Fashion Communication and Ageist Sentiment in the Australian Fashion Industry

A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Design

Heather Saltmarsh
B. Ed (Arts and Craft), BA (Fashion)

School of Fashion and Textiles
College of Design and Social Context
RMIT University

January 2018
Declaration

I certify that except where due acknowledgement has been made, the work is that of the author alone; the work has not been submitted previously, in whole or in part, to qualify for any other academic award; the content of the thesis/project is the result of work which has been carried out since the official commencement date of the approved research program; any editorial work, paid or unpaid, carried out by a third party is acknowledged; and, ethics procedures and guidelines have been followed.

I acknowledge the support I have received for my research through the provision of an Australian Government Research Training Program Scholarship.

Heather Saltmarsh

January 2018
## CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CONTENTS</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ABSTRACT</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Objectives</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Methodology</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. THE ISSUES</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Garment Size</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visibility</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female Stereotypes</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Body Image</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Persistent Prejudice</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Design Aesthetics</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender Equity and Work</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. CONSUMER AND INDUSTRY FOCUS</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consumer Questionnaire</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Industry Interviews</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. EXHIBITION</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Fashion Hates Me; Was It Something I Said?’</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 Fashion Illustrations</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exhibition Summary</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. DESIGN THEORY FOR FASHION</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Body Shape and Proportion</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colour Association</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colour Theory</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colour Context</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Line, Shape and Texture</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Design Theory for Fashion Summary</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. DESIGN THEORY ILLUSTRATIONS</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure Development</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colour Comparison</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shape, Division and Distribution</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pattern and Texture</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stripes</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pattern Scale</td>
<td>102</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Design Theory Illustruation Summary</td>
<td>108</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. CONCLUSION</td>
<td>109</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>REFERENCE LIST</td>
<td>112</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ILLUSTRATION LIST</td>
<td>118</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
ABSTRACT

Mature women's fashion, for those aged 35 years and older, seems underrepresented in the Australian marketplace and media. International research suggests similar circumstances prevail for older women abroad but there are conditions unique to Australia's garment industry that exacerbate and frustrate mature consumers further. This research investigates factors affecting midlife consumer's fashion in Australia and explores the lifestyle interests and expectations of mature consumers. Research on attitudes to aging were investigated through a broad range of source material including academic papers local industry interviews, historical fashion references and a consumer questionnaire. Academic research pointed to a misunderstanding of mature consumer's needs and dated concepts about mature women's aesthetic interests in clothing. An exhibition of t-shirt graphics was devised to highlight historical and contemporary views on mature women and fashion. A series of design communication illustrations were developed for use by designers to challenge fashion precepts that stigmatized mature women's clothing.
1. INTRODUCTION

This research commenced with the proposition that the design of mature women’s fashion is not well understood and seems underrepresented in the Australian marketplace and media”.

Australia’s population from the early 1990s is said to be an ‘aging’ one because of a lower national birth rate and higher life expectancy amongst its adult communities (ABS 2004). Despite this recognition, older women’s fashion remains a marginal if not clandestine market having very little profile within the fashion and general media. Since the post war era, the focus for fashion has been increasingly on the youth market. Even at designer levels, fashion is photographed on teenage models because fashion and being fashionable is now equated with being young, thin or physically underdeveloped (Borland and Akram, 2007; Dove, 2006; Twigg, 2010). The only relief from this pervasive parameter is celebrity editorial where the trim, older actress or social identity is occasionally represented. Media visibility for mature women is a significant issue (Borland and Akram, 2007; Dove, 2004; Dove, 2006; Lewis, Medvedev and Seponski, 2011; Twigg, 2010). Visibility for ordinary women of any age is uncommon (Dove, 2006, Target Australia, 2015) but few advertisers or editors display their product on older women (Millers, 2015; Feathers, 1998). The reasons for this situation seem to lie in the prevailing notion that fashion is a young person’s prerogative.

Media ‘invisibility’ affects access to age inclusive product; women generally need to search out mature fashion in the marketplace where size range is sometimes the only indicator of potential age accommodation in apparel. Size however does not guarantee suitable fit since subtle changes can occur in body shape with age and increased size will not adequately encompass the non-standard proportions of a mature figure (Davis, Vol 1, 2000; Berry and Hennes, 2008). Variations in mature body shape include increase in body fat due to a slower metabolic rate, a thickened waist and high hips, a lowered bust line and lowered and flattened buttocks (Davis, Additional Reading, 2000) Because body shapes vary significantly amongst individuals as they age, older consumers need to find a brand with a suitable range of sizes and a reflective fit for their mature physiques. Not enough information is provided in generic fashion advertising to indicate variation in body shape since the Australian sizing statistics (Standards Australia, 2008) have not been officially updated since 1997 (Kennedy, 2008). Manufacturers who’ve developed their own sizing systems are reluctant to share their research because of loss of competitive advantage leaving consumers to research the fit of fashion product via extensive trial and error across different brands.

Lack of accurate garment fit for mature body shapes may be an inhibiting factor in fashion purchase and may account for the preference for semi-fitted garment shapes (LaBat and DeLong, 1990; Pisut and Connell, 2006; Saltmarsh 1998) amongst mature female consumers. But while finding accurate fit is an important factor in the purchase process, satisfying aesthetic value is a pertinent criterion in the early stages of product selection (De Klerk and Lubbe 2008; Otieno, Harrow, Lea-Greenwood, 2005; Twigg, 2011; Woods and Padgett, 1987). Tactile qualities and the visual appeal of apparel contribute significantly to purchase intention yet it is often
these sensory characteristics that are diluted or moderated in the design of mature women’s fashion (Twigg, 2011). Fashion texts from the 1950s onwards contain advice for women ‘of size’ or ‘of age’ on selecting muted tones or neutral textures to avoid being seen or to limit unwanted attention (Chambers, 1951; McCall’s, 1968; Mortimer-Dunn, 1973). More recent references suggest older women may wish to choose mid tone colors to appear younger (Keiser and Garner, 2008) or that the popularity of black in fashion clothing is because of its ‘slimming’ capacity (Sorger and Udale, 2006). At no time do these authors suggest colour selection may be part of fulfilling an aesthetic desire other than to deflect the aging process, but fail to explain how these suggestions achieve their goal.

The importance of career or women’s work outside the home is a relatively recent trend (ABS, 2006) and statistics for work force participation have steadily increased amongst all female age groups since the late Twentieth Century, particularly for older women (ABS, 2006). Older women’s work attire (structured and tailored daywear including jackets, skirts, trousers, shirts, dresses and knitwear) does not feature regularly, if at all, amongst the glamorous location shoots or studio settings of high fashion magazines, despite high readership amongst older female age groups (Lewis, Medvedev and Seponski, 2011). A significant activity amongst older women is again under represented within conventional fashion channels that concentrate on artificial environments to promote clothing. Women’s participation within the work force, despite an increase in professional and managerial roles amongst the over 55 age group (ABS, 2010) is not yet seen as a subject of photographic.

Objectives
The objectives of the research were to firstly raise awareness of the issues confronting this mature consumer group and secondly challenge the conventional assumptions about the aesthetic viability of designing apparel for the mature women’s market.

The project asked two research questions:

- What problems are associated with design for the mature women’s fashion market in Australia?
- How could fashion communication make a contribution to address those problems?

Research Methodology
The research has been conducted part-time, commencing in 1998 in response to a perceived need in the Australian women’s wear market for mature women’s fashions. The term ‘mature’, refers to adult women aged 35 years and above and constitutes a potentially significant market sector in terms of volume and diversity within the Australian fashion market. Through direct observation of the marketplace and review of fashion periodicals, mature fashion product did not appear to reflect the variety or volume available to youth markets in Australia. With the heralded growth in aging populations, the mature market sector seemed underrepresented in the Australian marketplace and the sparse nature of product offerings suggested mature women’s fashion was not well understood. The research proposed to
investigate reasons for these observations and devise a response beneficial to the mature women’s market

The following outlines how the research was undertaken and in doing so aims to clarify the research shifts that occurred (Diagram 1). The most significant shift being the move away from the original intention of developing a garment collection to instead be focused on developing a series of illustrations as a guide for designers in the mature fashion industry. While this shift was significant, the original proposition has remained constant: that the design of mature women’s fashion is not well understood and seems underrepresented in the Australian marketplace and media.

**Contextual Review**

The research began with needing to understand the situational context of the mature women’s fashion market. A range of literature including textbooks, sewing journals, popular press, fashion periodicals and academic papers in pursuit of visual and written references about attitudes towards women, fashion and aging were reviewed. The historic references were frequently explicit in their advice about concealment of aging and what constitutes age appropriate dress while more contemporary references (with the exception of academic papers) scarcely acknowledged age related interests at all. At the inception of the research the fashion press concentrated their attention on youth markets or elite fashions using very young women as models. Contemporary fashion journals continued to promote youth and elite fashion culture in much the same way as earlier publications. Initial studies by academics concentrated on issues pertaining to garment fit and body image and women who did not fit the stereotypical body shape utilized by fashion manufacturers. More recent academic papers discussed prejudices related to the age and appearance of mature women, their relative invisibility in the fashion media and the disadvantages faced by older women in purchasing fashion when communication media rarely acknowledged mature age fashion.

From the contextual review a consumer questionnaire and a small number of industry interviews were undertaken. These there designed to assist with identifying the key issues.

**Consumer**

A consumer questionnaire, consisting of multiple choice questions was developed in relation to mature women’s fashion preferences and lifestyle choices and involved 32 respondents from between the ages of 30 to 60 plus. This questionnaire asked mature consumers about their personal preference in clothing type, sizes purchased and issues relating to clothing selection to determine consumer satisfaction with fashion product available on the Australian market (chapter 3). In addition, respondents could add comments to most questions if desired. While the survey was limited, the results suggested a degree of frustration for respondents with regard to garment fit and available styling selections particularly related to work attire and self-expression. The survey also indicated that work is a significant motivation for clothing purchase and that a mix of classic and eclectic styling represented individual purchase needs.
**Industry Interviews**
A series of interviews were also conducted amongst local Australian fashion industry representatives from companies known to produce clothing for mature customers. Remarks about the mature age market were at times negative and terms of derision were used in relation to the clothing produced (chapter 3). One company had rebranded itself to a 20 years old fashion label with a cut off of 30 years in its customer base leaving its traditional consumer to go elsewhere for clothing. Another company restricted itself to luxe resort wear because of the ease of fit resort wear allowed.

The findings from these interviews were limited. While the views of the interviewees may not be representative of the companies they worked for but are concerning none the less and indicative of an entrenched negativity towards age and aging in relation to fashion. Those interviewed were asked general questions about the company and the age range of their target customer and volunteered their opinions without direction.

It was through undertaking the contextual review, initial consumer questionnaire and industry interviews that a number of issues were identified. These issues included: Garment Size, Visibility, Female Stereotypes, Body Image, Persistent Prejudice, Design Aesthetics, Gender Equity and Work (Chapter 2).

**Exhibition**
As a result of this primarily work and the issues it raised an exhibition was developed as a creative response (chapter 4). Illustrative work was devised for an exhibition that highlighted the stereotypical attitudes towards mature women and fashion both in an historical and contemporary context. The illustrations were printed on custom made and ready to wear t-shirts and were intended as humorous statements on the entrenched prejudices that still exist in relation to age and aging within fashion and its related industries. The focus of the exhibition was on the consumer’s point of view to provide acknowledgement that their issues were recognized in some part. Comments from patrons of the exhibition were largely favourable with ‘about time’ as a repeated comment in favour of mature women’s fashion concerns.

**Review and Repositioning of Research Methodology**
As stated, the original intention of the research was to produce a ‘fashion forward’ or fashionable garment range for mature consumers. However, in reviewing the responses from the consumer survey, industry interviews and reflection on the contextual review and issues arising, it was realised that it would be impossible to adequately address all concerns related to mature women’s fashions within a solitary seasonal fashion range. Difficulties with sizing standards pertaining to age made the prospect of a garment range unwieldy and unreliable.

Consequently, the decision was made to move from 'by project' to 'by thesis' mode. The outcome of the research shifted from being directly consumer focused to being industry focused where illustrations based around design aesthetics could generate graphics to challenge and potentially dispel mythology about mature women’s appearance and fashion. These design tools could provide helpful communication for
designers working in the mature age sector in the way no seasonal garment range could without an accurate size standard to fit it.

*Analysis of Design Theory for Fashion*

In repositioning the research this way, the emphasis became on the analysis of design theory for fashion (chapter 5). The analysis focused on: Body Shape and Proportion; Colour Association; Colour Theory; Colour Context; Line, Shape and Texture.

Fashion related design theory is often a literal interpretation of depth perception clues used in visual arts depiction and appreciation and does not translate as succinctly to three dimensional form as it does to the depiction of three dimensional form. Most historic fashion texts see the elements and principles of design as mechanisms to camouflage imperfect form and create the illusion of ideal form. ‘The rules’ are applied as cautionary edicts on how to appear slimmer and taller or how to conceal characteristics that come with age. Contemporary texts do little to counter such translations and some make no mention age related design concerns at all. Most of the fashion rules have acquired an ageist sentiment over time.

*Industry Focus: Design Theory Exercises*

The final part of the research became a series of illustrated fashion diagrams that aimed to address aesthetic prejudices in a constructive way for those designing fashion for mature consumers (chapter 6). In doing so these challenge the validity of conventional fashion design theory in relation to mature women. Much of the advice in fashion texts of the past is repeated in contemporary volumes and is simplistic in its interpretation and application of design theory for fashion. Given the prejudice that exists in relation to mature age fashion, the decision was made to focus on generating design theory applications to dispel age related myths. Through a series of illustrated diagrams the purpose was to produce a body of work that challenges the validity of conventional fashion design views and provide a useful reference to those in the industry designing fashion for mature consumers.

The conclusion of the research (chapter 7), considers further work and the potential application of the research. It speculates that these design illustrations could form the basis of a style guide that provides aesthetic considerations for designing for the mature age market.
Proposition: Design of mature women’s fashion is not well understood and is underrepresented in the Australian marketplace and media.

Research Methodology

Contextual Review:
Review included: academic papers, textbook references and popular press

Consumer questionnaire:
Survey of Thirty-two women about the type of clothing they purchased, sizes they purchase and issues experienced in relation to apparel.

Industry Interviews:
Three interviews conducted with representatives from fashion labels known to produce clothing for mature consumers.

Identification of issues:
Issues included: Garment Size, Visibility, Female Stereotypes, Body Image, Persistent Prejudice, Design Aesthetics, Gender Equity and Work

Consumer focus: Exhibition
‘Fashion Hates Me’ exhibition of printed t-shirts with graphic content and humorous text relevant to issues confronting mature fashion consumers.

Analysis of design theory for fashion:
Design theory included: Body Shape and Proportion; Colour Association; Colour Theory; Colour Context; Line, Shape and Texture

Industry focus: design theory illustrations
A series of illustrations aiming to address aesthetic prejudices in a constructive way for those designing fashion for mature consumers and challenges the validity of conventional fashion design theory in relation to mature women.

Application of research:
Aesthetic considerations for designing for the mature age market: a potential style guide

Conclusions

Diagram 1: Research Methodology Diagram
2. THE ISSUES

Fashion in its broadest sense is defined as the ‘current, popular custom or style esp. in dress [or] manner of doing something’ (Australian Oxford Mini Dictionary, 2006, p180) and it is this definition that applies to the research. “Fashion Communication and Ageist Sentiment in the Australian Fashion Industry was initiated in response to a perceived gap in the Australian women’s wear market for adult, mature and older women. The focus was on midlife women between 35 and 50-plus years; an age range where women potentially occupied significant roles within the workplace. Recent developments have seen the retirement age for women extend to 65 to 70 years and so extend the age range of the original research group. Work attire on the Australian market for mature women in the late 1990s, seemed limited in variety and scope. Many of the mainstream fashion labels from mid-market to volume level were aimed at young adult consumers and their lifestyles while those catering to an older clientele predominantly offered either casual and weekend wear or formal event dressing options. Yet limiting work attire seemed out of step with the economic reality of the Australian Bureau of Statistics 2006 report on employment trends in women’s lives (ABS 2006). The 2006 ABS report mapped the changes in women’s employment, both paid and unpaid, between 1979 and 2004, and noted the proportion of women employed, aged 15 year and over, increased in all age groups.

Initially the project’s aim was to design and produce a range of clothing to accommodate the needs and interests of mature working women, but as the research progressed the reasons for the lack of fashion available for this group revealed ambivalence, at best, to an outright aversion, at worst, towards mature age fashion within the Australian industry. One garment collection could not address the complexity of issues around mature body shapes and sizing standards in Australia, nor could it address the issue of age invisibility within the fashion media, a primary source of access and aesthetic information for consumers. During the progress of the research, a wide range of primary source material was compiled and analysed; issues about women’s age and appearance recurred throughout the reference material and invited more urgent academic debate. Commentary on age appropriate dressing in the popular press signalled a greater need to identify and investigate the assumptions stigmatising contemporary fashion for mature females and to address those issues in a different way.

Garment Size

The accuracy of women’s clothing sizes (Barry, 2008) and the changing dimensions of 21st century Homo Sapiens (Callaghan, 2008) have been perennial topics of discussion in the popular press and broadcast media over the last decade. They are subjects that can elicit emotive comment because they touch on the highly charged issues of obesity, women’s appearance and the morality of catering/not catering to a plus-sized market. During the early stages of the research little technical information was available on age related size and body shape in Australia. Academics in other countries, including the UK and USA, were significantly involved in studies on fit and sizing for women’s apparel in the early 2000s, but an accurate anthropometric survey from which to develop new Australian clothing size standards had not been conducted. The existing sizing code AS1344-1997 was developed from a hybrid of statistics including a self reported magazine survey conducted in the late 1960s
Modified over time, the 1997 code from Standards Australia was heavily criticized for its inaccuracy and consequently many fashion businesses developed their own sizing standards forcing consumers to ‘test drive’ sizes in each brand to find an appropriate fit. There is also the stigma attached to larger sized women and their clothing; a belief persists that fashion is for the young; that it is ‘body-conscious’ and designed for an ideal figure rather than the real body shapes of mature adult women. Without better understanding age specific sizing needs, it is hard to produce well fitting clothes for mature women and it is harder to challenge the prevailing culture that only the thin and youthful are entitled to access fashion and to be seen to wear it.

Visibility
The functional urgency of establishing representative sizing statistics meant academic activity in the late 1990s was dominated by the mechanics of clothing rather than the philosophy of it. The increasing body size of populations worldwide necessitated formal sizing reviews in many countries but the aging nature of western populations was heralded by marketers as a potential boon if the apparel industry were to direct their attention toward it. As with the plus size market (Fearon, 1998), the ‘grey dollar’ was seen potentially as an area of economic plenty if handled astutely (Chalke, 1998; Textile View, 2001) but little if any interest in the latter was exhibited by the traditional fashion press.

The invisibility of mature women during the last few decades is not a phenomenon unique to Australia; the ‘cultural norm’ for fashion models is a tall, thin and very young body type which is prevalent in contemporary European and American ‘high fashion’ magazines. If older individuals appear in print they are usually celebrities or socialites who show little evidence of chronological aging. Body image and body cathexis, clothing fit and customer dissatisfaction have become topics of recent academic debate with some researchers keen to question the reluctance of fashion industries to take up the cause of older women when the spending potential of mature consumers has been acknowledged for over a decade. (Borland H, Akram S, 2007; Lewis et al., 2011; Ot1eno R, Harrow C, Lea-Greenwood G, 2005).

British academic Professor Julia Twigg (2007), whose interest is in the study of aging and clothing, has written of the invisibility of older women in fashion in critical terms. She challenges the exclusive focus of fashion studies on elite levels of design and transgressive sub cultures suggesting sexuality is the driving force behind such interest. As ‘older’ women and their clothing choices do not rate highly. Twigg (2010) wrote of the practice of age neutralization in UK Vogue observing that older women, when they did appear, tended to be displayed within the beauty pages of the magazine, advertising products designed to ‘erase’ evidence of aging. Recent advertising on Australian television supports this observation with models from the so called ‘supermodel’ era (now in their mid 30’s and 40’s) featuring as ‘spokespersons’ for cosmetics companies rather than the fashion houses they used to represent. Twigg (2010) also observed that older women’s images were often ‘diluted’ by showing them in small scale so that wrinkles or other signifiers of age were less noticeable.
An investigative paper by Lewis, Medvedev and Seponski (2011) analysed 8 different US fashion magazines for images of women over forty who showed characteristics of visible aging including body shape, hair colour and wrinkles. The percentage of images of older looking women was under 10% (Lewis, Medvedev, Seponski, 2011), less than the separate percentages for readership of women aged 35 to 49 and those over 50. Over half of the readership for nearly all magazines was aged 35 and above with 4 titles (Elle, Essence, Harpers Bazaar and InStyle) showing the highest readership of all age groups was amongst 35-49 year olds. Ironically the authors found that images of men outnumbered those of older women, presumably because of the youth centric focus of most fashion circulations (Lewis, Medvedev, Seponski, 2011).

Fashion advertising for age inclusive labels (Basler, Feathers, Trennery, Trent Nathan) will often feature younger models in clothing intended for older consumers and this approach is what Julia Twigg (2010) suggests fashion editors term ‘Ageless Style’. In her article “How Does Vogue Negotiate Age: Fashion, the Body and the Older Woman” (2010) Twigg states that older women who show few visible signs of aging are “valorized as the ideal” (Twigg, 2010 p 485). She identifies tactics such as airbrushing photographs and decreasing their size to limit the impact of aging appearance or showing older women in groups with younger women to make the product appear more youthful and therefore more fashionable by association. But if fashion is truly ageless why aren’t more ages represented and why aren’t more body types depicted than those of young underdeveloped models who may be as much as 20% underweight? (Borland, Akram, 2007, p 315) Twigg suggests that older women interrupt the ‘visual field’ of magazines like Vogue and that successful aging in consumption culture is “…aging without showing the visible signs of doing so.” (Twigg, 2010, p 485)

**Female Stereotypes**

Academic Professor Julia Twigg in fashion communications, claims contemporary high fashion publications stereotype beauty as a single body type, that of a “prepubescent body” (Twigg, 2010, p 475) that becomes impossible to emulate with increasing age. The Dove study “The Real Truth about Beauty: A Global Report” (Etcoff et al, 2004) surveyed over 3000 women aged between16 to 64 in 10 different countries about the representation of women in the media. When asked, 68% of respondents agreed ‘the media and advertising set an unrealistic standard of beauty that most women can’t ever achieve’ (Etcoff et al., 2004, p 27). A further 75% stated they would like to see more diversity in physical attractiveness, age, shape and size within the media (Etcoff et al., 2004, p 43). A subsequent report, “Beauty Comes of Age” (Butler et al., 2006), surveyed 1450 women aged 50 to 64 in 9 countries. Nearly 60% of subjects believed ‘if magazines were reflective of a population, a person would likely believe women over 50 do not exist.’ (Butler et al., 2006, p 16) In addition, 6 in 10 surveyed considered ‘men over 50 are viewed as distinguished [while] women over 50 are viewed as over the hill or past their prime’ (Butler et al., 2006, p 15).

In response to these findings, Dove developed two ad campaigns for their products. *The Dove Campaign for Real Beauty* (2006) depicted women of different age, body size, shape and ethnicity, laughing while being photographed in their underwear and
the second campaign featured four mature women of different body shape and ethnicity in discreet unclothed poses. The advertisement for Dove’s Pro-Age skin care range (2007) clearly showed the women’s ages and the natural condition of their skin. Their poses were not suggestive or provocative but the women looked directly at the camera and smiled. The text to accompany the advertisement reads ‘Too old to be in an anti-aging ad... but this is not anti-aging...this is pro-age’. A voice states ‘Dove Pro-Age...Beauty has no age limit’ (Dove Pro-Age Campaign, 2007). The Dove Campaign for Real Beauty was well received; the Dove Pro-Age commercial was banned in the United States for nudity and is only available for viewing on You Tube or other independently posted web sites. It is not on the official Dove website. Critics claim the ad campaign denigrates women by presenting their bodies naked (http://adland.tv/ doves-new-pro-age-campaign-banned-because-nudity, 2007), but the company argued it was celebrating age and challenging the conventional definitions of beauty (Dove Pro-Age Campaign, 2007). The advertisement’s prohibition suggests a deep-seated prejudice toward older women and the nature of aging as much as it does about protecting public morality.

The lack of visual precedent for aging women in fashion and the unrelenting youthful beauty ideal prompted Borland and Akram (2007) to investigate the opinions of two groups of women, one older, one younger, in relation to body size and advertising. Both groups were shown 3 photographs; 2 of models approximating the current ‘ideal’ and one of a group of ‘real’ women of different sizes – the Dove Campaign for Real Beauty advertisement. The older group preferred the advertisement depicting “real” women and indicated their likelihood to try products represented by “normal” looking women. Advertisements featuring younger models in idyllic or unrealistic settings held limited appeal for the older women because their escapist themes showed no relevance to their lives. The authors suggested that ‘ageless’ advertising is a missed opportunity because it fails to acknowledge the reality of physical differences amongst older women and their validity as fashion consumers (Borland & Akram, 2007).

A similar study by J. M. Kozar (2008) on middle aged women’s responses to current fashion models included 182 women aged between 30 and 59 who were quizzed to determine if they preferred clothing models whose appearance more closely resembled their own. The author showed participants 4 photographs of models modified to appear as different ages. Participants found the photographs of older looking models more appealing and indicated a greater likelihood of purchasing clothing worn by older models. As with an earlier study on women aged 60 to 80 (Kozar & Damhorst 2007), middle aged subjects who perceived more similarity with models rated their attractiveness more highly and their clothing more fashionable (Kozar, 2008). Kozar and Damhorst (2007) noted participants from their study were particularly disgruntled with the stereotypical way in which older women are represented in the media as being either sick, infirmed or in need of products like wrinkle creams and hair dye to ‘improve’ their appearance (Kozar & Damhorst, 2007).

Seemingly at odds with this study by Kozar and Damhorst, Wray and Hodges (2008) examined the responses of ‘U.S. Baby Boomers’ (between 41 to 65 years) to active-wear advertisements featuring a chronologically aged model (53 years) and a cognitive age model (43 years) both wearing the same apparel and sports shoes
The 60%, majority of subjects, aged between 56 to 60 years, responded to a questionnaire and indicated they saw themselves as 5 to 10 years younger than their chronological age. The researchers found that participants preferred the advertisement with the ‘younger’ cognitive aged model who was engaged in walking, possibly because as active individuals, respondents were resistant to cliché images ‘depicting their age group as sedentary’ (Wray and Hodges, 2008). Another consideration for the cognitive age preference may have been the negative connotations associated with women’s aging appearance and a desire for subjects to distance themselves from the stereotype of ‘little old lady’ (Wray and Hodges, 2008). Still, the fact that the cognitive age model was 43 not 23 years old indicates that fashion advertising for this group needs to be presented within a realistic age range to be effective.

**Body Image**

The worrying thing about the absence of adult female representation in fashion media is the lack of positive reinforcement for women about their bodies, health, workplace and social standing. Its lack could serve to alienate older women from mainstream culture and has the potential to negatively impact self esteem. Body image, the mental picture we hold of ourselves, is linked to perceptions of self worth. While many studies on body image have focussed on young adults and adolescent girls (Chattaraman & Rudd, 2006; Etcoff et al., 2006; Jung, Lennon & Rudd, 2001), recent studies have sought to examine the perceptions of older women and the issues that affect their clothing choices.

The Dove study, ‘Beyond Stereotypes; Rebuilding the Foundation of Beauty Beliefs’ (Etcoff et al., 2006) interviewed 15 to 64 year olds in 11 different countries and found that ‘a woman’s self esteem impacts her willingness to engage in life (Etcoff et al., 2006). The subsequent report ‘Beauty Comes of Age’ (Butler et al., 2006) indicated that more than 80% of women surveyed (50-64 years), had ‘resisted activities because of feeling badly’ (Butler et al., 2006, p 33) about their aging appearance. These activities included ‘wearing revealing clothing or a bathing suit, being photographed, looking in the mirror or being viewed unclothed’ (Butler et al., 2006, p 33) which explains Dove’s attempt to push the boundaries in its Pro Age campaign and possibly the negative reaction to it.

Body image and body cathexis relate to an individual’s perception of their physical self and level of satisfaction with their physical self (Lebat & De Long 1990). Clothing is said to mediate that perception depending on the degree of satisfaction with fit and approximation of body shape (Chattaraman & Rudd 2006). Lebat and De Long (1990) found a significant relationship between negative lower body cathexis and dissatisfaction with fit at lower body sites and suggested that since fashion at the time required a close fit at lower body, this may have influenced their findings. They also suggested a contributing factor in dissatisfaction with fit may be that fashionable clothing is proportioned to fit a tall, lean, body standard that did not match the dimensions of many of the 19 to 40 years old subjects in their study. Lebat and De Long surmised that women see ill fitting garments as a sign their bodies are less than perfect rather than that clothing is modelled on an unrealistic ideal (Lebat & Delong, 1990).
Chattaraman and Rudd (2006) examined the relationship between body image, body cathexis and body size with aesthetic attributes in clothing such as garment styling. Using undergraduate students in an online survey, they found respondents with a lower body image and larger body size displayed preferences for greater body coverage in clothing and less fitted or revealing silhouettes. While the majority were presumably young adults, the preference for less revealing clothing by those who wear larger sizes echoes the sentiments of women in the Dove – ‘Beauty Comes of Age’ report (Butler et al., 2006) where increasing weight was cited as a negative concern about aging.

Pisut and Connell (2006) studied fit preferences in female consumers aged between 19 and 54 with approximately two thirds of the sample over the age of 36. They found that subjects with pear-shaped silhouettes had the lowest body cathexis scores and, along with those who had a rectangular body shape, were more likely to prefer less fitted garments than those with inverted triangle or hourglass silhouettes. Although the four key body shapes were spread evenly across all age groups, 19-35 year olds reported a greater tendency to have an hourglass silhouette. This hourglass shape forms the basis of standard sizing systems within the USA and does not readily adapt to fit a ‘pear’ or ‘rectangular’ shaped body.

Webster and Tiggemann (2003) confirmed other research that for women, body dissatisfaction continues throughout life. They established the importance of the body remained constant with age but the degree to which concerns about the body affect self esteem moderates. They assert older women exert more cognitive control over their perceptions by changing their expectations to protect their self concept and self esteem (Webster and Tiggemann 2003). While women may have concerns about their weight and changing appearance as they age, a level of pragmatic acceptance acts to moderate the perceptual impact of those changes. Borland and Akram’s (2007) paper, “Age is No Barrier to Wanting to Look Good: Women on Body Image, Age and Advertising”, affirms the desire for mature consumers to see their ‘real’ selves reflected in fashion advertisements (Borland & Akram, 2007).

**Persistent Prejudice**

‘Age appropriate’ is a term frequently used by social commentators to describe the ‘suitability’ of a woman’s dress in relation to her age. How that ‘appropriateness’ is determined is a nebulous and subjective process in which the commentator is a self-appointed arbitrator (Alderson, 2012) and can reward or castigate a woman for choosing clothes that challenge (or do not challenge) the social mores about age and appearance. That we have a ‘set of rules’ discriminating against appearance, seems ludicrous in the 21st century and, Julia Twigg says, puts age ‘at the same point ...we were in the 1970s in relation to gender’ (Twigg ,2010, p 474). Home sewing manuals from the early part of last century (Butterick, 1927; Butterick, 1930) show a more tolerant and inclusive attitude towards aging appearance than fashion and sewing texts from the latter part of the century (McCall, 1968; Mortimer-Dunn, 1973; Simplicity, 1975) where advice to older women or those with larger body types, is primarily concerned with concealing aberrant form rather than complementing complexions or aging attributes.
While most women of mature status are excluded from the fashion pages of newspapers and gossip magazines, a few ‘vintage’ celebrities still garner press. They are praised if they conform to the rules of taste and ‘decency’ but are scathingly attacked if they are seen to transgress them. The performer Madonna, now in her fifties, was once praised for her daring and synergy with the ‘zeitgeist’, but is currently criticized for dressing too ‘provocatively’ for her age. Despite her obvious physical fitness, the inference of such comment is that her attire (on occasions) is overtly sexual and therefore inappropriate for a fifty something mother. She is viewed as desperately clinging to her youth rather than representing an extension of her on-stage persona or mature self.

In an ironic twist, a column by Australian fashion journalist Maggie Alderson (2012) compared US first lady, Michelle Obama, with Samantha Cameron, the wife of the then British PM. She condemned Ms Cameron for dressing too ‘old’ by wearing her dress buttoned up to the collar and her hair down, stating that only ‘a young thing’ could get away with such a ‘demure’ look (Alderson 2012). She could have commented that Cameron’s dress style was too conservative but she chose to ridicule ‘age’ at a time when most mature women struggle with the notion of ‘mutton dressed up as lamb’ when choosing public attire.

These contrary views highlight the difficulty for women of age. They must appear stylishly fashionable so as not to appear too ‘old’ but not so fashionable as to appear sexually active or young. Such views fail to keep up with the changing social roles of women who may be late life parents, hold responsible working positions and be actively engaged in adult relationships. For many women, the choice to dress provocatively is not an option that can easily be exercised. Most ready-to-wear apparel for midlife consumers in the duration of this study has remained ‘safe’ and conservative, so unless they can fit into junior market sizes, adult consumers have few opportunities to challenge dress conventions. Fashion’s attitude toward age seems regressive and its focus is ‘profoundly...youth orientated (Twigg, 2011, p 9). That the mature women’s market is so restricted goes to the heart of social values about women as they age. Julia Twigg asserts the “…traditional exclusion of older women from fashion studies and fashion culture relates to the sense that they are outside the sphere of sexuality, or at least acceptable sexuality” (Twigg, 2011, p 3).

**Design Aesthetics**

The aesthetic variables and formal properties in older women’s clothing are a deliberate selection by the designer or design team to optimize potential sale of a given garment. In mature clothing, the aesthetic selection can be severely limited. Julia Twigg agrees with Alison Lurie’s sentiment in the text ‘The Language of Clothes’, when she suggests the signifiers of older women’s clothing include length, especially skirts and dresses, colour and to some extent shape. While the shape of a garment may reflect bodily changes such as weight gain, the selection of length is essentially arbitrary and so longer garments suggest both age and asexuality. Younger women she proposes are free to select any garment length they prefer (Twigg, 2007).

Colour is another agent policing older women’s apparel which is often presented in soft, dull or muted hues. These ‘quiet’ colours, Twigg states, “have become
associated for women with professional dress including... the sexually neutral ideal of men’s suits. But worn by older women, these pale, grey, beige, non-colours suggest social retirement or a withdrawn and sidelined status.’ (Twigg, 2007, p 293)

Black once figured prominently in mature wardrobes as a sign of mourning or married status, whereas it now has more ‘dangerous’ or ‘sophisticated’ connotations associated with risqué or elegant social pursuits. Twigg (2011) states it is often excluded from older women’s clothing unless they are involved with work or formal activities (Twigg, 2011).

In ‘Adjusting the Cut: Fashion, the Body and Age on the UK High Street’ (2011), Twigg interviewed prominent fashion retailers known to cater to older markets. She suggests that buyers and design managers act as ‘cultural mediators’ negotiating the ‘space’ between physical aging and social attitudes toward appropriate dress. Saturated or vivid colours are reinterpreted regarding fading complexions, by diluting colours to compliment older or paler skin tones (Twigg, 2011). The assumption is that all complexions are fair or predominantly European, but the intent to de-saturate colour is an attempt to integrate older women within mainstream fashion culture.

De Klerk and Lubbe (2008) investigated the role of aesthetics in evaluating apparel quality by female consumers. They conducted in-depth interviews with 15 adult career women about the function and aesthetic properties of specific garments and their value as determinants of purchase potential. The researchers found that interviewees consistently cited the ‘beauty’ of the garment as a prime motivator when choosing apparel as well as the importance of colour and the tactile nature of the fabric. Purchase was an intention if these sensory factors were fulfilled while the functional aspects of a garment such as its durability or care requirements were not rated as significant in the decision-making process. This suggests that sensory pleasure is a priority to adult female consumers and that the conscious down grading of colour, for example, potentially robs older women of such a sensory experience. The emphasis in most fashion advertising is on body shape and styling rather than subtle colour and textural preferences, uncover by De Klerk and Lubbe (2008), and so challenges conventional approaches to fashion photography.

Fashion employs predominantly ‘young people’, be it in design, marketing or retail, a phenomena Julia Twigg (2012) cites as a concern because youthful values are reflected in the ageist beliefs of the greater fashion industry and the magazine giants who support it (Twigg, 2012). Young designers’ understanding of age is more likely limited to memories of their grandparents or their parents, a perspective seen through the filter of youth rather than the objectivity of adulthood. This brings into question their capacity to judiciously design for the older women’s market.

According to Twigg, designers act as ‘cultural mediators’ (Twigg, 2011), responding to the market but also shaping it by “showing older women how they might present themselves and providing them with the material goods to do so.” (Twigg, 2011) The cut of clothing for mature women may be made less revealing but plays into assumptions about the ‘shamefulness” of aging anatomy. Twigg claims ‘...women’s bodies are judged against a cultural norm that equates sexuality with youthfulness and presents older bodies as inadequate, flawed or failed and better kept covered up (Twigg, 2011, p. 14). In Pisut and Connell’s study ‘Fit Preferences of Female
Consumers in the USA (2007) the preference for semi-fitted apparel was ‘pervasive’ with tightness and length indicated as the areas of greatest dissatisfaction amongst consumers (Pisut & Connell, 2007). That sizing standards are contentious could account for the fit issues amongst participants because the standards present problems regarding accurate dimensions in relation to age and body shape. However, concerns with garment length suggest this mature group of consumers has internalized negative attitudes towards age as mirrored in the dominant fashion culture.

**Gender Equity and Work**

Women’s increased participation in the workforce, particularly in ‘white collar’ professions (ABS, 2006), is a relatively recent phenomenon and women’s fashions have not kept pace with the significance of work in women’s lives. According to an Australian Bureau of Statistics’ labour force report, the highest proportion of women employed in 2004 was 75% amongst 45-49 year olds followed by 71% for those aged 20-24. While women’s workforce participation has increased in every age group since the late 70s, women aged 45-54 showed an increase from 45% in 1979 to 72% in 2004 and represent the highest proportion of all age groups in both full time and part time employment (ABS, 2006). The latter result represents a 27% increase in the number of midlife females engaged in paid employment activities and should validate an investment by fashion businesses in mature women’s apparel suited to a professional workplace environment.

Although contemporary dress codes for women’s workplace attire are in general more ‘relaxed’ in interpretation than for men, mature women’s labels such as Anthea Crawford, Maggie T, Stitches, Trenery and Trent Nathan as examples of implicit and explicit mature age labels, seemed to concentrate their offerings in the categories of after-five and weekend wear. ‘Anthea Crawford’ and ‘Trent Nathan’ were labels originally dedicated to high fashion apparel during the 1970s and 80s but have retained their mature customer base with evening and ‘weekend’ apparel. ‘Maggie T’ and ‘Stitches’ provide for ‘larger’ sized women with relaxed social attire and ‘Trenery’, launched in 2010, is ‘Country Road’ s sportswear offering to the 40 plus market. ‘Country Road’ until the early 2000s included mature women in their customer base and offered tailored suiting as part of their seasonal collections. A turnaround during the mid 2000s saw a shift to the 20s to 30s age group and a shedding of their classic suiting and traditional consumer with it. ‘Trenery’ was an attempt by C.R. to regain an older customer but she was not from a formal or corporate work environment; more a representative of the ‘Casual Friday’ ethos at the time of writing.

The fit of more tailored items such as jackets and business suits, requires a more committed approach to acknowledging body shape than most seasonal fashions allow. By comparison, men enjoy the ‘ubiquity’ of the lounge suit (Sooke, 2011) which changes subtly through the seasons via fabrication and design detail without compromising fit or function. As an accepted form of dress, the business suit is designed to last for years rather than a single season, which runs counter to the culture of most women’s fashion, particularly the junior market. The suit’s longevity and the financial commitment required to purchase it, permit men an advantage not afforded women at Ready-To-Wear (RTW) level, that of individualized fit. Men’s
suits and business shirts are offered in differentiated neck, chest and waist circumferences and vary in sleeve and trouser length. Women’s pants are generally only available in different leg lengths at volume market level and are not always suitable as a working wardrobe garment.

The relaxed shape that characterizes older women’s clothing (Twigg, 2011) is not just indicative of issues relating to the fit of mature body shapes and does not appear to affect the styling of men’s workplace apparel at similar ages. The concept of ‘body consciousness’ in women’s fashion, in recent decades, applies to clothing that is fitted closely to the female form and reveals the underlying physique through the worn garment. The body shape required to wear such apparel is usually that of a young and underdeveloped girl rather than that of a mature female, unless she has maintained an athletic physique throughout her adult life. Men’s apparel, except for darted shirts and ‘skinny’ jeans, has not subjected its wearers to the same kind of ‘scrutiny’ as its female counterpart, and men’s business wear companies still offer an ‘alteration service’ that has not regularly been afforded women since the 1970s. There is acknowledgement that body shapes vary amongst male consumers, but perhaps because of the history of men’s tailoring, there is a lack of stigma associated with the use of such services; the durability of men’s formal attire however, justifies the practise. Observation of men’s trousers (even at volume market level) reveals they are designed to be altered through the waistband at the centre back seam and have a generous seam allowance to provide for waistline expansion. Women’s trousers and pants have a zipper opening at centre front, side or centre back with a continuous waistband and no room for adjustment in the standard RTW centimetre seam allowance. Except at elite and designer levels, women’s fashions are designed to be impermanent and discarded with seasonal fashion trends and this compromises the construction and fit of many female RTW garments.

Employment statistics should reassure apparel designers and manufacturers that a valid market exists for mature women, but midlife consumers, with their figure ‘aberrations’ fail to carry the ‘artistic’ cachet and advertising license of younger consumers. Youth and sexuality is the focus of most contemporary fashion output and magazines like Vogue concentrate on the elite end of the market, where work is not the main source of revenue for its readership. Australia however is dominated by mid range labels and syndicated fashion publications that could benefit from a more sustained effort to accommodate the needs and interests of midlife consumers.
3. CONSUMER AND INDUSTRY FOCUS

As stated the project’s initial aim was to produce a collection of fashionable workplace clothing aimed at the needs of midlife consumers, but factors around the visibility of older women and the approach to the marketing of midlife fashion made a garment collection seem inadequate as a response. Limited offerings in apparel choice, problems with fit and the spectre of ‘age appropriate’ dressing’, prompted a survey of consumer interests, interviews with local fashion businesses and training in advanced patternmaking for mature women’s garments. While the results of the pattern making course confirmed that well fitting garments of sympathetic styling could be produced for the mature market with improved statistical data and pre-production methods, the problems around cultural perception related to women and aging suggested an alternative vehicle be devised to raise the concerns of mature, female, fashion consumers.

Consumer Questionnaire
A short questionnaire was conducted in 1998 with women aged between 30 to 60+ years within the Melbourne CBD and Melbourne Central shopping complex. The survey catchment area included the, Melbourne Central train station, Victorian State Library and RMIT University and attracted academic, professional and other workers in fulltime and part-time employment as well as home-makers, ‘stay-at-home’ parents or retirees. Thirty-two women responded to the survey and were canvassed about the type of clothing they purchased, sizes they regularly bought and any issues they experienced in relation to apparel purchase. Ages 35-40 and 45-50 were represented by 8 individuals each, followed by seven in 50-55, four in 40-45, two in 30-35 and 60+ category and one in the 55-60 age group. Work was the priority in clothing purchase for 17 of the respondents with a further 12 indicating work and social or recreational priorities. Difficulties with apparel purchase included fit and body shape (11), size range (6), limited style selection (11) or not suited to personal style (9), poor fabric quality or options (12), limited colour selection (7), poor construction quality (2), uncreative fabric choice (1), shapeless larger sized garments (1) and limited options because of petite stature (1). Trousers (11) were the most frequently specified item of preference with tailored suits (5), tailored jackets (3), tailored shirts (3) and other tailored items (3) followed by knitwear (10).

Only 32 respondents completed the questionnaire but within that group there was significant dissatisfaction with available fashion product. The results of the questionnaire also suggested that devotion to fashion trends at the expense of personal taste was not a priority in these age groups. The original objective of the research was to produce a ‘fashion forward’ garment range for the mature market but the survey responses signalled that fashion trends are acceptable only if they accord with personal taste and preference; a much more independent view of fashion than is offered at youth market level on the Ready-To-Wear market.

Industry Interviews
Three formal interviews were conducted with representatives from fashion labels known to produce clothing for mature consumers. Informal interviews were given with individuals in a fashion business catering to a range of age groups during a work placement period of four months. Of the three companies with formal
interviews, Company A’s target group was ages 40 plus while Company B had more recently rebranded their product to reflect the under 30s age group. Rebranding included print advertisements and catalogues featuring twenty years old models and a store refurbishment of interiors with bright, white interiors and fixtures. The size range of Company B’s product still catered implicitly to a mature age group. Company C produced shirts for both men’s and women’s wear markets and Company D produced high end women’s wear for youth, adult and mature markets.

The Marketing Manager for Company A was interviewed in July 1998, about the styling and nature of their fashion product which catered to women over forty and plus sized women in day and evening wear. The Manager was at pains to point out that she did not wear the company’s product and stated she had “asked my husband to shoot me” if she was tempted to wear any items from the range. Company A had a significant presence in a major department store and an established reputation for quality women’s wear in the mature and ‘oversized’ markets.

The Assistant Design Director of Company B interviewed in August 1998, had migrated from a junior market label as part of a rebranding exercise to reposition the company’s target group from 20-40+ to the 20-30 age range. The company, through offering a larger size range 8-16 and S-XL implicitly included mature women and was known for their casual apparel and sleepwear during the period leading up to Mothers Day, Valentine’s Day and Christmas. The AD was adamant that the target customer was no older than thirty and expressed no concern about the displacement of older consumers who had gravitated towards the label for many years. The company’s profile during the 1970s had been the youth market and the business seemed to want to capitalize on its notoriety and success from that period.

Neither representative from Company A or Company B, acknowledged the potential of an aging population as an economically thriving market segment. Mature women were not credited with a significant representation in the workforce (ABS 2006). The general attitude toward age and women from both companies was that fashion was only for the young. Company C produced a range of shirts for the mature woman and its Design Director interviewed in May 1999, reflected this attitude in the statement “We don’t do fashion here!” The D.D. further suggested the age range for the shirt label was “Fifty to death...” which signalled a lack of segmentation in the forty years age range and missed marketing opportunities if the former comment was to be taken seriously.

Company D produced three fashion labels at the time of the author’s work placement, one of which targeted mature women with a high-end range of social and recreational clothing. This company owned several national stand-alone stores as well as concept stores within national department chains and the Design Director interviewed between January and April 1999, in his mid-sixties, was unapologetic about targeting the 50+ group. Many of his friends were customers and employees and the company had a loyal following amongst its clientele. Company D’s other two labels targeted the youth and adult markets with social apparel, dress suitings and evening wear, whereas the mature label represented something of a departure by offering luxury resort wear. Fashion items from all labels were expensive, high quality garments, using distinctive and exclusive fabrications purchased directly from
fabric merchants in Italy. The mature label received the same attention as other labels during the design development and production processes.

The fit of Company D’s youth and adult labels was unforgiving and the fit model used for all labels was a 24 years old woman with an athletic physique. Fitting sessions for the mature label often included the addition of body line darts, despite the ‘relaxed’ styling of some apparel items, which store employees would respectfully request be removed to accommodate customer’s requests for a ‘looser’ garment. Short sleeves rather than sleeveless items were another frequent request amongst this age group, but the Design Director would ‘despair’ that he could do ‘nothing’ with short sleeves. He found the preference for ‘big shirts’ creatively stifling and reluctantly acquiesced to the request for more of them every season. These over-shirts were made with exotic or delicate fabrics and were a staple in other resort collections, but the lack of ‘body-conscious’ fit used in the more formal evening and social wear ranges, frustrated the Design Director. The mature label however was as financially successful as the other labels despite creative issues.

Company D’s approach was the most encouraging amongst Company A, B and C but battled to resolve issues about body shape for mature consumers and their self-conscious attitudes towards body image. National sales meetings ensured customers’ views were heard and the Design Director tried to accommodate customer preferences, albeit reluctantly at times. He preferred the artistic freedom of the ‘younger’ fashion labels but recognized the needs of loyal clients from the 1970s and 1980s had changed. His twin sister, who had retained a slender body shape, was his ‘muse’ and as another Director of the company, had significant input over styling in the final collections. Her influence was concerned with the ‘fashion worthiness’ of garment offerings and reflected her body shape and lifestyle. Some conflict remained over the fit of garments with a few concessions, that is, over-shirts and dresses with short sleeves, made for customers with different proportions.

Attitudes towards age in the companies interviewed were perplexing. Few representatives recognized the merit of a mature customer base or the advantages of a growing market sector. Nor was women’s work attire a priority with any of the nominated labels, including Company C which despite producing men’s business shirts focused on recreational garments for women. Work was not included as a lifestyle attribute for their core customers and ‘fashion’ was not seen as having an association with the workplace or the age group. Company B, like other established fashion labels at the time, was in the process of rebranding for a younger consumer. A tough economic climate and successive seasons of falling profit had seen fashion brands (Country Road, Just Jeans) abandon their mature customer base in favour of a younger market believed to have the most income at their disposal to spend on fashion. The value of the ‘grey dollar’ has since been recognized by Country Road when they launched ‘Trennery’ in 2010 specifically for the forty plus market, but none of the ‘classic’ suiting the brand had offered women during the 1990s was included in the ‘lifestyle’ brand; instead a ‘weekend’ wardrobe was the focus at the time of writing despite increasing employment trends for mature women. Interestingly, ‘Country Road’ has added men’s wear to the ‘Trennery’ label and offer male customers ‘smart casual’ and ‘formal’ attire whereas women’s wear remains in the ‘smart casual’ category.
4. EXHIBITION

Design exploration for this project started as development for a garment collection for mature consumers but with consideration of the responses from the consumer survey, technical issues around fit and body shape and entrenched attitudes towards mature women and fashion, an alternative to the planned garment collection was devised. An exhibition of graphic work printed on commercial and custom-made t-shirts was planned for the cultural events program of the L'Oreal Melbourne Fashion Festival in 2002. The work for the exhibition presented mature age fashion issues from the point of view of the consumer and offered exhibition patrons an opportunity to record their thoughts and opinions in a visitor’s book. Twelve printed garments were produced that used humorous images and text to highlight the issues confronting mature age consumers of fashion and were presented as ‘protest t-shirts’ providing a ‘voice’ for older female consumers. Mature women are often alienated by mainstream fashion media so the exhibition was an attempt at consciousness-raising via the printed t-shirt, a symbol of social rebellion. Each graphic and text is an attempt to highlight the issues confronting midlife consumers and to validate their concerns through ironic humour. The following outlines each printed piece with explanation of the issues at hand and the origins of the imagery used.

‘Fashion Hates Me; Was It Something I Said?’

‘Fashion Hates Me’ was a joint exhibition of MA Research Project work by Heather Saltmarsh and Rose Vera at the RMIT University First Site gallery in conjunction with the L'Oreal Melbourne Fashion Festival in March 2002. The author's component, ‘Fashion Hates Me; Was It Something I Said?’ included twelve printed t-shirts that highlighted issues related to mature women and fashion. The construction of the t-shirts demonstrated the differences in flat pattern method for specific and non-specific body shapes. Five t-shirts were drafted using Barbara Davis' patternmaking methodology for mature bodies and constructed using a selection of fabric colours and textures used to emphasize the graphic messages with which they were printed. Seven t-shirts were men’s readymade garments that showed minimal body shaping to represent the shapeless oversized fit often used for mature and larger sized women’s wear consumers. The construction and knit fabrication of the t-shirts produced a flat canvas like surface on which to print and display images suited to a wall-mounted gallery exhibition. The author/exhibitor developed a series of ‘found’ and original hand drawn and photographic images manipulated in Adobe Illustrator to compose graphic representations and montages emphasizing fashion’s capacity to ignore mature consumers. These issues were treated in a humorous manner so as not to alienate younger exhibition patrons or fashion industry representatives but still highlight the concerns of mature fashion consumers substantiated by the research for this project. Exhibition patrons were invited to record their thoughts in a visitor's book available during the exhibition. Comments showed contributing patrons were appreciative that the topic of age and fashion was being addressed and that the manner of presenting those issues via humorous text and graphics was light heartedly provocative and pertinent. That current affairs programs and the popular press have regularly revisited the topic of age, body shape and vanity sizing in the past 10 years shows that the issues presented by the “Fashion Hates Me” exhibition, still hold relevance for today's mature consumers.
The 12 Fashion Illustrations

‘Full Stop’ - Illustration 1

“Full Stop” signalled the disbarment of older women with mature body shapes from youth market fashion. The graphic image utilized the international STOP road sign and red circles with diagonal bars to indicate the exclusion of the full-figured silhouette from mainstream fashion. The female silhouette represents the ‘average’ woman in the 1951 fashion text “Color and Design” described as “stout, a little short” (Chambers 1951) but probably came from an earlier 1940s edition because of the hair styling and garment length portrayed. The use of an outmoded illustration is intended to show that attitudes towards older women have not changed and that fashion actively discourages their participation because of body shape and size. The “Full Stop” symbols are arranged in the shape of a face resembling a WWI gas mask with a badge-like motif stating ‘Fashion Hates Me’ positioned where the mouth of the mask would be. The disbarment symbols and statement badge are given a graduated flesh tone and the Stop sign has a drop shadow to introduce more depth to the assembled facemask image. “Was it something I said?” is printed beneath the symbols and in place of the size label at the back neckline a stylized outline of a t-shirt is printed with the words Full Stop above and below it. The ‘Full Stop’ motif was printed on a Large (L), white, readymade men’s t-shirt – a garment often used by larger sized women when none are available in a suitable size in women’s wear.

‘Ready Made Bias’ – Illustration 2

“Ready Made Bias” is a play on the term for prefabricated bias tape used to finish garment edges and the prejudices that exist towards mature women and fashion. A dressmaker’s tape measure calibrated in inches was scanned and ‘posterized’ in Adobe Illustrator then recoloured using red calibration with black numerals at irregular intervals to suggest various ages above 40 years. Forty inches is also the approximate bust size of the 1997 Australian standard for a women’s size 16; a size once rarely seen in youth market ranges but more prevalent as the incidence of obesity in younger populations increases. While fashion labels are reluctant to nominate an age range for their labels, forty was the assumed cut off age for adult fashion and an age scarcely represented in fashion imagery of the time. The font style used in the image title is similar to those used by stone masons when carving
Illustration 1

T-shirts from 'FASHION HATES ME' Exhibition

Heather Saltmarsh 2002

Was it something I said?

Illustration 1, 'Full Stop', H. Saltmarsh, 2002, Textile print on garment
Illustration 2

T-shirts from 'FASHION HATES ME' Exhibition

Heather Saltmarsh 2002

memorial headstones and is meant to suggest an immutable quality in the struggle to gain recognition for older women’s fashion needs. The red calibrations and numerals appear to be bleeding in the areas where the tape is folded and allude to the physical intervention some women are prepared undertake to stay within a fashionable size range. Three of the four companies interviewed for the research project were dismissive of the mature market and saw their output as irrelevant to mainstream fashion trends. The fourth company struggled with the physical needs of its consumers and found the requests for consideration of body image issues frustrating and creatively stifling. “Ready Made Bias” is printed on a large, dull blue, straight-sided, men’s t-shirt.

‘Isn’t It Ironic’ – Illustration 3
The text to “Isn’t It Ironic” reads ‘To Remove Creases Just Apply Pressure’ with an image of a flattened female figure beneath the profile of a steam iron. The font style for the text “To Remove Creases’ is irregular and simulates a child’s handwriting and the font for ‘Just Apply Pressure’ looks like lettering used in a pressure tape label maker. While the symbolism is obvious, appearance expectations for women start in childhood and are insidious; the pressure to remove signs of aging is evident in all fashion magazines through advertisements for anti-aging beauty products and cosmetic surgery. The absence of older women in general from editorial or feature articles in fashion magazines signals intolerance for aging appearance and as Julia Twigg notes when older celebrities do appear, all visible signs of aging are absent having either been removed electronically or by photographing the subject at a reduced scale so such facial features like wrinkles are less apparent (Twigg 2010). Aging appearance is not acceptable and so mature fashion holds no cachet for prestigious publications that rely on the revenue from advertising to survive. The advertising for anti-aging products and cosmetic surgery are usually presented at the back of the magazines away from the main content and younger readers interests. The message of the t-shirt is to conform to appearance norms or be ignored. The irony is that the mature market is a potentially lucrative one for fashion because of its population size alone, but convention dictates that it remains concealed or at best under represented. “Isn’t It Ironic” is printed on a small green t-shirt; the only youth garment included in the exhibition.

‘Spot the Indifference’ – Illustration 4
‘Can You Spot the Indifference’ is another obvious message contrasting the difference between the animated and idealized fashion model and an ordinary, static figure of short stature and overweight physique. Advertising for mature age labels rarely uses older models as part of their campaigns (Basler in Vogue Australia, March 2012; Trener in Life, The Sunday Age Magazine, April 24, 2011, and Sportscraft for David Jones in Good Weekend, The Saturday Age, March 17), and despite the age range of their target customer, will feature 20 year olds in escapist settings (Basler) to promote their product. The association with youth and fashion is a hard one to break because it has been cemented in the popular mindset since the post WWII period. The mature market represents an economic opportunity for highly skilled fashion organizations to expand their market share but indifference to this opportunity persists. Mature bodies do not conform to the appearance expectations of fashion magazines and acknowledgment of age in women is only for those who have appeared to defy it. (Twigg 2010). Two figures are presented in the same
Illustration 3

T-shirts from 'FASHION HATES ME' Exhibition

Heather Saltmarsh 2002

Illustration 4

T-shirts from 'FASHION HATES ME' Exhibition

Heather Saltmarsh 2002

Can you spot the indifference?

Illustration 4, ‘Spot the Indifference’, H. Saltmarsh, 2002, Textile print on garment
spotted underwear but in reality such features as detailed fabric texture and varied colour-ways are reserved for younger and smaller sizes in lingerie. Colour and texture were cited as primary considerations in apparel purchase for women (DeKlerk & Lubbe 2006), but a minimalist approach often accompanies lingerie for larger sizes because the belief that women want to hide their appearance in dark or neutral colours is still held. “Spot the Indifference” is printed on a large, red, men’s wear t-shirt to highlight the contrast between body-shapes of the two figures.

‘Look Sharp’ – Illustration 5
“Look Sharp” plays on the technical term ‘Mass Customization’ which describes the process whereby individual measurements can be translated by CAD-CAM (Computer Aided Design and Computer Aided Manufacture) processes used in ‘mass production’ to produce custom fitted apparel. The text “Look Smart” appears in red and visual references of scalpels and adhesive bandages suggest the surgical efforts undertaken by women to appear younger or more attractive than their current or natural appearance. An additional graphic at the hem of the white t-shirt substitutes the word ‘hate’ in ‘fashion hates me’ for the word ‘mutilates’ and a motif where the size label would be placed states ‘Size Matters’. ‘Body Sculpting’ and liposuction are expensive cosmetic procedures that are frequently advertised in the classified section of elite fashion magazines. That these advertisements do not feature in the body of the magazine suggests something distasteful or taboo about engaging their services but the effects of the procedures are implicitly encouraged by the absence of visibly older or overweight women within their pages. “Look Sharp” is printed on a large, white, straight-sided, men’s t-shirt to highlight the contrast with the red and flesh colours in the graphic and the ‘shapelessness’ of the male garment.

‘Facing a Curve’ – Illustration 6
“Facing a Curve” uses a technical term and shows repeated garment construction diagrams set against a faintly rendered form suggesting a female breast. The aging process is often accompanied by weight gain and a redistribution of fat deposits on the female body due to decrease in oestrogen levels post menopause (Davis, 2000). Fashionable youth market clothing is designed for young or underdeveloped bodies making the fit for mature women of healthy bodyweight uncomfortable or unattainable. Women who during their youth dressed as they pleased are faced with fewer fashion options as they age because the cut of clothing is not designed for their adult body shapes and the clothing presented in fashion magazines is often adorned on underweight teenage models. “Facing a Curve” is printed on a large, white, straight-sided, men’s t-shirt and sums up the difficulty mature women face if they wish to engage in mainstream fashion culture. The adolescent body shapes that are featured on many fashion models and the clothing that is designed for them, is unrealistic for mature women and feeds negative views about body image for those who can no longer maintain such a physique simply because they have matured. The uninformed opinion is that older women have ‘let themselves go’ whereas changes in muscle mass, bone density and fat distribution in women’s bodies as they age, particularly those associated with menopause, are unavoidable.
Illustration 5

T-shirts from 'FASHION HATES ME' Exhibition

Heather Saltmarsh 2002

Illustration 5, ‘Look Sharp’, H. Saltmarsh, 2002, Textile print on garment,
Illustration 6

T-shirts from 'FASHION HATES ME' Exhibition

Heather Saltmarsh 2002

Facing a Curve

facing a curve?

Illustration 6, ‘Facing a Curve’, H. Saltmarsh, 2002, Textile print on garment
Illustration 7

T-shirts from 'FASHION HATES ME' Exhibition

Heather Saltmarsh 2002

Illustration 7, 'Hanger Appeal', H. Saltmarsh, 2002, Textile print on garment
‘Hanger Appeal’ – Illustration 7

‘Hanger appeal’ refers to the appearance of a garment on a ‘hanger’ when offered for sale. The image is of a pink padded coat hanger positioned to suggest an erect phallus and alludes to the importance of sexual appeal in women’s appearance that accompanies fashion imagery. Researcher Barbara Davis recounts incidents of requests to remove darts in garments because their appearance reduces ‘hanger appeal’ (Davis 2000). It is hard to imagine such a request would be applied to men’s suit coats or jackets yet its effect is considered paramount in the marketing of women’s wear. For older women, the fit of a garment is important and mature body shapes necessitate more construction features to accommodate size and shape. Youth market fashion is often about rapid response and turnover and, because it is limited in size range, can sustain fewer construction methods, also making the garment cheaper to produce. The odds are against mature women’s wear as a quick fix investment in the prevailing fashion culture. “Hanger Appeal” is printed on a large, white, straight-sided, men’s t-shirt. Women’s t-shirts can be hung or folded in the retail environment but because of their knit fabrication can lose shape and peak at the shoulders if suspended for too long and often require the addition of shoulder loops to prevent peaking which adds to the cost of the garment.

‘Born in a Tent’ – Illustration 8

“Born in a Tent” is a phrase as in ‘were you born in a tent?’ applied to individuals who fail to close doors when they leave a room and suggests a lack of consideration for others present or laziness in social attitude and manners. In this instance, the word ‘tent’ also applies to a voluminous garment popular during the late 1960s and used by manufacturers of plus-sized women’s wear because of its capacity to cover form without additional fitting features. To describe a woman as wearing a ‘tent’ is derisive and suggests an unacceptable body shape and intolerance for increased body size. The two meanings are combined in the additional phrases ‘Why/Why not give generously?’ and ‘Ease in Fullness’ the latter being a technical description of how to stitch a larger area of fabric to a smaller one. The column of graphics and text are capped with a stylized symbol of a female in a tent dress which suggests the child-like images drawn of women by the very young. Other images and text in the column show either the disbarment symbol used in other illustrations or a red strike across a red circle, to indicate prohibition and include the 1940s average female silhouette (Chambers, 1951, p 246), a coat hanger, a t-shirt and the word ‘not’. The print plays with the conflicting attitudes in the fashion industry towards larger and older women, that is, that the plus sized and mature markets offer untapped potential as an area of economic growth but that neither are considered fashion worthy within the definition of what constitutes fashionable appearance. “Born in a Tent” uses fabric in the oversized sleeves reminiscent of awning stripes used in tents and outdoor shelters and suggest the ostracism of mature women from fashion’s inner circle.

‘Seriously!’ – Illustration 9

‘Seriously! What Suits You?’ deals with the design mythology around size perception in fashion. The disbarred 1940s silhouette (Chambers, 1951, p 246) is used to signal prohibition of horizontal stripes for those with larger figures. Set against what looks like a plan-o-metric view of a gingham table cloth or picnic mat are four female figures, three in young elongated silhouettes from the 1960s (McCall,
Illustration 8

T-shirts from 'FASHION HATES ME' Exhibition

Heather Saltmarsh 2002

Born in a Tent

Illustration 8, 'Born in a Tent', H. Saltmarsh, 2002, Textile print on garment
Illustration 9

T-shirts from 'FASHION HATES ME' Exhibition

Heather Saltmarsh 2002

Illustration 9, ‘Seriously!’; H. Saltmarsh, 2002, Textile print on garment
1968, p 10) and one mature, ‘stout’ figure from the 1940s (Chambers, 1951, p 246). Each is filled with equidistant stripes in both vertical and horizontal directions but the horizontal stripes on the mature figure are considered inappropriate because they are believed to increase perceptual size. (McCall, 1968, p.6; Mortimer-Dunn, 1973, p.113; Reader’s Digest, 1984, p.50) Fashion texts from the 50s, 60s and 70s suggest that size is something to be concealed and that older women similarly need to hide their appearance by using dull and muted tones in solid colours to make them less conspicuous.

But suppose a short, fat blonde...insists on buying a bright pink coat with a full lynx band around the bottom. In certain stores, the sales assistant calls the assistant buyer who tells the customer they must remove the label as that choice does not meet store approval (Chambers, 1951, p.234).

Thus, there is shame attached to aging appearance and weight gain in females that men are rarely subjected to and it is not uncommon to hear unfavourable comment on women who dress outside the ‘accepted’ rules for size or age-related conventions. The phrase ‘mutton dressed up as lamb’ has no equivalent in masculine terms. The graphic shows that vertical stripes can fracture form no matter how svelte and that horizontal stripes integrate it and define contours. This state however is undesirable unless the form is slender as the title suggests. ‘Seriously! What Suits You?’ is printed on a white custom t-shirt with contoured side seams and double sleeves featuring a short sleeve in green horizontally striped fabric. The double sleeves were a contemporary youth culture look at the time of the exhibition.

‘Stubborn Mule’ – Illustration 10
‘Stubborn as a Mule’ is a phrase applied to individuals who refuse to conform or persist in doing something with which other parties disagree. In this instance, the older woman who elects to wear delicate or sexually suggestive footwear such as the marabou feathered ‘mule’ with ‘kitten’ heel and ‘peep’ toe, is the stubborn party because such fashion statements are considered outside her range of socially acceptable attire. The 1951 text Color and Design talks about how ‘silly’ a large woman carrying a small handbag appears and stresses the importance of ‘correct’ proportion while selecting accessories (Chambers, 1951, p.42). The 1973 text, Fashion Design, comments that women over 45 should wear ‘sensible’ shoes for comfort (Mortimer-Dunn, 1973, p.98) and leave the wearing of bright colours to the young (Mortimer-Dunn, 1973, p.100). Fashion texts from the past (McCall, 1968; Mortimer-Dunn, 1973; Reader’s Digest, 1984) are full of such sentiments in relation to size and age but these ideas persist to the present day, with websites for ‘fashion over fifty’ cautioning women to conceal upper arms and restrict hems to the knee length or lower (Nellis, 2012). Television fashion stylists Trinny Goodall and Susannah Constantine, who became famous for their ‘warts and all’ approach to dressing ordinary women, are more encouraging about wardrobe options for different body shapes (Mail Online, 2007), but their ‘method is still based on reveal/conceal conventions for those with less than ideal figures. The few labels that are dedicated to larger sizes or mature ages mean women’s fashion options are limited in comparison to the youth market unless they can fit into smaller sizes. Socially however, the phrase of ‘mutton dressed as lamb’ is still used by fashion
Illustration 10

T-shirts from 'FASHION HATES ME' Exhibition

Heather Saltmarsh 2002

commentators as an admonishment to older women who are seen to dress too young for their age. Attitudes towards age and fashion seem outdated in light of women’s status in the workplace and public roles within the community. Shoes are one of the last areas of apparel where women can express their fashion interests. Shoes come in multiple colour combinations and fittings and footwear manufacturers seem less prejudiced about producing larger sizes. ‘Stubborn Mule’ is printed on a white, custom t-shirt with sheer Dalmatian spot sleeves and pink contrast neckband. The Dalmatian fur is associated with Cruella De Vil, an ostentatious and extravagantly dressed fictional character from Dodie Smith’s novel ‘The One Hundred and One Dalmatians’. Pastel pink was the colour the romantic fiction novelist Barbara Cartland often wore and is associated with traditionally ‘feminine’ and ‘girlish’ interests.

‘Type XX’ – Illustration 11
‘We Know Your Type!’ is printed on the ‘Type XX’ t-shirt and shows four figures in profile with a figure type classification. The first 3 profiles are from the 1946 Butterick Dressmaking Book and the 1949 version of the same title (Butterick, 1949, p.5; Butterick, 1949, p.5). They show figures of a child, a teenager and young adult female and depict their development in height, body depth and bust size. A mature woman’s body shape does not appear in either edition of the sewing books although measurement charts for ‘women’ as distinct from ‘misses’ are included and organized by bust size rather than age. The ‘invisibility’ of mature females is established even for the home dressmaker whose interest was to produce well-fitting and fashionable clothing suited to her figure type. The t-shirt graphic includes a non-fashion figure clearly showing body shape development and weight gain associated with age and is outlined in a broken red line to suggest invisibility. The body of the t-shirt is in a similar pink to that of the mature XX figure and gives the impression that profile has been removed. The XX classification plays on the chromosomal makeup of females, early film ratings for sexually suggestive or explicit films and pre-decimal sizing codes for women’s clothing. The precise drop shadow behind the three 1940s figures indicates they are 2 dimensional shapes but the absent older figure with rounded contours is more indicative of 3 Dimensional forms. Finally, the sleeves of the t-shirt are printed in black and white diamonds and visually reiterate the double X motif.

‘Slash and Open’ – Illustration 12
‘Slash and open’ is a pattermaking term describing the process of adding fullness to a garment draft. The inference from the title “Slash and Open; You Know You Want to” is that the temptation to resort to surgical intervention to modify physical appearance becomes greater as women age and the pressure to conform to idealized ‘norms’ increases. The cultural ideal for beauty (Twigg, 2007; Etoff et al., 2006) is currently a young, thin woman whom most adult females cannot hope to emulate by natural means. Fashion is almost exclusively presented on this extreme kind of figure via fashion models, who display adult women’s clothing on teenage girls, the bodies of whom are often under weight and under developed. That fashion magazines print advertisements for cosmetic surgery is hardly surprising when even young girls and women have their facial features and body parts photographically enhanced to achieve visual ‘perfection’ (www.dove.com). The absence of older women from fashion imagery in general reinforces the unrealistic expectation to
Illustration 11

T-shirts from 'FASHION HATES ME' Exhibition

Heather Saltmarsh 2002

We know your type!

Illustration 11, ‘Type XX’, H. Saltmarsh, 2002, Textile print on garment
Illustration 12

T-shirts from 'FASHION HATES ME' Exhibition

Heather Saltmarsh 2002

Illustration 12, ‘Slash and Open’, H. Saltmarsh, 2002, Textile print on garment
appear ageless and that fashion is only for the young and privileged in society who can afford to conceal their age through surgery. Instead of scalpels, ‘Slash and Open’ features dressmaker’s shears positioned above a perforated arc that intersects the phrase ‘You Know You Want to’. Dove’s report ‘Beauty Comes of Age” (Butler et al., 2006) reveals that self consciousness about aging appearance can result in older women’s disengagement from regular social activities. This, compounded by outdated attitudes towards age and fashion and critical comments about women who are seen to dress outside ‘acceptable’ boundaries, suggests an overwhelming pressure to appear ageless or not to appear at all. ‘Slash and Open’ is printed on a white custom-made t-shirt. The sleeves have an outer layer of grey cloth which has been slashed to reveal the bright red layer beneath. The sleeves symbolize the release from drab, neutral coloured clothing that a younger physique would permit albeit by drastic means.

Exhibition Summary
“Fashion Hates Me; Was It Something I Said?” was an exhibition by the researcher, held in March 2002 at RMIT University’s First Site Gallery, as part of the L’Oreal Melbourne Fashion Festival’s Cultural Events program. Patrons of the exhibition were generally positive in their feedback recording comments such as ‘challenging the status quo’, a refreshing approach’, ‘witty’, ‘inventive’ and ‘in touch with today’s social problems’. One patron commented that the work was cliché, but the use of stereotypical images from fashion history was a deliberate choice to show that ‘dated’ views on women and dress hold fast today even with changes in work force participation and social roles.

Despite the length of time since the exhibition was presented, some of the issues for mature women in relation to fashion such as age specific sizing and visibility in advertising remain significant. Dove published their report on standards of beauty and age in 2006 (Butler et al., 2006), Julia Twigg wrote an article on how UK Vogue negotiates age in 2010 (Twigg, 2010), and ‘Adjusting the Cut; Fashion, the Body and Age on the UK High Street’ about British clothing manufacturer’s approach to older women was published in 2011 (Twigg, 2011). The age invisibility syndrome and fashions perennial ‘youth-scape’ remain topical issues, making the work from the “Fashion Hates Me” exhibition pertinent today. The research question ‘what are the problems associated with the development of the mature women’s fashion market in Australia?’ can largely be answered by the works in this exhibition. Attempt towards making mature women’s problems visible in a humorous way goes toward answering what contribution can be made via fashion communications. Humour makes the subject matter of the problems associated with mature women’s fashion more approachable and the historic mixed with contemporary imagery raises the issues using both subtle and explicit ways to explain a point. The exhibition addresses both the problems and possible solution for mature women’s fashion in Australia.

The issues covered by the exhibition graphics showed the frustration of mature consumers in the context of the truisms presented by fashion advice and design theory for fashion. Those of advancing years and non-standard body types have historically been subject to aesthetic disapproval for unconventional design choices. While women of age scarcely rate a mention in contemporary fashion texts, disproval continues in some sectors the fashion press for women who don’t conform to age
appropriate standards. The dilemma of age versus fashion became a dominant theme in the research undertaken. It became evident that the complexity of this theme warranted a more considered examination of the underlying issues and the survey responses indicated a need for developing tools for designers of mature women’s fashion. This prompted a shift in direction by repositioning the research from ‘by project’ to ‘by thesis’. The decision was made to focus the research towards developing design illustrations for industry rather than the original intention of producing a ‘fashion forward’ garment range.
5. DESIGN THEORY FOR FASHION

At the beginning of the project there was little information available to older women on what to wear and where to buy fashion for mature body shapes. There are now online articles (Nellis, 2005; Blackwell, 2005) and websites (http://www.fiftyplus.co.uk/; http://www.fashionafter50.com/) dedicated to older women’s fashions that provide some guidance via examples of celebrity role models and information on mature women’s designs and fashion labels. However, few of the websites or online articles offer Australian fashion content and provide little by way of visual evidence to support their claims with regard to the ‘rules’ for those over forty or fifty. The disturbing implication about the ‘rules’ for age-appropriate dressing is that while well intended, the advice is essentially subjugating (Blackwell, 2005; Nellis, 2005) and reinforces the stigma associated with aging appearance. From a design perspective ‘the rules’ don’t necessarily apply, but then fashion’s interpretation of design precepts could be considered contentious, as much of the research undertaken for this project suggests.

Design elements are the formal properties or characteristics (De Klerk & Lubbe, 2006; Woods & Padgett, 1987) inherent in imagery and objects. Design principles relate to the organization of those properties and their subsequent visual effect. They derive from visual arts appreciation (Itten, 1970; Saxton, 1981) and are a mixture of depth perception cues and ‘opinion’; over time they have been misunderstood or interpreted according to the tastes of the day. Fashion texts are often subjective in their analysis of design elements and principles, and are loaded with ‘value judgements’ that reflect social attitudes towards age and women at the time of publication. References from the late 1920s (Butterick, 1927; Butterick, 1930) refer to colour usage in clothing in relation to complexion and occasionally body size, whereas by the 1960s and 1970s fashion texts and home sewing guides suggest colour be diluted for the aged and ample bodied. The general suggestion, which is an interpolation of aerial perspective and ‘atmospheric effect’ (Saxton, 1981, p.30-3), is that cool, greyed colours diminish size and obscure outline. Women who do not conform to the ideal figure type or age range for youthful fashions are advised to refrain from wearing vibrant colours or bold textures which might make them appear larger and more conspicuous (McCall, 1968; Mortimer- Dunn, 1973; Reader’s Digest, 1984; Simplicity, 1975).

The body is at the centre of all fashion design and most of ‘the rules’ that govern design for fashion are about employing aesthetic variables so that an approximation of the ‘ideal’ figure can be achieved. Mostly the advice is on how to make the body look taller and narrower; more closely resembling the proportions of a fashion model than those of the so called ‘average’ woman. Market segmentation, particularly in countries with large populations like the United States, has resulted in a range of size categories for women of differing body shapes including Misses, Petites, Talls, Women’s Petites and Women’s Plus, but despite the recognition that consumers fall into different segments of the women’s wear market, contemporary fashion texts still demonstrate the application of design precepts on idealized forms (Sorger & Udale, 2006; Hunter, 2007; Keiser & Garner, 2008.). A review of historical home-sewing journals, paper patterns and fashion texts from the early 20th century is revealing
because, unlike current fashion magazines, they expose the mechanics of such thinking and how those views have infiltrated public opinion in the early 21st century.

**Body Shape & Proportion**

Fashion Illustration is one of the key indicators of body shape expectations at a given era. Although highly stylized and frequently elongated, illustration reflects the dominant silhouette of the period and the effort individuals are expected to exert, via padding or physical constraint, to emulate it. Illustration is rarely depicted in contemporary fashion magazines; photographic images are used in preference, but the almost surgical ‘retouching’ of anatomy and distorted camera angles, replace the ‘high’ stylization of the hand drawn image. Such idealized methods of depiction set a dangerous precedent for those who cannot decipher the manipulation of a constructed image and sets achieving a youthful appearance squarely at the centre of fashion interest.

Recognition that bodies come in a variety of proportional configurations was acknowledged during the early part of last century but usually within the text of fashion references, not via visual representation; figures such as those in Illustration 13, p.47 (Butterick, 1927, p 47) demonstrated advice on how to ‘correct’ patterns to accommodate anatomical aberrations barely noticeable on such idealized forms. The current emphasis in high fashion magazines is on an ideal figure synonymous with ‘prepubescent bodies of extreme thinness’ (Twigg, 2010, p 475). It excludes the shapes of adult women who have gained muscle maturity and body mass as they age. The fit of many contemporary fashions is unforgiving for older women and inclined to alienate all but those who have the most stringent physiques. High fashion items are not designed for an aging market and is seen as ‘low status’ or ‘marginal’ in interest (Twigg, 2011, p 9).

Body shape influences the fashion design process. Garments are initially drawn by designers on a female figure template with elongated proportions; even those designed for the plus sized market can be inordinately tall, as in Illustration 14, p.48 (Hunter, 2007, p 243). As such the reading of garment proportions during the two-dimensional drawing and three-dimensional pattermaking/construction design phases can be misinterpreted and the garment in need of substantial adjustment when fitted to a live model. In industry the two dimensional and three dimensional, design development phases are conducted by separate parties (designers and patternmakers) during the pre-production process; that is if ‘design’ is undertaken at all. In Australia, prototype garments are often ‘developed’ from ‘sample’ garments purchased on a ‘buying’ trip to international markets. Samples are then ‘converted’ to local product by cutting a pattern from the original garment and making minor modifications to the overall design (Davis, 2000). Given that no standard size code exists in this country and that adherence to codes in the USA is voluntary, it is difficult for consumers to attain a consistent and satisfactory fit for their body shape from garments developed in this way (Davis, 2000).
Colour Association
Colours are assumed to have emotional evocation rooted in cultural traditions and social mores. In European culture ‘red’ suggests sexuality and is presented as ‘unflattering’ or inappropriate for older women (Twigg, 2007). Black, once seen as a funereal colour, has become associated with daring sexuality or elegant sophistication but is generally absent from older women’s wardrobes unless work or formal activities require it (Twigg, 2011). One current association with black is that it is thought to be slimming. Its absence from midlife fashions may imply a lack of interest in viewing mature women in this context or any other that arouses the senses. As Julia Twigg states “…the avoidance of strong colour is still a significant part of people’s ideas about age (Twigg, 2011, p 16).”

‘The Art of Dressmaking’ (1927) and ‘Making Smart Clothes’ (1930) are two texts by the American pattern publishing company Butterick. Advice on colour selection is offered to women based on their hair colour, eye colour, complexion and size. The recommendations are surprising in that they acknowledge age by including advice for women with grey and white hair, perhaps because the reach of home sewing journals was more extensive than that of high fashion magazines. The author of ‘The Art of Dressmaking’ notes that in such publications young girls wear more colour than ‘grown-ups’ but states

Maturity requires dignified and harmonious colour combinations. Bright colours are in good taste for older women for sports and evening and summer dresses and it is better to err on the side of bright and cheerful colours than fall into the habit of wearing drab and uninteresting shades at all times (Butterick, 1927, p.26).

There is some suggestion that subdued colours are customary for older women but this may relate to the pervasive period of mourning after WWI and the cost associated with brightly coloured fabrics. The implication for women has more to do with the context in which colours are worn.

Colour Theory
There has been a long history of fashion advice about colour suitability for different types of women in fashion and dressmaking references and the current research has tracked these theories. The 1927 edition of ‘The Art of Dressmaking’ (Butterick, 1927) states blue, purple, green, rose, black and white and grey are suitable for white or ‘mixed’ hair colour. It has more restrictive advice for women ‘of size’ than women ‘of age’ and suggests using deep and neutral colours because they are ‘inconspicuous’ for larger women and make the figure look smaller. That contemporary palettes for older women are similarly arranged suggests both the eradication of size and age by default.

The 1930 volume ‘Making Smart Clothes’ (Butterick, 1930) recommends middle-aged women with the ‘mixed’ look in hair colour, avoid ‘middle values’ and select colours at opposite ends of the tonal range provided her ‘build’ allows for light colours.
“The white-haired woman has a much easier time of selecting the right colours. Any colour that throws her hair in relief will be flattering...She does not wear beige in sweaters and hats, as well as she does colours with more depth and clearness.” (Butterick, 1930, p.11)

These early publications do not explicitly acknowledge the use of colour theory, but they talk in terms of warm and cool colours, colour contrast, tonal values and their impact against hair and skin. That dark and neutral shades appear to make the figure smaller relates to the noticeable ‘cooling’ or grey cast colours take on with distance. This phenomenon applies to objects at least 5 kilometres away such as hills or mountain ranges and does not necessarily apply when replicated by someone within 5 metres distance. A misinterpretation of atmospheric effect (Saxton, 1981, p.30) may be the reason later texts suggest someone ‘of size’ should dress in cool hues and subdued tones (Mc Call, 1968, p.9-11; Reader’s Digest, 1984, p.50).

The association of colour with age and cultural mores or taboos is not emphasized in these early volumes (Butterick, 1927; Butterick, 1930), rather the capacity of colour to enhance complexions is the primary focus. The 1930 text, Making Smart Clothes, cautions against the wearing of deep blue violet because of its tendency to bring out the yellow in skin and is evidence of complementary colour theory at work. It states ‘matronly’ types and the elderly are ‘supposedly’ suited to purple but warns about its potential to make the skin look ‘sallow’ or fragile. The author suggests

Certain warm purple reds such as an egg plant colour...do wonderful things to clear and vitalize certain skins, particularly those that have lost their first freshness (Butterick, 1930, p.13).

The 1927 book, The Art of Dressmaking, does not suggest that the colour red implies inappropriate conduct, perhaps because such things were not talked about in polite society; but it does not recommend red for women with ‘florid’ skin or auburn hair. Those with grey hair are recommended soft shades of rose, while medium blondes may wear lipstick-red and those with ‘dark’ skins can wear orange and geranium red. By 1930 the author recommends red to ‘vitalize’ the skin, provided the complexion is suited to it.

Black does not seem to carry any negative or morbid connotations in the 1930 edition, in fact it is recommended for those with grey or ‘mixed’ tones because it

“...emphasizes the dark colour still left in the hair and by contrast throws into relief the grey portions forming gleaming silver highlights. This makes an otherwise dull mixed head of hair begin to sparkle in a subdued way which is very distinguished.” (Butterick, 1930, p.11)

This statement is noteworthy because it is in complete contrast to the findings of the Dove report “Beauty Comes of Age” where women feel only men are judged to look distinguished as they age (Dove 2006). Home hair dye preparations by ‘Clairol’ and ‘L’Oreal’ became popular during the 1950s with the former’s slogan “Does she...or doesn’t she? Only her hairdresser knows for sure” (Hair Color: A History of Follicle Hue Adjustment, 2007) indicative of the social delicacy around the use of such
products and may account in part for the shift away from the acceptance of aging with naturally grey hair.

By 1968 “McCall’s Sewing Book, first published in 1963, cemented the connection between size and colour. Warm colours, such as red and yellow, are categorized as ‘advancing’ and make the figure look larger (McCall, 1968). It takes no account of the capacity for cool colours, blues and greens, to ‘advance’ or ‘recede’ by their proximity to other colours but does concede that value and intensity of colour can ‘influence’ apparent size. The problem with warm/cool colour theory is that it relates to ‘virtual’ distance on a two-dimensional plane and often relies on comparative contrast to determine relative projection. The effects of colour contrast were espoused by Bauhaus teacher Johannes Itten who studied the physiological and psychological effects of colour and identified 7 varieties of colour contrast and their impact within imagery (Itten J, 1970).

McCall’s preoccupation with colour and size allows only a brief section on colour selection for skin tone. Black, it states, ‘removes’ colour from the skin and so is better avoided by those of pale complexion. It also states that figure irregularities are defined by black and that if you have ‘heavy hips’ you will want to avoid it in preference for ‘medium or greyed colours that blend into the background.’ (McCall, 1968). Blue-greens and medium greyed colours are also recommended for those with dark complexions which would seem to suggest the same kind of obscurity is needed as for those of ‘plump’ proportions. No mention is made of greying hair or age in any context.

An Australian fashion text book, “Fashion Design”, written by Gloria Mortimer-Dunn in 1972, includes a section on age in which readers are warned colours that once suited in the ‘teens’ may no longer suit in the fifties.

As one ages, the skin texture changes, the hair colour fades and the figure slackens and frequently thickens (Mortimer-Dunn, 1973, p.97).

At 35, she suggests, women avoid ‘harsh’ colours and choose ‘subtle shades’. At forty-five and over she suggests some colours are not ‘flattering to ‘faded’ or grey hair such as olive or maroon which she describes as ‘muddy’. Mortimer-Dunn recommends warm pastels and soft shades to prevent ‘harsh’ contrast. Aging is couched in highly negative terms, but using these mid-tones is the opposite approach to that suggested in “The Art of Dressmaking” 1927, which acknowledges age through hair colour and is inclusive in its approach.

The attitude towards age and colour in 1927 is at least conciliatory; by 1972 it is stifling when Mortimer-Dunn declares

> Leave the wearing of wild colours such as purple or orange to the young.  
(Mortimer-Dunn, 1973, p.100)

**Colour Context**

It is surprising that more of the recent texts from the 1960s and 70s were less age-tolerant than their counterparts from the 1920s and 30s, but the rise of youth culture
during the 1950s and 60s came to dominate fashion at both couture and Ready-to-Wear levels and may account for the disdain of age related concerns regarding older women. Both the 1968 McCall’s Sewing Book and Mortimer-Dunne’s 1973 volume suggest mature women conceal their appearance by using subdued or neutral colours and the more obvious the signs of aging the more fervent the advice to avoid colour altogether.

By 1980, Canadian Carole Jackson had published the highly popular “Colour Me Beautiful” as a guide to women on how to successfully wear colour. The premise of the book was that all skin types have either a blue or yellow cast and women should select from one of four seasonal palettes organized in categories of warm and cool colours of varying tonal value to harmonize with their skin tone. Jackson named each palette after a season; Winter, cool colours of high contrast including black and white; Summer, cool mid values; Autumn, warm high contrast and Spring, warm mid values. Jackson credits Bauhaus educator Johannes Itten and his theories on ‘subjective’ colour (Itten J, 1970) for the inspiration behind her seasonal palettes.

Jackson’s attitude to age and colour is inclusive; she maintains skin tones merely ‘fade’ with age and suggests one’s seasonal palette should remain constant throughout one’s lifetime with only slight adjustments in intensity during various life stages. She also lists hair colour in terms of warm and cool seasons with ‘prematurely’ grey hair most usually belonging to those who were Winter brunettes (Jackson 1980). Winters are the only palette group she suggests who can successfully wear black and pure white. By 1985 Jackson qualified grey hair in ‘Colour for Men’ as silver grey for Winter or Summer, warm grey for Autumn or Spring. More mature men are featured in her second book than mature women in ‘Colour Me Beautiful’ but Jackson advises women who ‘tint’ their hair to choose a colour compatible with their skin tone (Jackson, 1980).

A more fashion focussed volume ‘Showing Your Colors’ 1986, trialled 53 different colours in wardrobe combinations to assess their effect. The language gives a clue to its attitude towards aging with muted hues combined with black described as ‘matronly’ or ‘dowdy’ (Allen, 1986). The author cautions against the wearing of several colours (olives, browns, yellow green, mint green, malachite and mustard) next to the face, but may in fact be rejecting those colors based on her ‘unique’ skin tone (Jackson, 1980) or ‘subjective’ colour palette (Itten,1970).

Contemporary texts echo some of the historical sentiments about colour and aging appearance. ‘The Fundamentals of Fashion Design’ states black is ‘slimming’ and therefore ‘constantly’ in fashion’ (Sorger & Udale, 2006). Beyond a comment about the customary lightness and darkness of summer and winter palettes, it makes no connection with age and colour. However, visual references in the book show a distinct bias toward youthful fashion and appearance. Another textbook, ‘Beyond Design: The Synergy of Apparel Product Development’ refers to the consideration of age and ‘life stage’ when selecting colours for target markets. It maintains young adults are most likely to adopt ‘extremes’ of colour and ‘...often see clothing purchases in terms of a single-season life span...’ (Keiser & Garner, 2008, p. 151) The colour choices of mature consumers become more practical as they enter the
workforce and gain an awareness of their personal colouring and continuing wardrobe requirements. It states

Older women may reject neutrals such as black, grey and navy for more becoming middle tones that make them feel and look younger (Keiser & Garner, 2008, p.151).

Again, changes in complexion are cited as the reason for adopting a modified colour palette in maturity. These recently published teaching references instil a negative mindset toward the aging female consumer by qualifying the use of vivid or intense colours as the prerogative of the young and slender. There is no suggestion that the aesthetic desire for visual stimulation can be satisfied by the complexity of fabric texture or through the intricacy of garment cut. Nor is there acknowledgement that mature consumers are far from a homogenous group in their tastes and interests (Brown & Orsborn, 2006). Julia Twigg’s interviews with British “high street” manufacturers reveal a similar approach to colour for mature consumers with attempts to make it ‘softer’, ‘less brash’ or not ‘dowdy’ seen as a way to integrate older customers with mainstream fashion trends (Twigg, 2011).

Colour is viewed as one of the most age sensitive aesthetic considerations because of its potential to overwhelm ‘faded’ complexions ‘regardless’ of genetic predisposition or racial characteristics. Its other capacity, dependent on saturation, is to influence size perception and is recommended in highly diluted forms to make body size appear less ‘conspicuous’. Does colour on the body really have the potential to enlarge the figure or is it simply that those colours with longer wavelengths reach the eye more quickly and are therefore more noticeable? The ‘attention grabbing’ capacity of saturated colour may have as much to do with cultural attitudes towards aging (Twigg 2011) as it does physiological response. It cannot be extricated from other variables such as the cut or shape of clothing and its proportional juxtaposition with other colours, garments and the body.

**Line, Shape & Texture**

Like advice on colour, the emphasis on line, shape and texture, in garment design, is their capacity to elongate form or diminish circumference. To that end the advice is age specific. The ‘cultural ideal’ in high fashion is that of a young, tall, frequently underdeveloped female that most women of age cannot replicate via clothing. None the less, the mythology of optical illusion in fashion, and its potential to transform the wearer, continues with much the same attitude in current literature as with that from the early part of last century.

“No woman in her senses believes that horizontal stripes...are flattering to a buxom figure” (Butterick, 1930, p.6) or so the author of Making Smart Clothes claims. The book is dedicated to home sewers, so the primary focus is on achieving the ‘correct fit’ for those with ‘figure problems’ such as a prominent bust, protruding abdomen, sloping shoulders etc. The 1927 edition of The Art of Dressmaking states “Correct pattern lines can help tremendously in modifying undesirable outlines” (Butterick, 1927) although the author admits “…what might be right this year may be wrong next year.” (Butterick, 1927)
The silhouette of this era was rectangular in shape; topographical emphasis in any direction, other than straight up and down, was considered unfashionable and to be avoided. Unlike the S curve of the Edwardian era, the 1920s silhouette was almost tubular with some women strapping their breasts to minimize protuberance and extend ‘the line’ of the garment (Mulvey & Richards, 1998). By the 1930s, the silhouette had begun to include some flaring of skirt shapes below the hips which, along with a ‘cape effect’ at the shoulder, could provide ‘large’ women with the illusion of being ‘smaller in the middle’. (Butterick, 1930)

The attitude toward dressing ‘large’ or ‘stout’ women, and by default older women, remained largely unchanged in the 20th century, although the two volumes cited mention grey and white hair to distinguish mature complexions. In a section on Women’s sizes in ‘Color and Design’, 1951, Bernice Chambers states adult women have ‘increased weight and proportions’ and warns ‘Excessive weight gives the appearance of age’ (Chambers, 1951, p 245). Her advice, like others surveyed for this project, is to ‘camouflage’ figure ‘faults’, wear the ‘proper’ foundation garments and keep hemlines long to cover ‘too ample’ legs and ankles. Given the extravagances of the ‘New look’ with its ‘ballerina’ length skirts, the latter advice should not have been too difficult to achieve.

The length of a garment is a keen issue within the mature market. Julia Twigg quotes directors of Marks and Spencer’s ‘Classic’ range for women over 65, as stating length is ‘very, very important’ (Twigg J, 2011). Whether this is to conceal the ‘changes associated with age’ or a consequence of economies of scale, is not clear. Mass market clothing is made as cheaply as possible, hence the shortening of hem lengths during World War II was a significant cost saving. The extra length required to cover fuller physiques may only be a matter of 5cm, but multiplied during volume production, could add thousands of dollars to the cost of manufacturing garments and increase the price of the end-product. Assessment of length may be an economic decision as much as an aesthetic one. The sizing standards and grade rules, the body shapes of the mannequin and the fit model influence the designer’s perception of what constitutes ‘appropriate’ length, but given the probable age difference between the designer and the consumer (Twigg, 2011) shorter rather than longer hem lengths may be the preferred option of the design team. Bernice Chambers, author of Color and Design, 1951 quotes ‘the average American woman as being 5’3” [163cm] weighs 133lbs [approx. 60kg] and has a 39” [100cm] hip-line’ (Chambers, 1951, p.250). Her aesthetic advice to those who are of ‘average’ size or larger is to utilize design elements to lengthen and conceal the figure.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lines that add height</th>
<th>Lines that add width</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Thin solid colour fabrics</td>
<td>Bulky fabrics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Length wise stripes</td>
<td>Plaids and crosswise stripes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fitted silhouettes</td>
<td>Loose silhouettes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diagonal lines</td>
<td>Crosswise details</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lengthwise details</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Centre-front single-breasted suits</td>
<td>Double breasted coats</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V-neckline</td>
<td>Necklines that give width</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One piece dress in solid colours</td>
<td>Contrast in blouse and skirt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regulation sleeve</td>
<td>Dolman ' raglan or batwing sleeves</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Straight skirts</td>
<td>Broken line in a skirt, peplum, pockets etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small prints with ground and motif of the same value</td>
<td>Large prints big motifs, plaids</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discreet stripes, chalk stripes</td>
<td>Bold stripes and plaid effects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dark colours</td>
<td>Light colours with contrast</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Chambers, 1951, pp 248-249)

Similar advice is repeated in the McCall’s Sewing Book of 1968 (first printed 1963). Vertical and horizontal stripes and divisions in clothing are given significant emphasis in their power to ‘trick’ the eye. Horizontal lines and stripes are generally considered undesirable because they are believed to widen the figure. The author acknowledges the width and spacing of stripes may have an impact on perception, but fails to reference the shape of the garment as having an influence, regardless of line direction, width and spacing. Illustration 15, p.56 (McCall, 1968), probably dates from the 1963 edition and shows horizontal and vertical stripes in a column-like ‘sheath’. The ‘stack’ of horizontal stripes draws attention along the body rather than around it, probably because there are more of them to look at. The horizontal repeat sets up a ‘progression’ in the pattern, while the vertical stripes barely number three in repeat. The outer vertical stripes intersect the contours of the silhouette, drawing attention to the sides of the garment because of their different shape. Another silhouette with greater fit, cut and volume of fabric, and therefore complexity, may have had a different optical effect altogether.

Fashion texts for students of design and home dressmakers alike are guilty of oversimplification relating to visual perception but the dominant silhouette of a period has a pronounced influence on how other variables are perceived. Two home sewing books, Let Yourself Sew (Simplicity, 1975) and Complete Guide to Sewing (Reader’s Digest, 1983), first published in 1977, feature A-line or triangular dress shapes. Both books warn that vertical stripes can widen the figure depending on the ‘spacing’ between the lines. Illustration 16, p.57 (Simplicity, 1975) shows wide, contrasting, equidistant stripes and Illustration 17, p.57 (Reader’s Digest, 1984) shows fine, coloured stripes in alternating sets. The verticals in each example show truncated angles and lines of diminishing height, building a visual tension at the hemline – the widest part of the garment. Further interest is created at the sides of each garment where the verticals intersect, so the shape of the garment has direct influence on how the lines are perceived. The horizontally striped examples have a pyramid-like effect, stacking bars of decreasing width toward the neckline or truncated ‘apex’. The eye travels to the area of most interest in these examples which, in the vertical and horizontal stripes, are in different locations; neither necessarily creates the illusion of ‘bulk’ which is the real issue of perception.

Texture is another area of caution. ‘Nubby’, ‘fluffy’ or ‘pebbly’ textures are prohibited in clothing, as are ‘shiny’, stiff or clinging fabrics if one wants to appear ‘slim’ (Simplicity, 1975; Reader’s Digest, 1984). While the simplistic adjectives are amusing, the import is that women who do not conform to social expectations of appearance are severely restricted in fabric choice and garment styling if they follow such advice. Julia Twigg suggests

“...for many women, dress presents a significant source of aesthetic pleasure, a valued opportunity for self fashioning and for personal reflexivity.” (Twigg, 2007, p.288)

Adherence to the rules of proportion and size is assumed to be a priority as one ages. A web site posting from Cynthia Nellis lists the ‘don’ts’ for older women in Fashion at Any Age (2012) that include ‘exposing’ upper arms and wearing skirts ‘too short’. Twigg in ‘Clothing, Age and the Body’ explains

“Clothing, particularly for older women, is often embedded in moral prescriptions that act to police their bodies and entrench the micro-social order.” (Twigg, 2007, p.286)

She is concerned that the opportunity for self expression, while encouraged in the young, is discouraged in mature individuals and stifles the “exercise of agency and expression of identity” (Twigg, 2007, p.286) that clothing provides.

There are warnings too for those who wish to wear pattern in dress. The warnings relate mostly to the scale of motif in a print repeat; several books state that large scale prints ‘enlarge’ the figure (Butterick, 1930, McCall, 1968; Mortimer-Dunn, 1973; Simplicity, 1975; Reader’s Digest, 1984). It does not necessarily follow that small-scale prints ‘reduce’ size, but the general advice is to find a print suited to one’s own proportions. How that proportional ratio is determined is not explained. In most accounts, little consideration is given to the regularity and complexity of motifs. McCall recommends ‘darker’, ‘blurred’, ‘all-over patterns’ to decrease size while

“Wide spaced, sharply contrasted motifs will call attention to the wearer’s size even though the background may be subdued.” (McCall, 1968, p.7)

Interestingly, the fashion for large, fractured or ‘oversized’ prints on a wallpaper or furnishing textiles scale, breaks all the rules of proportion; but then the trend has been slow to ‘trickle’ into mature age markets. Printed textiles have the capacity to break up solid areas and add visual interest to garments, especially where they intersect with seam lines and other features. They are an easy way to introduce multiple colours into the dynamics of clothing and can be both subtle and bold in their execution. The scale of a textile motif can be counter balanced by the proportions of the garment, as examples from 17th C and 18th C costumes (Hart & North, 2007) suggest. Contemporary printed fabrics are generally more complex in their colour play and visual involvement than previous authors give the medium credit. Discussion of the effects of pattern on form (Reader’s Digest, 1984; Simplicity, 1975) may be a consequence of the popularity of various print styles and textile motifs at the time of publication rather than an absolute ‘ruling’ about their visual
impact. However negative beliefs persist about patterned fabrics for use by those with larger ‘frames’ (Keiser & Garner, 2008).

**Design Theory for Fashion Summary**

Colour, line, pattern and texture are aesthetic properties that are not inherently bad or good but they are all inextricably linked in any one design to garment shape and dimension. How the ‘balance’ of these elements ‘works’ in a garment may depend not just on the size and height of the wearer, but on their individual colouring, physical attributes and personal preferences as well. The aesthetic qualities of all variables between the garment and the wearer contribute to the overall effect on appearance. Given the physiological diversity of the adult female population, and their increased awareness of individual styling requirements, satisfying consumer’s aesthetic needs becomes a challenge for designers and manufacturers of mature women’s clothing. The tendency for physiological diversity to increase with age may explain (in part) the proliferation of ‘youth’ market labels at the expense of adult women’s fashion, where smaller, standard sizes can be produced with minimal cost and the fast turnover of goods that characterizes youth markets can bring maximum return. In fashion ‘cycles’, a seasonal ‘trend’ such as fluorescent colours can be short lived and can be replicated in ‘disposable’ items, whereas the wardrobe requirements for working women may be more considered in relation to the quality and potential longevity of a fashion purchase.

There is little evidence in historical or contemporary fashion texts to encourage older consumers in their use of colour, texture or garment shape to satisfy the need for aesthetic arousal in clothing. Few contemporary texts acknowledge the existence of a mature fashion market by demonstrating design concepts almost exclusively on young ‘ideal’ body shapes. They seem to target ‘young’ fashion students and equate design for ‘high’ fashion with the youth market. Older texts generated for the home sewer at least acknowledge diversity in body shape but offer advice on fabric selection and garment style in relation to ‘camouflaging’ anatomy that does not conform to the ideal figure of the day. Clothing is seen as a mechanism to conceal not just individual features but whole identities that include the old and the large. Design research sought to examine principles in relation to design for the mature woman and identify those precepts that applied to older consumers in a contemporary setting. A series of design theory illustrations was used to explore various fashion ‘mores’ in relation to adult body shape and to detect the validity of those edicts for individuals outside the circle of acceptable appearance standards.
6. DESIGN THEORY ILLUSTRATIONS

A series of illustrations was devised with the aim to address aesthetic prejudices in a constructive way for those designing fashion for mature consumers. The illustrations challenge the validity of conventional fashion design theory applied to mature women’s fashions and aims to show the arbitrary nature of some fashion edicts can be challenged in an inclusive way for mature consumers. The design theory illustrations are industry focused and are intended to provide a useful series of illustrations demonstrating the flexibility and potential of design for fashion designers in the mature market. The fit and function of mature women’s fashions is beyond the scope of the Masters study which concentrates on the fundamentals of design and the issues related to mature women’s fashion.

Design theory for fashion, according to the texts consulted during this research appears to be a hybrid of visual arts appreciation precepts and depth perception cues; their applications, especially those associated with colour, have varying validity for the clothed body and are sparsely demonstrated in reference to historical or contemporary fashion (Chambers B, 1951; Davis ML, 1980; Hunter V, 2007, Keiser SJ, Garner MB, 2008, McCall, 1966; Mortimer-Dunn, 1973; Sorger R, Udale J, 2006) However, a thorough understanding of these precepts is considered the foundation of design practice. Fashion design theory, according to the texts researched, seems tainted by cultural mores that discriminate against a woman’s age and her appearance unless she conforms to the cultural ideal of the period. The emphasis seems to be on achieving a semblance of the female ideal at a given time or with concealing features that do not conform to it; fashion then becomes a kind of social camouflage designed to obscure the wearer from view if she fails to live up to acceptable bodily dimensions. The researcher’s experience as a fashion, graphic communication and visual arts educator, questioned the validity of such a prejudicial approach to addressing form and instigated a practice led investigation of assumptions in design theory for fashion. A body of illustrated work was developed to explore aesthetic conventions in relation realistic body types and to appraise their veracity. The design theory illustrations were not conclusive in their findings but did debunk some of the myths around colour, texture and perception of form. The following section discusses the design explorations undertaken for the research.

Figure Development

Developing a relevant figure template for adult women’s clothing design was the first step in testing aesthetic variables on mature body shapes. Figure templates or ‘croquis’, depicting simplified front and back views of a female form, are used to guide the development of garment designs by providing an appropriately proportioned body shape on which to structure and dimension clothing concepts. There is scant visual reference available for those who wish to develop clothing suited to the mature fashion market. Generally, an 8-head high figure is used for its convenient and slightly elongated proportions when developing garment designs for the youth market (Exercise 1, Ill. 19, p.63) but these proportions often extend to 9 or 10 heads high (Illustration 18, p.61) for more stylized fashion drawing purposes. The ‘average’ figure is thought to be 7 1/2 heads high (Exercise 2, Ill. 19, p.63) regardless of circumferential dimensions. Front and back view templates should present a consistently dimensioned form against which to proportion garments, and x
Illustration 18: 9 ½ Head Fashion Figure, Saltmarsh H, c.2002
Exercises 1-6 (ILL. 19-22) are an attempt to develop a mature figure template to explore the effects of design elements and principles for clothing. Exercises 1-3 (ILL. 19-20, pp.63-64) show examples of 8 and 7½ head figures with Exercise 3 (ILL. 20, p.64) showing the development of a mature, overweight, ‘top-heavy’ figure categorized as a type ‘H’ body by author Kath Berry (Berry & Hennes, 2008). While there is a distinct difference between the ‘silhouettes’ of figures, the difference is most pronounced in profile. Exercise 4 (ILL. 21, p.65) shows an overlay of Exercises 2 and 3, and Exercise 5 (ILL. 21, p.65) a parallel comparison. The posture of figures in Exercise 3 demonstrates a ‘sway-back’ in comparison to the more upright stance of figures in Exercise 2. Posture changes with age and weight gain and postural ‘aberrations’ such as a sway-back become more pronounced. Such aberrations can be compensated with adjustments in patternmaking but make the difference between a satisfactory and unsatisfactory fit at market level.

In Exercise 6 (ILL. 22, p.66) the front view ‘average’ figure from Exercise 2 has been digitally adjusted to derive variations in body shape. Figure 1 represents the ‘average’ or ‘ideal’ figure; the ‘mature’ Figure 2 is incrementally adjusted by 5% in body girth at bust, waist and hips while maintaining height. Figures 3 and 4 show an increase in hip-width by 5% and 10% and figure 5 shows a bust increase by 5%. The increments are optical and moderate to represent changes in body shape that can occur with age. Their significance is in subtle changes that result when mature figures are used to ‘fit’ garment designs during the two-dimensional developmental process. Figures 6-8 and 10-12 show variations in height for hip-heavy and top-heavy body shapes, although all remain within 7½ head proportions. Figure 9 shows an individual figure type which falls between the two groups and represents an ‘H’ type body shape classification (Berry & Hennes, 2008). The methods used to enlarge top-heavy figures show one flaw in that shoulder widths are slightly increased. The ‘H’ type body, Figure 9, shows unaltered shoulder proportions. In Exercise 7 (ILL. 23, p.67), Figures 1-5 show colour rendered versions of ‘Average’, ‘Mature’, ‘Hip-Heavy I’, Hip-Heavy II’ and ‘Top-Heavy’ body shapes from Exercise 6.

Exercise 8 (ILL. 24, p.68) is of Hip-Heavy II and Top-Heavy figures in diminishing height and views include clothed figures as the first step to appraising the impact of fashion design theory on form. Figures 7-12 are clothed in a semi-fitted knit top and ¾ pant of mid grey tonal values. The length of the knit intersects at maximum width for the hips, a division that emphasizes what fashion texts refer to as a ‘problem’ feature for larger figures. (McCall, 1968; Mortimer-Dunn, 1973; Reader’s Digest, 1984). The purpose of the horizontal division in this position was to gauge whether differing tone and colour values in clothing could optically compensate for figure ‘aberrations’ by redirecting sight to another location on the body. The use of ¾ lengths in sleeves and pant legs was intended to provide more contrast of flesh colour in comparison to selected garment colours and tonal values. Flesh tones are an active component in assessing overall garment colour balance and the proportion of colour present has an impact on its reading.

The Hip-Heavy II figures in Exercise 8 were given a darker shade of grey at lower body locations and Top-Heavy figures were given a darker value on the upper body. The darker value is meant to ‘minimize’ body shape while the overall mid range
Illustration 22: Exercise 6, ‘Figure Variation’, Saltmarsh H, 2002 – 2012
Illustration 23: Exercise 7, ‘Figure Variation’, Saltmarsh H, 2002 – 2012
values are supposed to make figures less ‘defined’ (McCall, 1968). The exercise is flawed because the incorrect shoulder width of Top-Heavy figures is more pronounced at the point where it narrows towards the neck and head. The darker grey seems to focus attention where it intersects with lighter and brighter flesh tones and emphasizes the more complex outlines of the upper body. By comparison, the tonal division at the widest part of the hips does not look disproportionately large on Hip-Heavy II figures, perhaps because the lower body is divided into vertically orientated components and is less complex than the upper body garments, so leads the eye away from those features. Tonal contrast rather than garment division seems the most active agent in directing attention but it is toward the more complex features of the garment and the human form.

Similar explorations, Exercise 9-10 (Ill. 25-26, pp.70-71), were conducted with desaturated ‘cool’ colours on Hip-Heavy II and Top-Heavy figures grouped separately. Exercise 9 (Ill.25, p.70) shows Hip-Heavy II Figures 1-3 in dark and light blue combinations with the effect that, for reasons stated previously, the dark blue draws attention. Another factor explaining this result may be the greater contrast of the darker blue against the white page. Figures 4-6 shows a change in colour value for the upper body garments with the shortest figure showing the least contrast between upper and lower body garments. In theory this darker, cooler combination should provide greater opportunity to minimize form but tends to emphasize the whole body. The lighter boundary on the knit top may highlight its contours but the combination overall maximizes contrast with flesh tones. A similar result is evident in Exercise 10 (Ill.26, p.71) although both upper and lower body garments in Figures 4-6 have increasing ‘depth’ with diminishing height. The darkest colour combination seems to hold more attention than the contrasting colours in the taller figures, but the impact cannot be separated from the contrast of the figure to the white page. In all, the effects of cool colours when scrutinized on differentiated form do not have the desired camouflage effect because the contrast with flesh tones appears to override them. McCall’s Sewing Book, 1968, does warn against the use of black for ‘heavy hips’ because it defines the outline more clearly and suggests the use of “medium or greyed colours that blend in with the background” (McCall, 1968, p.10). Greyed colours may accord with the values of various skin colours but ultimately provide visual contrast and depend on the background context, that is white page or live setting, for their perceptual size register (See Exercises 36-38, Ill. 104-108). The cool colours used in Exercises 9 and 10 may not have been sufficiently diluted with grey to prove or disprove theories about size perception, but the overarching question is why those with ‘larger’ anatomical features or aging physical attributes should feel the need to conceal themselves at all?

**Colour Comparison**

Older fashion references make much of the capacity of ‘warm’ and ‘cool’ colours to ‘advance’ or ‘recede’ and supposedly ‘enlarge’ or ‘diminish’ form (Chambers, 1951; McCall, 1968; Reader’s Digest, 1984, Simplicity, 1975). Red followed by orange light have the longest wavelengths of refracted white light and when reflected by objects in those colours, have the potential to reach the eye more quickly. Objects in red and orange are noticed more readily but do not necessarily make objects appear larger. Part of the mythology around ‘warm/cool’ colours’ capacity to affect apparent size can be explained by the theory of atmospheric effect which observes colours appear
Illustration 25: Exercise 9, Saltmarsh H, 2002 – 201
Illustration 26: Exercise 10, Saltmarsh H, 2002 – 2012
'cooler' and become more 'grey' with distance. Objects also ‘appear’ smaller with distance and this may account for the ‘cool’ colour association with diminished size.

Bauhaus educator Johannes Itten’s interest in warm/cool colour contrast was for its expressive value in painting. He identified red-orange and blue-green as the ‘polar’ expression of warm and cool. Other colours from the 12-colour ‘wheel’ take on warm or cool qualities dependent on their proximity to the ‘poles’ and other colours. He noted that Monet and the Impressionists utilized warm/cool contrasts in their portrayal of sunlight and shadow rather than light/dark contrast to suggest the shimmering quality of light within the landscape (Itten, 1970). The capacity of colours to seemingly advance or recede within a pictorial plane is dependent on their proximity to other colours and their degree of saturation. The dilution of colour with black, white and grey or other colours affects their ability to ‘project’ or ‘regress’ within the overall colour scheme of a composition, be it an objective or non-objective art work. The ‘reading’ of colour within clothing also depends on other variables such as proximity, intensity and extension of hue (Itten, 1970) that result from combining coloured garments on the human form.

A series of explorations demonstrating the effect of colour on upper and lower body garments used the mature ‘Top-Heavy’ body shape to show colour comparisons. Exercise 11 (Ill.27, p.73) combines ‘warm’ upper body garments with ‘cool’ lower body garments of saturated and diluted colour. Warm colours are believed to advance and should make the torso and arms of rendered figures appear larger. The undiluted cool colours, and the red and orange, contrast most strongly with muted and neutral tones in Figures 2 and 5 because of their intensity and draw the most attention amongst the garments. The yellow-orange and yellow-green in Figures 1 and 3 are the next most intense colours but are also lighter in tonal value and are somewhat overpowered by the ‘cool’ deep colours in neighbouring garments Figures 6 to 10. Tonal contrast followed by colour intensity, create the most visual impact in these examples and appear to override issues related to perceived ‘size’ and colour ‘temperature’.

In Exercise 12 (Ill.28, p.74), combinations of complementary saturated colours are used to assess the effect of colour and tonal contrast on Top-Heavy figures. Those garments with colours that are deeper, Figures 1 to 12, draw attention from the lighter colours which include those in the warm colour category. In general, the cooler colours register as darker in tonal value and create more contrast but at this scale the ‘excesses’ of the Top-Heavy figures are not apparent regardless of colour designation. Only process cyan and magenta in Figures 13 and 14 seem more intense than the other saturated colours, but that may be because of the way colour is diluted during the CMYK printing process which uses Cyan, Magenta, Yellow and Black as its primary and achromatic colour mixing method.

Exercises 13 to 15 (Ill.29-31, pp.75-77), show Top-Heavy figures on a reduced scale and are rendered in saturated and diluted variations of Primary, Secondary and Intermediate colours from the 12-colour wheel in Exercise 16 (Ill.32, p.78). The scale simulates the effectiveness of colour to ‘emerge’ from a distance. Except for the red-green combination in Exercise 13 (Ill.29, p.75), dark clothing in
Exercises 13 and 14 (Ill.30, p.76) draw attention away from the saturated and diluted hues. The red-green composite is probably most powerful because of the proximity of both hues and their equivalent tonal value. Red in the red-green-rust combination seems less potent than red in the olive-red-green combination and demonstrates Itten’s theories about contrast of extension (Itten, 1970). The deeper tonal values in Exercise 15 (Ill.31, p.77) seem to dominate vision with only the combination of orange and mid-blue competing for attention. The mid-blue at full saturation contrasts strongly with the muted khaki garments, possibly because their tonal values are approximately equivalent and highlight the intensity of the blue through discord. The deep orange looks red against blue-green although seems less intense than the mid-blue because it is lighter in tonal value. The depth and intensity of colour, especially in proximity to complementary colour seems to override arguments about the ability of warm/ cool colours to advance or recede.

Exercise 17 (Ill.33, p.80) depicts upper and lower body garments with seam structure and design details. The garments on larger figures, Figures 1 to 6, are similar in area but are bound by a heavy black outline which affects the reading of the colours within them. The smaller figures, Figures 7 to 14, give a less encumbered reading because design details are less apparent and the outline less obvious. The rust, deep blue and deep purple shirts in Figures 1, 2, 6, 9 and 12 stand out amongst the muted blues, greys and paler colours. However, the blue-green colour of Figure 14 also stands out, contrary to cool colour theory, perhaps because it is lighter and less diluted than the surrounding colours. This lends credence to colour theories expounded in home sewing manuals (McCall, 1968; Reader’s Digest, 1984; Simplicity, 1975) that suggest greyed colours in mid tones will make the wearer less conspicuous, but the above exercises rely on comparative examples to demonstrate design principles. A solitary figure, devoid of competing visual interest may result in a different perception of form.

According to McCall’s Sewing Book, the object of wearing cool, dark and greyed colours is to diminish size and to make form appear less distinct (McCall, 1968, p. 10). Exercise 18 (Ill.34, p.81) renders shirts and pants with like-coloured boundaries that seem to magnify the area of colour in each garment. The dark outline of the deep purple shirt in Figure 3 and the deep blue pants in Figure 5 are similar in tonal value to the ‘fill’ colour of each garment and seem to keep both colours contained. The effect suggests a marginally smaller perimeter but may be the result of a dark contrast against a white page defining the silhouette more clearly. Exercise 19 (Ill.35, p.82) partially affirms the results of high contrast silhouettes, except that a pale outline was used in the black examples of Figures 6 and 7 in which the ‘fill’ colours are marginally reduced in size. Lighter coloured boundaries on other figures in Exercise 18 seem to extend form whereas dark boundaries seem to isolate and contain colour. The reading of colour in these examples is hence affected by the method of depiction.

The contention about colour’s ability to influence size perception is brought into focus in Exercises 20 to 22 which set clothed figures against coloured and achromatic
backgrounds. Figure 1 in Exercise 20 (Ill.36, p.83) shows black and white clothing bordered by mid-grey garments on a white ground; boundaries are faint to limit their impact on colour reading. The white clothing seems to merge with the white background while black clothing stands out as the maximum contrast and appears narrower than grey and white clothing. Figure 2 shows the four figures on a mid-grey ground. As expected the grey clothing merges with the grey background but also appears larger than both white and black figures. The white clothing still looks larger than the black, but the grey selected for the exercise might be lighter than a true mid-grey so shows black in more contrast. Figure 3 shows black clothing against a black background which appears to be the largest of the figures, while the white and grey clothing look equivalent in size; tonal contrast and context have an obvious influence on size perception in these examples.

In Exercise 21 (Ill.37, p.85), the black, white and grey clothed figures are set against grounds of blue-green and red-orange. Grey and black figures seem more readily absorbed by the blue ground with white appearing the most prominent. White does not appear noticeably larger than the other figures on the blue ground but does appear more luminous on the red ground; the grey and black figures on red ground appear roughly equivalent in size. In Exercise 22 (Ill.37, p.85) the grey clothing is substituted for blue and red respectively. Black, white, blue and red clothing in Figure 1 are set against a mid-grey ground; the blue figure tends to merge with the grey while the other figures contrast more strongly with it. In Figure 2, a yellow ground highlights the blue and black clothing while the red garment shows less contrast. The white figure tends to merge with the yellow ground which is closer in tonal value and appears slightly magnified in size.

White and light colours, according to conventional wisdom (Chambers, 1951, p.458; McCall, 1968, p.10; Mortimer-Dunn, 1973, p.100; Reader's Digest, 1984, p.50) are to be avoided if one is conscious about body size, and Exercises 36 to 38 would seem to support that theory dependent on context. The viewing context is important because ‘backgrounds’ in real-life are rarely controlled; even distributions of light, the colour of companion garments, exposed flesh and hair colour are just as likely to influence colour readings on the clothed figure. Exercise 23 (Ill.38, p.86) shows a series of 4 white shirts with seam and structural details. The white ‘cloth’ is translucent and shows subtle tonal variation over flesh and lower body garments. This modulation dilutes the potency of ‘solid’ white and creates more visual interest within the form distracting from apparent size issues. The context in which colours are viewed influences size perception at least in graphic form, however coloured cloth, through drape and fit to the human form, creates more complex interplays of light and shade and adds textural effects that at close range can also alter perception.

Shape, Division and Distribution
The proportions of garments when divided by seams, structural features or worn in combination can influence perception. Exercise 24 (Ill.39, p.87) shows skirts in various shapes, lengths and configurations with an unchanging upper body garment. The skirt shapes (except for the variation skirts) are simple but interact with the more complex shape of the upper body garments to create an overall silhouette. The skirts that are shortest, in both A-line and tubular examples, initiate
the most interest because they reveal more of the complex contours of the leg. The longer Variation skirt shapes create interest through their complexity and variation in contour. The pants shapes create more interest than their equivalent skirt shapes because their divided contours provide more stimulus than the unbroken areas of the skirts. The division within in pants is also both vertical and central and leads the eye back towards the more complex upper body region.

A comparison between horizontal and vertical division is demonstrated in Exercise 25 (III.40, p.89). The horizontal and vertical divisions in garments are simple but the horizontal division is shorter and tends to divide form into 2 unlike areas; the variation in neckline tends to focus attention within the upper body garments. The vertical divisions seem to unite the components of the clothed figure; the vertical line is longer, symmetrically divides form and produces 2 mirror-image halves with more complex contours. Even though the width of the silhouette is the same in horizontally divided figures as it is in vertically divided forms, attention is distracted from width in the latter. Structural details however are shown on solid, white garments and may not be apparent with distance, reducing visual impact to the effect of silhouette and contour alone.

Exercises 26, 27 and 28, show separation of lower and upper body garments through tonal variation. In Exercise 26 (III.41, p.90) the figure and garment variations, using darker grey in the upper body, show more contrast between the complex contours of the face and arms and tend to draw more attention than the paler tones of simple skirt shapes, contradicting the rule about light colours expanding form and therefore attracting more attention (McCall, 1968; Mortimer-Dunn, 1973). The black and white combinations provide the strongest contrast, particularly where there is added detail at the neckline but seem ‘in balance’ because the areas of upper and lower body garments are roughly equivalent. One tonal agent does not override the other when combined in these garment shapes.

Exercise 27 (III.42, p.91) uses tonal values in varied proportions to assess visual impact through change in lower and upper body garment shapes; black upper body garments in combination with grey or white lower body garments provide the most visual interest. In the all-black combinations, Figure 6 stands out because of its more complex sleeve and neckline contours and its shorter skirt length revealing more complex leg contours. In Exercise 28 (III.43, p.92), long-sleeve-long-skirt and short-sleeve-short-skirt examples are used with varying grey tonal values. Of the long skirt examples, the dark grey skirts seem to override the pale grey examples for overall visual interest probably because the pale grey skirts are similar in tonal value to the flesh colour of the figure and neutralize visual impact. In the short-sleeve-short-skirt examples, black and dark grey skirts draw the most attention possibly because the proportions of the skirt are smaller than the upper body garment and throw the skirt into more relief despite its simple shape.

Structural details in garments create complexity and visual interest at close range but colour and tonal contrast highlight contours and the silhouette at greater distances. Fashion advice seems intent on limiting visual impact for those who are larger, shorter and older than the ‘ideal’ body shape, thereby diminishing their aesthetic satisfaction from the complex interplay of formal properties in clothing (Twigg, 2007).
The emphasis seems to be on 'toning down' appearance by simulating the effects of atmospheric effect on form to obscure the wearer (McCall, 1968). This is rarely the context within which individuals are viewed or view themselves. Exercise 29 (Ill.44, p.94) shows 864 figures in combinations of diluted orange and blue. At this size the intensity of orange and depth of blue garments show most clearly against the paler colours and the white page. Orange coloured garments, particularly those where proportions are greater, seem to magnify form except in those examples where deep blue occupies more area. Atmospheric effect would dilute these colours further but the scale of these figures would be greatly reduced to the point of obscurity. Adopting the warm-cool-advance-recede theory to reduce size seems oblique even if it is correct because other factors tend to occupy attention at close range. Exercise 30 (Ill.45, p.95) shows garments in similar proportion to those in Exercise 29, but breaks the simplicity and dominance of two colour combinations by introducing contrasting bands of colour at varying intervals. The added detail breaks the solidity of form and dominance of stronger colours by introducing complexity to simple shapes through contrast of colour, tone and extension. Complementary colour contrasts serve to integrate upper and lower body garments, particularly where they are repeated in both regardless of colour intensity. Not all the garment details produce a 'balanced' result, but if that were the objective some manipulation of the placement and proportion of contrasting bands could achieve that end.

**Pattern and Texture**

Colour and texture were cited by De Klerk and Lubbe (2008) as key aesthetic properties in the evaluation of apparel products by female consumers; their study noted sensory fulfilment via aesthetic attributes took priority over functional qualities in garment design and appreciation (De Klerk, Lubbe, 2008). Pattern and texture have the potential to add to the aesthetic experience of clothing (De Klerk, Lubbe, 2008; Woods, Padget, 1987) but are generally discussed in historical fashion references (Chambers,1951: McCall, 1966; Mortimer-Dunn, 1973; Reader's Digest, 1984, Simplicity, 1975) for their capacity to enlarge or exaggerate form. Julia Twigg (2011) maintains, for British clothiers, colour has replaced cut in older women's clothing because the aging body is less amenable to the kind of body-conscious display most younger market labels are designed to accentuate (Twigg, 2011). Texture however, can be more subtle and personal in its sensory expression because it is both tactile and visual in aesthetic character.

Exercise 31 (Ill.46, p.96) uses photographic textures of melange yarns and quilted cloth to demonstrate the enhanced visual character texture can lend to subdued or muted colours through subtle tonal variation and linear-graphic detail. While the scale is not representative, the design elements within photographic textures show the potential for increased complexity within simple garment shapes. Complexity and familiarity were preferred attributes for clothing in Woods and Padgett's study (1987) of aesthetics applied to fashion. They attribute psychobiological factors such as the 'need for stimulation' and the 'need for order and harmony' within objects (Woods & Padgett, 1897, p.17) to the preference for complex but familiar forms. A third factor, 'habituation' or 'sensory adaption', maintains that repeated exposure to the same stimulus will result in desensitization and interest levels within an object will
abate (Woods & Padgett, 1897, p.18). ‘ Variety within unity overcomes habituation by providing change while maintaining order and organization’ (Woods & Padgett, 1897, p.18). Fabric pattern and texture can then satisfy the need for stimulation and order within garment design.

Exercise 32 (Ill.47, p.98) shows linear-graphic textures at various scales in combination with small, scattered repeats of non-objective motifs. The colours used are diluted and of low contrast to simulate textural qualities in the surface character and structure of fabric. Those patterns where the scale of the repeat is large or emphatic, such as the stripes in Figures 1, 2, 6, 9 and 14, tend to break garments into distinct areas rather than unify form. Figures 3, 7, 10 and 12 show linear patterns in repeat with a change of direction or at a greatly reduced scale (Figure 7) but tend to look predictable and simplistic rather than adding to the complexity of standard garment shapes. The repeats using the broken stripe and the scatter prints, Figures 4, 9 and 13, look the most balanced because they provide variety in subtle texture without predictability and unify form through the interplay of pattern.

**Stripes**

Stripes can add textural quality to garments dependent on their configuration, that is, figure/ground proportion, line character, subdivisions and colour combinations. Most advice around their use identifies ‘spacing’ and direction as the key components in estimating stripes’ capacity to enlarge or reduce form, but generally show large equidistant stripes in high contrast to demonstrate the point. Even then the garment’s shape and area can influence the visual impact stripes can make (Ill.15, p.56, McCall, 1968 p 6; Ill.16, p.57, Reader’s Digest, 1984 p 51; Ill. 17, p.57, Simplicity, 1975 p 5). Exercise 33a (Ill.48, p.99) & Exercise 33b (Ill.49, p.100) show figures in upper body garments with fine stripes in varying proportion, colour and direction. Lower body garments are in solid colours of mostly muted hues in a midtonal range with two exceptions. Figures 1 to 5 show stripes on a darker ground where Figures 1 and 2 compare smaller and larger intervals of the repeat. In Figure 1, stripes appear textural rather than directional because of their scale, whereas the more emphatic vertical stripes in Figure 2 tend to break up the garment form. The large scale vertical stripe in Figure 4 again looks disjointed when compared to the horizontal and diagonal stripes of Figures 3 and 5. The vertical stripes leave large irregular shapes where they intersect side contours and are fewer in repeat than Figures 3 and 5. The repetition of stripes in horizontal and diagonal examples sets up an ordered progression or viewing ‘rhythm’ that encourages a whole garment view and integrates component parts rather than isolating them as distinct units.

Figures 7 to 9 and 12 to 15 in Exercise 33a and Exercise 33b show fine, dark, vertical and horizontal stripes on a lighter ground. The contrast in tonal value appears less emphatic than in Figures 1 to 5 despite the same colours being used. The lighter ground is perhaps closer in value to flesh colour and the surrounding page; the warm grey of the lower body garment also decreases in contrast as stripes in either direction become finer and closer together. The larger scale vertical stripes don’t seem to fracture form as in Figures 2 and 4, but do appear less rhythmic than in Figure 7 where stripe and ground appear more integrated. In Figures 8 to 9 and 14 to 15 the stripe repeats scarcely register as directional elements because of their scale and appear closer to a diluted solid colour. Except for the large
Illustration 48: Exercise 33a, Saltmarsh H, 2002 – 2012
Illustration 49: Exercise 33b, Saltmarsh H, 2002 – 2012
scale stripes, viewing distance and scale are a key to determining the textural qualities and visual impact stripes make in directing sight around or along the body. Colours in adjacent garments also influence the efficacy of striped clothing. Figure 16 in Exercise 33b seems to render the dark stripe as more distinct than in Figures 7, 10 or 13 because the blue of the lower body garment is more concentrated in colour and appears to throw the lighter ground of the stripes into greater relief. The larger scale stripes in Figures 17 and 18 appear discordant against the warm, grey, lower body garment because their scale magnifies the intensity of their ground colour. The broken stripe added in Figures 19 to 21 dilutes the impact of large scale stripes on red ground and integrates readily with the white at lower body. It also adds complexity to a simple configuration without dissolving the integrity of colour contrast. Figure 11 offers increased complexity by pairing large scale stripes at alternating intervals, so figure and ground remain distinct but add an undulating pattern that breaks the predictability of repeat in Figure 12.

None of the striped combinations in Exercises 33a or 33b make one form appear larger or smaller than another, but the scale of the repeat can influence interest level where stripes register as distinct figure and ground or as faint textural characteristics. Only the large scale vertical stripe through limited repetition disrupts the integrity of the upper body garments. Figures 1 to 3 in Exercise 34 (Ill.50, p.102) show the same scale stripes in broad, irregular repeats but the vertical repeat in Figure 1 creates interest through its diversity of colour and interval rather than break-up form. Because there is little repeat of colour throughout the body of the upper garment, the repetition of colour in the sleeves of Figure 1, serves to unify garment components; the horizontal and diagonal multi-stripes in Figures 2 and 3 look predictable by comparison and fragment the body and sleeve by the uneven placement of stripes.

Exercise 35 (Ill.50, p.102) shows striped garments of differing complexity against intense, mid-tone, deep and pale colours at lower body. The large-scale figures show intense, complementary or discordant colour against the striped upper body garments; stripes in Figures 1 and 3 compete successfully with their companion garments, but the red garment in Figure 2 overwhelms the delicacy of stripes and their spatial configuration. The same stripes are shown at a reduced scale in Figures 4 to 12; the bold blue and white stripes remain distinct against deep and mid-tone garments while the pink and multi-stripes look muted or subdued by comparison. Only in Figures 10 to 12, with the pale lower body garments, do all stripes look distinct and compatible in combination.

The visual interest stripes provide in garments is dependent on their scale, colour and configuration; their capacity to divert or attract attention is restricted by factors other than their direction and spacing alone. The cut of the garment and placement and distribution of stripes within it are also affected by the viewing distance of the observer which in turn affects recognition of figure and ground characteristics. Stripes' impact on body size is limited by the shape and fit of the garment they inhabit. The configuration and scale of the stripe repeat can add to the complexity of clothing and influence the overall balance of coordinating garments without affecting the perception of body size; the mythology of horizontal stripes broadening the body is contingent on other variables influencing perception at the same time.
Pattern Scale

The checks in Exercise 36 (Ill.51, p.104) and geometric motifs in Exercise 37a (Ill.52, p.105) and Exercise 37b (Ill.53, p.106) vary in complexity and scale. The larger figures in both exercises show two-colour and multi-colour patterns that change character when viewed at a simulated distance on smaller figures, or rendered at a reduced scale as Exercise 37a and Exercise 37b. Small scale, muted colour checks become more textural in their rendering in Exercise 36, whereas larger scale 2-colour and multi-colour repeats in Exercise 37 retain distinct figure and ground characteristics. The simple green check in Exercise 37a retains its essential features in Figure 14, despite the reduced scale, whereas the muted stars in Figure 13 appear more like a bias-cut check because of the regularity of their repeat and low contrast of their individual motifs. The green and white checks in Figure 14 are also more readable because of their relatively high tonal contrast; only the high intensity multi-colour circles compete with the checks for contrast but coloured circles become indistinct at the most reduced scale in Figure 16, leaving the warm and dark/light colours prominent in the pattern repeat.

Patterns within patterns emerge at a reduced scale in the figures from Exercise 37 with more complex motifs and colour schemes, but individual colours appear more muted or diluted and do not compete as successfully with intense, solid colours in companion garments. Fashion texts recommend ‘medium’ scale pattern repeats to avoid inflating the figure and suggest using muted colour, low contrast motifs with indistinct contours for the same reason (McCall 1968; Reader’s Digest, 1984). The motivation in these texts is to ‘dissolve’ form or make it appear less noticeable, but complexity and visual interest may be sacrificed as a result (Woods & Padgett, 1987).

Figures 17 to 20, Exercise 37b, show groups of patterns at increasingly reduced scales with solid upper body garments of varying saturation. The 2-colour patterns in Figures 18 and 19 are shown with slightly de-saturated upper body garments in the two smallest motifs which mix optically to create diluted colours. While the clarity of individual motifs is subsumed, the overall colour definition is retained at reduced scale and requires only moderate adjustment in saturation of upper body garments to ‘balance’ competing optical effects between upper and lower body. The motifs in the more complex multi-colour patterns of Figures 17 and 20 lose their characteristic shape at reduced scales and expose remaining colour contrasts as key visual elements. Upper body garments in Figure 17 are progressively reduced in intensity as motifs become smaller and optically mix to produce more muted colours. Upper body garments in Figure 20 show more intense colour but change in tonal value as the combination of smaller and less distinct motifs highlight deeper values. Only the largest scale example of multi-colour circles competes successfully with full saturation yellow above it in Figure 20; the upper body garment to the right of the figure wearing full saturation yellow, shows a moderately intense colour to balance the yellow in the reduced scale pattern repeat. The remaining examples show diluted magenta and cyan garments in combination with motifs at lower body as they are reduced to areas of warm and cool colour contrast respectively.
Illustration 51: Exercise 36, Saltmarsh H, 2002 – 2012
Illustration 53: Exercise 37b, Saltmarsh H, 2002 – 2012
The definition of what constitutes ‘medium’ scale pattern repeats is ambiguous or generalized as is much of the discussion in fashion manuals. Scale is dependent on viewing distance of the observer and must include the stand point of the wearer and their perceptions about appropriate size. The theory is to match pattern motifs with body dimensions but fails to acknowledge the relative intricacy or regularity of repeats and the influence garment shape and proportion have on size perception. Exercise 38 (III.54, p.108) demonstrates the effects of varying scale in pattern on whole body garments which at mid range in Figure 3, shows only one and a half repeats. The all-over, scatter pattern shows like motifs in a recurring colour scheme that address the need for ‘familiarity’ and ‘order’ in aesthetic appreciation, without invoking ‘habituation’ through too regular repeat intervals (Woods & Padgett, 1987). The pattern in Figure 5 looks dysrhythmic at large scale because the colour field is less evenly dispersed. Similar motifs can be identified but individual colours dominate vision where they show more contrast with the background and as a result the pattern looks disconnected and ‘unbalanced’. The same scale repeat is used in the upper body garment of Figure 9 and whole-body garment of Figure 13. The former pattern looks unified, despite the scale, because the light pink and pale violet colours are repeated within the upper body; the latter example appears unified through use of like motifs in similar colours with consistent distribution but because of its regularity and simple colour scheme lacks complexity at this scale (Woods & Padgett, 1987).

Figures 7 to 12 in Exercise 38 show multi-colour medium and large repeats with different backgrounds. Those figures with the strongest colour contrast on pale green or dark blue grounds emphasize the irregularity of the repeat, while motifs in large scale with muted, mid tone backgrounds, such as Figure 11, appear more integrated. This effect seems to give credence to theories about disguising body size by using low contrast colours (McCall, 1968) but the pattern in question is low in tonal contrast only and exercises interest via contrasting colours of equivalent value. The scale of repeat in Figure 11 is still large and scattered but unified through like values and repetition of key colours. It looks ‘balanced’ and offers complexity (Woods & Padgett, 1987) via the intricacy of interlocking figure and ground. The colour complexity of the large repeat motifs seems to distract from issues about pattern scale and body size.

Colour selection, frequency of colour repeat, scale and distribution of motif within garment shapes contribute to the overall perception of accord in pattern design. Large scale, scattered repeats with irregular placement and strong tonal contrast may direct attention away from more uniform patterns but do not necessarily conjure exaggeration in body size. Altering one or more characteristics amongst those previously mentioned may result in less conflicting or competing components and contribute to an overall sense of balance in pattern repeat. Complexity combined with familiarity (Woods & Padgett, 1987) suggests a perceptual need for variety and unity within a given design. The point at which those two needs are satisfied however, is not clearly defined. Pattern scale is only one contributing factor to determining ‘suitability’ of a given garment for individual body size, but since the perceptual needs of the wearer and the observer may differ, the final assessment is subjective.
Illustration 54: Exercise 38, Saltmarsh H, 2002 – 2012
Design Theory Illustration Summary
Size deflation or visual obscurity is not necessarily the motivation of apparel selection for female consumers according to evidence collected by De Klerk and Lubbe (De Klerk & Lubbe, 2008), but fashion advice for older women rarely talks about aesthetic satisfaction or the need for visual stimulus (Woods & Padgett, 1987) in clothing. Neutrality is considered the general objective for larger or older women (Chambers, 1951; McCall, 1968; Mortimer-Dunn, 1973; Reader’s Digest, 1984; Simplicity, 1975) who do not conform to the young, thin ideal that prevails in contemporary fashion culture. This objective fails to account for the aesthetic interests of the wearer and the need for fulfilment in fashion choice. Assumptions about how design elements and principles work when applied to the body through clothing often miscalculate the overall effect of competing variables and are frequently coloured with bias about women’s social roles at a given life stage. By comparison, the design theory illustrations developed as part of this research demonstrate widely accepted aesthetic precepts promoted by historical fashion texts (Chambers, 1951; McCall, 1968; Mortimer-Dunn, 1973; Reader’s Digest, 1984; Simplicity, 1975) are often dependent on context or comparison to justify a given principle and in need of a more thorough and extensive exploration to reveal the properties at work in an aesthetic directive. When appropriately expurgated, such aesthetic principles could assist in the design and development of refined and sensuous clothing more deserving of mature adult consumers.
7. CONCLUSION
This research investigated the needs and expectations of mature female consumers on the Australian fashion market and examined constraints affecting the development and availability of fashion for this group. Research showed a variety of issues impact the design and availability of fashion for mature women including negative social and cultural attitudes toward aging and prejudices specifically limiting the visibility of mature women within the fashion media. Older women were often only depicted in advertising for cosmetic surgery or age 'minimizing' products rather than within the glamorous photo shoots that make up the body of most fashion magazines. This circumstance limits information and access to age inclusive fashion because the garments promoted by such publications do not offer visual references suited to mature body shapes. Company representatives from industry interviews tended to rely on in house catalogues to infer age representation and the survey respondent’s interest in work place attire did not register as a significant area of need amongst fashion houses in general. Work place attire does not feature prominently as a photographic subject in mainstream fashion media at all leaving mature women’s interests in the wake of the dominant ‘fashion equals youth equals exotic location’ paradigm.

These factors make the promotion of mature women’s fashion difficult to achieve because of the lack of visible role models in fashion advertising and the lack of consistency in sizing within the market place. From a design perspective, many of the aesthetic beliefs related to mature women’s appearance are steeped in historical prejudices about female aging and fail to account for individual sensory values or preferences amongst consumers. Most fashion advice assumes the need to appear slimmer and younger is the prime motivation in garment selection, a premise that generally leads to a plethora of diluted colors and subdued textures on the mature women’s market. The flow on effect from this restrictive approach is that less aesthetically appealing product limits promotional opportunities for advertisers and may inhibit the mature consumer’s custom as well by perpetuating the cycle of conformity for older consumers.

Because of the enormity of problems in relation to media visibility and sizing systems and the apparent aesthetic limitations of mature women’s wear, the research sought to respond to research findings on aesthetic prejudices via targeted fashion communications to challenge conventional attitudes towards fashion design for mature women rather than produce a fashion garment range. Initially an exhibition of printed t-shirts that highlighted negative attitudes towards women, aging and fashion was mounted to raise awareness about the age debate. Graphics and text referenced historic and contemporary images in a comical way to question the validity of prevailing attitudes about age and women’s fashion choices and received positive feedback from patrons who attended the exhibition. The objective was to show the dated nature of the ageist sentiments raised and to reflect on their use in contemporary fashion opinion. The nature of the feedback from the exhibition showed patrons were aware of the prejudices toward mature women and that the prevailing fashion culture perpetuated the stigma about older women’s appearance through the limited use of older models and subjects. The exhibition achieved recognition from patrons or would be consumers but not necessarily the perpetrators of such views. The research subsequently sought to develop design...
communications that might address aesthetic prejudices in a constructive way for those designing fashion for mature consumers.

Additional research was conducted graphically in a series of illustrated diagrams that tested the authenticity of historical and current design theory applied to fashion for mature consumers by trialling design properties on clothed naturalistic forms. The design communications were made comparable to historic references by using multiple figures to demonstrate design properties. The difference between the explorations and those of historical examples was both in the extent of colour used to demonstrate theories and the use of naturally proportioned figures on which to test theories. Previously historic illustrations depicted highly stylized and elongated female forms and used limited colour by way of example. The research project’s design communications were more extensive in investigation that those from existing fashion references.

These design communications exercises were based on the spatial perceptual rules of coloured and textured clothing depicted on naturalistic form to determine their visual impact. Historically, certain colours and textures are believed to modify appearance by making form appear larger or smaller but usually in context with other forms or within a pictorial plane. The design theory illustrations used to determine the impact of colour, tone and other properties were inconclusive because variables related to the configuration of clothing modified the perceptual result for colour, tone or shape, and could not account for the impact of multiple properties within one illustration or group. This did however challenge the validity of simplistic design theory interpretations such as ‘red enlarges’ that continue to suppress choice for older women in their pursuit of personal expression and sensory fulfilment through clothing selection. In general, design theory precepts cannot account for the complexity of the viewed result without cross analysis of perceptual factors. The illustrations showed how effects of theories inhibiting the use of colour and texture for mature body shapes cannot fully be determined without consideration of other factors related to interdependent design properties, garment design and naturalistic human proportion. The research’s existing exercises could be used to demonstrate a more extensive range of garments for mature clothing because vibrant and textured options amongst others listed in the design communications remain within the range of possibility for mature women’s clothing and ignores mythology about size and visual weight gain in women at least through colour and tonal value. The historic references that cite colour as a mechanism for figurative enlargement fail to take account of the complexity of garment form and interplay of colour, tone and texture that takes place on the viewed female form.

While the research sought to challenge the veracity of conventional precepts about fashion design and the perception of form, further research is needed to assess the impact of formal aesthetic properties on visual perception in relation to garment design. A far greater range of naturalistic body types could be tested via 3D rendering or photographic references to assist in the verification of formal design properties and their impact on the visual appearance. Design aesthetics are a contentious area of study and little concrete research exists in the field. The research’s existing design communications could be developed into style guides for different market sectors or extended to include more coverage of design precepts,
the interrelationship between properties or into sections dealing with one specific body shape in the context of mature garment design. Regardless the design communication explorations indicate a more comprehensive coverage of examination around aesthetic precepts and garment design that may assist in replacing stereotypical design notions that stifle mature age consumers and the potential of the mature women’s fashion market in Australia.

The research questions are (1) what are the problems associated with design for the mature women’s fashion market in Australia and (2) how could fashion communication make a contribution to address those problems. The exhibition ‘Fashion Hates Me’ highlighted aesthetic issues affecting mature women and fashion using a combination of historic and contemporary imagery and pertinent text. The work showed that many contemporary issues affecting women’s age and fashion compatibility are founded in entrenched attitudes towards women’s roles in society. The problem is how to surmount such prejudicial attitudes and to present a vibrant fashion culture for mature aged consumers.

The illustrations developed in response to examining design theory principles for fashion, show ways in which fashion communication can contribute to alleviating aesthetic prejudice in fashion design theory. The design theory illustrations were trialled on naturalistic figures with a mature body shape in a variety of colour ways from a variety of intensities and dilutions, to challenge attitudes about colour application and age. Similarly, illustrations in shape, tone and texture on naturalistic figures presented a variety of garment options to demonstrate the aesthetic potential for developing mature women’s fashions.

The conclusions of this research suggest there is potential for developing the design theory illustrations into a type of style manual for designers in this sector of the industry. The illustrated diagrams potentially offer a useful way for designers in industry to better understanding of design theory in relation to mature women’s fashions. Mature women’s fashions has not been represented in contemporary fashion texts in any substantial way and a visual reference or textbook featuring aesthetic issues for mature consumers may contribute to a significant understanding of the market sector.
REFERENCE LIST


Basler, 2012, Vogue Australia, March 2012


Drudi E, Paci T, 2006, Figure Drawing for Fashion Design, Pepin Press, Amsterdam, 2006


Kozar JM, 2008, Women’s Responses to Current Fashion Models: A Study of Middle-Aged Female Consumers, Kansas State University; Center on Aging Report, 2008


McCall Corporation, 1939, Dressmaking Made Easy, McCall Publishing Company (Australasia) Pty. Limited, Sydney, 1939

Millers, 2015, Fashion advertisement on Free to Air Television Australia, Spring Summer 2015


Saltmarsh H 1998, Questionnaire Mature Women’s Fashion, Apr/May 1998


Simplicity, 1975, Let Yourself Sew, Simplicity Patterns Pty. Ltd., Punchbowl, NSW, Australia, 1975


Sportscraft, 2012, David Jones, Good Weekend, The Saturday Age, Mar 17, 2012

Target Australia, 2015, Television advertisement, Spring/Summer 2015


LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

Diagram 1: Research Methodology Flow Chart, p. 9

Illustration 1: Illustration 1, ‘Full Stop’, H. Saltmarsh, 2002, Textile print on garment, p.25


Illustration 16: Simplicity, 1975, Let Yourself Sew, Simplicity Patterns Pty. Ltd., Punchbowl, NSW, Australia, 1975, p.6, p.56

Illustration 18: Saltmarsh H, *9 ½ Head Fashion Figure*, c.2002, p.60


Illustration 22: Exercise 6, ‘Figure Variation’, Saltmarsh H, 2002 – 2012, p.65

Illustration 23: Exercise 7, ‘Figure Variation’, Saltmarsh H, 2002 – 2012, p.66


Illustration 25: Exercise 9, Saltmarsh H, 2002 – 2012, p.69

Illustration 26: Exercise 10, Saltmarsh H, 2002 – 2012, p.70


Illustration 51: Exercise 36, Saltmarsh H, 2002 – 2012, p.103
Illustration 52: Exercise 37a, Saltmarsh H, 2002 – 2012, p.104