Unravelling Design: fashion, dressmaking, *ethos*

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Abstract

Discourses on ethical fashion are usually geared toward finding solutions—or right outcomes—to ethical problems, based on a teleological model of design and a positioning of the designer as an autonomous and isolated design authority. This practice-led project argues, however, that considerations of design ethics must take into account not only the outcome of a design, but also the ongoing, lived experience of designing as a making located in pre-existing social, historical and cultural conditions. Through an exploration of my own dressmaking practice and a reading of *ethos* as location, I argue for two things: one, for the designer as a located entity rather than an autonomous "author", and, two, against design-as-plan and the original design object, and for the circular and conditioned character of design. Through a connection to *ethos*, understandings of design ethics shift from an end object focus to something situated, and invested in, everyday lived experience—and always in the making.

Project weighting: 50% Creative practice, 50% written exegesis.

Keywords

Design

Dressmaking

Ethics

Ethos

Fashion

Location

Re-making

Signed Statement of Originality

The work contained in this thesis has not been previously submitted to meet requirements for an award at this or any other higher institution. To the best of my knowledge and belief, the thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person except where due acknowledgement is made.

Signed:

Date:

Table of Contents

Table of Figures

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Preface

I am an avid maker of things.

It is a compulsion that has been with me for as long as I can remember, and, as I have come to realise over recent times, it is a significant lens through which I view the world. I love the intimacy and materiality of making—a day does not feel right until I've physically manipulated, investigated, shaped, or played with something material. I feel joy in handling the stuff of the world, and admire made things as made things. This preoccupation is the driving force behind my creative practice as a designer/dressmaker.

Conventional understandings of design align it with activities of mind—a plan. Making, on the other hand, is held as something of the body. This neat division, however, is confused in my creative practice. I cannot say for sure that I design through making, and nor do I make through design. I am therefore interested in conceptions of designing and the place of making in design. My approaches have brought to the fore a fundamental questioning of design practice. What is a designer? What is design practice? What place does the material have, in design?

It must be said at the outset that my questioning of design has an intrinsic ethical dimension. This has to do with issues of transparency and responsibility, that is, I seek an understanding of design that accounts for the complexities of design as an activity grounded within lived experience. I see ethics, like design, as something that is intimately handled—created in our 'everyday', embodied, and material engagement with the world. My questions "what is a designer?" and "what is design practice?" are then perhaps better expressed as "what is an ethical designer?" and "what is ethical design practice?" These questions have intrigued me for a long time. I am not sure that I will ever find succinct or final answers to them. They have, however, put me on an invaluable path of study through creative practice.

The creative practice I undertook during my PhD wrestles with these issues. Through my dressmaking practice, I have examined notions of fashion design. My position in relation to fashion design is, however, somewhat complicated in that although my practice examines fashion and clothing, it is not a fashion design practice in the conventional sense. This is because I tend to make in domestic spaces, largely through improvised approaches akin to *bricolage*—making do with whatever is on hand, conditioned by my surroundings. The PhD work, in particular, has not been undertaken with a view toward a commercial outcome; instead, I have made one-off garments and gifted them to family and friends. These approaches, however, are not motivated by an 'opposition' to the fashion industry per se. Rather, they stem first and foremost from a love for the intimacy of dressmaking as a 'hands on' activity. Following this, my dressmaking practice highlights—and celebrates—an embodied sense of location. I am interested in how this sense of location impacts on understandings of design practices—how it re-positions design as an activity enabled by (and acted within) the particularities of the designer's lived experience. An awareness of location is an awareness of the designer as embodied within pre-existing historical, geographical and cultural conditions.

My own location, and the extent to which I rely on making as a form of engagement with the world (as an activity through which to think and learn as well as to conceptualise my place among things) is, however, often a source of confusion as much as pleasure. More specifically, my practice often brings to light uncertainties and ambiguities related to issues of identity, place, and creative practice. We primarily define ourselves along the lines of what we do—our occupations and interests. Compelled by my love of making, I have tried my hand(s) at a range of creative activities—but involving myself in and accumulating knowledge of these often diverse practices has made it difficult to describe neatly who I am and the work that I do. In this way, my PhD study is motivated by (and grounded firmly within) a desire to understand designing and making as a way to better understand my place in the world.

Engaging with this difficulty has involved a 'trying on' of different discursive approaches to see what my work is—or, more accurately, to find its location

within the realms of fashion and design. This seeking of a sense of place has also led me to question the prevailing oppositions that exist between industrial and domestic sites of production. Most importantly, however, it has been a slow journey toward an articulation of my profound love of making in a way that does justice to the sustaining energy that it brings to me. Central to this struggle has been an exploration of my own working processes in order to tease out a common thread to my interests and approaches to practice.

I began my formal art study in the 1990s. I immersed myself in a wide variety of art making, trying my hand(s) at painting, sculpture, printmaking, drawing, as well as animation and graphic design. Common to these different activities, however, was a commitment to a 'hands-on' approach. Looking back now, I can see that I was caught up in the tension between product and process; fascinated by the interplay between the visibility of art object, and the invisibility of methods of making. I was drawn to work by others that held, for me, some evidence of the material signs of making, and would view the work through imagining myself as the maker, enacting stories of process. My appreciation centred on the minutiae of gestures that together made the whole. My own painting, drawing and textile works soon became abstract meditations on, and markers of, the making—specifically, the touch and pulse of time. Plotting, repetition, and an awareness of the touch of the hand were key during this time—employed largely for the satisfaction they provided as a making technique rather than a means to communicate a conceptual viewpoint or end object.

These approaches were suspended, however, during my undergraduate fashion study. I had always been a keen home sewer, but studying fashion formally was, in hindsight, a move guided partly by its potential as an applied and 'usable' form of creativity—that is, through fashion, the material bodily-made thing could also be a bodily-used thing. The utilitarian focus of design, however, had its drawbacks, and my initial work left me confused and unmoved. Following a process that I now regard as 'plan-heavy', the garments' construction was directed entirely by an initial sketch, allowing little room for experimentation along the way. Process was construed exclusively as the means to the end product or outcome. I followed these design tenets to the point of feeling indescribably

empty. To fixate on a planned product, it seems to me, prematurely resolves a thing before its time. More importantly, it hampered my enjoyment of material making by effectively shutting out the possibilities of unforeseeable potentials within process and creative play. It guarded against risk and uncertainty, with process reduced to a teleological model of design-model-make. Similarly, my drawing and painting work became a stale activity, moving from experimental and abstract to tightly construed and figurative only in the service of design.

Interestingly, however, these plan-heavy design constraints (which, in retrospect, I now find suffocating to imagine) were paralleled during this time by self-imposed limitations in fabrication choices motivated by ethical concerns. I began to research alternatives to conventional fabrication and materials, a move that was (and still is) motivated by larger concerns over the environmental cost and sustainability of the fashion industry. It was also during this time that I began following a vegan lifestyle, which led me to avoid completely the use of animal-derived products in my work (i.e. silk, wool and leather). In contrast to plan-directed design, however, these constraints were welcomed and celebrated as they emphasised discernment based on personal values rather than a framework imposed by industrial convention.

The implementation of these ethical frameworks got me thinking. I began to wonder about design process as a conversation between the material and the immaterial—a negotiation of constraints. I also began to consider the place of making in this conceptualisation of design, as well as the traditionally perceived opposition between design's utility and art's 'free play'. This tension was the impetus for my honours project (completed in 2006), which saw a return to more fluid and materially engaged working processes. Titled, "Unravelling Design: Chance and Bricolage", the project investigated both the use of chance operations in creative practice and its incorporation into fashion design processes. The project involved the deliberate staging of chance procedures to generate pattern shapes as a way of distancing myself from a rigidly controlled end product—a process that became playful and experimental. Through often convoluted and inefficient working processes, and by embracing the unplanned and the unexpected, these systems of chance allowed me to develop an understanding of

design process as the tempering of plan and intention by both the material and immaterial situations through which the work develops. Equally important, however, was my reconnection with the materiality of designing and an approach to making that sustained me creatively.

My interest was thus piqued in the overlooked aspects of making, in our handling and apprehension of them, in materiality, as well as in understandings of fashion and design, in our ethical orientations and their place in what we do. I had connected with an idea of design as an activity open to the world and its effects. These interests led to a practice-led research project that centred on understandings of design, fashion and the place of our located *ethos*—the tacit attitudes we hold, create and re-iterate through our embodied, lived experience—in design ethics.

INTRODUCTION

project overview

Topic and contributions of research

Between 2007 and 2010, I undertook a practice-led doctoral research project at the Creative Industries Faculty of Queensland University of Technology (QUT) in Brisbane, Australia. The final submission, a combination of creative work and written exegesis, is titled, *Unravelling Design: fashion, dressmaking, ethos.*

As a designer, maker and writer, I am invested in questions of creative practice. This investment has led to an interest in the approaches undertaken by designers and makers in the conception and production of garments: I am motivated by a curiosity concerning *how* clothing is made, *where* it is made, *who* makes it, and *why*. This research is thus an exploration and interrogation of design, as framed by my experience and my particular interest in fashion and clothes making.[1] Through an examination of design, fashion, re-made clothing and home dressmaking, the research critiques the predominant image of the autonomous designer, the original design object, teleologically focused models of design process, and the subsequent bearing of these traditions on conceptions of design ethics. Working from a reinterpretation of these traditions, it presents an understanding of design that centres on circularity, collaboration and improvisation, and an ethic of design that centres on notions of *ethos*.

Most ethical critiques of fashion focus on questions related to production and consumption, and centre on the determination of right outcomes in terms of environmental or social responsibility. Notions such as 'ethics' and 'right action' are therefore discussed through a paradigm that places primacy on a teleological end point—the premise being that we can 'design' our way out of ethical dilemmas by determining the correct rules or behaviours needed to reach a particular end. This is consistent with conventional understandings of design, which emphasise

[1] I use the word fashion to identify the modern—originally Western—system of clothing and stylistic change, and its constituent (and diverse) systems of production, dissemination and consumption. Its precise definition is a complex and contentious issue, which I explore in Part One of this essay. For now, however, it bears recognising the difference between my use of the words "fashion" (a system) and "clothing" (the material through which fashion functions).

planning as the key to design thinking. This outcome-centric focus, however, overlooks a consideration of ethics as something perpetually lived, made and re-made through *ethos*—our located experience of the world. This project therefore examines *ethos* and its connection to design practice—the role of our historical, geographical and cultural locations in the 'how' of how we make. It works from the premise that considerations of design ethics must take into account the attitudes and understandings *within which we practice.* Rather than simply centring on questions pertaining the teleological outcome (waste reduction, for example), it contributes to new knowledge as an examination of fashion design ethics through *ethos*—as a fundamental question of recognising, and attending to, our place in the world. This is particularly important for fashion because, as a field concentrated on ideas of the autonomous, 'visionary' designer who transcends the everyday, any connection to the complexities of location dramatically alters not only how we perceive the very question of ethical practice, but it also transforms understandings of fashion and the practice of the fashion designer.

Also important is the investigation and articulation of the research from a practitioner's perspective. In both historical and contemporary fashion theory and discourse, the voice of the designer is conspicuous by its absence, apart from commentaries in popular discourse which either focus on the clothing object or its image or the designer's inspirations. Commentaries and critical reflections on the activities that inform fashion design practice are difficult to source, with the few available provided by outsiders removed from the practical side of the industry (Griffiths, 2000: 69). This "separateness of theory and practice" (Ibid) is part of what motivates this study. Through my position as a practitioner, I contribute to a dialogue around fashion design practice from a viewpoint that has been largely unrepresented within fashion scholarship—a point that I further elaborate in my explanation of methodology and interpretive paradigm.

In a broader sense, in terms of design studies, my contribution to knowledge derives from the effort to reconfigure both fashion practice and its critical inquiry by re-inscribing the question of *ethos* in design practice. Bolt contends that the value of creative practice as research lies not only in the insights presented to the

practitioner, but also in the potential of the knowledge gained to be applied to a wider field. Thus, she contends the research ought to "produce a movement in thought itself" (2007: 33). To this end, this project's exegetical component elucidates an ethic particular to my practice and demonstrates the application of knowledge to the wider field of fashion as well as design in general.

Therefore, in conducting this research, several contributions to knowledge have been made which can be summed up as:

Within the field of fashion

- Positioning fashion design practice as a valid location for theoretical enquiry and research;
- Emphasizing the critical role of ethics from the point of view of an 'insider,' both as a fashion practitioner and as a practice-led researcher in fashion;
- Extending conceptions of fashion design practice through an exploration of the complications presented by re-making and domestic dressmaking both as ideas and processes;
- Developing a model of design practice that departs from the perspectives presented in the formulaic 'how to' teaching guides currently available within fashion literature;
- Positioning an awareness of '*ethos* as location' as integral to approaches to fashion design and ethics

Outside fashion

- Development of a model for improvised work within design;
- Broadening the scope of contemporary design practice by questioning disciplinary separations and the traditional hierarchies which have thus far marginalised fashion practice;
- A re-conceptualisation of practice based on moving beyond the binary oppositions between theory and practice and between design and production;
- Expanding conceptions of ethics to include understandings of *ethos* as location.

For QUT research

- A contribution to the emerging discipline of fashion theory;
- A new example of interdisciplinary research within the Creative Industries faculty;
- The development of a research model for practice-led fashion design PhD's.

Outputs (creative practice and exegesis)

The project's outputs consist of a practical component (50%) and written exegesis (50%). The practical component—the making, gifting and documentation of garments—is archived as a book of photographs titled *wearer/maker/wearer* (a collection of portraits which document both the garments produced and their recipients). This written exegesis is both a reflection on, and exploration of, this practical component. It describes and contextualises the research within both a historical and contemporary setting. Together, they function as the research output; as a "creative and reflexive research practice", the project components work in conjunction as a site for the testing of ideas and critical reflection (Goddard, 2007: 114).

Research orientations: methodology and interpretation

Fashion scholarship and the voice of the practitioner

Although fashion history and theory is a subject of increasing interest to contemporary scholars, it is nonetheless a relatively new area of academic study. *Fashion Theory: The Journal of Dress, Body and Culture,* launched in 1997, was the first scholarly journal devoted solely to fashion inquiry. As its title suggests, the journal covers fashion from a wide variety of disciplinary perspectives. This multi-disciplinary interest is indicative of fashion's complex position within modern society, which has seen it discussed in a multitude of contexts over recent years, but largely as a subject through which to explore larger socio-cultural concerns (White and Griffiths, 2000: 3). Although these perspectives provide

invaluable insights into the state of contemporary fashion, they tend to focus on fashion as an image or product, concentrating on its cultural significance in terms of dissemination, mediation and consumption. Indeed, critical approaches to design and making have rarely been investigated within *Fashion Theory*, and scholarly accounts from practitioner's perspectives are virtually non-existent. This omission was highlighted by Judith Clark in 2006,[2] an observation that perhaps prompted the launch by Berg of *Fashion Practice: The Journal of Design, Creative Process and the Fashion Industry* in 2009.[3] The fact that *Fashion Practice* has only recently begun publication is testament to the fledgling state of a dialogue around both examinations of fashion practice and the perspective of the fashion design practitioner.

Prior to 1970, inquiry into fashion generally followed art historical lines, with dress examined in terms of linear progressions and stylistic change. With the emergence of schools of new historical thought, however, these analyses gave way to new interpretations based on social and political context. Marxist, feminist, psychoanalytical and semiotic theories were employed as a means to investigate fashion as a cultural phenomenon, especially around issues of identity and representation (Breward, 2000: 23). This focus on representation and consumption continued within post-modern analyses into fashion's location between culture and commerce, thus providing a ground for its critique as an "image-driven industry" fuelled by mass-media consumption (Taylor, 2005: 447). Although these approaches continue to generate interesting and important debate, they undoubtedly focus on fashion as a mediated and consumable end product. They present only part of the picture of contemporary fashion. Garment *making*—by this I mean the strategies and processes undertaken by those who create the material object—are largely neglected within fashion studies in favour of its analysis as a socio-cultural phenomenon of consumption.

[2] Her index of articles from 1997-2006 shows no entries under the heading 'design' and only three articles under 'clothing production'.

[3] Other scholarly journals launched since *Fashion Theory* in 1997 include *Textile: The Journal of Cloth and Culture* (first published by Berg in 2003) and the *International Journal of Fashion Design, Technology and Education* (first published by Taylor and Francis in 2008), although these too have focuses which largely exclude subjective accounts of creative practice.

The few accounts of fashion design strategies and making that are available can generally be grouped into three types:

—systematic 'how to' books that focus on design in industrial production (see Carr, 1992, McKelvey, 2003, Tate, 2004, Jones, 2005);

—pattern-making guides (see Aldrich, 1997, Amaden-Crawford, 1996 , Jaffe, 2000);

—and profiles of designers (see Frankel, 2001, Meagher, 2008).

While useful in describing generalised approaches to design, containing advice on technical construction, or analyses of fashion systems in relation to technological and social developments, very few studies offer nuanced accounts from a designer's perspective or give critical insights into industry workings. It must be noted, however, that the absence of critical investigations is not entirely attributable to outsiders neglecting or misrepresenting fashion design practice. The majority of fashion practitioners have (either consciously or unconsciously) been complicit in this scholarly neglect. White and Griffiths argue that the stark separation between theory and practice within fashion is partly due to the majority of practitioners being either disinterested or unaware of the existence of academic inquiry, or reluctant to engage with it (2000: 3). While White and Griffiths do not speculate on the reasons for this reluctance on the part of fashion practitioners, it bears considering the competitive and commercial nature of the industry in which they work. Their reticence may be attributed partly to a desire for secrecy during production in an industry that is paced at an intensity that precludes the patenting of designs (see Troy, 2003). Also significant, however, is the existence of fashion as an industry dependent on the allure of the creative designer mystique. Welcoming scrutiny and demystifying the process behind the products could be construed as anathema to an industry propelled by objects that, at the highest level, have come to symbolise a transcendence of the mundane[4].

[4] I explore this further in Chapter One.

The Practice-led approach

This absence of critically engaged accounts of practice—especially those presented from the position of the practitioner—is not unique to fashion research. Across many creative disciplines, accounts of creative practice are thin-on-the-ground. Addressing this lack, in a research context, is the impetus behind the practice-led research approach. As discussed by Barrett and Bolt (2007), Macleod and Holdridge (2006), Sullivan (2005), Gray and Malins (2004) and Carter (2004), studio-based research, which elucidates creative practice from the point of view of the maker, is a vital component of arts enquiry that has hitherto received limited attention within the academy. The reasons for this lack in scholarship are complex and contentious. They settle largely around issues related to its 'fitting in' with prevailing research paradigms and philosophical hierarchies in terms of knowledge value and assessment (which tend to privilege activities of mind over body), where "creativity" was previously regarded as a difficult topic of research. While it is beyond the scope of my research to address these issues directly, the project nonetheless centres—by way of its exploration of practice—on a philosophical tension related to these issues of practice in a research context.

Practice-led research is thus a useful meta-methodology for me as it allows for a close investigation of ideas that inform and construe creative practice. My practice-led approach highlights knowledge as formed through "material thinking"—as generated through embodied activity and engagement with material (Carter, 2004). Material thinking implies that which emerges through an integration of thought and action, one that could not be attained by mind or body alone. This insight is contrasted with the product-focused discussions of creative practice presented by critics and theorists operating outside of studio practice, which tend to separate the artwork from the complexities of its production. Without hands-on knowledge of practice, Carter argues that this treatment results in a negation, a simplification or a mystification of practice and ultimately its ineffectual translation into a vocabulary that fails to address the fundamental subjectivity of its existence. While the communication of the nuances of creative practice remains challenging even for those who engage with it intimately, the practitioner's expression of the peculiarities of their work (and their relation to the

work) is nonetheless crucial to the pursuit of a more complex understanding of creative practice.

That said, this PhD does not insist only on the peculiarities of making or practice. Instead, my research is a product of my own material thinking, which in turn aims to articulate possible ramifications for new conceptualisations of both design practice and design ethics. In the Preface I outlined briefly my background as a maker and then discussed the conceptual and practical shifts that have been propelled by, and simultaneously have informed and constituted, my creative practice. Similarly, these shifts (and my investigation, interpretation and articulation of them) instigate, frame and constitute this study. Put simply, it is a project both driven and sustained by a desire to investigate *my place as a designer and maker, as well as the way I design and make*. It investigates the motivations behind my approaches to thinking and making, and examines and contextualises them within historical and contemporary thought and practice.

This project thus critically probes both my methodology (how I make, how I research) and my interpretive paradigm (how I interpret what I do and its—and my—place in the world). These two components are inextricably linked—how I see and how I make is at the heart of the research. This situation is typical of the practice-led approach. In *Visualising Research* (2004), Gray and Malins describe the practice-led strategy as a studio-based paradigm that firmly situates the creative practice both as a vehicle of inquiry and as a research output in its own right. This approach not only allows creative practitioners to offer an 'insider's' perspective *on* artistic practices (Sullivan, 2005: 84), but it also offers a mode of academic inquiry in which the research is performed and examined *through* the idiosyncratic procedures and subjective decision-making inherent *in* creative practice (Barrett, 2007: 1-2, Bolt, 2007: 29). The creative work thus not only generates the questions for research, but, in partnership with the written exegesis, provides the framework through which information is gathered, investigated, organised and articulated. It is a mode of inquiry that provides a perspective different from, but complimentary to, the commentaries on practice from non-practitioners that have hitherto dominated studies of creative practice (Sullivan, 2005: 83-84).

Practice-led research emphasises the exploratory and emergent qualities of research by virtue of its grounding within—and functioning through—creative practice. Ongoing reflection is thus a key methodological tool, as it both drives and facilitates this exploration. Reflective practice is the active, experiential learning gained through reflection upon one's own activities and processes; issues and questions raised within the practice are explored alongside other modes of research, with the reflection that arises impacting once again on future practice (Gray and Malins, 2004: 1). This reflection is taking place in my project as both reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action, which is described by Schön as the observation and appraisal that occurs both during the activity and after the activity (in Bolton, 2001: 15). This constant appraisal creates a malleable research process. New understandings inform and shape the work being produced, advancing both the creative activity and the research through the formation of new perspectives and new questions for further investigation. In this way, the project is experiential and emergent because it is a continually evolving and a "necessarily unpredictable" mode of research that follows an exploratory model of development based on a perpetual questioning and reconfiguration of practice (Barrett, 2007: 3-6).

Following Gray and Malins, I adopted a multi-method approach to the collection and investigation of research material. By this, I mean I incorporated and extended the studio-based research by comparing and contrasting my own practice with findings generated through the analysis of other textual and creative works. These readings of literature and creative works establish a context for the practice and inform the practice-based development of my work. Similarly, the theoretical exploration is prompted by the ongoing engagement with studio-based working. This relationship between practice and theory—another tenet of the practice-led approach—is described by Bolt as a 'double articulation,' "whereby theory emerges from a reflexive practice at the same time that practice is informed by theory" (Bolt, 2007: 29).

The primary methodology specific to my creative practice is the design and making of clothing. The clothing designed as part of this project can be summed up as resulting from an emphasis on re-making, domestic dressmaking, and

improvisation. The works, and these approaches to making, are discussed in detail in Part Three. My key critical emphasis hinges on interpreting these approaches in relation to understandings of design and design ethics.

A short word on ethics and *ethos*

The development of the ethical dimension of this research has parallels with sensibilities inherent to my vegan lifestyle. I became a vegan in 2004, after many years as a vegetarian. The move to veganism was not difficult—when pressed by others to explain the shift, I am at pains to emphasise how much it 'made sense' or 'just felt right'. I find I still cannot adequately explain how 'normal' it felt; far from a sense of sacrifice or going without (which suggests a surrendering of something prized or valuable) the choice was almost a non-event in that it seemed to unequivocally accord to a course of thought and being that I had come to embody. Paradoxically, however, it was also a significant time; becoming vegan was a decision that resolved a profound discomfort that I felt in relation to identity and place—it allowed me to begin to locate my values and actions amid prevailing cultural attitudes and beliefs.

The prevailing cultural beliefs in question here centred on notions of anthropocentricity; I was dissatisfied by the inherited traditions of thought and action which presumed humans—and human interpretation and evaluation—at the centre of world and being. These anthropocentric attitudes manifest in our moving through the world as though entitled to its possession; they are presumptions that reduce animals and environments to chattel. While I acknowledge that human experience is an inescapable lens through which we view the world (indeed, this project is in itself an articulation of my experience of the world, through my own embodied thinking) I assert the need for perpetual reflection on, and awareness of, the cultural values that we take on as 'normal'. I question the hierarchy that privileges humankind as the 'yardstick' against which to measure the value and experience of other organisms. For me, veganism makes some moves toward an acknowledgement of the precarious nature of humankind in the world; it points toward an awareness of the complexity of our indebtedness and interconnectedness with the world. To become vegan, therefore, was both a

logical and rational choice but at the same time fulfilled a longing of sensibility that I had long struggled to place.

My interest in these issues was piqued by a recent reading of Elizabeth Grosz's *Chaos, Territory, Art* (2008). I read this work as contributing to a conversation around alternatives to anthropocentric thought; Grosz explores our human-embodied experience of the world as an abstracted engagement—as a perceiving of only part of the totality of the world. Our perceptions of the world are both enabled and limited by our bodies in that we come pre-equipped, by virtue of our embodiment in time and space (and our co-evolution with our environments or 'lifeworlds') to perceive and experience only those aspects that are of significance to us. An organism thus "at best engages with certain features that are of significance to it, that counterpoint, in some sense, with its own organs" (2008: 40). Using the work of Jakob von Uexküll (as interpreted through Deleuze and Guattari), Grosz's interpretation of these ideas follows a musical analogy, where nature is conceptualised as a conflux of melodies and rhythms, "dynamic, collective, lived rather than just fixed, categorised, or represented" (Ibid).

The value of both my shift to veganism and Grosz's thinking to this project lies in the conceptual approach it allows. Grosz's thinking emphasises interconnectedness between beings and lifeworlds, where "species cannot be understood as entirely separable from the milieus in which they find themselves, for these milieus are involved in a kind of coevolution" (Ibid). It also counters the anthropocentricism of philosophical thought in that human experience (and, indeed, philosophy itself) is positioned not so much as the apex of experience (or the 'end' or final word on the world), but rather, as an interpretation, as "one way of living" with the world (Ibid: 27). My reading of this thinking is that it does not necessarily diminish philosophical interpretation (which includes Grosz's work itself) but instead calls for an awareness of infinite and ever-changing *differences* in how beings frame the world. This has a bearing on our practices (how we make and move in the world) and the ethics of practice in that it sets up engagement as at the heart of our being.

I extend my interest in Grosz to conceptions of ethics, in that I approach philosophical ethics with the same caution as I do other traditions of thought. Therefore as I understand it the project is not an exploration into ethics in terms of locating a single understanding of what is 'good' or 'right' behaviour or action. Although questions related to what is right and what is good fall into the domain of ethics in that the task of ethics is traditionally held as the determination of how we ought to live (Figal, 2008), these questions are not at the centre of this project. These terms are in themselves tricky[5], bound up in histories and understandings of ethics and moral philosophy that are beyond the scope of this research.

What I seek in this project, therefore, is not so much a set of rules or abstract principles through which to structure one's life, in order to be good. What I understand as ethical being is not simply the result of following certain rules of moral conduct. Rather, I am interested in the complexities of an ethics that does not rely simply on the authority of rules, but instead functions through an ongoing examination of something that I have come to understand as *ethos.* By *ethos,* I mean an interrogation of our historical, geographical and cultural positioning in the world. Such a stance is fundamental to an alternative ethical thinking because if we understand ethics as grounded on a responsibility of self in the world, it follows that ethical practice must therefore constitute an ongoing appraisal of our location in the world. Furthermore, when we self-consciously attend to our ethos, we move toward a responsibility for its continuous making as something inherently embodied and lived through our located cultural experience—as "a way of being, not a knowledge about that way of being" (Tonkinwise, 2004: ¶4).

The etymology of ethics and *ethos* help clarify the distinction between the two words. Our modern word, 'ethics' has its root in the classical Greek '*ethos*'. Whereas ethics in our current usage alludes to principles of right or wrong, *ethos* refers instead to 'character' or 'way of life' (Barnhart, 1999: 345). *Ethos* therefore is connected to notions of community—as something rooted in the social. It is the accustomed values, habits and practices of an individual, or group, or time, as conditioned by the particularities of historical, geographical and

[5] Charles E. Scott's paper "In the Name of Goodness" for example, examines the difficulties encountered when describing goodness in the context of moral virtues.

cultural location. In the context of this project, therefore, my concern for design ethics is perhaps more accurately described as a concern for design *ethos*. I explore this further in Chapter Four.

Synopsis

In Chapter One, I undertake a literature review to outline definitions of both design and fashion. I contend that design is read almost exclusively through a tripartite structure—the teleological model of design as 'plan'; the original design object; and the designer as an autonomous and isolated design authority. This is consistent with prevailing understandings of design as intellectualised management and rational ordering directed toward an instrumental outcome. In fashion design discourse, these tenets are carried through, with an emphasis on the authority and vision of the autonomous designer. Similarly, conceptions of design ethics follow this model; ethical discourse in fashion is usually geared toward finding solutions (based on an instrumental outcome). Ethics is thus largely seen as something designed ('design ethics' becomes 'designed ethics'), and the ethical designer as one who plans toward 'right' outcomes. By advancing critiques of design as plan, and theories of ontological design, however, I argue that considerations of design ethics must take into account not only the outcome of a design, but also the ongoing, lived experience of the designer as someone embedded in pre-existing and constituent conditions. By formulating design as an ongoing interaction with—and negotiation of—our physical and conceptual location in the world, I show how this new framework overcomes the shortcomings of models that regard design (and design ethics) as a teleologically-driven activity determined by an autonomous creator.

In order to explain more alternative formulations of design, in Chapter Two, I look at two areas of making—the domestically produced and the re-made—that have been explored and developed in the practices of Maison Martin Margiela and Andrea Zittel. I begin by explaining how domestic dressmaking offers both an alternative history and conception of practice. I position domestic dressmaking and the re-working of existing clothing within contemporary fashion practice. By doing this, I seek to delineate an alternative consideration that points toward

design as circular and conditioned, but also expressly invested in site or location. By looking at aspects of making that are not entirely dependent on design as plan, such as through Bill Brown's 'thing theory' as a de-centring of traditional subject-object relations, I further speculate on design as an activity grounded in lived temporal, spatial and cultural relationships—relationships that simultaneously reflect, create and re-iterate our cultural being.

In Chapter Three, I reflect on my own creative practice—that is, my domestic dressmaking, re-making and photographic documentation—in order to expound upon my own grounding within the quotidian histories, traditions and cultural ideologies examined in the chapters ahead. I outline the practice I have undertaken during my candidature, and describe in detail the major body of work and archival photo-book titled, *wearer/maker/wearer*. In addition, I also describe and analyse two key photographic projects that document people and clothes—Kate Fletcher's *Local Wisdom* and Lisa Clark's *What Are You Making?*

In concluding my approach to understanding and practicing fashion design, I then draw upon a feminist reading of *ethos* as location, which extends and further locates the identification and articulation of our historical, geographical and cultural positioning. This feminist reading also complements Tonkinwise's exploration of *ethos* and design as a way of questioning the predominant outcome-centric conceptions that tend to govern the idea of ethical design practice. Chapter Four, therefore, ties together my critiques of design and the autonomous designer, domestic fashion production and the re-made, and my own creative practice, through an exploration of *ethos*. Through *ethos* as location I ground my work (and my design ethic) in an awareness of, and attention to, my subject positioning as something never entirely separate from my environment. In short, I consider dressmaking practice as an example of handling *ethos* that reconfigures the practitioner away from the privileged concept of an autonomous figure and design away from an end object focus. Through a connection to *ethos*, understandings of fashion, design practice and design ethics are re-conceptualized as continuous, ever-shifting activities that are always in the making—embedded and invested in locatedness of everyday lived experience.

By way of *ethos*, I expand the understanding of fashion design practice as not only a broad area of activity, but as an activity which enacts materially our place in the world as conditioned by embodied experience. This reconfigures the designer as one who is made, and makes, within larger stories of making and design discourse toward ethos, understood as creating, identifying, and being responsible for, our presence in an interconnected world.

CHAPTER ONE:

A literature review of histories and ideas: design, fashion, and design ethics

This literature review positions my PhD project as an exploration of the predominant understandings of design, fashion, and fashion design ethics. As I outlined in the Introduction, fashion theory is an emerging discipline and critical discussions of design in fashion are virtually non-existent. Although twentieth century design discourse includes many areas of design, fashion is curiously overlooked. In terms of design, then, the review is informed primarily by theories as covered by disciplines other to fashion; my tracing of design draws upon discussions of design as it is theorised within other disciplines—discussions that, interestingly, rarely include fashionable clothing as part of their domain.

I begin by outlining definitions of both design and fashion. Regardless of their scope and disciplinary application, theoretical definitions of design generally emphasise schematic planning and problem solving—i.e. contrasted with artistic or intuitive creation, design has settled itself largely in the domain of rational concepts geared to outcomes—a focus that orientates both aesthetic and functional elements. Furthermore, the plan toward the end object is generally held to be a product of an individual and autonomous designer. I therefore contend that design is read almost exclusively through a tripartite structure—the teleological model of design as 'plan'; the original design object; and the designer as an autonomous and isolated design authority. The centrality of these three tenets overwhelms understandings of design practice; models of design are constrained and determined almost exclusively by a privileging of the plan, the designer, or the tangible end outcome.

In keeping with this tradition, understandings of modern fashion design tend to emphasise the authority and vision of the autonomous designer. In addition, conceptions of design ethics similarly follow these design tenets; ethical discourse in fashion is usually geared toward finding solutions (based on an instrumental outcome). Ethics is thus seen as something designed, and the ethical designer as

one who 'plans' toward right outcomes. Through critiques of design as plan, and theories of ontological design, however, I argue that considerations of design ethics must take into account not only the plan toward an outcome of a design (a designed ethics), but also the ongoing, lived experience of the designer as one embedded in pre-existing and constituent conditions (one's *ethos*).

This literature review foreshadows an exploration of my own work, and that of other key practitioners in the chapters to come. This review is important in that it begins to contextualise this project. To explain this more clearly and explicitly, however, it is important to start with a historical development of ideas and basic definitions. I begin with design.

Professional design and the Modernist Canon

Guy Julier's *The Culture of Design* (2000)[6] offers an overview of the etymology and historical development of design to delineate both popular conceptions as well as current debate. He argues that in seeking to legitimise its role as a professional pursuit worthy of copyright, designers have continuously sought both to align and to separate themselves from other forms of cultural practice. "In doing so", Julier states, "they have attempted to identify themselves and their practice as something which bestows things, pictures, words and places with 'added value'" (Ibid: 30).

Julier traces historical accounts of the use of the word design, its development and the "professionalisation of its practice", as well as its eventual definition as "value-added" activities (Ibid: 32-45). The Renaissance use of the word '*disegno,*' translated as 'drawing', was used to describe the drafting phase of making, the conceptual activity that occurred separately to the execution of artworks. During the 19th century, however, the English use of the word 'design' was largely removed from references to professional practice due to a potentially misleading association with the French equivalent '*dessin*' (to draw). Julier explains:

[6] This review of design is greatly indebted to Julier's book.

> While the French 'Ecoles de Dessin' were exclusively directed towards the teaching of drawing—using the word *dessin* in its literal sense—from the mid-nineteenth century the British 'Schools of Design' were dedicated to a broader curriculum to promote visual innovation for manufactured articles (Ibid: 30).

Design activities were thus separated into fields and demarcated under new names, such as 'industrial art' and 'applied art,' in order to "express greater practical and professional complexity" (Ibid: 33). However, this re-arrangement was short-lived, and practitioners in the 20th century revived the word 'design' because terms such as 'applied art' were seen to connote the decoration of objects as opposed to their conception and creation. Julier argues that this "system of professionalization and differentiation" has been reflected and reproduced through design history texts and design discourse generally (see for example, Wong's *Principles of Form and Design*), which aim for the "public recognition of design as both a profession and a product" (Ibid: 37).

Victor Margolin's article "Design History or Design Studies: Subject Matter and Methods" (1995) examines the origins, subject matter and methodologies of design discourse within the academy. In examining the inclusion and exclusion of subject matter in studies of modern design, Margolin investigates the writings of two famous design historians – Nikolaus Pevsner and Reyner Banham – to illustrate what has constituted design in the 19th and 20th centuries.

Nikolaus Pevsner's *Pioneers of the Modern Movement* (written in 1936, but later revised under the title *Pioneers of Modern Design from William Morris to Walter Gropius*) is presented as a text which "sought to identify a distinctive quality of modernity" through the establishment of a certain kind of framework of "aesthetic discrimination" (1995: 6). Margolin argues that Pevsner "infused his narrative with a high sense of morality", in which he lauded design as work which demonstrated certain principles in keeping with the spirit of the modern age. According to Margolin's interpretation, Pevsner's definition of design excluded the mundane, mass-produced objects used in 'everyday' life (Ibid). Julier, on the other hand, argues that Pervsner's work "traced a linear, progressive perception of

design history, a steady development of architectural style, based on the work and aspirations of individual architects and designers" (2000: 38).

Margolin compares Pevsner's study of design objects with that of Reyner Banham, who embraced a wider scope of objects within his narratives of design history. His particular interest concerned popular culture and it was this enthusiasm for the 'mass-produced' which contributed to "opening up the subject matter of design history" (Margolin, 1995: 8). In this way, Banham's published works broadened the scope of design history, through his critical examinations of the opposition between popular culture and fine art. Banham asserted the scholarly value of the popular, stating that any difference between an enthusiasm for the popular and that of fine art is "only one of taste" (1995: 7-8).

For Julier, however, Reyner Banham followed the same "Pevsnerean tradition" of structuring his narrative in a way that traces a formal development of design, giving primacy to certain individuals, objects and design traditions (2000: 38-40). According to this tradition, works are analysed in terms of the artist's life and singularly intended meaning, rather than "as a social product" that represents and reproduces societal values (Buckley, 1989: 258). This narrative system has been described as the 'canon of design': an "endless chain of achievement" in which "the baton of genius or avant-garde innovation passes from the hand of one great designer to the next" (Walker, quoted in Julier, 2000: 38). Julier insists that a "vast void" existed between the activities of these esteemed individuals and the consuming activities of the general public in order to conclude that modern design history "has been dominated by the achievements of individuals" and also by "specific objects of a certain type" (Ibid: 39).

Definitions of Design and the Designer

Julier argues that this regard for design as the production of highly valued objects, places or services, "pushes design into a reflexive mode whereby its value becomes self-consciously recognised" through an internalised focus on the formal characteristics of objects. (2000: 30). What this means is that in the 'canon of design', design studies are reduced to object-based analyses, whereby "all aspects of the design, production and distribution are concentrated in the object as if they

exist *in* it" (Ibid: 40). In this model of modern design as self-contained and self-reflexive, we begin to get a sense of the tripartite structure through which design is conventionally understood. The centrality of the designed object (or outcome), the plan toward this object, and the designer as the instigator of this plan thus impinge upon all understandings of design and what constitutes design practice.

Julier ventures into definitions of design by way of commentaries by design historians. Quoting the historian John Walker, he says design:

> … can refer to a process (the act or practice of designing); or to the result of that process (a design, sketch, plan or model); or to the products manufactured with the aid of a design (design goods); or to the look or over-all pattern of a product ("I like the design of that dress") (30).

This diversity and dynamism of meanings of design is counterbalanced by a focus on its disciplinary application as well as on its description in both broad and narrow terms. Descriptions of process in many 'how to' books and student guides emphasise design solely as schematic planning and problem solving. In *Principles of Form and Design* (1993), for example, two opposite approaches to visual creation are posited: the intuitive and the intellectual (Wong: 13). The intuitive approach is characterised by the 'pouring out' of emotion that results in expression of an artistic kind; whereas the intellectual is a "systematic thinking with a high degree of objectivity" (Ibid). Wong aligns design with the "objective" approach. In keeping with the predominant dictionary definitions, he typifies it as "a process of purposeful visual creation," an ordering of aesthetic and functional elements into a solution for "practical needs" (Ibid: 41).

Some perspectives, however, depart significantly from this predominant decisive model of design. In *How Designers Think* (1997), Lawson argues that design, as an activity, encompasses a broad range of practices. He even contends, "the extent to which the various design fields share a common process is a matter for considerable debate" (5). Design thinking, in his view, is multifarious and cannot be contained in a neat definition: "Many forms of design … deal with both precise

and vague ideas, call for systematic and chaotic thinking, need both imaginative thought and mechanical calculation" (Ibid: 4). Design is therefore construed as consisting of a range of tensions around oppositional approaches to thinking as opposed to simply a precise and decisive ordering.

Common to these definitions, however, is this emphasis on design construed primarily as an activity of mind. Although different in their understanding of the functioning of design thinking, they share an ontology grounded in thought. Victor Papanek, for instance, offers a definition to include most human pursuits, while re-emphasising the key role of plan or mind:

> All men [sic] are designers. All that we do, almost all the time, is design, for design is basic to all human activity. The planning and patterning of any act toward a desired, foreseeable end constitutes the design process. Any attempt to separate design to make it a thing in itself, works counter to the fact that design is the primary underlying matrix of life (in Julier, 2000: 30).

Papanek presents a view that design, as plan, is an intrinsic and inevitable aspect of living—and thus, we are all designers in that we all plan in one form or another. Cooper and Press similarly focus on planned outcome in their definition of a 'designer'. In the introduction to their *The Design Experience* (2003), they define the designer as a "cultural intermediary," who utilises activities and skills to "impose values upon the world – values of their own or those of their client" (6). They position design as a form of cultural production, as the purpose-driven making of meaning (Ibid). *Imposing* suggests an intervention into (as opposed to an interaction with) culture, and from a vantage point outside of it, suggesting an activity separated from the very systems within which it works. Design is construed as an authority that expresses itself decisively and teleologically from a position removed from the 'everyday'—a one-way movement of designer over world.

I will return to definitions of design later in this chapter by way of critiques into these predominant models of design and the designer. For now, however, to understand the bearing of object/outcome–based design, the privileging of original design object and the autonomous designer on the development of the modern

fashion system, I turn to an outline of the historical development of fashion design. I will focus, in particular, on the role and function of the fashion designer in modernity, to show how the pre-eminent figure of the fashion designer is central to conceptions of fashion design.

A brief history of Western Fashion Design

Western fashion is a complex site for inquiry, with its historical development requiring careful consideration if we are to understand the positioning of the contemporary fashion designer. At first glance, the popular phrase 'fashion design' seems fairly self-explanatory, particularly if aligned with the histories and practices already described. As I have already pointed out, however, clothing design is curiously omitted from many histories of design, making direct parallels difficult to draw[7]. There are, however, histories of fashion design itself, which cast light on its emergence—histories which tell the story largely through the rise of the fashion designer.

Contemporary fashion is inextricably linked to the social upheavals that heralded industrial modernity (see Lipovetsky, 1994, Breward, 1995, Green, 1994). Georg Simmel, who was interested in both the aesthetic and social formations of modernity, defined fashion as an activity motivated by an impulse to simultaneously signify belonging and difference (2004). Breward notes that the initial stirrings of this impulse can be traced back to the Italian Renaissance, where courtesans in city-states sought to differentiate themselves from their rivals through sartorial competition (2003: 23). For centuries that followed, fashion was a pursuit of the wealthy, made within guilds under the instruction of the client; the lower classes garbed in domestically produced, often re-made clothing, or alternatively second-hand items (Manlow, 2007: 35). Throughout Europe, state-set sartorial rules saw certain styles of dress limited only to certain members of the court, as a signifier and regulator of status. In seventeenth-century France, the couturiers and couturières (male and female dressmakers) worked under the instruction of their clients, with the *merchandes de modes* (fabric and trimmings merchants) the primary directors of fashion change (Breward, 2003: 24-25).

[7] I will venture into possible reasons for this omission later in this chapter, and also in Chapter Two.

Political upheavals, however, eventually saw court life replaced by a wider sphere of privileged individuals and it was in this climate that the first fashion designers would emerge.

The story of modern fashion is largely framed as a movement from dressmaker to designer. Within the predominant modern canon of fashion design, Charles Fredrick Worth, an English textile merchant is widely acknowledged as the first individual to position himself as a fashion and style authority. Most fashion historians concur that Worth's most significant contribution to the development of the modern fashion system was through the innovative manner in which he refigured producer/client relations. Prior to the establishment of Worth's house in Paris in 1858, couturiers and couturières worked in the service of their patron, travelling to their residences to measure and fit the garments. Worth did the opposite by presenting collections of 'haute couture' (high dressmaking) designs (or 'models') in his salon twice a year, to which clients would visit and select garments for custom-made production (Lipovetsky, 1994: 57). While Worth's innovation had an industrial imperative (the models could be reproduced) it was also underpinned by a cultural 'savvy' whereby he positioned himself as artist as opposed to artisan. Many followed Worth's lead, setting up elite fashion houses for the wealthy and engendering a reputation for haute couture as the epitome of fine dressmaking practice.

Worth's haute couture saw Paris become the symbolic and geographical capital of Western fashion. Indeed, the establishment of the *Chambre Syndicale de la Haute Couture* in 1868 would institutionalise haute couture practice, governing its members with strict regulations to maintain it as a preserve for only the most skilled fashion houses. Lipovetsky argues that this "bureaucratization of fashion" and its presentation as an organised artistic institution signalled a radical shift due to its "separation of professionals from customers" (Ibid: 83). Haute couture, Lipovetsky argues, became responsible for:

> … the organization of fashion as we know it today, at least in its broad outlines: seasonal renewal, presentations of collections on live models, and, most important of all, a new vocation coupled with a new social status for the dressmaker. Here is the heart of the matter. Ever since Worth's day, the couturier has been recognized as a creator with a mission: to develop brand-new models, to launch new lines of clothing on a regular basis, lines that ideally reveal a special, distinctive, incomparable talent…After centuries of relegation to subordinate status, the couturier had become a modern artist, one whose commanding law was innovation (Ibid: 64)

The subsequent shift in social status for the creator of elite fashion would also set the tone for the ready-to-wear industry that would flourish with the advent of mechanical reproduction. Haute couture's power as a symbol of the original skilled garment production would carry into the promotion of ready-to-wear, which modelled itself on the esteemed reputation of couture while, paradoxically, signalling a democratisation of fashion for the masses (Ibid: 78).

Haute couture signalled a separation of the "professional and private spheres." The result transformed individual creators into innovators charged with social distinction, whereas previously the discipline was constituted as a craft activity practiced in the service of others (Lipovetsky, 1994: 84). Thus, the image of the autonomous designer is inseparable from the ideology of individualism that emerged with modernity. Modernist culture permitted a desire to signify difference and individual freedom through creativity and innovation—a motivating factor for both producers and consumers (Ibid: 85). Signalling individuality and originality was paramount. Creativity was construed as orchestrating "discontinuity", in contrast to what was regarded as the maintaining or sustaining of cultural traditions (Ingold and Hallam, 2007: 19). This valuing of both the creator's and the consumer's personal freedom allowed couturiers to work under an assumption of autonomy, to create novelty, thereby implying a certain separation from prevailing cultural determinants in the quest for innovation. Thus, Lipovetsky asserts, "the bureaucratic autonomy of fashion could not have come about without the simultaneous recognition of the ultimate value of individual freedom" (1994: 85). Up until the mid-20th century, these couturiers held unprecedented influence over fashionable Western dress. Their

creations filtered through to the masses by means of both the ready-to-wear industry and the domestic production of readymade clothing.

Yet, the new individualist ideology that allowed for design creativity and wider fashion consumption would only signify a shift in "notions of emulation"—not their abolishment in favour of everyone asserting their individual autonomy (Breward, 1995: 183). In first half of the 20th century, Paris remained the symbolic centre of fashion with ready-to-wear designers following the couturier's stylistic directions, albeit at a lower price to a wider consumer base (Steele, 2000: 8). Although the 'reality' of clothing production also encompassed domestically produced garments as well as the ready-made, haute couture designs provided the stylistic direction. High fashion, Lipovetsky argues, "had a monopoly on innovation and set the annual trends; clothing manufacturers and related industries followed along, producing goods inspired more or less directly and more or less immediately by haute couture" (Lipovetsky, 1994: 56). Ready-to-wear depended on the aspiration to haute couture. At the same time, the allure of the designer within haute couture depended on ready-to-wear's adoption of style to motivate innovation and seasonal differentiation. The relationship between the custom-made and ready-made was based, as Troy notes, on a "tension between originality and reproduction" (2003: 4), with the popular appeal for the designed object motivating both strands of the fashion system.

The influence of interested parties with special investments in elite fashion—designers, fashion press, retailers—did not go unchallenged. During the second half of the twentieth century, haute couture's influence was destabilised and complicated by the advent of youth movements, sub cultural style and the integration of non-Western approaches to construction and codes of dress (see Polhemus, 1994, Steele, 2000, Kawamura, 2004). The "trickle-down" social theory of fashion in which elite styles filter through and eventually are emulated by the masses, was complicated by the fact that fashion consumption fragmented into niche markets or "style tribes" (see Polhemus, 1994). The aura of the designed garment, however, would endure with the economically confident ready-to-wear industry claiming "artistic cachet as their own" (Green, 1994: 735). Indeed, Breward writes that a "cult of 'the designer' revolving around ideals of

couture and 'high fashion' or strong sub cultural identities ensured the survival of older hierarchies based on notions of quality, style and individuality" (Breward, 1995: 183). Thus, the phrase 'fashion designer' continues to weigh heavy with connotations of a cultural arbiter, particularly at the high-end segment of the ready-to-wear market.

A combination of branding and the prestige of the celebrity designer continue to position the fashion designer as the autonomous creator with a unique perspective, someone who controls and shapes from on high. This understanding is characterised by the lack of discussion of process (particularly when discussing approaches to practice) in fashionable clothing production (see Griffiths, 2009). Although the physical 'reality' of the production of fashionable clothing encompasses a vast range of creative exchanges in various roles (see Rissanen, 2007)—thus involving a complex interplay between sites of cultural and material production—fashion designers continue to be positioned outside all of this. Fashion designers are presumed to exist outside the constituent limits and material conditions of design practice. This common understanding renders the nuances of practice—plus the fundamentals of making and doing— effectively invisible.

Challenges to design traditions

The persistent image-based focus on design as "high cultural goods" has not gone uncriticised by contemporary commentators and design historians either. Unfortunately, because there is little to consult within fashion discourse, it is necessary to turn once again to discussions beyond the discipline for these analyses. Buchanan is cited by Julier as one such commentator because he voices a desire to re-configure design as an investigation of values as they apply to design products and their consumption. This shifts the emphasis from "material form to immaterial processes", from object-based enquiries to those that investigate design as the "shaping of structures and relationships" (quoted in Julier, 2000: 44). It conceptualises design as planning, shaping and organization—as well as the managing of concerns within a larger social and economic context. Buchanan's vision of an "integrative view of design" judges the effectiveness of design by its achievement "of the most appropriate combination and use of different disciplines and the best relationship with end-

users" (Julier, 2000: 44-45). It is interesting to note, however, that although the emphasis has broadened to consider the effects of design on a wider cultural level, the outcome-centricity of design (and design process) remains, albeit shifted to a focus on the consumer-as-designer. The role of the designer remains paramount, as does design as a shaping *of* systems as opposed to a shaping *within* systems. This refiguring of design, I would argue, still privileges control from a removed and privileged location.

Victor Margolin also strives to take an inclusive approach to design by acknowledging a breadth of activities beyond the production of objects. Yet his approach remains problematic, even when trying to articulate a diversity of practice. In *Design Histories or Design Studies* (1995), he voices the difficulties encountered when trying to mark out the 'boundaries' of design as a subject. Research into design exists in a fragmented form, separated into hierarchies and into "histories of craft, graphic design, and industrial design" (Ibid: 9). It is this fragmentation, with its focus on the categories of end products, which has been problematic in defining design. Rather than concentrating on a "fixed class of products", Margolin suggests that a definition of design should rather focus on the "act of invention that is continually creating new products" (Ibid: 14). Given this "process of continual invention" and the wide scope of activities that Margolin sees as characteristic of design and the design process, he offers a broad definition:

> Design is the conception and planning of the artificial, that broad domain of human made products which includes: material objects, visual and verbal communications, organized activities and services, and complex systems and environments for living, working, playing, and learning (Ibid: 13).

Once again design is positioned as the act of planning giving primacy to the designer as a director and controller of materials and environment. This implies an objective and external positioning of the designer over the systems they manage. It is an attenuated understanding of design because it effectively removes the designer from the existing systems and constraints in which they work. It

therefore fails to acknowledge the bearing that these systems have on the designer's work.

Rethinking design as plan and the designer as planner

In the Preface to *Non-plan: Essays on Freedom Participation and Change in Modern Architecture and Urbanism*, Hughes and Sadler introduce the prospect of the 'non-plan' by asking "Should architecture obey, deny or subvert the logic of 'the plan'?" (vii). The question, they argue, carries considerable weight when one contemplates its implications on urban planning, and the challenge it presents to notions of professionalisation in practice (and the traditional role of the passive consumer in design). Within architectural and urban planning discourse, the notion of non-plan critiques "the power of the 'rational' modernist plan to shape the use of space", destabilising its governance over "everything from matters of taste to the conduct of life itself" (Ibid: viii). The key concern for non-plan, therefore, is "how people can take control of their environments" and the "the belief in the ability of people to gain from the devolution of power"—primarily in the context of architectural design and town planning (Ibid: ix).

The original 'Non-plan' articles appeared in the journal *New Society* in 1969 under the title 'Non-plan: An experiment in Freedom.' In *Thinking the Unthinkable* (2000), Paul Barker, one of the original authors, revisits non-plan and outlines its origin and development as a critique of British suburban housing and planning. He writes: "Non-plan was essentially a very humble idea: that it is very difficult to decide what is best for *other* people" (Ibid: 6). Non-plan was devised as an experimental exploration into "getting along without planning" or rather, getting along without the planning of architects, urban designers and other "aesthetic judges," who sought to impose their own values and tastes on urban development (Ibid: 2-4). Planning by designers, it was argued, should concern the setting up of "frameworks for decision" rather than the "imposition of certain physical arrangements based on value judgements or prejudices" (Barker and et al., 1969: 442).

Clara Greed introduces a feminist perspective into these discussions concerning non-plan by examining the notion of 'the plan' in terms of its significance within

patriarchal ideologies. In *Can Man Plan? Can Woman Plan Better?* (2000) she investigates the binary opposition between plan and non-plan, posing instead a "third option": "to 'plan differently', to transform patriarchal, bureaucratic planning" (184). While focusing primarily on the governance of zoning and urban development, Greed argues for "a greater diversity in planning policy." This diversity is said to occur when designers take the role as facilitators for community-based design and when they take on board local knowledge in the creation of products and services.

Non-plan proposes an alternative to a design paradigm that privileges the designer as an autonomous entity who shapes systems from a removed vantage point. Although it takes an approach similar to user-led design—by calling for a model of planning which prioritises the end user—non-plan is significantly different in its ontology because it is a thinking and working from the 'ground up' on a community level. It questions the primacy of the plan in that the design process is construed as necessarily operating through pre-existing and constituent conditions. Rather than abolishing the privilege of designer intention, non-plan re-frames this intention as an interaction with pre-existing situational circumstances.

Ontological design

The project of re-thinking design practice has been taken up by some contemporary design theorists who take the debate beyond the designed object in order to include conceptions of design practice as a lived activity that is ongoing, and which transforms our lived experience both in terms of the objects we use and also the way we operate in our world. These theorists are integral to my research because they help to re-conceptualise the function of design (and its designers).

I have argued that conventional approaches to theorising the activity of design tend to focus either on the plan, the object, or (significantly, for fashion) the autonomous designer. Tony Fry's take on the situation is similar; he holds that these conventions tend to formulate design as a meta-category consisting of three elements—the design *object* (or outcome), the design *process* (the activity of designing), and the design *agency* (the effectual force instructing the design) (in

Willis, 2006). Fry argues that understandings of design generally focus on only one of these three elements, to either the exclusion of the others or their subjugation as mere vehicles through which the primary element functions (Willis, 2006).

In her paper "Ontological Designing", Anne-Marie Willis explores design as a more complex relationship between "human beings and lifeworlds" (2006). Working in collaboration with colleagues (including Fry and Tonkinwise), and drawing upon the work of Heidegger and Gadamer, Willis articulates a theory of design that is far beyond fulfilling commercial ends; it is a fundamental way of thinking, making and being that constitute who and how we are in the world. I have some reservations about a theory that seems to position design as instrumental to our living—a position that omits an acknowledgement of chaos, or the unknown at play in the world—in short, a position that omits the aesthetic dimension of making and creating. Still, significantly, for my research, Willis offers a model of design that usefully complicates the subject-object division as a necessary requisite of teleological accounts of design. In place of a one-way movement with distinct beginnings and ends (i.e. humans making objects), Willis construes design as an ongoing 'circularity' of design presences—not only do we design in and *through* a multitude of pre-existing conditions, but are, ourselves, designed *by* these conditions (see also Fry, 2009). Our movements in the world are, in part, directed by the limits and possibilities of the way objects function, as well as our physical and conceptual locations in the world. Willis points out that this is not simply a reiteration of environmental determinism. It is not a case of environments, or objects, producing the subject—a configuration that would adhere to neat subject/object causal distinctions. Instead, it reconsiders design as a "subject-decentered practice" (2006: ¶6) involved in a complex system of pre-existing relationships. In ontological designing, 'human' and 'world' are inseparable; design is positioned as the result of a complex interplay of subject and object, material and immaterial, or what Schön calls the "conversation with the situation" (1983: 23).

In short, there is a simultaneous engagement between our being designed, and our interpretations (our designing), and, our designs: "we design, that is to say, we

deliberate, plan and scheme in ways which prefigure our actions and makings—in turn we are designed by our designing and by that which we have designed (i.e. through our interactions with the structural and material specificities of our environments)" (Willis, 2006: ¶5). The things that surround us design us; we come into a pre-existing, prefigured world, and create (and are created) through an interpretive engagement with this world. Our activities are thus informed by our embodied 'thinking' (being). Fry describes this engagement with the world in terms of a continuous, multi-directional making:

> To comprehend habitus so formed and framed by the human coming into being via the practice of self- and world making, is to open ourselves to seeing design in two ways—as structuring both: 1) features of the world in which we dwell; and 2) many of our material and immaterial relations to this world. It is a practice, as designed and designing, as manifesting our active being-in-the-world, which dissolves the binary relation between being structured and structuring. In doing so, the totality of practice strives to regulate, replicate and modify our domain of habitation ('our' world) (2009: 24-25).

By framing design as ontological and thus embedded, rather than autonomous, we are not only able to reconsider the broad reach of the design object and its touch on (and place in) our everyday life, but we can also begin to recognise our designing as conditioned by our located (physical and conceptual) being. This alternative formulation suggests that design is embedded in, and constituted by, an engagement with the world that is located within historical, geographical and socio-cultural conditions. It disrupts the conventional notion of design as a more or less straightforward, teleological movement of designer-over-world, of active subject over passive subject.

The ethical implications of this line of thinking lie in the inherent sense of connectedness suggested by the blurring of subject/object distinctions, and the emphasis on active and ongoing relationships as central to our being. The vitality of connections within this relational model of design emphasises ethics as not simply the concern for just outcomes, but as something constantly lived and re-made in (and through) the very practice of designing and making.

Fashion and Ethics

Fashion's ubiquitous presence as a symbol of modern mass production and consumption sees it targeted—often with good reason—as an industry and social practice in need of a greater moral conscience. In existing fashion discourse, ethical critiques centre largely on industry workings, with a focus on the negative aspects of either the product lifecycle or the cultural systems of production and consumption. On a broader level, however, claims against fashion often rest upon a deeper philosophical bias against notions of change, consumption, artifice and appearance.

Within fashion discourse, commentaries focus almost exclusively on establishment of standards for enacting social or environmental responsibility, either through a re-designing of the clothing itself or the systems through which it is made and distributed. The design of 'better' products is posited, for example, through an awareness of the perils of material cultivation, waste and pollutants during production, or the by-products of use and disposal (see Brower et al., 2005, Fletcher, 2008, Hoffman, 2007, Hethorn and Ulasewicz, 2008); the transformation of fashion systems through discourses centring on issues such as third-world manufacture and exploitation, or planned obsolescence and excess (see Timmerman, 2009, Fletcher, 2008, Rosen, 2002, Hethorn and Ulasewicz, 2008). Ethics are thus discussed primarily in terms of a teleological end point—the emphasis is placed on the determination of 'right action' toward a just outcome. While I do not dispute the importance of right outcome in directing and vindicating ethical action, it must be noted that these discussions and negotiations of ethics in design take place *within* a culture of design as plan. To be clear, it is my argument that the privilege placed on the planned end outcome extends to the treatment of ethical discourse in fashion design; the individualist, teleologically-focused conception of fashion design not only circumscribes its range of possibilities, but is also transferred to its ethical discourse. Ethics, and ethical action is construed as something that is 'designed'—that is, as something that operates in the service of the plan. It overlooks the place of *ethos*—what

Tonkinwise refers to as "an essentially lived culture"—in ethical discussion (2004)[8].

It is not the case that all existing fashion discourse ignores notions of the lived culture of design (as well as the relationships or connections through which design functions). Many accounts of sustainable fashion practice note the connectedness of process as central to ethical discussion. For example, Fletcher's article "Clothes That Connect" calls for systems that emphasise and "advance relationships" between individuals, communities and environments (2007: 123). Nonetheless, these relationships are still largely discussed via a teleological paradigm. Positioned as outcomes fostered through planning or decisive action, ethical living is seen as something created through 'good' design. What I see in these commentaries—though not always explicitly identified—is a call for recognition of place and of location, of designers designing *in* the world. I therefore wish to build upon these commentaries by considering lived relationships as something through which design already functions. In contrast to viewing design and ethics as exclusively planned or intentioned to a correct and pre-determined outcome, I alternatively wish to emphasise design ethics as inherently lived, thus opening up design thinking to a different consideration of the inherent and ongoing engagement between design and ethics. To fully appreciate this, it is essential that we move beyond a simple inversion of the product/process dichotomy. Instead, we need to consider the complexities of our engagements with the world of design and of designed things. I will discuss this further in the coming chapters. But for now, to conclude this literature review and point the way ahead, I turn to a final—but crucial—commentary concerning fashion and ethics.

I have stated that when considering definitions of design practice we must acknowledge the broader cultural context through which design (and designers) function. This point is yet to be explained in detail, as it underpins the project and will therefore be expanded upon throughout this exegesis. To begin to illustrate this point however, I turn to Karen Hanson's exploration of fashion's reception

[8] I explore *ethos* further in Chapter Four.

within philosophical traditions. She claims that contemporary criticisms of fashion are often based on a prevailing philosophical bias against fashion. I quote her at length, as she outlines these criticisms and concerns succinctly:

> There may be moral, socio-economic and political concerns that can be ranged against the demands and effects of fashion. Some may object to the use of animals—their pelts in luxurious garments, for example, their oils and their living tissues in the formulations and the testing of cosmetics. The conditions of clothing production in an industrial age—the exploitation of workers, the potential for misallocation of limited agricultural resources, the prospects for economic colonialism—all can contribute to the sense that the beauty of fashion is a false front covering ugly human misery and economic abuse. Fashion can be seen to mark and help maintain class differences, to promote and enforce repellent social distinctions based on wealth, heritage and gender. New operations of imperialism may be discerned as the changing standards of Western fashion are disseminated globally, asserting a peculiar cultural hegemony as they abruptly displace traditional clothing, the indigenous styles presumably better suited to local climate and surely more expressive of native craft and culture (1990: 108).

In the face of these issues, it is perhaps all too easy to feel contempt for fashion's systems and products. Hanson continues, however, by pointing out the instability of accrediting the totality of these issues to the responsibility of fashion. She does this in order to assess the values that have marked philosophical assessments of fashion with a sense of distrust:

> But are considerations of these sorts really at the heart of the philosopher's hostility? The political and social issues connected with textile and apparel manufacturing and merchandising can, after all, be directly addressed, addressed *as* political and economic problems. That there is room for moral improvement in this area of commerce does not distinguish that fashion business from any other sphere of human activity, and neither does the fact that individuals, in their concern for fashionable adornment, can demonstrate a wide range of vices and responsibilities. The prospects for profligacy and unfairness are probably no wider in matters of clothing than they are in matters of food or shelter. Yet some philosophers seem to reserve a special disapprobation for fashionable dress, even while they enjoy a well-furnished and spacious dwelling, even while they relish a meal of veal and baby vegetables, kiwi soufflé and cognac to follow. What could account for this? In complex and relatively affluent societies, choice

> among alternative styles and types of dress become available. Choices are here not only possible but nearly inevitable. Why should *this* exercise of taste so often provoke disgust? (Ibid: 108)

Hanson suggests that philosophy's moral objections to fashion are founded on attitudes older and more culturally pervasive than simply a concern over its activities in the modern age. Philosophical traditions, she argues, harbour a persisting suspicion and uneasiness "on the matters of appearance and change" (Ibid: 110). Change—especially changing desire and appearance—is associated with instability, superficiality, novelty, and the absence of an essential truth. "Fashion" she writes, "knows it lives on change"; it functions through the appearance of impermanence and could be seen as flying in the face of philosophy's quest for "the real truth hidden behind the merely apparent" (Ibid: 109). In addition to this, fashion, as a phenomena "grounded on embodiment" (Ibid: 113), can be seen as falling on the wrong side of the enduring mind/body divide that has shaped so much of the Western philosophical tradition. The aforementioned compulsion within Western philosophy to "get beyond the surface of things, beyond the merely superficial" has tended to privilege the activities of the mind over body (Ibid). To find a pure truth of mind, the body, as a distraction, is to be transcended.

It is for these reasons that Hanson calls for caution when enlisting help from philosophy as a way of opening up critique of fashion. She argues that a criticism of fashion (and here she is speaking of feminist analyses in particular) should be wary of siding too quickly with certain philosophical attitudes, since what at first may seem an 'ally'—in critiques of the objectification of women under the male gaze, for example—may actually undermine feminine experience. Distrust of the body, she writes, does not bode well for feminist analysis, as "philosophy's drive to get past what it takes to be inessential has usually been linked with a denial or devaluation of what it has typically associated with woman" (Ibid: 113).

This question of the body is significant for this research, as so many readings of design's ontology place it exclusively as plan—an activity of the mind—but this need not mean that the classic mind/body division be reinscribed in favour of the body. Rather, it is to bring into consideration the division itself. Hanson claims

that the ethical dilemmas associated with fashion cannot simply be attributed to fashion, but must also be considered in the light of much broader social formations and traditions. The mind/body separation is one such formation whose critique underpins this study.

Chapter One conclusion

In this literature review, I have outlined the predominant understandings of design and fashion practice, and the bearing of these understandings on conceptions of ethics in fashion design. I have stated that design is read almost exclusively through a tripartite structure—the teleological model of design as 'plan'; the original design object; and the designer as an autonomous design authority. Furthermore, I have explored how these dominant models of design have overwhelmed understandings of fashion practice. In particular, they over-emphasise the authority and vision of the autonomous designer in modern fashion design. In addition, I have shown that the prevailing conceptions of fashion design ethics similarly follow these design tenets—thus, ethics is largely regarded as something to be 'designed'. In spite of these prevailing understandings, however, several theorists have taken up the project of re-formulating design practice as a 'lived' activity. I have outlined how these theorists posit an alternative conception of design (and designing) by conceptualising design as an embedded activity—a complex and ongoing interplay of pre-existing relationships.

My project is therefore an exploration and extension of this understanding of design as ontological. In the forthcoming chapters, I explore how recognition of the fundamental condition of our existence as embodied and embedded (in an ongoing engagement within a shared cultural environment) enables us to confront the limits of outcome-centric ethical discourse. In focusing exclusively on outcome, we overlook ethics as something lived, made and re-made. In the next chapter, I advance my argument by undertaking a contextual review of practices and practitioners who exemplify design as conditioned and embedded. I offer their work as alternatives to these predominant histories and conceptions of design practice by reading their approaches to practice as examples of activities openly interrogating location in design.

CHAPTER TWO

A contextual review of creative practice and practitioners

In this chapter I further establish a context for my creative work and critical exploration. First of all, I outline the creative practice of those groups and individuals whose approaches to material thinking have influenced my own thinking and making. I begin by outlining domestic dressmaking and re-making as intrinsic sites of contemporary fashion practice and as examples of activities that are transparently invested in site or location. I argue that home sewing, as an activity inextricably linked with the home, makes apparent one's physical location as well as one's location within quotidian histories, traditions and cultural ideologies. I contend that this more domestic conception illuminates the relationships and connections that are otherwise hidden in predominant models of fashion practice. Following this, I explore the fashion and design work of Maison Martin Margiela and Andrea Zittel, as examples of contemporary practitioners who, through their making, critically engage with the nuances of time and place.

Issues of Fashion, Design and Gender: making clothes in the home

In the Introduction and Chapter One, I briefly outlined fashion's marginal situation in the academy as well as the bias against fashionable dress in philosophical tradition. Whether scorned (and subsequently disregarded) as trivial or false artifice or otherwise maligned as ephemeral and unstable, fashion does not bear well within these contexts. This is especially true of Western philosophical traditions that have privileged enduring truths of pure mind, and relegated the body to an uncertain, mutable status. Hanson (1990) contends that fashion's existence as a phenomenon inextricably linked to embodiment has seen it largely ignored by academia. More specifically, she links this dismissal or distrust of fashion to broader issues associated with the female body. I would like to now turn to consider how these issues play out in histories of domestic fashion making, as the marginalisation of this aspect of fashion history within accounts of design has been linked by feminist scholars to the neglect of practices traditionally associated with the feminine.

Cheryl Buckley's article "Made in Patriarchy: Toward a Feminist Analysis of Women and Design" (1989) unpacks design history from a feminist perspective, focussing particularly on the consequences of gender bias in the written recording of the culture of design. She challenges the predominant grand narrative of design by suggesting that it presents an incomplete version of design history in that "women's interventions, both past and present, are consistently ignored" as a result of the patriarchal context in which women have designed and worked (1989: 251). Her argument is that the focus on professional structures and on individuals as the chief agents of history disparages design activities undertaken by women as well as devaluing activities that are primarily centred on domestic, non-professional craft production (Ibid: 251-252):

> Arguably, if a feminist approach to women's design production is to be articulated, it must cut across these exclusive definitions of design and craft to show that women used craft modes of production for specific reasons, not merely because they were biologically predisposed toward them. To exclude craft from design history is, in effect, to exclude from design history much of what women designed. For many women, craft modes of production were the only means of production available, because they had access neither to the factories of the new industrial system nor to the training offered by the new design schools. Indeed, craft allowed women an opportunity to express their creative and artistic skills outside of the male-dominated design profession. As a mode of production, it was easily adapted to the domestic setting and therefore compatible with traditional female roles (Ibid: 255).

Patriarchal ideologies tend to tie women to specific sets of skills by reinforcing the view that they are biologically predisposed to working in particular contexts, rather than recognising that a domestic setting has often been the only place afforded to women as a site for creative endeavours. A feminist approach to these design histories thus recognises much broader areas of design practice than the conventional, generalised understandings of design activity. It also questions the hierarchies that have hitherto governed the written recording of design.

For example, rather than heralding the advent of a completely original kind of thinking separate from the past, Buckley argues that modern design instead places pre-existing skills and traditions in a different context. Conventional design

histories, she contends, present a significant 're-definition' of these skills and activities when the maker is male, hence dressmaking becomes 'fashion design' when "appropriated by male designers who have assumed the persona of genius" (Ibid: 253). In addition, this gender-based division of labour is reinforced by a split in "the value of design" within the capitalist system (Ibid: 254). This split, Buckley argues, diminishes "designs produced by women in the domestic environment (their natural space within a patriarchy)" as objects simply for use, rather than for commercial exchange. Domestic design work is therefore relegated to a lesser value when compared to design for the marketplace (Ibid: 253-254).

This hierarchy of activities also extends into the placement of certain 'professional' disciplines within design, which values certain design activities over others. As we have already seen, fashion as a discipline has received little attention from design historians, and is often "trivialised because of its association with women" despite being a characteristic example of modernity in design (Ibid: 261). Evans and Thornton add another perspective to this argument by asserting that while fashion design presented women "opportunities of expression denied to them historically in the male-dominated world of fine art", notable female fashion designers are nonetheless positioned on the periphery compared to their male counterparts (1991: 52-53).

To define fashion only in terms of mass production omits a significant part of its scope in contemporary Western culture. In particular, it overlooks design practice undertaken in non-professional sites of production—sites that have co-existed with professional practice but rarely receive attention within surveys of fashion design history. The presumptions governing the canon of Western fashion design—most significantly the divorce between the professional and private spheres of clothing production—generally overlook design practices undertaken in non-professional sites of production. Part of the complexity lies in the accommodation of such diverse practices within generalised understandings of design. Its production encompasses a wide range of activities, nuanced by specificities in consumption, making neat demarcations difficult to pin down. From the replication of high-end apparel to the making of garments from purchase

or online sharing of home-made patterns to DIY subcultural style, it is actually a broad and diverse area of practice. More significant, however, is its existence as a practice inextricably linked with the home. In "On the Margins: Theorizing the History and Significance of Making and Designing Clothes at Home" (1998) Buckley writes:

> … the activities of the home dress-maker and the products which resulted do not correspond neatly to 'typical' design methods or archetypal objects. Also the designer's role is much more negotiated and divergent than the usual 'model', and the value and significance of the designs cannot be assessed using criteria which stress innovation, commercial success or viability, and uniqueness. Instead one could argue that dress and dress-making are cultural sites where identity, place and memory figure prominently (160).

Design in the home happens amid the 'everyday' and, as such, jars with the predominant notion of design as the conception of the original object. It also disrupts design as that which is produced by way of a teleologically distinct plan by the autonomous designer. It does this through its intrinsic link with a sense of location; it is a making where the nuances of *habitus* are at the fore—constraints of place, time, skill base, and availability of tools and materials bear upon the work and highlight the embedded and conditioned nature of design activity. The home sewer makes things by "finding space on the kitchen table, and squeezing sewing between other domestic responsibilities" (Buckley, 1998: 157). Similarly, Irene Brin's article "Fanno loro la vera moda" ("They Make the Real Fashion") of 1949 evokes an embedded activity that is otherwise overshadowed by the more illustrious accounts of professional design: "Dressmakers sew in the bedroom, take measurements in the dining room, use movie stars as their models. Their charges are very modest, and so their glory is more definitive than that of Fath or Dior" (in Caratozzolo, 2006: 56). Home sewing emphasises the materiality of design, and design as an embodied activity. When grounded within the circumstances of site and embodiment, we begin to acknowledge the pre-existing situations through which design functions, and this in turn problematises the assumption that design is an original creation or that which is under the unmitigated control of the sovereign designer.

The historical process that saw the professional male practitioner assume dressmaking under the banner of design meant that design lost these connotations. The 'everyday' was resisted, seen to undermine the authority and skill of professional practice. Of course, dressmaking practice itself did not disappear. The term 'dressmaker' continues to connote one who is able to create a garment in its entirety. This prevailing definition leaves dressmaking as an activity that encompasses and integrates the entire material and immaterial aspects of a garment's creation. This is why limiting histories of design to only commercial sites of production risks losing knowledge of a large section of design activity. Indeed, widening the focus to include non-professional design practices does not automatically deny the particular character of design in professional spheres. Rather, it presents an opportunity to explore a long history and co-existence of complementary activities and practices, which have shaped so much of modern design culture (Pacey, 1992: 217).

Re-made things

Acknowledging design in the home reveals that modern fashion comprises a complex mix of contributions on a vast range of fronts. Home copies of couture garments may not fit into models of design that privilege originality, but they nonetheless contribute to patterns of consumption that define Simmel's enduring account of fashion consumption as social organisation—of simultaneously marking belonging and difference (1901). Similarly, youth sub cultural style—from which high fashion has often taken its cues—often exists outside of a commercial framework, but is nonetheless a demarcation of self, or of a sub-group, within broader social alignments.

These complications of design history are significant for my own work because so much of my making is realised in a domestic setting. In addition to this, much of what I do is the result of re-making or re-purposing existing garments and objects—an activity with a long tradition in the home. My design and dressmaking practice (which I explore in detail in Chapter Three) often utilises salvaged objects and second-hand clothing, and searching for these materials is in itself a much-enjoyed pastime. I make for friends, family and myself. I often gift the work to others to continue the life of what I have taken and re-purposed. The

sense of 'time' in design is also experienced in reverse. By this I mean that I am often moved to collect an item not just through a sense of expectation for its future, but often by feelings of gratitude for the 'already made' thing—particularly those which bear modifications made by previous owners. Sometimes adjustments are minor—shortened hems, nipped-in waists. Other times, the alterations are substantial, or a piece is entirely hand-made. Besides being captivated by the materiality of these (re)made things, I am moved by the located sense of authority with which these garments have been adapted to suit individual tastes, bodies and lifestyles. They are indications of an ongoing design—of improvised objects changing through time, place and usage. Understood through this lens, home dressmaking and the re-made thing in particular speak of a world of fashionable clothing on the periphery of conventional understandings of design—one grounded in the 'everyday' circumstances of domestic production. Besides complicating conceptions of what constitutes 'the new' through a complex interplay between production and consumption, re-made things point toward larger stories of fashion-making—ongoing stories of cultural production bound up in the nuances of "identity, place and memory" (Buckley, 1998: 160).

My practice thus acknowledges, revives and continues traditions of domestic dressmaking and re-making. The creative transformation of garments—a significant part of domestic design production and consumption—is a practice as old as clothing itself (see Collier Frick, 2005, Palmer and Clark, 2005). Until the advent of the modern designer and mass mechanical production, fashionable dress was a pursuit of the wealthy, created by dressmakers and tailors who worked under guild regulations, class-specific sartorial custom, and the instruction of their elite clientele. The majority of the population, unable to afford new garments, dressed in hand-me-downs, or domestically produced clothing re-made from second-hand items found at rag markets (see Manlow, 2007, Wollen, 2003). In more recent history, wartime utility schemes positioned resourcefulness as a national imperative through the introduction of 'make do and mend' initiatives, emphasising a 'waste not, want not' approach to production and consumption. Although 'waste not, want not' is perhaps less a guiding mandate now, the ubiquity of second-hand clothing stores and the appeal of vintage apparel is a

testament to the continued long life of garments in a contemporary context. Economic and material thriftiness, however, is not always the prime motivation for the re-purposing of clothing. The consumption of used clothing has also characterised certain youth sub cultural movements—1970s punk and 1980s new romantic movements being just two examples of a clothing aesthetic based on the assemblage and transformation of objects and clothing on a domestic front.

More recently, the re-interpretation of existing garments has also emerged in the work of practitioners working toward commercial ends. The 1990s, in particular, saw recycled fashion become a strategic design imperative for a variety of artists and designers interested in referencing clothing's connectedness within larger cultural systems. In French fashion, Maison Martin Margiela, XULY.Bët and Andrea Crews have consistently taken their cues from the re-formation of existing garments to create things anew while simultaneously referencing histories and movements through time (Gill 2007; Rovine 2005). Similarly, the work of Jessica Ogden deals with the transformation of discarded garments and fabrics already "patterned with biography" from their previous manifestations (Evans, 2000: 104). Lucy Orta's re-made fashion explores the embeddedness of makers and consumers, their connections to social realities and the interplay between public and private living spaces (Bourriaud and Orta, 2003). In addition, recent trends toward environmentally conscious living have also encouraged a wider appreciation of resourcefulness as well as re-use amid concerns for environmental sustainability and the accumulation of waste. Internet-based communities of amateur sewers—where approaches to making are openly shared—promote the DIY approach to fashion through re-making (or 'up-cycling') through weblogs (see outsapop.com), online communities (like threadbanger.com) and trading sites (etsy.com). These diverse practices—both professional and amateur—point to a broad and ongoing cultural fascination with notions of the re-made.

Maison Martin Margiela and Andrea Zittel

As I have argued the genius-designer paradigm is a long-held image that underpins understandings of contemporary fashion and fashion practice. Indeed, branding and label names, which depend on mystique as aspiration for consumers, are a fundamental signifier of commercial fashion. As with all other disciplinary

fields, fashion has developed as a system with particular conventions and hierarchies. As Nancy Troy puts it, all design practices depend upon "socially constituted – even if buried and invisible – discourses of authorship, display, and reception" (Troy, 2003). In seeking to establish a context for my practice I have examined the work of contemporary designers or artists who work within these conventions, whilst simultaneously interrogating the larger systems that shape the production and reception of their work. These critically reflexive practitioners offer valuable insights for my research and practice because they probe the parameters and limits of the professional context of design—for instance, they work in the grey areas in-between expectations and intentions of outcomes, and they explore flexibilities of process and its subjective investments.

Maison Martin Margiela, a design collective based in Paris, is perhaps the most significant example of a contemporary fashion label that has consistently engaged with the long life and circulation of clothing through the practice of re-making. Although launched by individuals—Belgians Martin Margiela and Jenny Meirens—in 1988, the label is the result of a design collective who position collaborative process at the centre of their work. While still working within conventions of producing collections twice yearly (from a Paris base), they do not strictly conform to the expectations of seasonal 'new beginnings'. Their work is allowed to unfold differently—with collections appearing as snapshots marking moments in practice rather than thematic shifts and 'new' work (see Martin).

In positioning themselves as a collective (albeit under a founding individual's name), the work is presented as a result of collaboration between many, rather than the vision of one individual. The group thus eschews the fashion design tradition that prioritises the image of the individual genius-designer. The group's namesake and design team are both famously reclusive, speaking only by faxed interviews or through their own publications (see Maison Martin Margiela, 1999), presumably to avoid a media fixation on an individual design figure. Although it may be asserted that their secrecy helps to mythologise their practice and perpetuate the designer mystique in a new guise, I would argue that this seems inconsistent with the transparency with which they produce and discuss the making of the garments.

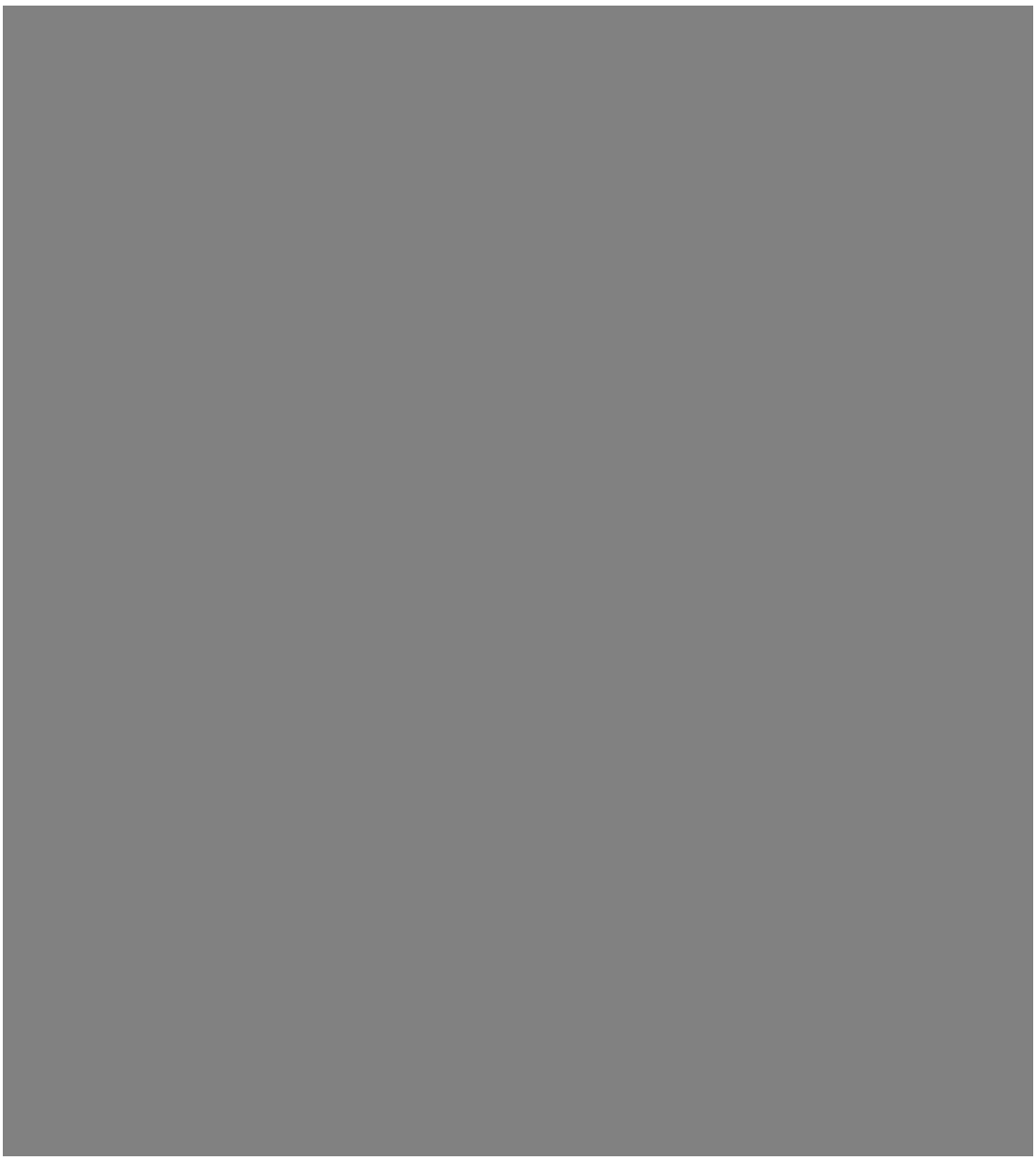

Figure 1. *Spring/Summer 2006*, Maison Martin Margiela

Their "artisanal" line, produced through the re-formation of existing garments, references clothing histories as movements through time (Gill, 2007). In regard to this artisanal line, Maison Margiela comments:

> This quest to transform garments is born from a wish to treat the strictures of the structure of a particular garment as a design challenge. Often, more than one garment is combined to produce a new design so one consideration is that the initial garments are used as a raw material of which often only small elements of their original structure serve in shaping the new. Albeit that the initial impetus is one of design and not one of recycling, the result allows that these elements are given a second lease of life (quoted in Martin).

The aesthetic of the end object is closely tied to process that bore it, and is likewise communicated by the interconnected design thinking from one collection to the next. Garments from previous collections are often re-visited in retrospectives, or re-presented in new ways—"played with…using the techniques of a later season" (Frankel, 2001: 35). The work thus centres on design and fashion making as an embedded repositioning of existing materials, structures and conventions; the hold of 'the plan' is loosened as the teleology of the design process is made less straightforward and more indistinct.

Many descriptions of Maison Margiela's artisinal work, however, conclude all too quickly that the work presents a destructive anti-fashion statement, or "a dark and deathly side to capitalist modernity" (Evans, 2003: 37). This assumption of an anti-fashion stance is challenged by Gill, who posits that erroneous readings of Derrida's philosophical deconstruction as a form of destructive anarchy have carried into fashion through a so-called 'grunge chic', which is often simply construed as a "negative critique of the fashion system" (2007: 495). Gill seeks to rectify these confusions by asserting that Derrida's deconstruction constitutes an analysis of established hierarchies of meaning by uncovering their inherent instabilities as binary oppositions. In this way, Maison Margiela's work is construed not so much as working in opposition to the Western fashion system, but as a form of making which is *bidirectional*—created through a simultaneous "making and undoing" of the structures through which clothes are formed (Ibid: 491). Rather than simply destructive, Maison Margiela's work points to the limits

of viewing fashion as ‘innovation’ or the creation of the ‘original’ or ‘new’. Instead they highlight its complexities by “stitching a dialogue with the past into its future” as well as revealing the dependence of the present on the “material and immaterial existences” of what has gone before (Ibid: 494).

Figure 2. *Spring/Summer 2006,* Maison Martin Margiela

Alison Gill regards Maison Margiela’s work as pointing to the shortfalls/risks/ of viewing fashion simply as ‘innovation’, as does Barbara Vinken, who posits the literal presence of time in Maison Margiela’s clothing as a self-reflexive exposure of the temporal and historical nature of both the fashion item and the fashion system (2005). Fashion’s fixation on the future-present (the ‘new’ and the ‘now’) make it a noteworthy platform for this kind of questioning. Vinken argues that Maison Margiela’s clothing emphasises the presence of “indexical signs” pertaining to time and making (Ibid: 140). She sees evidence of wear and tear as

pointing toward the traces of a garment's past life—with the exposure of seams and fastenings or unfinished aspects being suggestive of the "slow labour" of making, a "turning outwards of time" (Ibid: 140-142). The materiality of the clothes is testament to life and death, of disfiguration and refiguration (Ibid: 150). Maison Margiela's revisiting of past garments (both their own, and those of other practitioners) points to an experience of clothing that is rooted in everyday life or 'habitus.' Rather than seeking to transcend the past by projecting into the future with 'the new', the work resides as a point for "a reflection on its place in the history of fashion" (Gill, 2007: 505).

The work of American artist, Andrea Zittel, also explores 'habitus' through design by responding to the systems of living that shape our surroundings, perceptions and interactions with the world. Through analysing the various constraints and freedoms that bear upon her own lived experience, Zittel comments on the creation of structures and systems as a way of manifesting "security, stability and belonging" (quoted in Basilico, 2001). Freedom, she asserts, can only be defined against constraints. She even asserts that it is perhaps undesirable in an absolute sense because it posits an individualism that is separated entirely from the social strictures that define our being (Ibid). It is only within the parameters and constraints of the conventions and history of design practice that we are able to conceive of its possibilities and hence of individual autonomy. Design therefore only ever happens through constraints and pre-existing situations, as designers are never able to separate themselves entirely from these constraints and situations. Rules and structures, therefore, are construed as "creative gestures and not purely limiting forces" (quoted in McCollum, 2002).

Zittel communicates the complexities of the freedom and constraint dualism through installation and design works. These organised spaces and objects are modelled on "a corresponding set of beliefs, systems or values" made for specific situations or users (McCollum, 2002). She sees design as exposing how "people's basic assumptions about the world works", particularly with regard to their body and space relations (quoted in Basilico, 2001). The furniture, vehicles and capsule-like rooms she designs can thus be customised by the user to suit their individual ends—albeit within the aesthetic and functional limitations set by the

work designed by Zittel. Of this dichotomy, she comments: “I am always looking for the grey area between freedom (which can sometimes feel too open-ended and vast) and security (which may easily turn into confinement)” (quoted in Vischer, 1997).

This exploration of constraints and bodily space has extended into an exploration of the wearing and physical making of garments. In “A Brief History of A-Z Uniforms” (2004), Zittel outlines the various approaches she has taken in clothing construction. Initiated by a perceived confinement within the social etiquette that insists on a daily changing of clothing style, she embarked on a project in 1991 where a single dress was conceived for every six-month block. Zittel would wear the ‘uniform’ every day during the six-month period, eschewing completely the constraint of choosing a ‘new’ outfit each day. The design of the garments, too, became an opportunity to explore guidelines, which would, paradoxically, free the designer from choice through a restriction of material and process. The *A-Z Personal Panel* garments were produced from rectangles of fabric torn straight from the bolt and secured on the body with pins. These works were followed by pieces that reduced the making even further:

> One idiom behind the A-Z Personal Panels is that they are a first hand evolution of their former material. Eventually, I realized that this dictate could be even more directly achieved by making clothing out of a single strand, instead of woven fibers. The resulting "Single Strand Garments" were crocheted one per quarterly season. I liked crochet because it required the least number of implements possible in the construction of the garment- a single crochet hook. (I would break the yarn rather than cutting it with scissors) It was also perfect because it meant that I could create a dress anywhere, anytime (Ibid, 2004).

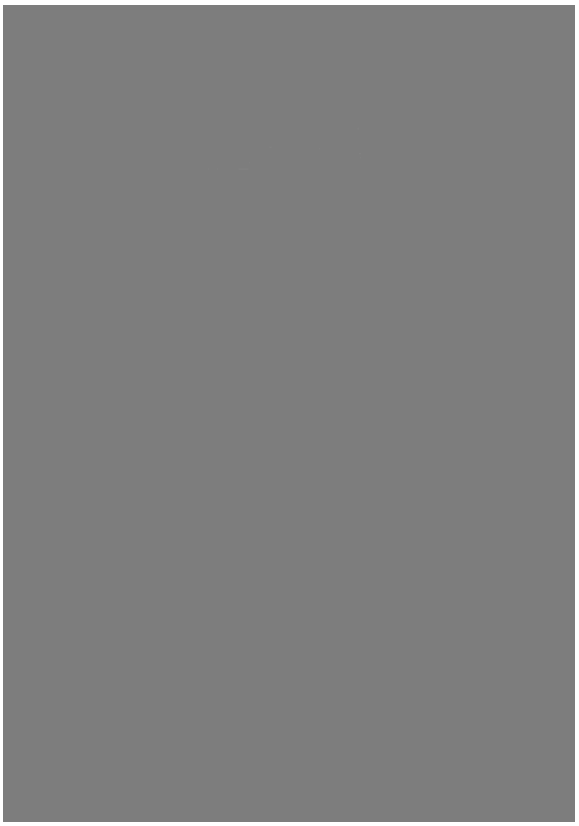

Figure 3. *A-Z Fiber Form: Black, Grey and White Dress*, Andrea Zittel (2002)

Zittel soon removed the crochet hook altogether, replacing it with a self-devised technique of knitting with her fingers alone—a process which required much time, patience and a careful controlling of yarn tension. Recent garments reduce material and construction further, through working with fibre in its most basic form; by felting directly onto the dress form with her hands, Zittel creates pieces without seams, which need to be cut from the dummy at completion. The garments are fastened on the body with pins.

By playing with the freedoms and constraints of habitus, Zittel's making is significant as a practice that makes transparent the constituent conditions of its making. While perhaps existing as a hybrid of conventional art and design practice, her practice represents a form of dressmaking that functions outside of the conventional commercial fashion system. Besides drawing attention to the material conditions of making, I therefore read her work as a platform for the questioning of traditions that draw distinctions between 'make' or 'locate' in

fields of creative practice. I interpret her hybrid practice as drawing attention to the immaterial or conceptual locations/dwellings that designate the fields of art and design.

Material Things

Both Maison Margiela's and Zittel's work highlight a curious tension between product and practice. They conjoin a conceptual and material approach, overturning an aesthetic steeped in the mystic of end object in order to ground the actual process in the circumstances that bore it. By approaching design as a form of making, the materiality of practice (and the designer's place in the world) is reinscribed as an inescapable condition of design. This complicates simplistic notions of design as plan, the autonomous designer, and the original design object. Neat distinctions between the internal thinking of the designer and the passive external world are disrupted, so too is the teleology of design as a one-way movement of designer-over-world. The maker's agency is embedded and engaged with (and within) a multitude of both material and immaterial systems, with the materiality of the world intrinsic to the way the design plays out.

The question of how a material work can remind us of these ongoing, embodied lived experiences is an intriguing one. Our apprehension of the activity of things or the extent to which they can 'speak' to us of their own materiality is similarly explored by Bill Brown's critical delineation. A 'thing', according to his thinking, is precisely that which calls attention to itself through a breaking of our habitual subject-object oppositions—oppositions which so often lead us toward an anthropocentric 'taking for granted' of the world around us. In his essay, "Thing Theory" (2001), Brown surveys the ambiguity of things as a tension between our tendencies toward a subjective understanding of them as objects—things for our use—and the material 'thingness' of things in their own right. Our attitudes toward the material qualities of the world largely assume that objects occupy a physical and conceptual space opposite our place as subjects. Objects are therefore primarily regarded as either an object for physical use, or else as a vehicle to look through to see a part of ourselves (our history or culture, for example). We define objects in relation to ourselves—they become meaningful only through our interpretations of them (Brown, 2001: 3-4). Viewed this way,

everything is presumed to start with the subject, hence our predominant anthropocentric conception. Placing an emphasis on things, on the other hand, suggests a shift away from subject-centric conception of the material world as essentially passive. We become aware of things through a disruption of this subject-object relationship, by their highlighting the relationship itself:

> We begin to confront the thingness of objects when they stop working for us: when the drill breaks, when the car stalls, when the windows get filthy, when their flow within the circuits of production and distribution, consumption and exhibition, has been arrested, however momentarily. The story of objects asserting themselves as things, then, is the story of a changed relation to the human subject and thus the story of how the thing really names less an object than a particular subject-object relation (Brown, 2001: 4)

Brown designates things as objects that have detached from the subject-object relation. They function instead as an active presence; they draw attention to themselves as something more than an object made by us, for our use. Therein lies the ambiguity of things—when we see objects as things, not only does our use and dependence on them become visible, but we sense an indeterminate material 'otherness' to their existence. It is this sense of presence—a thing pointing to itself as a thing—that jars our thinking, our taking of an object for granted. Objects become things when our 'seeing through them' is disrupted and we are forced to confront them as something other than simply an instrument for our will.

Brown points toward a critique of how we relate to design objects by problematising the unthinking centrality of the human subject in conceptions of the material world. He goes on to articulate the effect that an apprehension of thingness might have on our material living. Just as Willis and Fry's ontological design (based on Heidegger's critique of Western metaphysics) re-configures design as a circularity of design presences—where objects and situations, as well as people, design—Brown's thing theory asserts the potential agency of the designed object. It shows that things do exist separate from our intentions, and have an intrinsic role in shaping how we exist in the world. Brown's conceptualisation of the thing is key to an understanding of design that seeks to evade the object-process-agency hierarchies described by Fry. Rather than

settling on either the outcome, process or design agent as the primary instigating force in design thinking, the focus on things highlights instead the materiality of our designing and disrupts our assumptions of a passive material world.

Things bring to the fore our dealings with the world, allowing for reflection on the processes through which we make and are made; they call attention to the attitudes through which we comprehend our living and confront us with the material existence of our values and being. I discuss this point in detail in Chapter Four, where I show how the 'made' appearance of works like Maison Margiela's and Zittel's can serve as an indication (and reminder) of our immersion, connection, and indebtedness to the conditions in which we live. Furthermore, I will argue that traces of making inflects our understanding of the material object as an active thing that changes in time and place. As a prelude to a discussion of my own work, however, I would like to state that it is this confrontation with the value of material existence that makes an emphasis on re-made things compelling—particularly the domestically produced re-made thing. It has the benefit of pointing directly to an ontology founded in an unabashed belonging to (and contingence on) the everyday lived and located circumstances of their making.

Chapter Two conclusion

In this chapter, I have sketched a context for my work by outlining practices, practitioners and works that highlight my own creative interests and research concerns. To reiterate, these practitioners are significant as groups and individuals that scrutinise process and the parameters and contexts of contemporary art and design practice. I situate my own practice alongside these examples to the extent that my work continues traditions of domestic dressmaking, in particular the re-making of garments. Most importantly, it is influenced by contemporary practices that seek to question our understandings of practice and our relations to the material world.

I have explored domestic dressmaking and the re-making of garments as models for a different understanding of design as ontological, meaning an activity embedded in pre-existing historical, geographical and socio-cultural conditions

and relationships. In addition, I have shown how dressmaking—in which the shaping of the work is a product of the integrated activity of embodied thinking—disrupts the neat separation of design (mind) and making (body) that underpins conventional conceptions of design. An analysis of the work of Maison Martin Margiela and Andrea Zittel revealed two exemplars of practice, which similarly explore notions of materially embedded, negotiated design. These practitioners reinscribe the materiality of practice and the practitioner's place in the world of design by regarding making as a process embedded in the nuances of time and place. Next I explored this notion of materiality through Bill Brown's "Thing Theory", which worked to explain how 'things' can disrupt our habitual relations with the world and work to remind us of our embedded being.

In the next chapter, I present my own take on these critical interpretations, by describing the creative work I undertook during my candidature—work that is marked by a similar interest in the visual referencing of process and place. This foreshadows my exploration of *ethos* as integral to ethics, where I show how awareness of location—that is, awareness of design and the designer as embodied and embedded—is vital to conceptions of design ethics in that it moves toward a more rigorous appraisal of one's place (and responsibilities) in a cultural situation.

CHAPTER THREE
Creative practice

This section outlines the practical work undertaken during my candidature. Its positioning as a third chapter, however, is not a result of my working through the study in distinct or chronologically separate phases. As mentioned in the methodology, the language and activity of theory and practice were always integrated, throughout the study. It was thus not a simple case of the creative practice being instrumental to the theory, nor the other way around, but something much more complicated—a complex, back and forth interaction between the two. I have tried to keep the narrative of the creative practice sensitive to (and respectful of) the often chaotic and emergent nature of creative research, although it must be acknowledged that what I present here is a much neater thread teased out in retrospect.

What follows is my reading of the creative practice and its development during the course of my candidature. I begin by outlining the general development of the work produced during the course of the study, then follow with an exploration of, and reflection on, the final creative outputs produced for examination. A timeline listing the activities undertaken during the PhD can be found in Appendix A. In Chapter Four, I further examine the work, but in the context of expounding an understanding of *ethos* in regard to design. In the process, I also return to the conceptual and theoretical orientations described in Chapters One and Two.

2007

The study began in 2007 following the completion (in 2006) of my honours project. As I stated in the Introduction to this exegesis, the honours year signalled a significant shift in my practice. It was during this time that I began to recognise and respect my attachment to the materiality of making. It also marked a burgeoning interest in the nuances of design process and in general discussions around design as creative practice. Unsatisfied with staid and predictable pathways of design, I sought a way toward an experientially interesting—and creatively sustaining design process. At first, my creative and research practice

was informed largely by an interest in chance, *bricolage* and improvisation. As a consequence, my design process was typified by an aversion to sketching and planning a decisive end product.

Figure 4. *Making Plans 01*, Digital print and mixed media on paper, 80cm x 118cm (2007)

In June 2007 I participated in a group show at the Noosa Regional Gallery. This exhibition was a collaborative venture with my peers from the honours year. Titled, *Slow Fashion*, it was a display of garments and photographs from the original *Slow Fashion* honours graduate show of 2006. In addition to this exhibition, however, I had the opportunity to use an additional gallery space to display a separate body of work called *Making Plans.* These mixed media works—10 in total—were produced in the months following the completion of the

honours project, and at the beginning of the PhD study. Still intrigued by re-making and improvisation in the creative process, I set out by re-working a set of digital prints produced during the honours year. I cut, collaged and painted over the surfaces, taking my cues from the existing printed patterns and shapes, sometimes sanding my new marks back when they overwhelmed the existing composition. These were cautious, clumsy works, produced during a time of hesitancy and transition. However uncomfortable for me to behold now, they are significant indicators of a concerted grappling with my experience and understanding of practice.

The clothing produced in early 2007 also followed on directly from the honours year. It was based on re-working garments, patterns and shapes used during 2006. By this, I mean literally unpicking and reconfiguring old toiles (draft garments), or revisiting and reworking existing patterns. Again, I worked like a *bricoleur*— working with whatever was on hand, or that I could find in the studio. During this time, I fell into the practice of creating works in series or, what I would call, 'continuums of design' forged through repetition and variation. I reworked patterns and reassembled garment shapes over and over again, altering form slightly from piece to piece, playing with shapes directly on the dressmaker's dummy with fabric leftover from the honours project. I sought an understanding of design as perpetually 'in progress.' For example, in one 'series' I took a waistcoat pattern that I had developed in 2006, and pushed its size and shape through different manifestations (see Figure 5). The 'looseness' of the garment's fit on the body, and ambiguous appearance, often meant that it could be worn in several different ways.

This ambiguity was the key to a flexible process where the outcome was not managed toward a single, decisive end. I enjoyed the very literal play with memory, forgetting, and the circumstances of my location. This interest in improvisation and articulating the constraints of my immediate surroundings was developed by working with second-hand garments. I pulled them apart, either re-forming them in a different way with the original fabric, or using the unpicked fabric shapes for use as patterns for reproduction in a new material. Fabric shapes were draped straight onto the tailor's dummy, or altered using metric (flat)

pattern-making techniques, or even worked using a combination of both processes. In this time-honoured process of re-making, the work developed through handling material. Through trial and error previously unimaginable design directions emerged and were tested all at once. As I stated in Chapter Two, this process represents a common approach within the long history of re-making second-hand garments in the home. It brings into sharp focus the problematic design conventions that hold a neat distinction between design as plan (and as a product of the mind) and making or production (of the body). The practice of *dressmaking*—making an entire garment by thinking through material on the dress-form—solidified an approach and a conceptual orientation for the project's exploration of design.

This approach also solidified a particular aesthetic in my work. The exploratory process of applying 'found' shapes to the body generally results in loose, soft and draped clothing. This is because draping existing shapes tends to result in a more relaxed, less rigidly structured fit.[9] Rather than following the body as a starting point for the garment and making the pattern to fit (what we know as tailoring), draping allows for the material itself—the handle, shape and weight of the fabric—to guide part of the making. In this way, the object is bound closely to the processes that formed it. When making in this way, it is therefore possible to keep traces of the garment's previous iteration visible in the newer iteration. I seek to make things that look like made things.

Harkening back to Brown's "Thing Theory", I see this aesthetic as having the potential to 'say' something about its making. My concept of beauty is bound to making—creating garments that draw attention to making—which allows for a degree of sensitivity toward the 'thingness' of the material. I seek a sensibility in

[9] This loose, draped aesthetic, besides being championed by Maison Margiela, is probably best recognised as a characteristic of contemporary Japanese fashion design. Yohji Yamamoto and Comme des Garcons are two particularly influential examples of contemporary labels that consistently create this type of clothing. It must be noted, however, that this kind of process/aesthetic can also be traced to Madeleine Vionnet (1877-1975). Vionnet is significant as an early figure who created garments by draping geometric shapes onto the dress-form, rather than by tailoring the fabric to closely follow the body's shape.

which my habitual relation with the material object is disrupted, and I am then forced to confront the garment as a thing in its own right, a thing that guides my actions as much as I guide it. I chase the awareness of my place in the world as embedded among things.

Figure 5. *Examples of variations on a basic shape – working in series* (2007)

Because it was difficult to trace beginnings or track ideas, this process extended and intensified a sense of play that I had begun in the honours project. I revelled in what felt like joyous and unchecked exploration. Whereas previously I had been careful to take stock of process by way of meticulous record keeping (photographing stages of design development, keeping ordered pattern libraries and notes for assembly, or detailed visual journals), at this point I let go of the idea of producing the garments for commercial production. Similarly, my journal keeping became less a space for jotting down ideas for further directions, and more an opportunity for abstract play.

I did not abandon documentation entirely, however. Towards the end of 2007 I collaborated with a photographer (and friend), Cameron Attree, on a shoot of the honours garments. In an effort to establish a low-tech casual context I chose to shoot in my home, with the garments modelled by another friend, Lauren. We approached the session with a spirit of exploration and experimentation—shooting in my home in complete darkness with the aid of torchlight. It was an invaluable experience in that it piqued my interest in both photography and the home as a space for both fashion making and its documentation—interests that I would return to later in the candidature.

Figure 6. *I love Yohji dress, re-worked skirt, circle skirt*, Photograph by Cameron Attree (2007)

2008

The abstract collage and mixed media work that I had been continuing to produce in my visual journal led to a body of work that was exhibited in the H-Block Gallery, QUT, in early 2008. Titled, *Making Response,* the exhibition consisted of six large works on calico, created through collage and the re-working of existing past works. The images started as journal pieces; A4 sized collages of

magazine and newspaper clippings worked upon with various media (paint pens, texta pens and pencil). These images, nine in total, were scanned and printed onto a long length of calico. Five were printed first, and the remaining four over-printed onto these first five. Following my preference for random and chance procedures, I allowed a printing technician to chose the order in which the layers were printed. The resulting length was then cut into 90cm segments (following the width of the calico length), meaning that little control was exerted over the composition of the prints in their final square format. These were then worked upon with various materials, included stencilling with shapes that I cut from masking tape and placed onto the surface while blind-folded.

Figure 7. *Making Response 1,* Digital print and mixed media on calico, 90cm x 90cm (2007-8)

The artist statement from this exhibition outlines my thinking at this time:

> The *Making Response* works explore process as a negotiation between intention and bodily experience. Developed through found-object collage, staged chance procedures, and long periods of focused gestural action, these works bring bodily engagement to the fore and question notions of control and the autonomous

> maker. They form part of a larger project that investigates the tension between process and product within improvised making practices (Dunlop, 2008b).

I find this statement significant in retrospect. It marks a position that I began to puzzle over, and re-evaluate. Through surrendering control, or distancing myself through chance play, I was attempting to critique the design paradigm in which I had been trained. This critique entailed its corresponding notions of design as plan, its investments in the autonomous designer and the original design object. My approach to these issues became problematic, however, as it seemed to maintain the designer/world, mind/body separations that I was seeking to interrogate. To give an example, I sought by deploying chance to advance an approach that removed or distanced the designer—or, at least, disrupted the "designerly" intention—from the conceptualisation of an entirely pre-ordained activity. This was achieved by incorporating systems 'external' to the designer. The idea of removing the designer to allow for an engagement with the everyday, however, was only useful to a point—that is, to underscore the prevailing understanding of design in which I had been trained. To follow this line of thinking completely would still mean reinforcing the designer as the primary agent and perpetuate the separation between the internal world of the designer and the external world of the everyday. It was little more than an inversion of the mind/body and designer/world dichotomies. Manoeuvring within the confines of this design paradigm remained dissatisfying and limiting. As a consequence, I came to regard this exhibition—and my confirmation seminar in June 2008—as a turning point in the PhD study. Unable to neatly pin down or name my uncertainty, I resolved to concentrate on my creative practice and undertook an intensive making period for the remainder of the year.

I also produced some sculptural work during the making of *Making Response*, from one of the printed calico squares that 'didn't make the cut'. I liked the crisp surface of the calico after applying layers of lacquer, and began cutting into the surface to make flower shapes. The lacquer sealed the calico, but also made it surprisingly malleable—I was able to fold the fabric over itself to create 3D forms quite easily. I began a production line and churned out a hundred calico flowers,

then set out over several nights to hammer them to telephone poles in the streets surrounding my home. I've come to call these works (and the night-time escapades) as 'flower bombing.'

Figure 8. *Flower Bombin' the 'burbs* (2008)

Shortly after the H-Block exhibition, I was invited to participate in *How You Make It* curated by Kate Rhodes from Craft Victoria. The show featured the work of fashion practitioners who explore artisanal production, and construction techniques as a starting point for design. The exhibition was significant in that it explored design practice as an engagement with the material—my inclusion in the show validated the importance and currency of my work (and the research) as part of an emerging critical perspective within the broader context of contemporary Australian cultural production. This travelling exhibition was launched at Craft Victoria, Melbourne, and moved to various regional galleries throughout Australia over 2008 and 2009. The garments I contributed to the show included some work from the honours year, as well as a new piece re-made from a second-hand dressing gown and chemise.[10]

[10] I would later re-work this piece as part of the final body of work, *wearer/maker/wearer*.

Figure 9a. *dressing gown/chemise dress* and **b**. installation view, *How You Make It* (2007-8)

As mentioned earlier, I am intensely interested in re-making as a process. At this time, I increasingly utilised salvaged objects and second-hand clothing in my practice. Often the clothes that I chose to unpick and re-make would reveal traces of prior ownership. Often the body that had worn the garment had left its imprint in some way, such as stains and signs of wear and tear. Moreover, to my fascination the garments would reveal a history of their own (imperfect) making: mis-matched thread of clumsy alterations, pattern lines drawn on with ball-point pens, untidy hand stitching and impatient, imperfect cutting! These traces suggested something of bodies, geographies and histories, as well as the history and practice of dressmaking. In turn, it also suggested that dressmaking was intimately connected to design, but not necessarily bound to its strictures. The intimacy of clothing as objects made for, and used, closest to the body was visible in these worn things. The 'everydayness' of their construction spoke of domestic making as a site of creative production that was unabashedly invested in the contingencies of embodied location.

This emphasis on embodiment, and on garments with changing histories, resonated strongly with my creative inclinations toward re-making. Also important was the notion of shared and circulated clothes; of the second-hand and the re-made as a form of social engagement. As a consequence, the PhD inquiry increasingly focused on making clothing both for myself and for people close to me. I began to follow this hunch and opened my practice out to making with and for other people. My first collaboration was a costume for an artist-friend Michelle Oxenham, who was undertaking a video performance work as part of her MA project. I had previously loaned Michelle a jacket made from old, worn saris, and she wanted to extend this with other multi-coloured garments and accessories. She wanted a scrappy, layered, DIY look; a playful outfit that seemed clumsy and excessive. I made a headpiece from pom-poms and fabric scraps (a cluster of bagged-out miniature squares arranged to look like scales or feathers), a red mini-skirt (from a second-hand dress), and parts of a neckpiece from old yarn and small jewellery pouches. The video and sound work was shown in the H-Block Gallery, QUT, in July 2008 as part of her exhibition *Fields and Folds in Progress*.

Figure 10a. video still and **b**. installation view, *bachelorettechangingopinionforevermore,* by Michelle Xen, photographs by Michelle Xen (2008)

Immediately following this work, I collaborated with another artist-friend, Madeleine King. We share an interest in fashion making on the margins, and had wanted to work together on a project for some time. In mid-2008 we decided to contribute to both the exhibition and presentation program for the IGNITE QUT Post-graduate Research Conference. Our contribution was to document the making of a garment through time-lapse photography, then stitch the images together to make a video for projection (see Appendix B for link to YouTube). Seeking to convey an experience about the joy of friendship, making and collaborative exchange (as much as design), we started by devising a framework for making that would allow for playful interaction and improvisation.

Figures 11a, b and c Video stills from *Co-operative Fashion,* with Madeleine King, (2008)

The first (unfilmed) attempt was a time-controlled work on paper in which we created a work in response to a found still life on the studio table. Using an egg timer, we took turns drawing and painting onto the same surface—altering the other's mark making, pushing marks around the surface, finding and losing shapes. We noticed that some of the marks could serve as pattern shapes for garments if scaled up to human-size, and thought this constituted an interesting way forward in translating these 2-D shapes into 3-D garments. The filmed work followed the same course—gestural mark making on paper and shape-finding—but this time we extended the process in order to make a garment. Even though we had a loose plan of sorts to use light and shadow as a means for transferring the small abstract works to larger garment shapes, our approach was open to not

quite knowing what we were doing or where we were going! We wanted to show a making that acknowledged location—the situational circumstances of time and place, or the limits of our own skill base, the particularities of our physical bodies, and the experience of collaboration itself with all its compromises.

It was an intensely positive experience that resounded with much of what I had been researching previously. Nothing was purpose built or acquired especially for the project, apart from the camera. We worked on my lounge room floor and kitchen, in and around the mess of domestic living. Our approach was reminiscent of a sewing circle exchange in which sharing meals, cooking, cleaning and chatting were as valuable as the work itself. During our conference presentation, we reflected on the experience in relation to our solo work, and design's take on design process generally:

> We found that working collaboratively took the pressure off our individual design expectations and made the work less susceptible to over-critique during the making process. Surprisingly, we took on some of each other's aesthetic values and processes, at times suggesting pathways that would deliberately deviate from individual habitual response. We resisted preciousness over ideas or end products. We threw each part out to collaboration—rules, outcomes, goals, aesthetic decisions, the act of making, reflection and presentation were determined and resolved collectively … Our mutual attitude was one of sharing, where there was no withholding of ideas for fear of loss of authorship, or the stealing of intellectual property … We were conscious to maintain a sense of humour about the work, and we purposefully convoluted the design process to prolong the experience, and to pose questions concerning prescribed designerly behaviours. We felt that once we removed a concern for efficient manufacture, we couldn't value any particular design process over another (Dunlop and King, 2008).

Figures 12a and b. Video stills from *Co-operative Fashion,* with Madeleine King, (2008)

The creative practice developed through *Co-operative Fashion* signalled an important shift in approach to the research. It framed an approach to making that I would follow for the remainder of the candidature, which involved making with, and for people close to me. This approach literally allowed for a close engagement with the particularities of practice as embedded within embodied, located experience. The different strands of my PhD inquiry now shared a common element. They signalled attempts to 'tease out' the character of agency as part of wider lived circumstances—agency linked to questions of situation, environment and biography. In addition to this, an ethical agenda came to the fore. It required an articulation of design practice that acknowledged embodiment, which presented a more accurate portrayal of the 'realities' of design process. As a consequence, this pursuit facilitated a broader awareness and understanding of the designer as part of larger systems and stories. This motivation acknowledged the proximity of my creative practice and the research project as a joint inquiry into how one 'ought' to be in the world.

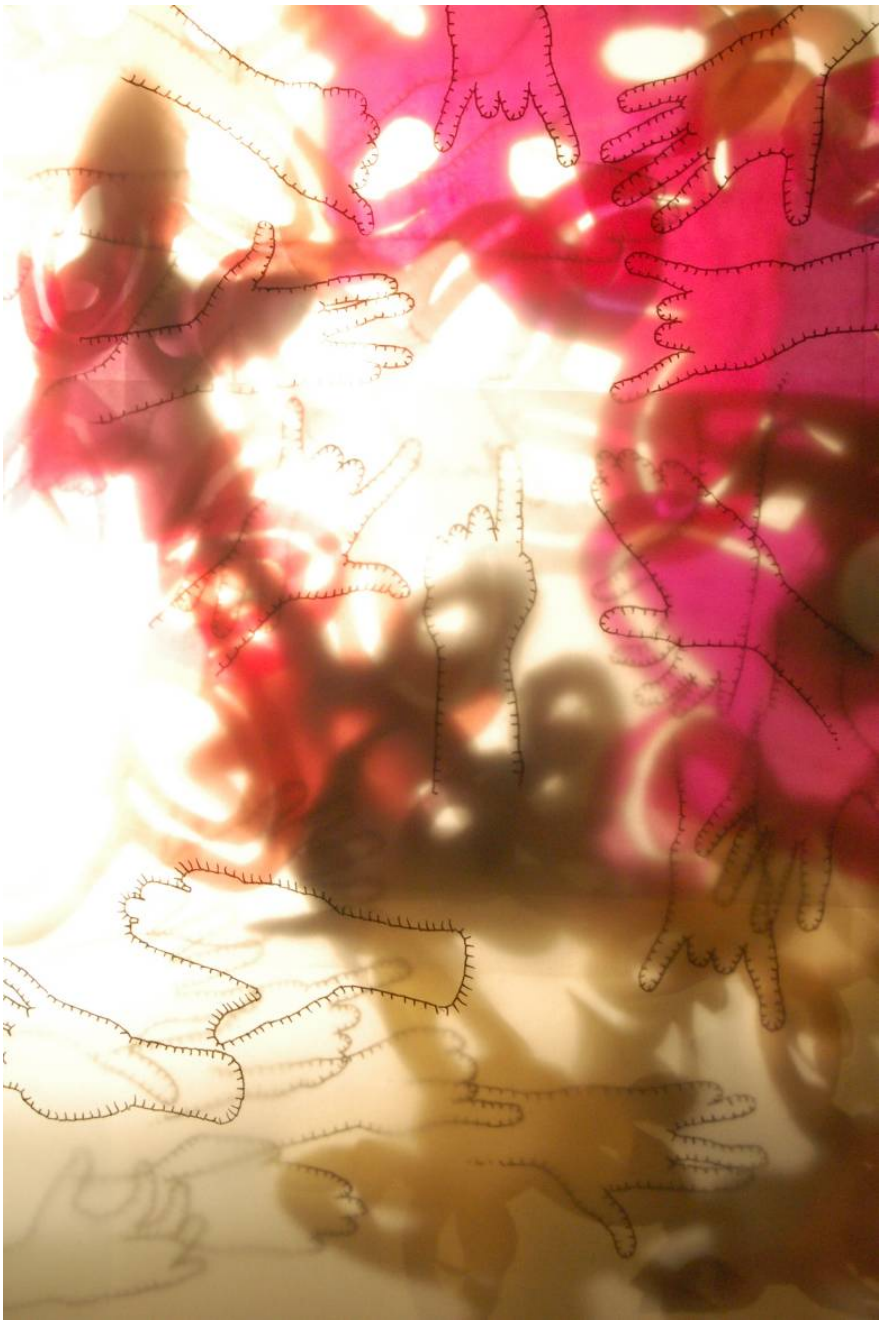

Figure 13. *Image for FIVE* (2008)

During the second half of 2008 I was able to further explore photo-documentation within a publication celebrating five years of fashion at QUT. The book, *FIVE: fashion musings*, was arranged around a theme of the 'fashion corpus', with both the content and layout arranged around notions of the heart, head, hand, eye and body. I responded to this theme by undertaking a photo-illustration project, whereby I created images through photographing hand-drawn images and objects

through tracing paper. These images and objects included some coloured versions of my previous flower-bombs. They were placed on a pane of glass, backlit with lamps and/or hand-held torches, and photographed from below. My brother Damian (a photojournalist) helped by advising me on some of the technical aspects of the shoot; it was our first time working together, and we agreed to collaborate on some further work in the future.

2009/10

For the remainder of the PhD I concentrated almost exclusively on making garments for family, friends and myself. Although I have always made garments for others, I had rarely acknowledged it as a key component of my creative practice. In overlooking such a central aspect of my practice, it was telling of a broader undervaluation of an important aspect of making. More than that, it represented the taking for granted of something vital and commonplace in my world and my living. My interest increasingly focused on recognising both the embedded nature of practice within the everyday as well as on the margins of fashion-making. Making for people close to me seemed an apt way to further explore my own physical and cultural location.

Gifting was key to examining my sense of location. This is because it allowed me to continue to interrogate the predominant assumptions of fashion design. To be clear, my stance is not so much oppositional to the dominant fashion system, but rather aims to illuminate and emphasise the alternative histories and practices that contribute to its existence. Gifting garments acknowledges and continues traditions of making clothes either for their aesthetic value or use value, rather than their exchange value in the capitalist marketplace. The gifting process reiterates my claim that fashionable clothing and its circulation need not be defined by the market economy.

The choice of the recipients did not follow any formal arrangement. The 'giftees' received the work under many different circumstances—sometimes they were made intentionally or given as birthday or thank-you gifts, but more often than not it was simply a situation of my making something and then recognising (at different points in the making process) that it was to a certain

person's taste. For example, *A Thing for Carolyn* (2010) was made and given as a thank-you gift Carolyn Stubbin, who had recently gifted to me a large number of glass beads and jewellery-making supplies. The resulting 'thing' (a neckpiece/sash) was constructed from patchwork embroidery cut from a second-hand sari (sourced while I holidayed in India some years ago) and some of the gifted glass beads. On the other hand, the second-hand materials for *A Top for Nadia* (2009) and *An Apron for Nadia* (2010) had been donated to the project by Nadia Buick, who requested that they be re-formed for her to wear. *A Scarf for Mojo* (2009) was made from reclaimed cotton lace with the giftee, Jodie Weller, firmly in mind; whereas *A Dress for Tory* (2008) was made very early in the candidature, and only gifted to Tory Young when it was re-discovered during a studio clean-out.

The variety of circumstances through which the garments came to be gifted emphasises the fact that the project was not simply an exercise in making for others (or in the service of others' personalities). It was, rather, an interrogation of my own love for making and the particular circumstances of my historical, geographical and socio-cultural positioning. It allowed me to examine the bearing of location on how I make: for example, my place in the histories and practices of fashion-making, the limits and possibilities of the tools and materials I had access to, and the friendships that enrich and sustain my living. In short, it became a way for me to explore, be mindful of, and express gratitude for, the circumstances of my location in the world.[11]

"I heart makin' stuff" blog

When making and gifting to others in the past, however, the tendency has been to forget quickly what I have made once it had been given over to the recipient. It is for this reason that I started a weblog called *I heart makin' stuff* (see Appendix B). I saw blogging as an easy way to archive the work produced during the candidature and share it with supervisors and peers. It also presented an opportunity to explain my research interests to a broader audience. My first entry reads:

[11] I explore this further in Chapter Four.

"So, what have you been up to lately?"

Guh. For some reason, that question always leaves me stumped. It's not that I don't do much - I'm always working on something! - but rather, I tend to lose track or overlook all that I get up to. My pal Maddy suggested I start a blog, to take stock of all the things that I do but so often seem to forget.

My practice-led PhD centres on commonplace making - fashion design on the margins; non-professional sites of production. Although my undergrad studies saw me trained for design in commercial spheres, my interest keeps leading me toward the fringes of what is popularly understood as fashion. As a hands-on maker, my research is conducted partly through the creation of clothes for myself and those around me. So rather than producing a decisive thematic collection for a commercial application, I make things in dribs and drabs; working with whatever is at hand (primarily through the remaking of second-hand items) for friends and family. While this sort of making is not special to me, it is an area left largely untouched by scholarly inquiry. Which is silly. Really! What else is there to talk about?

I heart makin' stuff.

So then, here it is. I'm going to document all those bits of my research - the things that I write, the things that I make, the things that interest me most - that I often forget to record. Hopefully I'll also form a habit for regular writing, to ease the anxiety that sets in whenever I sit down to compose papers! (Dunlop, 2008a)

The blog proved to be a very useful recording tool by helping me to keep track of the many research activities and creative projects that constituted the PhD study. After I had made an item, I would photograph it and create an entry, including a brief note on its construction. An example is *A Collar for Maddy,* which was made from the waste fabric of another project:

> Another garment - this time it's a collar I completed recently for my pal Maddy. It is made from some scraps leftover from my recent re-working of a vintage dress.
>
> I picked up the dress on ebay - it was originally a floor-length, Grecian-style frock. It was square across the neck and back, the fabric falling from narrow panels which fastened with buttons at each shoulder. My re-working of the dress saw my shortening it into something more summer-friendly. I removed the neck and back panels, and made shoulder straps from fabric taken from the hem.
>
> For this collar I took the removed panels and remaining fabric, played with it on the dummy for a bit, then hand-stitched the pieces together. Easy-peasy (just the way I like it!). It fastens with a couple of hooks and eyes (Dunlop, 2009).

The blog features 24 garments and accessories, most of which are represented in the final photo book for examination, *wearer/maker/wearer.* It also documents other projects that I undertook during the candidature—toys, puppets, costumes, photographic work, as well as book reviews.

Figure 14. *A Collar for Maddy* (2009)

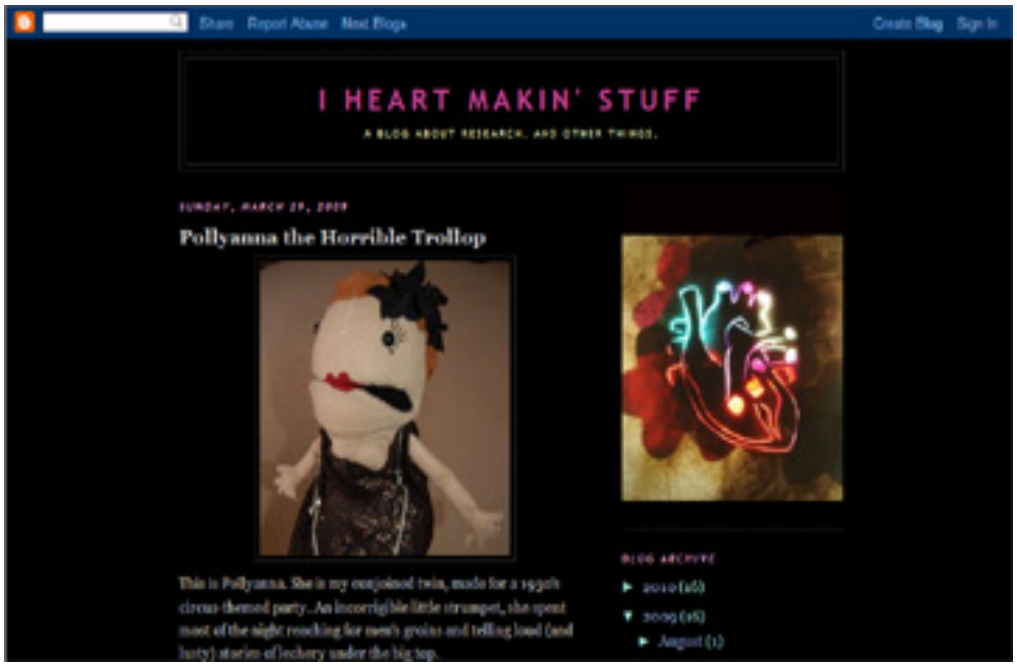

Figure 15. Screenshot of weblog *I heart makin' stuff* (2009)

The garments made as part of the final body of creative work were produced in the home, typically through either the unpicking and reworking of existing, second-hand garments, or through a reworking and reproducing of pattern shapes taken from existing garments, in new materials. A skirt thus becomes a top, or a top a dress, or pattern shapes from each, a jacket. I also re-visited and re-worked several garments that I had made earlier in the PhD,[12] fitting these to the measurements of my recipients.

A Jacket for Ol' C (2009, see figure 18), for example, is made from the fabric of a vintage kimono in which different sized rectangular shapes were joined together. I had worked with kimonos previously (during the honours project) and admire the elegant simplicity of their construction. I had found this particular kimono online, and chose to make something special for my close friend, Carla Binotto. I pulled apart the rectangular shapes and decided to tamper with the original cut shapes as little as possible. I draped several of the shapes on the dummy, tucking and gathering them to fit the form, rather than cutting into the material. The result

[12] See, for example, *A Waistcoat for Mox*, *A Waistcoat for Ma*, and *A Tunic for Clare* (www.iheartmakinstuff.blogspot.com), all of which were garments constructed originally in the first year of candidature, but re-worked in the third.

was a short fitted jacket with a simple front closure and full, ¾ length sleeves. Toward the end of the candidature, I dyed the excess fabric a deep burgundy colour and made *A Skirt for Susanharvey* (2010, see figure 21). For this garment, I patch-worked the pieces together before cutting out the panel pieces for a simple A-line skirt.

Photographing people and clothes

In early 2009, an opportunity arose to exhibit the project in progress. I was approached by a friend, Nadia Buick, to collaborate on a solo show of work at the QUT Art Museum. Through her own practice-led research in fashion curatorship, Nadia had worked on several fashion exhibitions alongside other curators, but was keen to stage a show of her own, especially by working in close relation with a fashion design practitioner. Nadia and I hatched a plan for an exhibition of both garments and photographs—a timely opportunity, since I had been interested in working again with Damian on a series of images to document my recent garment work. My brother's background and expertise was vital, due to the fact that my own experience with photographic equipment and shooting conditions was limited. Besides this, however, it presented another opportunity for a close creative collaboration with people I admired, to acknowledge and articulate the bearing of place on my work.

Although a useful and somewhat ubiquitous form of documentation, the use of photography forces one to confront a medium that has its own histories and traditions. The same is true for portraiture.[13] In fashion in particular, the photographic image carries a weight that I was not necessarily looking to embrace as part of the PhD study. That said, however, I did not want to avoid the complexities of fashion photography as a genre by resorting to the impersonal, clinical imagery of 'objective' cataloguing (a genre that carries its own connotations). Instead, the ideas of fashion, making and location carry connotations of the inescapable subjectivity through which we experience the world. I therefore wanted the images to evoke something of the intimacy and

[13] See, for example, Buick's "The Model as a Blank Page" (2009)

familiarity of the clothing and their wearers, as well as my own position as a maker.

Two key examples in the documentation of people and clothing are Kate Fletcher's *Local Wisdom* and Lisa Clark's *What are you Making* (in Livingstone and Ploof, 2007).

Figure 16. *Local Wisdom*, "Work and rework: a life of action" Kate Fletcher

Local Wisdom, by Kate Fletcher, is an ongoing project that "seeks to recognize and honour a user's 'craft'" through the visual and written recording of wearers, makers and their clothing (Fletcher, 2009/2010). Explored as part of a broader interest in sustainable practice, Fletcher works in collaboration with photographers Fiona Bailey and Sean Michael to document the resourceful use and care of clothing materials at "the level of the user" (Centre for Sustainable Fashion, 2009). The participants are volunteers who have been contacted through advertisements in local newspapers. The collected images and words are exhibited both online and in gallery spaces and quite fortuitously, I was able to view a selection of the *Local Wisdom* photographs as part of the *Fashioning Now* symposium at UTS in 2009.

Ownership, identity and location are central themes in Fletcher's project, as is inventiveness and a celebration of difference. Fletcher's work is significant as a

documentation of clothing practice outside of predominant understandings of fashion as governed by the commercial sphere. The work is motivated by a dual interest in sustainability and the everyday place of clothing as treasured and intimate items. Fletcher explains:

> The images and stories gathered by this project document micro-scale social innovation in fashion. They give expression to differences in power relations, ways of behaving, material status and emotional connection and give us small, specific working prototypes of grassroots change (ibid).

By tapping into the practices of the 'everyday', Fletcher seeks to acknowledge a wealth of knowledge around sustainability that already exists in the community, albeit at the margins of sustainable fashion discourse. The emphasis on locality is significant because it sets up 'place' as integral to the clothing practices and the identity of the subjects as wearers and makers. The images, as a series, eschew compositional consistency in favour of diversity and spontaneity—each portrait is different in terms of its location and format.

In contrast to Fletcher's work, the participants in Lisa Clark's photographic project, *What Are You Making?* are shot (presumably) in the studio against an empty background. This project follows similar themes of identity, self-reliance, resourcefulness, and clothing on the margins. Clark, an American textile, video and sound artist, documented 54 individual makers. Her participants—who were contacted through a range of craft organisations and needlework associations—were each photographed with a craft or clothing item they had recently produced, and interviewed in response to the question "What does it mean—personally—to make things in a post-industrial time?" (Livingstone and Ploof, 2007).

Figure 17. *What are You Making?*, "Susan True" and "Laura Margaret Frazier", Lisa Clark (2007)

Initially, the inclination for my own photographs was to follow a direction similar to Clark's—that is, for warm, but starkly simple images of figures against a plain, tongue-and-groove wall in the campus, post-graduate studio. We tried this at our first attempt, with unsatisfying results. Apart from difficulties in controlling lighting, this starkly bare setting was problematic for the interests that were at the heart of the research inquiry, in that the minimal (almost stripped bare) approach to setting was undermining the sense of everyday 'locatedness' that was beginning to define the project. Furthermore, the participants were uncomfortable in the plain and unfamiliar space, unsure of what to do! The solution was to try again, but this time in my home.

This domestic setting seems so logical now, in terms of the core concerns of the project. Through shooting amid the clutter of the home, I moved toward articulating (however imperfectly or incompletely) something of the sense of place that permeates my thinking and making. In addition to this, in my home I was able to create a relaxed atmosphere and we could take our time arranging

lighting while the participants ate and drank. I became insistent that the photos depict warmth through both the lighting and movement of active, living bodies in a domestic space. We worked *with* the setting, and it proved successful—especially in terms of the participants' comfort and enjoyment of the experience. The two shoots were conducted in June and July 2009—eight garments with eight people. We shot on digital, with the aid of a single flash and the ambient lighting.

In terms of an aesthetic, we sought to create something distinctly grungy. Damian and I share an admiration for the grunge photography of the 1990s, and although we didn't research or call upon these influences directly, they are nevertheless present in our approaches. We understood almost tacitly that the images were to be something not quite as formal as a fashion shoot, but more considered than a simple party snapshot. The images solidified the practice as something connected to fashion design practice, but not entirely located within its traditions in a conventional sense. The fact that we shot in the home, with friends, automatically speaks (through its difference) of something outside the dominant convention of modelled fashion images. Indeed, some of my favourite fashion images can be said to fit into this alternate aesthetic.

Thinking that it would give the participants more control over their shot, I encouraged the use of a cable shutter release (a key concern of mine being that the subjects were not intimidated or uncomfortable during the shoot). In this way, Damian was controlling the position of the camera (often moving it, or the zoom lens during shooting), and I took charge of the lighting. Yet the subjects themselves were the ones 'taking the photo'. On reflection, however, it seemed that the presence of the cable increased rather than decreased the participants' anxiety through a perceived pressure of responsibility. As a result, we decided to offer the cable release in future shoots as an option, not a requirement.

Figure 18. *A jacket for Carla,* photograph by Damian Dunlop (2009)

Figure 19. *A dress for Tilda*, Photograph by Damian Dunlop (2009)

The first images evoke the joyous atmosphere of the shoot. The cluttered rooms and the warmth of the ambient light; the figures lurking in the background; the mess of eating and drinking; all speak of the intimacy of domestic life and of the bodies and moments within 'lived in' spaces. The figures—and garments—shift and blur within the surroundings—as part of the 'beautiful everyday'.

The subsequent exhibition, titled *wearer/maker/wearer*, took place in the Tom Heath Gallery at the QUT Art Museum during August and September 2009. It featured nine garments and eight large-format photographs. The exhibition design grew from a collaborative exchange with Nadia, who was also featured as one of the garment's recipients. Together, we worked toward a display that was sensitive to the making of garments, photographs, and exhibition as a series of open-ended and experiential creative negotiations. The 'collection' (I use this word loosely, since the garments were not made with a view to a congruous formal display, but nonetheless bear formal and aesthetic similarities) consisted of two tops, two waistcoats, a jacket, two dresses, a belt and a collar. They were displayed in a space separate to (but not entirely removed from) the photographs. In this way, the viewer could see the embodied garment in the images, before beholding the real thing on the dummy or hanger. This was important, as the exhibition's premise was to present 'the work' as not entirely the garments nor the photographs, but as something which included the process of making, giving and photographing as part of ongoing, lived, collaborative exchanges. The title, *wearer/maker/wearer*, was used to reference the work outside of the garment and photographic outcomes. The title aimed to suggest both a sense of design circularity (the re-making of garments) and the intimate life of the garment, wearer and maker as part of broader sites of making.

Although the layout of the show fulfilled the aims of a combined staging of 2D and 3D works, it confirmed my conviction that the work should not be displayed in an exhibition format for examination. This is for reasons that I now explain.

Figures 20a, b, c and d Installation views, *wearer/maker/wearer*, QUT Art Museum (2009)

wearer/maker/wearer: the photo book

When it came to representation and display, I knew I was in a bind from the very beginning. How does one represent a practice—in any context, not just research—without making it look like a planned outcome? Any documentation will always be a static outcome in the wake of the making.

I found the gallery space problematic for the work—mainly because museum tradition focuses on the object. Positioning the work within an exhibition space complicates and draws attention away from the project's interrogation of object or outcome-based understandings of practice. In addition to this difficulty, the 'work' itself seemed an ambiguous thing. It operated across several sites and forms of making. I could not decisively say that the garments or the photographs or the blog constituted the work; nor could I say that it was just the 'practice' or physical act of making these. It was all of these, yet also something immaterial, including an articulation of place and of sensibility.

Due to these considerations, I was never drawn to represent process too literally. Images of works-in-progress, or a step-by-step recounting of design development though making seemed to miss the point. Worse, it undermined my attachment to the beauty of image and of the material object/thing. Instead, such a communication needed say something about the practice of design as an activity grounded in embodied, lived experience without resorting to a 'too clinical' documentation that sacrificed the beauty and ambiguity of material 'thingness'.

I settled on continuing with the photography, and the final display as a photo-book. The intimacy of the project seemed best expressed through small, simple and intimate display—something that could unfold gently in a viewer's hands. I was also drawn to it as a format because I was able to preface the work's context by drawing attention to the sense of place that permeated the making. For the remainder of the candidature I continued to make clothes for friends and family, and Damian and I continued to work together on the portraiture. The ambition was to continue to work with photography in a way that did justice to the relationship with the wearers/recipients, my developing awareness of my location, the gesture of making and the lived stories of clothes on bodies.

We shot a further 15 recipients (and garments) in my home over the following year. The aesthetic of the imagery shifted slightly during this time, mainly in terms of lighting. I imagined three distinct 'movements' in the book, broken up by macro photographs showing some garment detail. To designate the distinct phases of photography, the middle eight images were overexposed, resulting in a white, blown-out effect. In contrast, the remaining seven evoke the dim colours of twilight.

Figure 21. *A skirt for Susanharvey*, photograph by Damian Dunlop (2010)

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have outlined the creative practice that I undertook during the candidature. I began by describing early explorations into notions of location (my historical, geographical and socio-cultural positioning) through my use of chance procedures, improvisation, collaborative making and bricolage. I utilised these approaches as a way to articulate and acknowledge design as an embedded, embodied and located making. When applied to my dressmaking practice, the result was an exploration of agency through material thinking and in particular, the mindfulness of location that brings to mind the bearing of the material on how we make. I chased this mindfulness through making garments that, as material 'things', evoked something of the practices and processes that informed their making.

This creative exploration culminated, during the candidature, as a major body of work titled *wearer/maker/wearer.* Garments were made and gifted to friends and family, then documented through photographic portraiture. This work, and the creative practice as a whole, articulates an ongoing engagement with issues pertaining to one's location in time and space—the acknowledgement (and communication) of both the maker and the made thing as entities that make, and are made, by the conditions of the world. The effort of rendering something of the structures and processes—of relationships, of making, of sharing and of location—was paramount. This ambition came to the fore during the shoots as an integral aspect of my practice.

To explain the research ambitions informing this effort in more detail, however, I need to turn back to a broader view of design. In the chapter that follows, I articulate what a reading of embedded, located design means for conceptualisations of design ethics. I turn to a feminist reading of *ethos* as location, in order to clarify the link between a communication of place, design ethics, and the responsibilities of the designer.

CHAPTER FOUR

Ethos, location, and dressmaking

So far, this exegesis has presented a literature review of ideas of design, fashion and ethics; an overview of creative practices and practitioners key to my thinking and working; and a descriptive analysis of the creative work I have undertaken during my candidature. I would now like to turn to a topic that underpins my project, but has not yet been explored in detail.

I have come to understand *ethos* as central to my interrogation of fashion, design and ethics as well as to understandings of my creative practice in a broader sense. As I stated in the Introduction, '*ethos*' is the root of the modern word 'ethics'. Whereas our modern usage of 'ethics' usually refers to principles of right and wrong, *ethos*, in its classical Greek usage, pertained to notions of lived community or custom. Although when we speak of *ethos* we are generally referring to notions of character, we shall see that in its original use, notions of character had distinct social connotations in that character was understood as always contextualised by the customs and habits of social spaces. This distinction is significant for my work because I am interested in developing an understanding of design in terms of a design ethics that accounts for the ongoing, ever-present and 'everyday' ethics of our situation in the world.

Ethics and *ethos* have had a complex and contentious relationship within the often opposing traditions of philosophical and rhetorical thinking and study. My aim here is not to go into depth regarding the history and interplay of these traditions (and the bearing this has had on readings of *ethos*). Rather, this research project prefers to show how *ethos*—and in particular, a contemporary feminist reading of *ethos* as location—can navigate the difficulties of subject-object (designer/designed) oppositions without sacrificing subjectivity itself as a site for creative and critical authority. *Ethos* as location provides a new model for ethical design discourse because it redefines ethics as something embodied and lived through our located experience rather than focusing on ethics as an end to be

reached through proper (good) design thinking (no matter how that ideal endpoint is conceived).

Ethics and *Ethos*

Contemporary popular usage regards *ethos* as encompassing:

> … both an individual and a collective meaning. It makes sense to speak of the *ethos* of this or that person, but it makes equally good sense to speak of the *ethos* of a particular type of person, of a professional group, or a culture, or an era in history (Halloran, 1982: 62)

When we speak of *ethos*, we are usually referring to notions of character. Popular and academic understandings of *ethos* primarily derive from Aristotelian formulations of rhetoric (Baumlin, 1994: xiv). In the tradition of classical rhetoric (the art of effective communication through language, or speech), *ethos* is translated as the role of an individual's character in communication and persuasion (Ibid: xii). Artistotle's theory of rhetoric consists, among other things, of *pisteis* (proofs) or three "modes of appeal": *logos* (logic), *pathos* (emotion), and *ethos* (character) (Gill, 1984: 60, see also Reynolds, 1993: 327). Halloran notes:

> In its simplest form, *ethos* is what we might call the argument from authority, the argument that says in effect, Believe me because I am the sort of person whose word you can believe […] the speaker (or writer) must understand *ethos* in order to create in his audience a strong and favourable impression of his own character (1982: 60).

Understood in the individual sense, *ethos* is the impression of character conveyed in communication. While at first glance this outline may seem straightforward, there has been ongoing discussion and debate concerning just what *ethos* is, how it is formed and how it functions—as well as a questioning of the relationship between ethics and *ethos*. In Artistotle's formulation, *ethos* consists of three elements:

> In the ethical argument, the speaker must show "good sense" (that is, appear to have practical knowledge about the subject), must show "good will" (that is, seem to have the good of the audience at heart), and must show "virtue" or "good moral character" (that is, portray himself or herself as a person who would not deceive the audience) (Kinneavy and Warshauer, 1994: 174)

Ethos as an ethical appeal, however, raises some issues. Just what makes a 'good' *ethos*? Who decides what is 'good'? Can *ethos* be 'faked'? Is there a gap between seeming ethical and being ethical? Is it something that can be easily transmitted from speaker to audience? *Ethos*, in other words, is bound to the complexities (and instabilities) of the representation of the self through language. Philosophy and rhetorical theory, in particular, have since sought to engage with these complexities by uncovering the process through which *ethos* functions and is constructed (Baumlin, 1994: xiv). Central to these enduring debates is the issue of 'the nature of the subject" (Jarratt and Reynolds, 1994).

Broadly speaking, these debates have been divided along two lines of thinking. The first line of inquiry is oriented around notions of a fixed, essential *ethos*, where *ethos* is positioned as "a revelation of character", and the self a stable entity—"one that language is presumed able to distort, conceal, or (ideally) express and reveal but not change or construct" (Baumlin, 1994: xx). This tradition interprets *ethos* as a quality pertaining to the speaker's individual identity, a rhetorical tool under the control of the *rhetor* to be deployed at will in the service of communication (Schmertz, 1999: 83). The second line of inquiry focused on a socially contextualised, 'made' *ethos*. It conceives of its discourse as "an active construction of character—or, rather, of an image, a representation of character" within a larger social discourse (Baumlin, 1994: xv). This tradition regards *ethos* as "resistant to being mapped onto the speaker," that is, not possessed entirely by the speaker. Instead, *ethos* is viewed as the result of the speaker's immersion in a certain cultural context and thus it straddles "the boundaries between speaker, audience and speech." (Schmertz, 1999: 83). The etymology of *ethos* is typically translated from Ancient Greek to mean either

'character' or 'custom,' and as Baumlin points out it initiates an opposition from the outset:

> Translated as "character," *ethos* would seem to describe a singular, stable, "central" self. Translated as "custom" or "habit", *ethos* would describe a "social" self, a set of verbal habits or behaviours, a playing out of customary roles" (1994: xviii)

Continuing, Baumlin notes that in Western traditions questions of selfhood (as well as the human subject) have continued to be based on an unsettled opposition between the individual, centred self and the socially-constructed self (Ibid). Our modern sense of selfhood, he asserts, aligns with the individualistic self, founded on a Cartesian model of mind that emphasises "self-presence and self-possession" (Ibid: xxii). This corresponds to the analysis of design that I outlined in Chapter One: the Enlightenment's predilection toward the autonomous and self-contained mind continues to play out in conventional design thinking by privileging the autonomous designer, the plan, and the original design object.

These conceptions of the autonomous, self-contained mind have come under critique, however—perhaps most significantly by poststructuralist discourse. Many of these recent critiques have sought to destabilise the individual as a "unified and coherent whole" by emphasising the subject's creation through language (Jarratt and Reynolds, 1994: 37). When seen as a linguistic construction, the subject (or author) becomes viewed more as a construct (or object) of the cultural context in which she finds herself. This poststructuralist conceptualisation, however, is worrying to some thinkers. To dismantle the autonomous subject completely erases any ground for a claim to individual agency—a situation that is problematic for feminist thinkers who are invested in identifying feminine experience as a platform from which women can authoritatively speak (Buckley, 1998). Furthermore, it perpetuates the all-too-neat subject-object divide that has hitherto defined much Western thinking by inverting the division to privilege the context.

This subject-object division, which has fuelled and facilitated modern tensions between self and other, has been a site for critique across many disciplines. It touches issues of selfhood, authority, and the socio-cultural, political, and ideological structures that characterise our living. I have discussed, for example, theories of ontological design that seek to reformulate design as the interplay between multitudes of pre-existing design forces. This is where theories of *ethos* not only intersect with broader concerns around ideas of subjectivity, but also contribute compelling perspectives to the conversation around the problem of binary thinking. *Ethos*, when understood as a person's autonomous character, privileges the idea of the autonomous individual subject. As we have seen, however, understandings of *ethos* also encompass the broader situational context of the subject's history and cultural positioning. To guard against the envelopment of *ethos* in either of the two sides of this debate on subjectivity, however, it is crucial that *ethos* is re-conceptualised. Understandings of *ethos* need to acknowledge the complexities of the nature of self, voice, and authorship amid a larger cultural discourse (Baumlin, 1994: xvii). To this end, feminist rhetorical theory has sought to articulate *ethos* as a *located experience.* This understanding of *ethos* is significant to both my conceptualisation of design practice and my argument for a more penetrating and profound view of ethical design.

Ethos as Location

Feminist understandings of *ethos* navigate the complexities of subjectivity by focusing on site and embodiment. Reynolds sees issues of 'site' as key to *ethos* in the poststructuralist sense—where "the subject is the 'site' on which language becomes meaning, where meaning is constituted and thereby constitutes the subjectivity of the individual" (1993: 326). The currency of site, she writes, has "long been important to the rhetorical concept of *ethos*" because it "encompasses the individual agent as well as the location or position from which that person speaks or writes" (Ibid). To demonstrate the importance of location to *ethos*, she returns to *ethos*' etymological complexity and meaning for "space, place or haunt"—a complexity that conventional translations have failed to acknowledge (Ibid: 327). *Ethos,* and its translation either as 'character' or 'habit', stems from the meaning of the word in the Greek lexicon as "a habitual gathering place"

(Halloran, 1982: 60, and Reynolds, 1993: 327-9, see also Jarratt and Reynolds, 1994: 48). The etymology of *ethos* therefore refers to a relationship between habit, character and place, from "the classical ideal of character pointed toward public life, the life lived in that gathering place" (Halloran, 1982: 62). Following this translation, Reynolds interprets *ethos* spatially, as an aspect and locating of the self amid broader social contexts:

> …*ethos* is not measurable traits displayed by an individual; rather, it is a complex set of characteristics constructed by a group, sanctioned by that group, and more readily recognizable to others who belong or who share similar values or experiences. The classical notion of *ethos*, therefore, as well as its contemporary usage, refers to the social context surrounding the solitary *rhetor* (1993: 327).

Her understanding of *ethos* is significant because it emphasises that an individual's character is not entirely self-determined or innate, nor is it pre-determined by the workings of cultural ideologies. Instead it is an ongoing discursive act formed through a complex social engagement. Reynolds cites Halloran to further explain *ethos* as a located social interaction:

> In contrast to modern notions of the person or self, *ethos* emphasizes the conventional rather than the idiosyncratic, the public rather than the private. The most concrete meaning for the term in the Greek lexicon is 'a habitual gathering place,' and I suspect that it is upon this image of people gathering together in a public place, sharing experiences and ideas, that its meaning as character rests…(1982: 60, also quoted in Reynolds, 1993: 328).

Locatedness speaks of bodies in social spaces. Looking to the social then, the habits of a culture locates the individual's character as a cultural negotiation because an "individual's *ethos* cannot be determined outside of the space in which it was created or without a sense of the cultural context" (Reynolds, 1993: 329). Jarratt and Reynolds quote Linda Alcoff's term "positionality" to describe "a

place from which values are interpreted and constructed rather than as a locus of an already determined set of values" (Alcoff, quoted in Jarratt and Reynolds, 1994). One's position, therefore, is not separate from the world, nor is it pre-given by the world. It is negotiated "through one's locatedness in various social and cultural 'spaces'" (Reynolds, 1993: 326). This is why subjectivity is said to be always situated:

> It is precisely the concept of *ethos* in rhetoric that theorizes the positionality inherent in rhetoric—the speaker having been created at a particular site within the contingencies of history and geography. The location we speak of here is not the distance between a stable, moral Self and the various images contrived for an audience […] Rather, this positioning is a constant awareness that one always speaks from a particular place in a social structure […] (Jarratt and Reynolds, 1994: 47)

It is important to note, however, that this idea of a socially constructed *ethos* does not imply a homogenous or conflict-free social situation, nor does it imply a single, static, unified and inclusive social discourse. Reynolds asserts that within any community, "individual experiences and material circumstances differ", making the idea of 'community' itself far from something unified or without difference (1993: 329). Rather than founded on shared conventions or understandings, then, community is reconceptualised as formed (and ever-forming) through the interplay of difference. Significantly, this means that our subjectivity (as something embedded in, rather than detached from a social discourse) is itself always comprised of a multitude of discourses working simultaneously—formed through the "overlapping" of a plurality of loci (Ibid: 329-30).

An individual's *ethos*, then—as with a community or culture's *ethos*—is always under tension and marked by location as a conversion or intersection of difference, what Schmertz describes as an "ever-shifting point of intersection" (Schmertz, 1999: 89). *Ethos* is not so much a fixed shared convention, but rather, an ever-changing interplay between different discourses. If this is the case,

however, how then does one identify an *ethos*? Is it possible to identify a stable location or experience from which to speak? How do we avoid falling into what Jarratt and Reynolds call the "endless logic of deferral set in motion by deconstruction" (1994: 53), to articulate a place amid a confluence of places? How does one account for the instability—the changeability—of *ethos* in this model? Jarratt and Reynolds use a feminist "politics of location" to re-formulate notions of the stable self, as a way toward some answers.

Naming a Location

Using Adrienne Rich's terminology, Jarratt and Reynolds see the self as a "split self"—embodied, but occasioned by an ongoing engagement with historical, political and social experience (Jarratt and Reynolds, 1994: 53). In this way, the subject is not an integrated subject, but a split subject in a socially created space; a clear subject-object demarcation is blurred. In this model, the subject does not hold him/herself as an autonomous individual, but recognises his/her subjectivity as operating at the intersection of a multitude of (largely unknowable and ever-shifting) contexts. *Ethos* thus marks "the position of the self, to the admittedly limited extent that it can be articulated by the author, making no claim that this speaking self is completely known or stable"; it is "the admission of a standpoint, with the understanding that several other standpoints exist and that they change over time" (Ibid).

This idea of ongoing change, of a shifting and split self, is thus the recognition that "one is positioned multiply and differently" (Ibid: 56). Any expression we give or make of ourselves or our *ethos* is therefore only ever a single point of (an incomplete) articulation—a momentary arresting and acknowledgement of our position and expression of part of our location. Schmertz states this understanding explicitly:

> I ultimately want to define *ethos* for feminism as neither manufactured nor fixed, neither tool nor character, but rather the stopping points at which the subject (re)negotiates her own essence to call upon whatever agency that essence enables (1999: 86)

Importantly, the essence Schmertz speaks of is not a universal, fixed essence, but the continual reassertion of identity—the identifying, naming and constructing of self amid ever-shifting circumstances (Ibid: 88-9). The sheer complexity of these historical, geographical and cultural circumstances means that we will never know or be able to articulate exactly our positionality, but this does not signify a failure or inconsistency on the part of the subject. Rather, it enables an authority of place, and responsibility for the self through an awareness of the ways through which we engage and form ourselves and our worlds. Schmertz argues that when we reflectively and self-consciously "attend to our own *ethos*," we are:

> both constructing a subjectivity for ourselves and retroactively reconstructing or recuperating that subjectivity in a process that is never finished because it is always shaping its own critique, shifting to a new position or location … I tell the truth not about the now but about the then. Yet in naming this moment, however belatedly or provisionally, I create a new *ethos*, a new speaking location. I recreate my subjectivity, act with agency, create a "me" available only in retrospect, a me-effect or trace that nevertheless marks my world and my existence in it. In naming my politics of location, I displace the structures from which I have emerged. I create empty spaces, and new places, from which others speak (Ibid: 89)

Ethos, as "never finished", is thus always in the making through our immersion in the circumstances of our embodied, lived experience. We do not have complete control over our *ethos*—we are, after all, born into pre-existing circumstances—but nor is it untouchable or unchangeable. We are able to locate our subjectivity at points and therefore "attend to our own *ethos*" through a critical engagement with our immersion in the world. Similarly, a community's *ethos* is never singular or fixed but rather formed through the in-flux interrelations—always in the making but able to be arrested and named at points for scrutiny in retrospect. *Ethos*, then, is always a negotiated construction in-the-making, and by identifying our *ethos*—our location—we also identify a subjectivity that acknowledges not just our conditioned experience, but subjectivity as something always fractured

and never completely 'ours'. "Character", writes Reynolds, "is formed by habit, not engendered by nature", and those habits come from the intersection of a plurality of discourses within a community or culture" (1993: 329). The perpetual making of *ethos* is thus "a shared enterprise among members of the community", and the responsibility of *ethos* rests on the "negotiation or mediation between the rhetor and the community" (Ibid: 328).

Design, Ethics, *Ethos*, and Responsibility

I would now like to turn back to my earlier claim (in Chapter One) that ethical discourse in design is attenuated by its neglect of considerations of *ethos*. I argued that design ethics is conceptualised through understandings of design that privilege teleological models of design, the autonomous designer, and the original designed object. In this way, ethics is understood as something to be 'designed'—something planned and produced toward a particular end outcome. This conceptualisation, however, overlooks the place of ethics as something perpetually made and re-made in our lived, located and embodied being. It overlooks the potential of *ethos* (or, rather, the potential of a recognition of *ethos*) as a platform for conceptualising and enacting design ethics. The following section re-visits themes and theory from the first three chapters through the lens of *ethos* as location, to suggest a re-formation of understandings of design and design ethics.

Ethos adds an important angle to conventional conceptualisations of design as well as design ethics. Through its fundamental root in the social and the constructed, and its blurring of distinct subject/object binaries, it sets up a critique of the three characteristics of conventional design that I outlined in Chapter One. Theories of *ethos*, however, largely derive from rhetorical studies and are thus primarily conceptualised as formed through linguistic communication. If this were to remain the exclusive concern of *ethos*, then it would undermine the importance of material culture in the formation of *ethos*. Our engagement with the world of material things is significant for, as Tonkinwise notes, "an immaterial culture is an impossibility" (2004: ¶12).

Tonkinwise's paper "Ethics by Design, or the *ethos* of things" (2004)[14] is a discussion of ethics and *ethos* in relation to design and the world of designed things. Following a track similar to Fry and Willis' ontological design (which questions distinct separations between designer and world), he explores the idea of an ethics that is materialised in design, that is, the possibility for designed things as fostering and sustaining ethics. Tonkinwise points the way toward a consideration of ethics in relation to material things. Ethics, he argues, should be discussed in terms of material as well as social relations, and following this, design needs to be scrutinised as it contributes significantly to our material culture. Tonkinwise therefore posits ethics as not so much a fixed set of rules to guide toward ethical ends, but as something materially lived, "a way of being, not a knowledge about that way of being" (Ibid: ¶4). Working from this premise, he aligns ethics and *ethos* closely, seeing both as signifying something of an "essentially lived culture", a way of being that is taken largely for granted, invisible to those inside it, and only ever visible at certain moments when called into awareness (2004).

It is this notion of awareness—of ongoing, reflective critique—that I would like to focus on, for it has parallels with a feminist *ethos* as location and is explored further by Tonkinwise at the end of his paper. I have argued that in teleological models of design and design ethics, ethics is pursued as a goal in itself, as something to be reached through design convention. Following this, an ethical designer is one who plans for ethical design outcomes. Planning for ethics, however, seems to miss the point when we consider *ethos*; it fails to recognise the fundamental formation of our cultural being as one embodied and lived within an ongoing and shared cultural engagement. The responsibility that comes from recognition of this interconnectedness is, after all, at the heart of the concern for ethical living.

A desire for ethical or just design exclusively 'through design' therefore overlooks the fact that a move toward the ethical requires a more rigorous appraisal of one's place in a cultural situation. This sentiment is shared somewhat

[14] This paper is significant as a work that deals explicitly with design and *ethos*.

by Tonkinwise, who argues that in following a design for ethics, we risk our desire for ethics becoming a desire for ethics as an end, rather than simply 'being ethical'. It also risks the sort of habitual response that comes from instrumentalist approaches—approaches which can lead to a falling back on abstract principles or moral conventions (2004: 5). If the whole point of ethical behaviour is living decently and justly in the world, then an automatic or "unthinking ethics" that relies on planning or rules for ethical conduct actually undermines the ethical to the extent that it does not acknowledge differences of situation nor facilitate an awareness of our location amid an interconnected world.

This notion of recognising and being responsible for our place in the world is central to conceptions of *ethos* as location. When we attend to our *ethos* (that is, when we seek to locate ourselves amid broader social contexts), we are taking responsibility for ourselves (the sites or locations from which we speak or act). Furthermore, the responsibility engendered by an *ethos* as location can serve as a platform for understanding ethical engagement (being just). Reynolds suggests that "being explicit is also being responsible." Her take on *ethos* as location is that in acknowledging and articulating our place in the world as a single, negotiated perspective amidst a multitude of perspectives (however incomplete or imperfect that expression is), we become responsible for ourselves and our ways of knowing (1993: 334). In addition to this, we allow room for difference when we "recognize our partial perspective—if we insist that our sight or location is never representative of all experience" (Ibid: 331). A feminist *ethos* as location thus offers "a way of preconceiving *ethos* as an ethical political tool—as a way of claiming and taking responsibility for our positions in the world, for the ways we see, for the places from which we speak" (Jarratt and Reynolds, 1994: 52).

Ethos in the (re)making

How, though, do we facilitate an awareness of *ethos*? How do we attend to our location, or our ethical responsibilities, without falling into unthinking or automatic patterns? How do we engage with our *ethos* in a way that is always mindful of it as an ever-shifting cultural negotiation? These questions are at the heart of my creative practice. They propel my dressmaking in that through my work I seek (however imperfectly, or incompletely) to engage with the

complexities of *ethos*. My practice centres on a transparency of place and of agency.

A critique of design related to this issue of ethical awareness is explored by Tonkinwise through the work of Albert Borgmann. Borgmann argues that through working with things that 'engage' our awareness in critical and creative ways we are more likely to develop sensitivity to ethical responsibility. Design and technology, he argues, is increasingly oriented toward an efficiency of use or "user disburdenment"—a situation that spells a decline for user engagement (Borgmann, 1995: 15). These 'disburdening things' "relieve us of the need for activity or attention by delivering predetermined outcomes" (Tonkinwise, 2004: 5). The predictable nature of our interactions with entirely efficient designed things means we are less likely to be challenged into an awareness of our use of them. Tonkinwise suggests that Borgmann's position on ethical design is somewhat paradoxical due to the fact that he positions the most ethical design as the one that

> still involves some pain to use, some work. By being less than completely polite, somewhat drawing attention to itself, its materiality and its design, such a thing would enable ethical ways of being, that is to say, ways of being that remain available for case-by-case deliberation by not withdrawing beneath immediate satisfaction (Tonkinwise, 2004: 5)

It is a thinking that echoes Bill Brown's account of the apprehension of the 'thingness' of things; it is the imperfect things that jar our habitual responses, our taking them for granted. It is the broken or imperfect things that call attention to themselves and disrupt our subject-object relations. When forced to face a thing for its 'thingness' (through, for example, working with it when it is broken) we become aware of its existence in its own right—not just as chattel to our needs. Our relationship to the thing is highlighted, as is our presence within a larger world of things.

This is the ethic of my dressmaking—to communicate my *ethos*, my location. Domestic dressmaking is an activity that emphasises an investment in ethos by serving as a model for understanding design and design ethics as an embodied, conditioned and located activity. This is because dressmaking involves thinking through bodily engagement with the material and immaterial conditions of making and doing. Its histories are inextricably linked with the home. It therefore makes apparent one's physical location as well as one's location within histories, traditions and cultural ideologies. This is the sense of location I had sought to engage with through bricolage and chance-play, and more recently, through re-making and re-purposing existing garments. Re-making represents a literal handling of our *ethos*. While emphasising being located or embedded, however, the focus on *ethos* does not suggest one's place as totally fixed, but rather malleable and changing in time and place. Because each garment or material that I work with is different, I am forced to reconsider my usual approaches and reformulate the making on a case-by-case basis. Framed through a feminist understanding of *ethos* as location, I see this as a manifestation of my design ethic—to touch, recognise and articulate (however imperfectly or incompletely) the complexities of the historical, geographical and cultural situations that locate my subjectivity. The work, as an expression and creation of *ethos*, is ongoing, in need of constant maintenance through re-appraisal and re-making—to be continually worked, reworked, critiqued and changed.

This sense of continuous making—of no decisive end point—highlights the long life of design objects and reinforces the constitutive place of both design and ethics in our lives. Ethics becomes not just a goal or end point, but something continuously lived, made and re-made—making us, and made by us, in all aspects of our living.

CONCLUSION

The phrase 'in the making' is an intriguing one. When we say that something is in the making, it can mean two things: it can suggest that something is in progress or coming into being (for example, when an important event is proclaimed as "history in the making"), or that a quality of something is contained in its making ("The beauty of the garment is in the making"). A feminist reading of *ethos* as always in the making suggests, I would argue, both meanings—*ethos* as continuously formed and reformed (never finished), but also that its quality (or worth) is contained in the made thing. When we attend to our *ethos*, we become responsible for its continuous making; *ethos* as location means attending to our ethical being through awareness of our place and our relation to the world.

This understanding of *ethos* as an ongoing making, and as an indication of our located experience, significantly alters our understandings of design and design ethics. It also effects how we perceive fashion and the role of the fashion designer. Through my practice-led research I have explored ideas of design, fashion, dressmaking, ethics and *ethos*. In order to conclude, I will summarise my key arguments and offer some new possibilities for ethical design discourse.

A summary of the research

In Chapter One, I undertook a literature review to outline definitions of both design and fashion. I argued that design is read almost exclusively through a tripartite structure—the teleological model of design as 'plan'; the original design object; and the designer as an autonomous design authority. In fashion design discourse, these distinctions are upheld, but with a particular emphasis on the authority and vision of the autonomous designer. Similarly, ethical discourse in fashion tends to be directed toward finding solutions and thus toward desired outcomes. In this way, the tendency of the ethical focus is to replicate the traditional tripartite structure focused on the object designed with the ethical designer as one who conceives of, and plans for, 'just' outcomes.

This model of design ethics, however, is limited by its containment within these design tenets. By expounding critiques of design as plan, and theories of ontological design, I outlined some new definitions of design that seek to account for the designer as located amid pre-existing conditions and constraints. These formulations aim to counter design conceived exclusively as an activity devised by the autonomous, self-contained designer. This alternative formulation suggests, instead, that design is embedded in, and constituted by, an engagement with world. In this way, design (and the designer) is seen as both shaped within a confluence of situations and shaping experiences. Through this reading of design, I assert furthermore that design ethics must take into account the ongoing, lived experience of the designer as one embedded in the pre-existing and constituent conditions of the world in addition to the outcome of a design.

In order to further develop these proposals, I looked at two key areas of making in Chapter Two—the domestically produced and the re-made. Dressmaking, and in particular domestic dressmaking, presents an interesting historical and practical counterpoint to conventional histories of modern fashion design. Producing in the home, and the reworking existing clothing in particular, are activities that are openly invested in their site or location of design. In addition, dressmaking's existence as an activity of material thinking—where the shaping of the work is a product of an integrated experience of embodied thinking—disrupts the neat separation of design (mind) and body (making) that underpins conventional conceptions of design. An analysis of the work of Maison Martin Margiela and Andrea Zittel reveals two exemplars of practice, which actively embrace such ideas. By looking at activities that are not entirely dependent on design as plan, and through Bill Brown's 'thing theory' as a de-centring of traditional subject-object relations, I further speculated on design as an activity grounded in lived temporal, spatial and cultural relationships—relationships that simultaneously reflect, create and re-iterate our situated cultural being.

In Chapter Three, I described the creative practice that I undertook during my candidature. I traced my exploration of location through reflection on my use of chance procedures, improvisation, collaboration, and bricolage techniques. Through these techniques I sought to connect materially with the circumstances of

location, to understand design as an embodied and located making. I then described my dressmaking practice as a slow 'teasing out' of ideas related to selfhood, agency, and embodied thinking. This creative exploration culminated (for this project, at least) in a major body of work titled *wearer/maker/wearer*, in which garments were made and gifted to friends and family, then documented through photographic portraiture and presented as a photo-book. This work, and the creative practice as a whole, articulates an ongoing engagement with issues pertaining to place—the acknowledgement (and communication) of the maker as one who is simultaneously making and being made by the world.

In Chapter Four I tied together the following: my critiques of design and the autonomous designer, my exploration of domestic fashion production and the re-made, and my own creative practice. I achieved this through an exploration of *ethos*. I showed how although our modern word 'ethics' is rooted in the classical Greek '*ethos*', their respective meanings and translation have undergone significant shifts in different historical contexts. Through a contemporary feminist reading of *ethos* as location, however, I understand *ethos* as pertaining to our conditioned and embodied experience. I grounded my creative practice in the awareness of, and attention to, my subject positioning as something never entirely separate from my environment. Furthermore, I identified my working ethic as functioning through an articulation of my *ethos*—the identification of my positioning within pre-existing historical, geographical and cultural conditions.

When I re-make, or make in the home, design is highlighted as an iteration of what already is, nuanced by embodiment in time and place. Broadening my awareness of the worlds into which I work creates new apprehensions of making, particularly with regard to the complex dialogues between the situational circumstances of time and place, the limits of my own skill base and physical embodiment, as well as in relationship to collaborations with outside parties. Through re-made things and the domestically produced, I seek to touch these complexities, to speak something of my engagement with the world, however imperfectly or incompletely. It is the chasing of an awareness—of stopping it and highlighting it through the palpable traces of making.

The practice of re-making is thus an apprehension of imperfection and incompleteness. The notion of continuous and embodied production, of things changing through time and place, suggests that both design and ethics are perpetually in the making and contingent on our sites of making. This sense of continuous making—of no decisive end point—disrupts notions of the original design object, design as plan, and the figure of the autonomous designer. This is my chief claim and contribution to knowledge—to refocus the very idea of 'design' in fashion practice. By reinforcing the constitutive place of both the material and the immaterial in our living and the related notion that one is never able to separate their subjectivity from the conditions of the world, we must accept that nothing is ever entirely new, and nor is it ever exclusively the product of a plan or 'mind'. Similarly (and significantly for fashion discourse) the figure of the autonomous designer is destabilised—the designer is no longer a solitary or self-contained but immersed (and therefore acting within) the conditions of the world. We are forced to acknowledge what Buckley calls "the situated nature of identity" (1998:158).

Ethical design discourse is similarly inflected by this reformulation of design. Through recognising *ethos* as location, ethics becomes not just a goal or end point, but something continuously lived, made and re-made—making us, and made by us, in all aspects of our living. Furthermore, as it shows our subjectivity as dependent on our making (and our having been made) within the specifics of our cultural location, it positions our ethics as something in need of our constant attention. Through re-working existing garments and objects, and through bricolage, improvisation, and collaboration (activities which all require embodied attention on a case-by-case basis, rather than relying on generalised, planned approaches) I seek to disrupt my habitual responses. Although this practice is in itself imperfect—in that any working requires tacit approaches which risk becoming automatic or unthinking—I nonetheless see it as a way to foster an awareness of my place in the world. By having to almost 'start anew' with each work, I attend to my *ethos* and my ethics.

Through a connection to *ethos*, understandings of fashion, design practice and design ethics shift from an end object focus to something that continues, ever-

shifting, and always in the making—embedded, and invested, in the locatedness of everyday lived experience. By way of *ethos*, I have shown an understanding of fashion design practice as not only a broad area of activity, but as an activity which enacts materially our place in the world as one conditioned by embodied experience. This reconfigures the designer not as an autonomous figure, but one who is made, and makes, within larger stories of making. This moves discourse in design ethics toward as not just as a concern for just outcomes, but as a fundamental way of creating, identifying—and being responsible for—our presence as part of an interconnected world.

The significance of the research

In undertaking this research, several contributions to knowledge have been made.

First of all, the project is significant in that it contributes—critically and methodologically—to a dialogue around fashion design practice from a practitioner's perspective. Through my critical engagement with the histories, traditions and practices that inform understandings of contemporary fashion design I present a viewpoint that is thus far under-represented in fashion design discourse. In this way, I have re-inscribed questions of practice within explorations of fashion, and extended conceptions of fashion design practice through an exploration of the complications presented by re-making and domestic dressmaking. In a broader but related sense, my project also contributes to the emerging field of practice-led research. This is because the research is framed and explored through my experience and particular interest in dressmaking.

In terms of design, the research builds on commentaries that question predominant definitions of design. My exploration into the predominant image of the autonomous designer, the original design object, teleologically focused models of design process thus add to those movements in design thinking that seek to re-formulate design both as an idea and as a practice. This investigation is particularly significant for fashion; within fashion, the project presents a major critique of the sovereignty of the designer. In my work, the designer is not positioned as autonomous (or separate from the world, controlling from 'on high')

but rather, is seen as part of larger (and often unknowable, or uncontrollable) histories and traditions.

This re-formulation of design effects approaches to, and understandings of, ethical conduct in both fashion and the wider field of design. The project provides a new model for ethical design discourse by redefining ethics not as an end to be reached through design thinking, but as something embodied and lived through our located experience. It contributes to new knowledge as an examination of fashion design ethics through notions of *ethos*—as a fundamental question of our located being. By positioning an awareness of '*ethos* as location' as integral to approaches to fashion design and ethics, I provide a new model for ethical design thinking—one that seeks to transform how fashion designers see themselves in the world and their responsibilities for ethical design. By reinstating *ethos* in discussions of design ethics, I disrupt the 'designed' model of ethics as plan.

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Appendix A
List of Research Activities (2007-2011)

Group Exhibitions
Slow Fashion - Noosa Regional Gallery (June 2007)
How You Make It - Craft Victoria, Object Gallery Sydney (March-June 2008)
Co-operative Fashion - Z3 Level 3 Foyer, QUT (October 2008)

Solo Exhibitions
Making Plans - Noosa Regional Gallery (June 2007)
Making Response - H-Block Gallery, QUT (February 2008)
wearer/maker/wearer - QUT Art Museum (August-September 2009)

Publications
"Dressmakers, Designers and Re-made Things" (2009) in *Five: Fashion Musings,* Vaughan, S. and Schmidt, C. (eds.) Teneriffe, QLD: Post Pressed.

"Fashion, Ethics, Ethos" (2011) in *Design and Ethics: Reflections on Practice*, Felton, E., Vaughan, S. and Zelenko, O. (eds.) Routledge (forthcoming)

Online Publications
(Review) *Fashion Speak* by David Meagher (March 2008)
http://reviews.media-culture.org.au/modules.php?name=News&file=article&sid=2490

(Review) *Shape: Talking about Seeing and Doing* by George Stiny (July 2008)
http://reviews.media-culture.org.au/modules.php?name=News&file=article&sid=2674

(Review) *Chaos, Territory, Art* by Elizabeth Grosz (January 2009)
http://reviews.media-culture.org.au/modules.php?name=News&file=article&sid=3076

(Review) *Difficulties of Ethical Life* by Shannon Sullivan and Dennis J Schmidt (eds.) (May 2009)
http://reviews.mediaculture.org.au/modules.php?name=News&file=article&sid=3355

Conference Presentations
Co-operative Fashion (with Madeline King) IGNITE, QUT (October 2 2008)

Conference and Symposium Attendance
IGNITE 2008 QUT (October 1-3 2008)
AAANZ: Alpha Alpha Alpha November Zulu Southbank, QLD (December 4-6 2008)
Fashioning Now UTS, Sydney (July 28 2009)

Other Lectures/Presentations
Fashion and the Plan – PhD overview Artspoken, QUT (March 11 2008)
Dressmakers, Designers and Domestic Spaces GOMA, Brisbane (Nov 1 2009)
Chance in "Co-operative Fashion" Revealing Practices, QUT (Nov 27 2009)

PhD Milestones

Stage 2	June 2007
Confirmation	June 2008
Final Seminar	July 2010

Public Programs/Workshops
Fashion in the Library (with Hannah Gartside and Monika Holgar), Brisbane City Council Library (May 2007)
the stitchery presents: Up-cycling Fashion (with Hannah Gartside), as part of Brisbane City Council's Art Bites program (June 2010)

Appendix B

Links to web-based activities

Co-operative fashion (via YouTube)
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fm1-Epf7Phw (Part One of Two)
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l8miku0RNBM (Part Two of Two)

Research blog (via Blogger):
www.iheartmakinstuff.blogspot.com