SERIAL INDIVIDUALITIES
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A Practice at the Junction of Special Occasion Micro-design and Sustainability

A PROJECT SUBMITTED IN FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

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JULY 2015
Declaration
I certify that except where due acknowledgement has been made, the work is that of the candidate 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 is the result of work which has been carried out since the official commencement date of the approved research programme; any editorial work, paid or unpaid, carried out by a third party is acknowledged; and, ethics procedures and guidelines have been followed.

Georgia McCorkill
July 2015
Acknowledgements
A precious and unanticipated outcome of this project is the great many people I have encountered, each of whom have inspired my practice, challenged my thinking and buoyed my spirits.

My supervisor Soumitri Varadarajan has been a transformative influence as well as always knowing just what is needed in the moment. My associate supervisors have likewise offered invaluable guidance; firstly Sue Thomas in 2010, then Mick Peel whose example greatly influenced my making from 2011-2014, and since 2014 Jessica Bugg has perceptively steered me towards completion.

My RMIT research cohort within the Schools of Architecture & Design and Fashion & Textiles have been incredibly supportive as well as teaching me much through their own journeys, particularly, Jo Cramer, Tania Splawa-Neyman, Karen Webster, Denise Sprynskyj, Peter Boyd, Winnie Ha, Adele Varcoe, Juliette Anich, Leyla Acaroglu, Anthea Van Kopplen, Chris Cottrell and Simon Curlis. The feedback offered by the many people who sat on my GRC/PRS panels, has been of invaluable benefit to my research. Robyn Healy in particular contributed much appreciated guidance throughout and it was also a privilege to take part in Peter Downton’s research methods seminars.

Zoe Tuckwell-Smith, Leeyong Soo, Lou Pardi, Tullia Jack, Cheryl Lin Rodsted, Paola di Trocchio, Kyra Pybus, Iolanthe Gabri, Phoebe Montague, Lisa Teh, Louise Keye, Rachel Dennis, Jo Finney and Jacqui O’Brien were amongst those who took part in creative and inspiring ways, by wearing my designs, connecting me with others and writing about my projects with such good humour and generosity.
Tullia Jack, Kate Luckins, Lara McPherson, Emma Lynas, Nerida Lennon and everyone involved in the GRVP book club and Sustainable Fashion Australia group inspired me with their ambition for social and environmental change.

Matt Thomson, Kara Baker, Julie Simonelli and Danielle Bleazby were amongst many who generously shared their practice or special occasion wisdom with me. Mariana Hardwick and Luci DiBella gifted precious “triangles of silk”. The women of the Natural Dye Group at Plant Craft Cottage in the Botanical Gardens shared their knowledge of plant dyes amassed over thirty years during two memorable workshops.

My friends Sean Morrison, Michael Parry, Eli Wallis and Donna Miovich contributed their professional expertise to my projects. Professional editing was carried out by Lani Steinberg. Caitlin Perry and Tom Harper laid out this dissertation so elegantly.

My parents Geraldine and Bruce have always offered unfailing support for me in my education for which I am eternally grateful. My brother Alistair and sister-in-law Verity have been enthusiastic and encouraging. My son Vaughan, two years old, tolerated my distracted parenting and helpfully rearranged the drafts I laid out on the floor. My partner Chris likewise tolerated my distracted company, spurred me on, patiently refuted my dire predictions and somehow made the whole project conceivable to complete – thankyou so very much.
Contents
Abstract
The genre of special occasionwear can be considered to be in a state of flux. Traditional occasions with clearly defined dress categories such as the “ballgown” or “cocktail dress” have been replaced by a range of contemporary settings such as the “red carpet” arrival at an awards ceremony, or sitting “front row” at a fashion parade. Not only are such settings imbued with their own protocols and traditions, they are complex ecosystems in which many actors contribute to the staging of occasion dresses. While special occasionwear has always rendered women as objects to be gazed upon, recent popular culture phenomena such as the ubiquity of celebrity culture, and the mass media distribution of the photographic image mean that the singular occasion dress is now visually consumed, critiqued, and even derided by a mass audience.

Against the backdrop of this popular culture setting is a making practice concerned with the individual construction of one dress for one person using techniques of co-design, made-to-measure and craft-based hand making. This making practice is called “Serial Individualities,” a name coined for the particular assemblage of design approaches employed. Serial Individualities is a poetic practice, in which the time involved in hand making is an immersive and rewarding undertaking. It also has a socio-material dimension, whereby engaging with stakeholders within the staging of each project impacts on the aesthetics and materiality of the dress.
However, for a practice that is also concerned with sustainability, the one-off nature of the special occasion genre: laboriously constructed dresses to be worn often only once could be considered the epitome of environmentally wasteful practice. Therefore addressing such material questions is one starting point for a design intervention, as such each dress employs design strategies informed by recent literature on sustainable fashion practice, such as upcycling, and design for sharing. Concurrently, the occasion dress is a potent artefact at the convergence of mass-media, celebrity and fashion, therefore exploring the activist or “billboard” potential within a socially-grounded scenario, is another tangent for sustainable practice.

Through practice-based inquiry this research explores the junction of special occasion practice and sustainability by making a series of individual dresses. Each project results in the dress as a material outcome in itself, followed by a suite of reflections on the effects generated through the making and staging of each project. Such reflection-in-action has resulted in a transformation of my practice to one capable of expressing a range of moral concerns through a making practice.

The staging of dresses has resulted in the incorporation of invitation and performance activities associated with wearing – actions
ordinarily carried out by other professionals - into fashion design activity where they are conducted from the perspective of the designer. Such a framework enables the designer to consider the ways in which socially-based activities are part of material making practice, and to reflect on a range of personal qualities, described as “porosity”, which facilitate a practice that encounters situations with conviviality and good humour. Additionally, negotiation between the quantitative and rational, or “pragmatic” approaches to sustainability on the one hand with the immersive and sensory or “poetic” priorities of design on the other demonstrates a fine tension existent in sustainable fashion practice. The characteristics of porosity, and the linked binary of poetics and pragmatics are captured within a reflective and explanatory model of the design practice and its concomitant theoretical context. This research demonstrates that practicing sustainable fashion within a context of Serial Individualities involves working within a tension space: between the pragmatic priorities of sustainability and the poetic impulses of fashion design, or between the material preoccupations of the designer, and the social nature of the occasion stakeholder network. Teasing out the tensions and complexities that arise through each project leads to a practice model through which sustainable design strategies can be selected and adapted in a manner appropriate to the individual scale context of a practice in special occasionwear.
“For Special Occasions”
The back entrance is an innocuous door on a narrow backstreet in inner city Fitzroy, Melbourne. The street is potholed bitumen with deep cobblestone gutters, lined on either side with warehouses. Half of them are occupied by light manufacturing and import businesses while the other half are renovated into expensive urban dwellings. Navigating the large commercial rubbish bins crowding the narrow footpath, I enter and clomp up a functional wooden staircase. At the top of this unassuming entrance is the workroom, an open space with twelve or so generously sized sewing machine workstations arranged in lines, industrial irons that emit sharp gasps of steam and two long chipboard cutting tables under a cavernous ceiling clad in silver insulation with original exposed wooden beams. Behind a desk are deep shelves stacked with rolls of fabric. Mannequins are scattered about the space, in various sizes and states of repair and behind the cutting tables hang bulging, oversized white plastic garment bags and large brown cardboard patterns. I make my way down the carpeted path that runs the length of a cutting table.

− “Morning”
− “Morning”
− “Good, thanks”
− “And how are you?”
I greet people seated at the sewing machines or bent over the irons as I pass. It is a truth universally acknowledged that seamstresses like to start early and leave early. By 4 pm, stillness will descend over this space, but at 9 am it is noisy with a studious ‘busy-ness.’ I turn the corner into another space, a messy mezzanine office of three or four desks side by side. Here, I store my handbag, and begin my workday. The year is around 2002: I am in my early twenties, and I am beginning my career as a designer with special occasion label, Mariana Hardwick. It is a dream start for me; having walked into the job after my work was spotted at a graduate exhibition. Throughout my studies in fashion design, I have made detailed, intricate creations employing hand techniques. Mariana is an entrepreneurial but ‘hands-off’ boss after many years focused on her business. She encourages fresh ideas and I revel in the autonomy even if my young and inexperienced self also flounders at the lack of direction.

I feel very at home in the workroom space. My job is to see through the creation of new samples for the company. Much time is spent at the patternmaker’s table, in discussion over interpretation of a sketch I have presented.

“I don’t know what you mean here, you’ll have to show me,” she pronounces, heading to the kitchen, because it is 10 am and that means everything must stop for morning tea. There is a personal and professional camaraderie between the women, who span
all ages and are a microcosm of Melbourne’s migrant history. I opt to continue working today because this dress has invaded my psyche. I stand at a mannequin with a large scrap of silk pulled from a remnant box under the table, draping and pinning it to demonstrate what I mean. “I think ... like this,” I explain on her return at precisely 10:15am. “This much draping over the bodice, diagonally, not gathered, pleated, but uneven, not too neat and not too tight.” Later, I stand with the sample machinist and drape it again, this time over a boned corset foundation in the proper fabric cut from a heavy roll on one of the long tables. The sample machinist is the one with not only the best problem-solving skills but also the most effective patience-come-bossiness to work with the young designers like myself who come and go with their wild and impossible ideas. “See, I think this way, yes, that’s best,” she asserts with the tacit authority of her experience. These are the women who maintain what is referred to as the ‘handwriting’ – the aesthetic consistency – of the label, through their control over its making. In the oxymoron that is used too often in this industry, I am the ‘contemporary’ and they are the ‘classic.’

Of course, there is also a front entrance. It is a giant glass garage door and the one male employee, the General Manager, graciously hauls it up to the roof every morning at 10 am. This is the gateway to the salon. Again, a cavernous space but softened with walls created from long grey velveteen curtains. In this domain, the dresses hang from heavy iron hangers generously
spaced on long curved racks so one can appreciate their individuality. There are large triptych mirrors with short round plinths placed in front, and cabinets filled with sparkling jewellery. Jazz or classical music floats through the air and tea-light candles heat fragrant essential oils in little oil burners scattered on side tables.

This space represents the public face of special occasionwear. Here, sales staff will spend an hour at a time intensely focused on divining the dreams of clients-to-be. Dresses on mannequins are displayed in the large windows facing the street. People stop to gaze at them. Sometimes they snap photos because they appreciate the design but not the price-tag - in the thousands of dollars - and indignant sales staff run out the front door to chase them away. When people ask me where I work, I tell them and they are impressed. They are familiar with those elegant windows, or they know someone who just last week, month or year stood in a gown on the pedestal in front of the triptych mirrors as the same sales attendant who chased off the would-be counterfeiter placed a diamante necklace over her delicate collarbones, whilst her entourage, sunk into deep couches close by analysed the effect from every angle. People only know the veneer of glamour epitomised by the salon window display; the bride as she walks down the aisle, or the celebrity on the red carpet. Admittedly, I also enjoy this performance: I play along, dropping salacious gossip about a television star, or joking about the woman who threatened to sue over silver beads that turned gold in the humidity
of the Indian monsoon where the fabric was embroidered. But really, they don’t understand, and I can’t explain, the quiet and deep satisfaction I derive from cold winters and sticky summers high up in the workroom sifting through rolls of georgette, satin, dupion; bent over a sketch in deep discussion, or standing at a mannequin with a mouth full of pins trying to control slippery silk.

Many of the business’ competitors referred to their practice as “bridal couture” but Mariana preferred the term “for special occasions.” Even though commercial reality dictated that most orders would be produced for brides, I was encouraged to create some sample prototypes in dramatic, intense shades; deep red, purple and olive green, or bright, popping ones; hot pink, sky blue and mint green. Such fabulous, dramatic gowns annoyed the sales staff, who had to find ways to explain to clients how they would look made in hues of white, ivory, blush pink or coffee. But placed in the windows and couriered to magazine photo-shoots, these colourful gowns created an illusion of the special occasion. What were these occasions? Who was the woman who purchased and wore such dresses? Despite our best attempts, in microcosmic Melbourne, at least, she never really eventuated; or when she did, she was the celebrity who only ever borrowed, never bought, the dress in return for the prestige of her being seen wearing it. The business itself was complicit in creating a grandiose, old world, illusion of the special occasion while at the same time operating astutely within its contemporary reality.
Introduction

When I designed bridal dresses, I came to love the limited bridal colour palette, the differences between myriad shades of white and ivory. The hidden construction materials were also fascinating. My colleague at the time, sculptor Pennie Jagiello, shared my fascination and together, we created an exhibition in 2003 in which we explored these colours and internal fabrications. Titled “Stripping the Veil of Enchantment”, and part of that year’s Melbourne Fashion Festival cultural program, we used the company’s cardboard patterns scaled on the photocopier to reconstruct exaggerated ballgown silhouettes in nylon tulle, net, organza and shapewell. We exhibited the dresses hanging from a mezzanine into the window of the salon to simulate jelly-fish floating in a giant tank (Figure 1). That exhibition was located as an art practice inquiry, but in many ways, this research picked up in 2010 from where I left off at that point. That is to say, the research is an inquiry into making and staging. It is informed by experience within commercial fashion practices, but is in itself, located as speculative academic inquiry. This creative research practice continues activities I have always done, in the ways I have always done them, but it is also a beginning and an opportunity. I am driven to make, and I use making as a tool to
explore, explain and intervene in the world. I am inspired by and identify with several fashion practices I see around me in my city of Melbourne, but I do not seek to replicate any of them by establishing a commercial business. Further, it has also allowed a certain freedom to be explicit about the goal of testing and applying principles of design for sustainability to the creation and dissemination of the work.

Contemporary Occasionwear

The research certainly examines the making of special occasion dresses, but also the individual occasions in which such dresses are called for in a contemporary setting. Collectively, I group similar occasions as stages, and the processes and actors involved in wearing or arranging for a dress to be worn is the staging of occasionwear. Special occasionwear is defined as a genre of fashion practice; typified by a dress, often of elaborate or complex materials and construction, and intended to be worn at a specific occasion. I regard a special occasion as an event with a heightened social significance at which the disportment of special occasionwear is de rigeur. A well-established example of a stage is a red carpet event, at which many things occur: celebrities or other dignitaries arrive at an event such as an awards ceremony or opening night dressed in occasionwear. They literally traverse a red carpet, but also perform other functions including answer questions from reporters, and importantly, they pose for photographs.

Examples of specific red carpet occasions include globally recognised awards ceremonies such as the Oscars, as well as specifically local events including the (Australian Football League’s) Brownlow Medal and Australia’s TV Week Logie Awards. Another, more lateral, interpretation of a stage is the
“front row” of the fashion parade, the sought-after space in which journalists, buyers, celebrities and clients of most importance to the designer are seated. It is in this domain, that my general observation of fashion parades and fashion media has led me to conclude that people dress up in spectacularly ‘fashionable’ clothing that could also be deemed occasionwear, which, I speculate, sometimes garners more attention than the styles actually presented on the catwalk itself. Examples of front row occasions include the French Haute Couture fashion weeks, and also the parades as part of the Melbourne Fashion Festival. Therefore, ‘special occasionwear’ and ‘occasion’ per se are inextricably linked terms. Occasionwear is determined specifically by the occasion to which it will be worn, while the process of wearing occasionwear is one variable that makes an event an occasion.

Special occasion staging can be considered a network involving a variety of dress practices and performances and a fascinating complexity of interactions between stakeholders. For example, the case of the red carpet stage could be considered as follows: for a small fashion practice, advertising is often prohibitively expensive, and so public relations (PR) is commonly considered a far more cost-effective means of promotion. PR creates a system whereby occasion dresses are loaned to celebrities for them to wear to special occasions. The celebrities, in turn, do their best to credit the designers by whom they are dressed when interviewed. Due to public interest, the event organisers and television channels create more grandiose events surrounding the red carpet arrival. In turn, this additional exposure encourages designers to make the effort to create ever more spectacular creations for their wearers. It is a mutually beneficial system for all involved, with designers benefitting in sales to the general public of their fashion collections, or more accessibly, their accessories and perfumes.
Regarding occasions, staging, dresses and the various other ‘actors’ that make up such scenarios as a network presents various potentials. These potentials can be explored by engaging stakeholders in the development of a speculative design practice that employs sustainable design methods. The sense of responsibility towards creating a credibly sustainable design practice is countered by humour and a form of post-modern provocation whereby the methodologies and language of popular fashion practice are used to subvert ‘worn-once’ occasionwear for the purposes of the sustainable agenda. Through processes of staging, wearers are invited to dress and display the garments at occasions including the Logies and the Melbourne Fashion Festival, thus exposing the designs to the public critique and comment that the project itself critiques.

Sustainable Fashion

Alongside staging and making, sustainability is a third discourse that I weave into this practice. Since circa 2008, there has been a plethora of texts on environmental sustainability in fashion design, (Black 2008, 2012; Fletcher 2008; Fletcher & Grose 2012; Gwilt & Rissanen 2010; Hethorn & Ulasewicz 2008; Hoffman 2007) although concerns about the environmental impacts of fashion certainly pre-date this time. These are supported by a number of academic initiatives that have built substantial bodies of practice-based outcomes relating to sustainability.¹ Media reporting of sustainable fashion has also increased with the result that consumers are also more aware of the issue of the environmental and social damage done by clothing production and consumption.² As a designer in the present day, I have become intensely aware of the ethical ramifications of my own actions within my industry. I am now much more aware of the conditions under which the clothes are made; the environmental

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1. For example, the Centre for Sustainable Fashion at London College of Fashion, London, and Textile, Environment Design at Chelsea College of the Arts, London.

2. Although there is an “attitude-behaviour gap” (Niinimäki 2010), increased awareness does not always result in behavior change.
implications thereof and ultimately, the waste created by a consumer society. In the media, frequently repeated titles and headlines such as “Green is the New Black” (Blanchard 2008; Menkes 2006) present an unfortunate view of sustainable fashion as being simply, the latest trend. By contrast, my personal experience of the field of sustainable fashion is that it has afforded me the opportunity to explicitly incorporate into my practice a moral dimension that I had previously located within my private interests but not expressed in practice.

Within the field of sustainable design, a rapidly expanding body of theoretical ideas provides a framework for the ethically minded designer to develop, or re-orient their practice (Fry 2009; Fuad-Luke 2009; McDonough & Braungart 2002; Thorpe 2007; Walker 2006). The applicability of these approaches to fashion warrants further testing and development on the part of designers themselves. Most research and development focuses on manufacturing aspects such as the development of recycled or organic fibres and fabrics, or the application of new technology to production systems. These strategies are applicable to companies operating in mass-production contexts but less so in small-scale practices. The focus on achieving sustainability through technology also neglects the potential impact of cultural change, be it behavioral, social or economic. Additionally, it sidelines the contributions of non-technologists such as designers and the consumers for whom they create (Fletcher 2008).

The Junction of Sustainable Fashion and Occasionwear

From a sustainable perspective, a special occasion dress, a garment intended for ‘once-off’ wear poses specific technical questions related to its design, material choice, construction and disposal.
But in quantitative terms, solving the “problem” of ‘unsustainably-made’ occasion dresses will not make a significant impact on the very real environmental problems the fashion industry creates in its entirety. Yet the occasion dress remains a significant and potent object: it has a propensity or currency for captivation, which are socially-mediated concerns. It is through exploiting the symbolic value of this genre, alongside material exploration, that the potential within my practice lies.

The annual Red Carpet Awards season in the United States begins with the Golden Globes and culminates in the Academy Awards held in February. Of specific interest to the research was the 2010 Academy Awards, which featured a number of examples of both dressing sustainably and promoting sustainability through dress. Livia Firth (wife of actor Colin Firth) dressed entirely in “sustainable fashion” for every event, documenting her process in a blog for vogue.com (Firth 2011), while Suzy Amis-Cameron (former actress and wife of director James Cameron) ran a competition to design a sustainable dress, which she then wore to the event (Rod 2010). These are both ongoing practice-based - although not designer-led - examples that explore the junction of sustainable fashion and special occasionwear. “Green Carpet” projects such as these are potentially polarising and have been regarded skeptically in some instances. For example, academics have indicated the potential contradictions between fashion and activism (Schacknat 2008), celebrity and the environment (Brockington 2009), or luxury fashion and sustainability (Dafydd Beard 2008; Winge 2008). But on a different, more visual level, fashion writers have chronicled the way that design, fabrication and methods of construction have amplified the symbolism of wardrobes of iconic figures such as Princess Diana (McDowell 2007). These varying views offer both theoretical and practical (design) clues in order to unpack,
define and appropriate the captivation inherent in, and specific to the genre of occasionwear through practices of material making and staging practices.

Occasionwear and sustainability present reflective questions. These questions concern firstly, and most obviously, material making practice, but also the various mechanisms, actors and dialogues that I wish to construct around my making practice:

- What is the creative potential for fashion design practice in using special occasions as staging devices for the presentation and discussion of work concerned with topical issues of environmental and social problems faced by the fashion industry?
- What does it mean (for me and for my practice) to design beautiful or luxurious garments?

It is apparent that in the context of sustainability, beauty embodies a certainly aesthetic appeal, subjective as that is, alongside a narrative of the intention or consideration paid in the making of the garment.

**Approach**

My own creative research practice employs a design research methodology constructed from several sources. Peter Downton (2003) identifies three types of design research: research *into* design, research *through* design and research *for* design. Of these, I primarily employ research *through* design, (although secondarily supported by research *for* design), whereby the production of knowledge stems from the act of designing itself. Ilpo Koskinen et al (2011) propose the term “Constructive Design Research,” as a useful development on research through design.
Constructive Design Research is concerned with projects that involve making an object, service or system. “We are dealing with research that imagines and builds new things and describes and explains these constructions” (p. 6). In this sense, there are two distinct research outcomes, the first is the constructed object: something that tests a hypothesis and interacts with its context, and embodies tensions between the designer’s creative expression and a rigorous testing of theory. The second broaches the explanation of the object, reflection and observations that inform further insights and has ramifications for a broader community than those who directly experience the object designed. Constructive Design Research is aimed at industrial and interaction design disciplines, and as such, reflects the precise distinctions characteristic of those disciplines. Paul Carter (2004), on the other hand, defines a similar relationship between making and researching as “Material Thinking,” which is: “the desire to collaborate, to integrate text-based knowledge with the plastic wisdom of the craftsperson” (p. xii). “Material Thinking” then is influenced by examples of practice from a range of art and design disciplines, and embodies more blurred boundaries between making things and the theoretical outcomes.

In this research, I have employed Donald Schön’s (1983) notion of reflective practice as the method of deriving knowledge from my practice. Schön highlights that professionals employ “knowing in action,” a type of tacit knowledge, as they go about their practice. “Reflection in action” is a fleeting type of decision-making guided by elusive “know-how” occurring in the “action-present,” “the zone of time in which action can still make a difference to the situation” (1983, p. 62). The reflective practitioner is one who consciously seeks to identify and articulate these moments of reflection-in-action for the betterment of his own practice. The reflective practitioner employs reflective research for the purpose
of advancing their practice in situations of “uncertainty, instability, uniqueness and conflict” (1983, p. 308). Schön suggests four methods of reflective research:

Frame analysis – through which the researcher frames the problem at hand in a certain light, defines the values that shape their practice or a movement with which they identify, and consciously determines where they will focus their attention.

Repertoire-building research – in which the researcher builds a body of precedents and examples amongst which they can draw parallels and use this information in their own decision making processes.

Research on methods and theories – in which the researcher uses theoretical positions to “restructure” what is going on in order to explain the practice situation.

The study of reflection-in-action – in which the researcher reflects on their own reflective process. To do so requires the researcher to become aware of his influence on the process they seek to understand.

These methods can be likened to other empirical methods; for example, frame analysis resembles the case study (Yin 2009) research method. The distinctive feature of reflective research – and why it has been adopted in my practice - is that it has an immediate impact on practice. Research activity is “triggered by features of the practice situation, undertaken on the spot, and immediately linked to action” (1983, p. 308). As design research, reflective research might also be considered an example of research for design, particularly in the way it functions in a supportive role to research through design.
Method

This research is based primarily around the process of making; that is, cutting, sewing and finishing garments, and engaging participants to wear dresses to special events or occasions. In this research, the objects of my reflection have been many and varied. However, they all relate in some way to the processes of my making practice or the activities involved in staging my work within particular occasions. My reflection-in-action and reflective research has taken several material forms, utilising a variety of tools of documentation and analysis.

Writing – Throughout the research, I have written in various formats and styles, each serving different purposes:

Papers – I compiled several conference papers in which I reflected on different projects from various theoretical perspectives (McCorkill 2012, 2013, 2014; McCorkill & Varadarajan 2011, 2013). These assisted in building the theoretical framework of this dissertation, and indeed, the first draft was constructed from these papers.

Blog – Throughout the projects’ duration, I maintained a blog: www.redcarpetproject.com.au, using the platform to give an account of the projects as they unfolded. The blog is an ethnographic instrument, but it is also a performative one in that the intent was to record the work as it was being undertaken, but also to display my research to a general audience, and was, therefore, written in an accessible, conversational voice (Figure 2).

Journal – Not all subjects could be publicly blogged about. For instance, in the case of a red carpet dress, protocol dictates that details be kept confidential until the moment of unveiling.
For these events I maintained a private journal, where I wrote up encounters shortly after they occurred. By the immediacy of its nature, this was rough, matter-of-fact recording. Extracts from these journals have been utilised to illustrate the accounts of each project within Chapters One and Two.

**Mapping** – A method of creative stakeholder mapping evolved in order to document and analyse the relationships between material artefact and social outcomes. Maps took various forms and included a simple mind map of actors; a grid of post-it notes stuck to a wall and a wall-sized collage of images linked with pins and string. As with the process of blogging, mapping represented both personal research method and a means of dissemination.

**Sketchbooks** – I maintained large sketchbooks in which I documented the material design development. My sketchbooks employ collage, sketching, photocopy, notes and assorted visual descriptives (Figure 3).

**Project Design – One person, One dress**

The account of this research rests around four key projects representing the outcomes of a studio practice engaged in designing, making and coordinating the wear of occasion dresses. Each project consisted of one, or a series of dresses, with a specific or general idea of the occasion at which it would be worn. The projects begin with a concept of the occasion to be designed for. There is also a theoretical idea or design strategy to be applied. The project proceeds, and can be seen in three parts; the before or planning activities, the execution, being the making of the dress; and the after activities, being the documentation and amplification of the “impact” of the dress.
Spirit of the Black Dress (March 2011)
In the Black Dress project, one dress was created in response to a call for black dresses that embodied one or more criteria of sustainable design. The dress I created was included in an exhibition, fashion parade and photo shoot as one of ten designers. The Black Dress consisted of a hand-stitched quilt of silk fabric and required extensive attention to draping and styling in the process of dressing. Unexpected twists and turns meant the dress was worn in different ways at each event associated with the project. Consternation turned to delight as I wondered at the possibilities for practice present within these turns of events.

Logies Project (May 2011)
A gown was designed and created for an actress to wear to the Logies, the Australian television awards night that is preceded by a forty-five minute “Red Carpet Arrivals” television special. The dress was conceived and crafted employing sustainable design strategies of up-cycling remnants of silk fabric and dyeing with plant dyes. The project involved interaction with a range of stakeholders implicated in the dressing practices of actresses for this red carpet event. This project revealed the processes of engaging in fashion systems, through working with various intermediaries, as a convivial negotiation, while materially, I developed the craft of up-cycling of silk remnants.

The Front Row (March 2012)
An exhibition-event staged as part of the L’Oreal Melbourne Fashion Festival Cultural Program in March of 2012. It consisted of creating a range of ten dresses that were displayed in a studio. The studio was open to the public as an exhibition, as well as operating as a design studio with invited participants attending for selection and fitting of garments. The participants invited to wear a dress were those attending the fashion parades
and events that comprise the Fashion Festival. The clothes designed and created for the project were made from remnants of silk fabric sourced from other designers and were constructed in such a way as to facilitate ease of disassembly and alteration for a new wearer. Participants were invited to wear a garment to a fashion event of their choosing on the understanding that while this was at no cost, they would return the garment after use for re-use by another participant. The proposition was of a shared model of consumption, demonstrated through an event that appropriated spaces of fashion practice such as the atelier, and the front row of the fashion parade.

**Structure of the Dissertation**

The account, discussion and realisations of these projects are woven through three chapters in a thematic and non-linear manner. Reviews of literature are integrated into the narrative where relevant because this exegesis draws on distinctive bodies of literature that vary considerably from one another.

**Chapter One: Staging Special Occasionwear**

Chapter One deals with the notion of staging special occasion dresses within their occasions, and the implications for my practice of absorbing actors within such a staging into design. I begin with repertoire building research of an ethnographic and observational nature of several special occasions that begin to form questions and potentials for practice. As a genre, what is significant about special occasionwear is the close relationship between the specific occasion and the dresses designed for that event. Design of such dresses is governed by protocols and dynamics that determine material details of dresses. What becomes apparent is that contemporary phenomena such as the ubiquity of celebrity and the photographic image combine with
the protocols of old to create a fascinating and contemporary genre of dress.

Subsequent involvement in the processes of designing, making and dressing women during the three main projects focused on in this research involved working within a heterogeneous network of stakeholders and intermediaries. It also involved the creation of artefacts; particularly communicational materials in support of the primary material outcome, the dress. These activities of engagement are framed as part of an expanded view of fashion design practice, which is significant, as typically, fashion design-making practices focus solely on the creation of the garment. Through reflection, I begin to consider that the activities I perform in addition to garment creation as parts of designing itself. I arrive at a distinctive feature of this practice in its porosity: the openness to interpretations of the work and the experiences beyond the control of the designer. The act of placing the work in various situations and allowing wearers, writers, stylists and other intermediaries make of it what they will has resulted in a type of practice that is porous. Moreover, the staging of occasion wear informs, guides and shapes my making practice, but it also tussles and struggles with it.

Chapter Two: Making Practice
Chapter Two is concerned with my making practice. Using frame analysis as reflective research, I locate my making practice amongst three communities of practice within a context of made-to-measure, singular production of dresses, alongside practice on a micro scale as a contemporary craftsperson. While drawing on all these traditions, none adequately describe the full range of my practice, and for this reason I have coined the phrase ‘Serial Individualites,’ being the making of unique dresses one after another, in a series. The symbolic value lies in making
just one dress - where the dress as vehicle becomes a strategic and deliberate artefact. Serial Individualities is the term I use to describe my making practice as well as the context for my making practice, and, demonstrative of its importance, I have also used it as the title of this PhD.

I reflect on my making practice and characterise it in two ways. The first is as socio-material practice whereby social meaning and value is constructed through construction. In this interpretation, making is a social undertaking between designer, client and other associated intermediaries. This social undertaking takes material form through activities such as design consultations, sketching, draping and examining fabrics and dress fittings. Another way of considering socio-material practice is through a socially based strategy of sharing enacted through material making, joining, draping and using fabric in ways that afford sharing. The second way of characterising my making practice is as a poetic discourse. The poetic takes several forms: the sensory describes the aspects of form, colour and texture, the principles of design, whilst the aesthetic describes the thematic or emotional connotations the designer evokes through a utilisation of such principles of design. The immersive describes the manner in which the act of sewing and making is therapeutic and time consuming, with reference to Peter Dormer’s writing on craft practice (1994, 1996). In my practice, designing happens through making, necessitating that the two become one and the same, which is a feature and a possibility only available within contexts located outside mass production, such as Serial Individualities.

Chapter Three: Modelling Sustainability and Special Occasionwear
The third chapter is concerned with my practice as a sustainable practice, and in particular, the outcomes at the junction of
sustainability and special occasionwear practices. The lab as a metaphorical research space is an area where a spontaneous approach to design – literally, the act of taking up scissors and cutting into cloth, intersects with theory in the formation of those approaches and strategies best suited to the Serial Individualities context. But the junction of sustainable design and special occasionwear is blurred. Ways of doing fashion and sustainability are always changing, and therefore, the relationship between the two is in a constant state of negotiation and remaking. Tensions are present particularly between the poetic impulses of fashion practice and the pragmatic nature of sustainability. Conversely, this complexity locates special occasionwear as a lively, contemporary, and where the intention exists, moral genre of fashion practice.

In this chapter, I have developed a model to explain these negotiations and tensions. A model, as a representation of a situation, encompasses theoretical, contextual and practical information, is created through iterative reflection on action with the tools, from the materials, and according to the measures of the relevant discourse. Modelling enables layering of theory and material practice, of stitching together material and social aspects of practice. My model also performs a reflective function in several ways. As I use it for explanation, and tell and retell each project, I reflect and learn through the repetition of telling and re-telling. I notice new aspects. The model, in its reflective role, helps me to visualise my own practice and therefore, more clearly articulate what it is I have done. One important clarification noted through the model is that my practice, while embodying sustainability as a crucial component, is in fact, predominantly concerned with making and with design, and conversely, through making this point, contributes to sustainability discourse.
Conclusion
In the conclusion, I reflect on the project and the changes that have occurred in my practice through the process of conducting this research. I examine the role of the four forms of reflective research in relation the main projects, as well as the impact on my practice of being both researcher and practitioner. Reflective research requires collaboration between researcher and practitioner that is not based on hierarchical adoption of the researcher’s findings by the designer, rather it engages a reciprocal arrangement where both benefit from the reflective outcomes. I discuss the key realisations throughout the project, such as the nature of sustainable fashion practice as navigating tensions between poetics and pragmatics. I speculate on the direction of future work, both personally and within my field.
Chapter One

Staging Special Occasionwear
Some years ago, an acquaintance recounted how, when the special occasion business I was employed at as a designer had a store on Bourke Street in the centre of Melbourne’s CBD, she always sat on that side of the tram so as to see the dresses in the windows of the salon as she travelled by. At the time, anecdotes like this were not unusual. Others would recall gazing dreamily at a dress displayed in the window, while a brazen few described details of a dress their cousin, friend, or sister-in-law had tried on in the salon with the shamelessly stated objective of having a dressmaker copy the design more economically.

Through these anecdotes, I formed an opinion of the ‘occasion dress’ as a focal point for a broad demographic. Though worn by the bride, its selection assisted by her inner circle of girlfriends, sisters, and other relatives, paid for, perhaps, by her parents, there remain countless others who lay claim to the dress. They encompass the guests at the wedding, the passers-by and others who chance upon or seek out photographs of the event. Such practices of viewing can thus be considered forms of consumption. Special occasionwear is different to luxury clothing, which
is understood as the preserve of the elite or the connoisseur of refined taste. ‘Special occasionwear’ is, as it were, “consumed” by both the wearer in garment form and the wider public, if not in real time then via the photographic image.

The wedding scenario could be considered as one stage upon which the occasion dress is performed. This chapter proposes the stage as a key actor in the practice of special occasionwear. The staging of occasionwear has direct ramifications for the materiality of garment design. Similarly, the designer’s practice is informed by the stage for which they design. There are accounts of design projects located within three different stages in this chapter, namely; the Catwalk event, the Red Carpet, and the Front Row of the fashion parade.

In this first chapter, I begin by broadening the genre of special occasionwear, considering the relationship between the dress and its stage and the ways in which a fascinated public visually consumes the occasion dress and its associated imagery. I then move through an account of each of the three main projects within the research. The accounts focus on the staging of the occasion dress within its occasion, and on the crucial relationship between dress and occasion. As I move through each project, with the outcomes of one informing the next, my reflections change from ethnographic observation to those of the design practitioner. My method alters from research about design to research through design (Downton 2003). Furthermore, my reflection-in-action is stimulated by the surprise of unintentional outcomes, and I am motivated to seek out further opportunity for such reflective opportunity. This chapter positions the special occasion as a staging for a contemporary practice in occasionwear, defines a role for the fashion designer within this genre, and establishes qualities for a designer engaging in this scenario.
I begin the first section of this first chapter by inquiring into the ecosystem of contemporary special occasion wear. So much of this research is spent at close range, in the detail of a stitch or in a personal interaction. At one remove, however, the staging of special occasion dresses is more complex. For example, the special occasion is at once a contemporary spectacle shaped by celebrity and mass media, yet remains steeped in protocols and etiquette. It is concerned with individually crafted garments, yet is collective property. This inquiry, mirroring my approach at the beginning of the research, constitutes “research for design” (Downton 2003), or “repertoire-building research” (Schön 1983), through which I sought to articulate a situation redolent with design potential. I achieve this firstly, through a review of literature on the subject, and then through three observational case studies that frame the special occasion in relation to popular culture, wearer, occasion and audience. On reflection, I see that my understanding of the staging of the genre, whilst derived from personal experience in that domain, was, at this point, that of the observer. As I progressed through the research and situated myself within each project as a design practitioner, my
understanding became focussed around a particular framework that could directly inform my practice.

Contemporary Occasions and Occasionwear

Historically, occasionwear is a genre of dress imbued with protocols about how it should be designed and worn dependent on the conventions of the occasion for which it is created. Such protocols are generally expressed in specific garment details, such as hem length, width, and degrees of ornamentation. There are also clear delineations between different special occasions and the dresses required for them. Writing about eveningwear, Jane E. Hegland states, “though straightforward in its basic definition, there are surprisingly complex expectations related to appropriateness of fashionable dress for evening” (2005b, p. 428). Alexandra Black expands on these expectations by detailing an extensive list of evening gowns such as; The Informal Dinner Gown, The Tea Gown, Formal Dinner Dress, and Ball Dress. These all vary in style and expectations determined by the occasion they are for (2004, p. 21).

Contemporary occasionwear remains determined by its occasion but there are a number of cultural factors that define special occasionwear at the beginning of the twenty-first century. Anthologies and exhibitions that chronicle occasion dresses with titles such as Ballgowns: British Glamour Since 1950 (Cullen & Stanfill 2012), The Impossible Collection of Fashion in which Valerie Steele selects the 100 most iconic dresses of the twentieth century (Steele 2011) and The Black Dress (Steele 2007) demonstrate the changing nature of special occasionwear. In these accounts, appearances by celebrities wearing occasionwear play an increasingly important role in its representation.
The statement evening dress is no longer a garment that is worn to a private event and possibly photographed in an official portrait. Dresses worn on today’s red carpet are photographed from every angle by the world’s press (Hegland 2005a, p. 26).

Therefore, spaces such as the red carpet, combined with factors including electronically disseminated photographic images, and celebrity culture are changing the dynamics of the special occasion, and as a result, the dresses worn to and the practice of designing for it.

Celebrity and Media
The ubiquity of mass media and digital reproduction has positioned special occasionwear not as Ready-to-Wear or Haute Couture, but as a different kind of mass fashion; consumed by the public through the celebrity and the photographic image. As Hegland states, “evening dress draws attention to a woman’s body and serves to define her gender, establishing her as an object to be gazed upon by her audience” (Hegland 2005b, p. 430). With the advent and evolution of image capturing, this audience expanded beyond those in her immediate vicinity. Similarly, cultural studies theorist Chris Rojek writes that “celebrity and notoriety assume a relationship in which the individual who is differentiated by honorific status is distanced from the spectator by stage, screen or some equivalent medium of communication” (2001, p. 12) and furthermore, that “I believe that mass media representation is the key principle in the formation of celebrity culture” (p. 13).

Charles Eckert (1990) and Jackie Stacey (2007) have both discussed the links between Hollywood films and female consumption practices. Both articles serve to demonstrate that
the public’s own consumption practices in the market place are determined by their consumption of representations of Hollywood film stars, and likewise that film stars are fashioned for their audiences. This analysis has various implications, but from the perspective of special occasion design practice, what is important is that it identifies that the special occasion dress, while one person might wear it, is beheld by a much larger audience. As celebrities are frequently presented to the public attired in evening dress, the public is a consumer of both celebrity fashion and special occasion wear.

The ubiquity of celebrity culture has positioned special occasion wear as a kind of “mass fashion” for “mass consumption.” Within the context of this research, I have represented consumption primarily as a purely visual experience mediated by the media and enacted through the photographic image rather than the practice of shopping for clothes.

Fascination and Derision
Writing in the late 1990s, Epstein (2007), however, proposes the relationship between consumer and celebrity began changing in the 1960s from one where the movie audience is a consumer of celebrity fashion to one where the audience is a critic of celebrity fashion taste. The shift from consumer to critic, Epstein explains, is brought about by structural changes in the fashion designer-celebrity-film relationship as well as the rise of media best and worst dressed lists. Epstein refers specifically to American Richard Blackwell’s (1922 – 2008) syndicated ‘Best and Worst Dressed’ lists, initiated in 1960.

Blackwell uses his worst-dressed list to argue that if his subjects do not know the trappings of ‘good taste,’ they
should heed the advice of someone who does. For Blackwell, that authority is himself—and, by implication, his column’s readers (2007, p. 212).

The mass consumption-criticism of special occasionwear via celebrity imagery provokes opposing sentiments of fascination and derision. It is a truth universally acknowledged that a woman wearing an elaborate gown is a potent fashion image: a shorthand for fashion itself. We all like to observe a statement dress and give our critical appraisal. In a pejorative way, we might remark that it is: “Too short, too full, too expensive, too much cleavage.” Alternatively, we may gush and exalt over the dress itself: “Gorgeous, stunning, it must have cost so much.” Today, media coverage fuels this fascination, devoting numerous online galleries and newspaper pages to events such as awards ceremonies and film premieres that are preceded by a “red carpet arrival.” Media critique positions special occasion dresses as significant cultural artefacts. They are ‘special’ and ‘one-off’ yet ubiquitous. As various traditional occasions themselves have become obsolete, so too have some of the dress codes for them. Much of the rigidity with regards to garment features has been lost, but not in its entirety. Perhaps the contested nature of such features feeds the critique and derision.

**Glamour**

In this fascination-derision complex, the notion of glamour is invoked. To Rojek (2001, p. 10), “Glamour” is the favourable side of celebrity with “Notoriety” its unfavourable other. According to Elizabeth Wilson (2007) meanwhile, glamour is the favourable opposite to celebrity. The notion of glamour is synonymous with special occasionwear, yet its definition is
ambiguous. Wilson (2007) explains this ambiguity as a result of shifting interpretations of the term over time, from something more mysterious to a concept synonymous with celebrity, though she argues celebrity and glamour have nothing in common. According to Carol Dyhouse, in her book devoted to the subject, glamour came into general use in the twentieth century.

Glamour as a term implying a form of sophisticated feminine allure has a history which is interwoven with changing constructions of femininity, consumerism, popular culture, fashion and celebrity (2010, p. 1).

Both Dyhouse and Wilson agree that glamour is subjective, which might help to explain the commentary and judgement levelled at occasionwear events. Ideas of glamour have changed over time, and glamour involves artifice and performance to some degree, an elevation from the everyday. For example, Wilson cites the arbiter of men’s fashion in Regency England, Beau Brummel (1778 – 1840) as an example of glamour, suggesting that to be glamorous, one must do more than wear clothes, one must inhabit a character. Dyhouse concurs thus: “Glamour was often aligned to a dream of transformation, a desire for something out of the ordinary, a form of aspiration, a fiction of female becoming.” (2010, p. 3)

The condition of “glamour,” slippery and ambiguously defined nonetheless exists as an aspirational and possibly essential actor within the staging of special occasionwear. It is also invoked in relation to protocol or etiquette, suggesting that in order to be suitably dressed, one must attain a state of glamour.
Observations

Contemplating such actors within the ecosystem of contemporary special occasions led to a frame analysis of three observational case studies through which I have examined the agency of the occasion dress in the context of its staging. The case studies here are in no way exhaustive, there are so many iconic dresses and fascinating moments that one could dissect. These choices do, however, permit me to unpack several ways that the occasion dress can be framed: as a relationship with its audience, as part of the social construction of celebrity, and as one aspect of a stage-managed occasion. Such reflective research assists in determining how I might frame my own practice.

Photo-shopping Princess Di

In exploring the notion of captivation inherent in occasionwear, I produced several photo-shopped mock-ups of various dresses in an attempt to express my thoughts and inclinations about occasion dresses and their potential. The images were scanned from Colin McDowell’s book Diana Style (2007), which traces the evolution of Princess Diana’s fashion style and her interactions with the various people who helped to manage this image. McDowell states that Diana’s message through her clothes was ultimately directed at the public. In one photograph, Diana walks along a street flanked by a large crowd. Mostly women, they appear rapturous and adoring, ecstatic, thrilled. Is this a religious or evangelical moment? I photo-shopped the image so that the crowd became black and white, a smiling, homogenous mass (Figure 5). Diana’s head and arms were removed and replaced by even more of the crowd, while the purple dress was turned a strong red. Is the focus of the crowd on the dress or on the person? What is it that caused the state of rapture experienced by the crowd? Was it Diana, the person; the moment, or the dress?
In this mock-up, I wished to propose the dress as possessing critical agency. I altered it to suggest that the dress was responsible for the collective enchantment experienced by the audience.

**Liz Hurley’s Safety Pin Dress**

The example of Princess Diana serves to illustrate a relationship between audience and occasion dress. A second relationship of importance is between the celebrity and their occasion dress, particularly the ways in which the wearing of special occasion-wear is an integral part of the social construction of celebrity. To illustrate this, in 1994, Elizabeth Hurley wore a black dress by Gianni Versace to the premiere of the film *Four Weddings and a Funeral* (1994) (Figure 6) in which her then boyfriend Hugh Grant starred. Though already an actress, she was not well known to the mainstream public at that point. However, the dress is widely acknowledged as launching her career. The principal detail that caused such an impact was the design feature of splits through the bodice held together with safety pins, an inference to the punk movement. That is to say, it was the inclusion in the garment design of elements outside the conventions of that dress category that created a flurry of interest. On viewing this famous dress at a retrospective of Versace’s work some years ago, I noted that this detail was purely ornamental and served no functional purpose. The pins were gold and oversized, stitched in place over the carefully finished split, and though in the photographs, the dress appears to precariously contain Hurley’s breasts, it was actually of stiff construction with significant corsetry concealed under the top layer of silk. The wearing of this dress is widely chronicled in popular media as well as academic publishing, but two accounts stood out as of significant interest.

Lee Barron writes, “There are few media celebrities whose key moments of cultural impact can be identified with such precision
as that of Elizabeth Hurley’s” (2007, p. 445). The abiding question is to what degree these moments are serendipitous, and to what degree they are deliberate? Barron sees Hurley as an example of a diversified celebrity career (2006), meaning her career cannot be described by one central role (i.e., actress, model, fashion designer). The image of Hurley at red carpet events plays a crucial role in her habitus. The wearing of occasionwear is a vehicle by which Hurley steers this career. Just as the public consumes occasionwear through celebrity imagery, the celebrity uses occasionwear to fashion their public self (Hegland 2005a), the side they present to the public, while concealing their “veridical self” (Rojek 2001).

Secondly, on a symbolic level, Richard Martin describes Hurley’s black Versace dress as “anti-bourgeois” (1998). Elsewhere, his concept of “ingratiation and outrage” (Martin 1997) describes the way that contemporary fashion provokes as it simultaneously seeks to be acceptable within social and cultural norms. From the point of view of contemporary occasionwear, this implies that the historical interdependence between occasion and garment features remains important, however it is successful, nuanced and skilled adherence to, or rejection of these conventions that is crucial to the success of the garment.

The Red Carpet
A third observation of the special occasion genre is from the perspective of the event itself, where I have placed myself as an inconspicuous observer. The ‘Brownlow dress’ is the best example I know of the polar dynamics of fascination and derision directed at occasion dresses and the women who wear them, and I myself became quite fascinated by it over the course of this research. It is also a local Melbourne occasion and therefore afforded me a degree of accessibility that a globally renowned
event would not. Originating in 1924, The Brownlow Medal is awarded to the player at the culmination of each Australian Football League (AFL) season deemed “best and fairest” by virtue of accrued votes by umpires over the duration of the annual playing period. The extravagance of this event has grown over time commensurate with broader trends in the presentation of elite sport (Alomes 2000). A pre-event television “red carpet arrivals special” was introduced in 2003. In this half hour program, the partners of players acknowledge the designers of their dresses and accessories. The focus on fashion has led to the event being dubbed the “Gownlow” (Cuthbertson, Flinn & Sadowsky 2010) or the “Breast and Fairest” (Breen Burns 2009). The appearance of footballer’s partners at the Brownlow Medal count has become a defining image around which their public persona is created.

I had often watched the Brownlow Medal red carpet event on television and took guilty pleasure in the guffawing discussion that ensued among friends and colleagues the following day. Having committed myself to the research of special occasions, which by this point, were shaping up to entail primarily red carpet events, I thought it best I undertake primary research, rather than simply purchase the newspapers for review the next day. I had no contacts and made no attempt to gain an invitation in any way to the event. But I wanted to see what facility existed to watch the red carpet as it unfolded live rather than through the media channels. I took my camera and myself to Crown Casino in Melbourne’s Southbank, the venue for the event one damp evening in September 2010. I estimated that for a red carpet special to be edited and ready to broadcast at 7pm, the arrivals likely began around 5pm. I have only visited the casino a few times and am not familiar with its layout. I arrived on foot, circled the venue and quickly located a main entrance driveway, which had been cordoned off with bollards.
Security staff presided over a line of taxis, limousines and private cars forming in the street. There seemed to be an awful lot of the hybrid Toyota Prius and I was briefly heartened by the thought that so many footballers were environmentalists. I later learned that these were sponsor cars used to chauffeur the guests. I also discovered that there was no provision for spectators to view the red carpet activities in a live situation.

To be a spectator at the Brownlow Medal itself is to peer over the fence into the driveway of the casino (Figure 7). There is indeed a small crowd gathered, but they are nothing in number or excitement like the fanatical crowd in the image of Princess Diana previously discussed. A few dedicated football fans stood by clutching posters and hoping for an autograph. Most of the crowd is comprised of passers-by on their way home from work. From my vantage point among this assorted throng, I observed that the red carpet arrival was a carefully staged event. The driveway was lit with stage lighting. The media, consisting of presenters carrying large microphones, photographers, camera operators and journalists with dictaphones were arranged on either side of elegant chrome and rope bollards, differing considerably from the plastic version that kept the general audience out. Banners printed with sponsor logos created the backdrop. Each member of the represented media was attired in occasionwear themselves, and I found out later this was a strictly enforced dress code. On the television broadcast, only those dressed the part can be spotted. No one would guess at the small assortment of bystanders peering over the fence in the drizzle. The circumstances here highlighted that these events are intended for consumption via the media and the dresses consumed via the captured image.

I didn’t arrive home in time to see the television broadcast, but the next day, I bought the newspapers and browsed the
proceedings online. Melbourne’s two main newspapers, The Age and the Herald Sun, devoted several pages of both the sports section and the general news to the event. The media view and the view over the fence seemed to me to be two different events. The most striking difference was that from over the fence, the young women in their dresses had a smaller role, they seemed subsumed by the lights, the cars, the tall, athletic men. Additionally, the footballer’s partners I saw over the fence were so very pretty, youthful and slim. Their silk dresses fluttered and billowed behind them as they walked up the driveway. I recall one dress that particularly struck me: its long, mushroom-coloured organza train billowed in the breeze as the high-heeled wearer kept pace with her taller partner (Figure 8). I thought the effect was magnificent, but in the Herald Sun newspaper the next day, it was criticised for being too ornate, for the confusion of details and it was scored four out of ten (Cuthbertson, Flinn & Sadowsky 2010) (Figure 9).

While iconic moments might emerge from a serendipitous collaboration between a designer and a woman with the dress becoming a vehicle to celebrity, it is just as likely that unwelcome outcomes will arise from the unconsidered boundaries between public and veridical self, compounded by a red carpet system where the balance of power is tipped away from the women in general, and towards more powerful stakeholders. From direct observation of the event, I began to build an impression of a staged event. This prefaced a more thorough investigation into the relationships between the stakeholders I observed over the fence through a series of projects in making dresses.
Locating the Designer

In these three case studies, I have traced the roles of and relationships between wearer, audience, media and the event, but I have deliberately omitted to locate the designer. Broadly speaking, in the case of Princess Diana, the fashion designer exists in the careful relationships with selected designers Diana cultivated over time (McDowell 2007). In the case of Elizabeth Hurley the designer is the celebrated Gianni Versace, as great a beneficiary of this event as Hurley’s career (Martin 1998). And in the case of the Brownlow red carpet, the ‘designer’ is the many local and international dress designers themselves, but importantly, the event itself is also something that is designed.

In her book *The Enchantment of Modern Life* (2001), Jane Bennett describes the sense of “fascination” that I refer to as “enchantment.” She defends the existence of enchantment in modern life as an alternative tale to the dystopian image of modernity as “disenchanted.” Bennett argues that, in fact, the use of technologies to create fascinating forms of imagery in modern life could create the effect of enchantment:

To be enchanted then, is to participate in a momentary immobilising encounter, it is to be transfixed, spellbound ... The overall effect of enchantment is a mood of fullness, plenitude, or liveliness (p. 5).

While on the one hand, disenchantment might be celebrated as the fall of superstition and confusion, on the other hand, it is the loss of contact with a meaningful, moral universe. Bennett explores whether the “effective force of these moments might be deployed to propel ethical generosity” (p. 1) towards others or to
extract “the ethical potential within commodity culture” (p. 113). Bennett’s perspective lead me to consider the collective fascination with occasionwear as a source of agency to be deployed within my design practice.

At one remove, the occasion dress is an object of both fascination and derision, as previously mentioned. The purpose of occasionwear has changed over time. In particular, the role of the media permits a greater degree of intimacy with these garments and allows for immediate and detailed scrutiny, a point that has ramifications for the materiality of dress design. These dresses and situations can be read on many levels. I propose this ethnographic perspective on the special occasion ecosystem as a launching pad for practice.
The Black Dress:
‘What Happened to my Dress?!’

An Anecdote: Cate Blanket

Just prior to the commencement of this research, in 2009, the actress Cate Blanchett wore a one-off dress with asymmetric neckline designed by the irreverent Australian fashion house Romance Was Born, and constructed from the multi-coloured crochet pattern known colloquially as “Nanna Squares” to the opening of Screenworlds, a new permanent exhibition at The Australian Centre for the Moving Image (ACMI) in 2009. The media dubbed her “Cate Blanket” after the old fashioned throw rugs the crochet pattern is typically used for. Shortly after, I noticed haberdashery retailer Spotlight had copied the dress and published it as a promotional DIY crochet pattern, which I considered an amusing alternative to the high street, mass-produced copies of celebrity fashions one often spots — this was rather a case of celebrities promoting DIY through their special occasion practices! My friend happened to be the Project Manager of the ACMI exhibition and so I told him about the pattern via facebook. He, in turn, told his communications department, who reported it to The Age Melbourne newspaper, who published a short report on the connection (Carbone 2009) (Figure 10).
Figure 10.
Cate Blanchett’s Romance was Born Dress and its DIY pattern copy.
With this little anecdote, I begin an account from a different position to the observational one with which I commenced this chapter. In this account, I delve into special occasionwear as a socially constructed network of effects. I begin to make and engage as a designer with others responsible for the staging of the wearing of occasionwear. Through a series of unintended occurrences, I emerge with an alternative proposition of the occasion dress: that far from being the singular vision of the autocratic designer, its creation is a process of conciliatory consultation in which the designer must prove adept at engaging.

A Prelude: The Black Dress

In 2011, I submitted a proposal to design a dress for an exhibition titled *The Spirit of the Black Dress*. The exhibition called for a dress, in black that conformed to a prescribed set of criteria pertaining to sustainability. *The Spirit of the Black Dress* was a multidimensional project that involved a photo shoot, an exhibition, a fashion parade and various media opportunities as part of Melbourne Fashion Festival (LMFF). It was initiated by young fashion graduates keen to create an opportunity to demonstrate their skills in styling, project management and activism through the elevation of sustainability into fashion discourse. It was an interesting example of a “fashion project” that is difficult to categorise. Is it primarily exhibition, parade, promotion, or event? It was a fashion occasion, although the precise purpose and nature of that occasion was trickier to pinpoint, perhaps even to the organisers. Another occasion in itself, The Melbourne Fashion Festival afforded the organising group the opportunity to create such an occasion through the provision of a “cultural program” where multidisciplinary projects could be grouped under the auspices of a festival. The event played on the iconic status of the “Little Black Dress” as a marker of fashion sophistication and stylistic accomplishment. [Steele 2007]
My proposal was detailed as follows on the submission form:

One-shoulder draped gown with knotted shoulder trim, gathered and tied at waist. All joins hand stitched using decorative running stitch in gold nylon thread and silk sewing thread. Body is made from a continuous ‘quilt’ of silk remnants. The quilt is constructed flat and the joins are such that the quilt is reversible - extending the options for future re-use. The mismatched nature of the shades of black and textures of satin and matt are mixed to decorative effect. Trims are created with stitched strips of silk knotted into lace-like forms. The softly draped form of the dress takes its inspiration from the handle of the available fabrics assembled for the project - lightweight satins and crepes are perfectly suited to this Grecian inspired drape.

And when prompted to document the sustainable elements in the design:

This dress employs two different methodologies of design for sustainability. The first considers end of life disassembly of the garment through minimal stitching and careful draping of a length of fabric. The ‘length of fabric’ in this case is a quilt of many pieces of fabric - yet in its quilt form it is complete and uncut and could be easily re-assembled into a new garment. Light hand stitching is also a deliberate choice to facilitate disassembly.

The second methodology of sustainability being explored is the upcycling of fabric remnants. This serves to draw attention to the fabric waste that occurs as a byproduct of conventional manufacturing techniques. Recently, I sourced a stock of silk remnants from some of Melbourne’s bridal couturiers and
am exploring decorative ways in which these odd shaped and otherwise impractical pieces might be utilised. Black, however, is not commonly found in bridal salons and so for this piece I used remnants from a number of sources including ends of rolls from fabric retailers and offcuts from disassembled kimonos (G. McCorkill 2011, pers. comm., 22 January 2011).

The remnant squares filled the criteria of being made from recycled fabrics, but it was the adaptability of a single length of cloth that was most interesting to me.

The dress was accepted for the project and was sent away for a photo shoot (Figure 11), accompanied by several sheets detailing instructions on how to arrange and drape the garment (Figure 12). The designers were then invited by the organisers to take part in several events such as the media launch. After sending my dress away, I had not seen any of the process until I attended a promotional media event for the project, held the morning before the opening, where I was surprised at the interpretation of my design (Figure 13). I wrote on my blog:

Last Tuesday morning, I discovered that my one-shoulder dress had been styled for the exhibition photoshoot hanging from two shoulders. My reaction was mainly puzzlement, as I couldn’t quite figure out exactly how the second shoulder had been created from what was designed as a one-shoulder gown. On closer inspection of Photographer Peter Ryle’s beautiful shots I noted the dress was also inside out. Puzzlement turned to delight as I realised it also looked really good done in this way.

There was barely time to digest this fact before models wearing the ten dresses featured in the exhibition converged...
on The Trust following their media “flashwalk” through Melbourne’s streets. Georgina was wearing my dress hanging very low over one shoulder like a sleeve, inside out, the hem dipping almost into a train on one side. The arrangement of the cord detail at the back was a little messy, but nothing a small amount of hand sewing couldn’t solve, should one want to fix the dress this way for a longer period of time. This was my favourite look.

At Wednesday night’s opening gala (Figure 14) the dress was right way round but hanging from the left, instead of right, shoulder and draped far more tightly around the body than originally intended (McCorkill 2011).

I felt a sense of consternation that these things had happened to the dress, mixed with delicious delight in the juicy possibilities it held. I wrote in my blog account:

My design process at the moment is probably a little bit too focused on an inanimate mannequin and not as much on dresses worn on bodies, or better still, worn on bodies in real situations. It was an exciting experience to see the possibilities inherent in the dress revealed through Jordan Moore’s creative direction, and I hope I adequately communicated this to her. I cannot say how she felt to be given such an open-ended garment to contend with – essentially a tube of (slippery) fabric.

When Jordan showed me the shot from the photoshoot I was at first surprised and my initial reaction was ‘It’s not meant to be like that!’ Then I became excited that it had been interpreted in another way. These feelings are interesting ones to ponder. As designers, we like to control the look and image
of the clothes we design. We do this through means both subtle and blatant including size range selection, retail environment, selection of stockists and pricepoints. It is not an unusual occurrence for a designer to only ever see a garment in its sample form on an approved fit model, with knowledge of the actual wearing of that garment coming in the form of lists of sales figures from a department store. This is hardly holistic information about the realities of a garment worn (2011).

The above quote from my blog at the time articulates some ambivalence in regards to this project. From the perspective of the fashion designer, it points to darker feelings that my ‘masterpiece’ was not reproduced as designed. Whilst from the perspective of the researcher, this became a fascinating point for reflection. In a discussion by John Law, co-founder of Actor-network Theory (ANT) he explains the theory of the actor-network, as a sociological means of understanding structures as networks of heterogeneous materials which generate effects and produce knowledge (1992). One asks the question as to how these effects are generated and examines the relationship between materials and social relations, all of which are actors. Networks may be simplified or punctualised into “single point actors” when they function seamlessly and effectively. However, when they come apart, when an object such as a dress cannot be read and interpreted as intended, then the nature of the network as composed of human and non-human actors is revealed.

The actor-network perspective helps me to place the dress and myself as a designer within this occasion, and it also helps to understand the interlinked relationship between occasion and occasionwear, context and genre. But where does it lead for practice? What are the methods and techniques that I might deploy within fashion design practice to work with this understanding?
Do I seek to actively disrupt or subvert such networks, to contrive to hold them together, or to work within them? What implication does this pose for the agency of the designer to be just one of a heterogeneous assemblage of materials? Whilst designing for disassembly or increased user interaction are valid methodologies of design for sustainability, I am forced to conclude that perhaps it is on the part of the highly aestheticised designer where this concept meets the most discomfort. Are we really ready as designers, to not only accept, but to actively encourage, the malfunctions and unintended results that true user participation entails?
Red Carpet Dress: Designing for TV’s ‘Night of Nights’

Fashion as Collective Activity

Law’s perspective on the functioning of networks resembles one approach to the field of fashion studies that views fashion as a product of collective action among stakeholders. In an article discussing the field of fashion studies, Diana Crane and Laura Bovone summarise several approaches in use for the study of material culture such as fashionable clothing. The production of culture approach is one way, and constitutes “analyses of systems of cultural production in which symbolic values are attributed to material culture through the collective activities of personnel with a wide range of skills” (Crane & Bovone 2006, p. 321).

This research views fashion as the product of cooperative collective activity by those within a network (Becker 2008). Kawamura (2005) sets out a sociological approach to the study of fashion that sees fashion as a site of symbolic cultural production and as a belief with clothing occupying only an aspect of this. Factors such as institutions, cities, media, press and designers are coordinated in such a way as to enable the elevation of clothing into legitimated fashion. In The Japanese Revolution in Paris
Fashion (2004), Kawamura’s introductory theory views fashion and clothing as two entities, and fashion as the construction of a system of individuals and organisations. Fashion is created through the macro level structural functionalism as well as the micro level symbolic interactionism.

What sociologists of fashion can contribute to the project of cultural analysis is a focus on the institutions of fashion and the social relations among fashion professionals, the social differentiation between groups of designers, status of the designers, their ethnic heritage, and fashion systems worldwide. It is a sociology of culture that recognises the importance of and pays much attention to the social structural processes of cultural production and consumption (Kawamura 2005, p. 32).

Blumer’s theory of "collective selection" seeks to explain fashion as a social process whereby ideas are funnelled through a number of groups attuned to relevant modern developments. It is through this collective process that fashion is able to symbolically express a spirit of the times. Creative ideas are channelled through various taste-determining professionals who function as proxies for the general public (Blumer 1969).

The production of culture approach has been used in reflection on each project throughout this research. However, more than simply being a device for understanding my practice, the view that effects result from collective effort by people and objects within various cultural contexts has also informed an approach to fashion practice, through enabling me to envisage ways of working where the designer assumes a different role.
In Kawamura’s (2004) study of Japanese designers in the French fashion system, she noted the interdependence between editors, journalists, publicists, organising bodies, government and designers in creating and legitimising fashion as symbolic production. A useful term for describing these stakeholders is ‘cultural intermediaries.’ Rojek (2001), referring specifically to the notion of celebrity, describes cultural intermediaries as people who construct the star’s public persona. According to Smith Maguire and Matthews, the term is a “productive device.” Cultural intermediaries are not a profession in themselves, they are specialists in a variety of different professions, therefore they can be understood as people occupying a diverse range of professional or at least specific job roles with a range of associated skills and expertise. Cultural intermediaries impact upon “notions of what, and thereby who, is legitimate, desirable and worthy, and thus by definition what and who is not.” (2012, p. 552)

To be a cultural intermediary is to be involved in the framing of goods (products, services, ideas, behaviours) as legitimate and worthy points of attachment for intended receivers. A cultural intermediary’s location within specific cultural and occupational fields and commodity chains or circuits affords a certain set of opportunities and constraints (Smith Maguire & Matthews 2012, p. 554).

It is for this reason that they matter both to the material practices of cultural production, and within research into cultural production. In analysing cultural intermediaries incorporating Latour’s ideas of Actor-network theory, Moor (2012) suggests that cultural intermediaries could also be studied in relation to the material and non-human artefacts with which they work.
Blumer’s empirical account stems from his observations of the buyers and other actors of the ready to wear fashion industry in New York in the 1960s, while Kawamura’s observations are derived from the Paris fashion system in the 1990s, with a particular focus on the factors that enabled prominent Japanese designers to gain a foothold in that system. I have applied these theories to extract the conditions that comprise the contemporary Melbourne special occasion setting. I position occasionwear as a unique fashion system apart from other systems such as “Ready-to-wear” or “mass-market.” Additionally, this view of fashion solidified around the time that I began the second project, the account of which follows, and it informed my practice in that it pointed out the usefulness of note-taking, and of noting trivialities, so that they might inform reflection-on-action at a later date, becoming the starting points for subsequent iterations within my practice.

A Dress for the Logies

The Spirit of the Black Dress submission aroused an unexpected yet intriguing sense of discomfort at a loss of control over the aesthetic presentation of my garment design. However, it remained in essence, a demonstration project shared among a particular fashion cohort. In the next project, I sought to interject my garment into a popular culture, mass media occasion. I determined to create a dress for the TV Week Logie Awards. This occasion is famously broadcast each year on network television. As a local equivalent of the Emmy’s, it is important to many in the television industry, yet is also regarded with an irreverence, that while not perhaps as cynical as that towards the Brownlow, was sufficient to make it a deliciously audacious proposition for an academic project.
Inviting Zoe

With this proposition in mind, I thought about how to find an actress for whom I could create a gown. I made a list of people I knew who worked in television or had some connection to actresses. In a fortuitous conversation with a friend on New Years Eve 2010-2011, I told her what I wanted to do and she informed me about the new television show on which she was employed in the wardrobe department. I talked about my interest in design for sustainability: how I wanted to use sustainable design strategies to create a dress for this event. She thought one of the actresses Zoe Tuckwell-Smith, would be intrigued by the proposition and offered to pass on some information and my contact details. The time frame was good: it was then January 2011 and the event was in April, so the attending actresses would just be starting to think about what they might wear. I created a “brochure” featuring images from an earlier, exploratory design and making project and it was duly passed on. The text on the brochure was phrased as an invitation to take part and sought to convey in explicit terms the nature of the project:

I design gowns that demonstrate design solutions to environmental problems faced by the fashion industry. These dresses are made in a spirit of activism and are not a commercial endeavour. I would like to collaborate with/design for women who are interested in using the fashion they wear on the red carpet to discuss questions of environmental sustainability (G McCorkill, The Red Carpet Project invitation, January 2011) (Figure 17).

Zoe contacted me, was enthusiastic, and in early February of 2011, we met over lunch at a café local to her. At this meeting, we identified a common ground: a wish to explore a moral dimension within our respective professions. Zoe indicated
her willingness to be involved in the project. On March 30, a second meeting took place with the wardrobe stylist from Channel Seven. I prepared some design boards with concepts for a dress, based on similar ideas to the Black Dress (Figure 18). I wrote of the meeting:

Went through and explained each board. Rachel’s concern immediately was that there is structure in the gown/bodice underneath. She explained it is important that there are no stray bits the media will pick up on, nothing inadvertently revealed, especially as this is Zoe’s first Logies, the experience must be a good one (2011).

Feeling despondent, I wrote:

I have a really sinking feeling this isn’t going to happen… (2011)

Early Design Process
I felt disappointed that the arrangement I thought was decided was made impermanent. I was still excited about the project but considered that perhaps it wouldn’t go ahead. The wardrobe stylist needed to ensure the gown had certain qualities, primarily, a flawless presentation from all angles, with no risk of wayward body parts, which might be photographed by media and mocked by the public consumer-critic. This needed to be achieved materially through corsetry and structure. Based on the sustainable design strategies I had developed of a loosely draped piece that could be disassembled, I didn’t think I could fulfil my own idealistic criteria of material sustainability with tightly-fitted corsetry through the dress. I agonised over these thoughts for about a day as I pondered what to do. I decided that I wanted this dress to go ahead, and I would go to whatever ends it took to ensure that
it did; I needed to make a big impression. I pulled out all stops to produce a series of four precise and detailed illustrations. I created mock-ups of draping and decorative swatches so I knew I could make what I was drawing. This was a laborious task and I worked throughout the night to finish it one evening. On April 4, I sent some new sketches as a four page pdf (Figure 19) with the following message:

I’ve put together four sketches based on the things you responded to when we met last week. Mostly, I’ve cleaned up the designs so they sit flatter to the body, especially around the neck and through the waist. I’ve added structure to the foundation/lining of each gown, and I’ve developed the placement and use of colour - although this is always difficult to communicate on-screen! Let me know what you think of the new ideas!

The response was immediately positive:

− “Amazing Sketches. Either of the last two are my favourites”
− “I totally agree!!
− “The last 2 are my favourites”
  (G McCorkill 2011, pers. comm.).

The receipt of these sketches marked a turning point in the project. The decision had now been made and a dress was going to be made.
Logies 2011
Zoe Tuckwell-Smith

SILK GEORGETTE gown with SEQUINNED GEORGETTE shapes appliqued through waist and sleeve hems. REMNANTS of sequinned silk hand dyed to matching tonal shades.

APPLIQUÉ SAMPLE
Feathers cut free to profile despite being very fine.

SEQUINNED GEORGETTE

Sheer NECKLINE and SLEEVES. Georgette dyed to be close to skin tone.

Heavy sequin overlay drapes comfortably over foundation, not skin tight.

Skirt - 2 layers silk georgette over heavy silk lining, or 2 layers georgette, only, for semi sheer layers?

(Waistband fabric to be chosen)

Diagram of underlayer showing fitting details

Boning side seams, bust 7BC

The Red Carpet Project
Making the Dress

In chapter two, I explain the deliberations over design details: I also describe the crafting processes of sewing and fitting. Here, I have chosen to note some elements that are unusual to foreground in an account of making a dress. They are important, however as they have a bearing on my practice. Drawn from the account of the project in my journal (2011), they serve to illustrate the collective nature of fashion production, in line with the production of culture theoretical approach adopted in this research.

Making the dress occurred around a series of four fittings. The fittings predominantly took place in a small dressing room next to the wardrobe department at Channel Seven’s studios in the Docklands precinct on the edge of the city centre. I would bring the dress and my tool box. I quickly realised that the ability to do something as apparently simple as spend half an hour trying on a dress required a series of negotiations to achieve. I was asked how many fittings I required and this requirement was never questioned. Nonetheless, considerable effort was expended by the show’s publicist locating the moments in the filming schedule when the fitting could take place and ensuring all relevant people knew to be there. Had I had to arrange these fittings myself, I’m not sure I could have managed to successfully find the time that was needed to ensure the dress fitted well. The work performed by cultural intermediaries can take on a very mundane nature but it is this facilitation work that is critical to the successful staging of the garment.

In addition to the dress, the other element constructed during the making process was ‘the outfit.’ In the television red carpet specials I had documented, media hosts query the celebrity about her work, and then ask her to describe her dress. Recent convention dictates that she name the designer of her dress, and
perhaps too, the supplier of her shoes and jewellery. Fashion critics may also make comment on the suitability of details such as her handbag. Creating the overall look with these accessories is generally seen as the preserve of another cultural intermediary, the stylist. Rachel sought to carry a sustainable theme throughout the outfit and sourced shoes from Brazilian company Melissa: they are “eco friendly” in that they are made from mono material pvc and are recyclable (Figure 21). A pre-loved red velvet clutch was found and altered to be just the right size. Some discussion ensued over jewellery, which is commonly borrowed owing to its cost. There was contention about who could wear real jewels and who has costume jewels amongst the network stars. Rachel was keen that they be “vintage,” a word which has a favourable association with sustainability, and ultimately borrowed rock crystal and diamond earrings from luxury Melbourne jeweller and reseller Kozminsky. However, as I studiously noted: “Zoe is not to say real diamonds, as this is a sensitive topic!” (2011)

Constructing Communications
An important element to the celebrity red carpet occasion dress is constructing a variety of messages through and around the dress. In the short case study of Princess Diana with which I commenced this chapter, I speculated that the dress possessed an agency of its own making. However, through making the Logies dress, I realised the agency was the result of the work of cultural intermediaries whose considered efforts project and mediate information and imagery that the public then uses to form their critique of the dress and the celebrity. This point has been made elsewhere in relation to red carpet occasionwear, for example in Bronwyn Cosgrave’s book Made for Each Other: Fashion and the Academy Awards (2007). However, in the Logies project, I was able to document the ramifications on the material nature of the dress design of the interactions between cultural intermediaries. It follows that
as the communication events impacted on the dress design, that they too can be construed as part of the design process.

The Herald Sun Pre-event Interview
One activity that takes place to gain maximum mileage out of the red carpet occasion is a pre-event interview. Jo, the publicist arranged for Zoe to do an interview about her Logies preparations with Melbourne newspaper, the Herald Sun. I was invited to observe and to supply an occasion dress other than the one Zoe was to wear, for an accompanying photograph. A photographer set up lights in a studio while a hair artist made final adjustments. Jo was in attendance and while the photographer made changes to lights Anna, the journalist, interviewed Zoe about her dress, writing notes on the back of an envelope. I noted in my journal:

Anna said at the beginning ‘When I heard sustainability, I thought hessian sack,’ and was amazed that these dresses were so glamorous. Zoe explained during her interview that she was after something that has an interesting story to it in regards to ethics, yet stood up to the other dresses that were worn to the Logies. (This is a point she has reiterated several times). She also talked during the interview about how the shoes were eco-shoes and the jewellery vintage. Jo mentioned that when Zoe first told them about the idea, their reaction was ‘oh, really’ in a raised eyebrows type of way, not really believing that this would be a good idea at all - they had the same expectation of ‘hessian sacks.’ Jo went on to say though, that when they saw all the pictures that I had drawn the second time around, what they thought was so great about them was that they could imagine them all on Zoe: they were very personalised (18 April 2011).
I found the discussion around preconceived notions of sustainability among these women to be very interesting. The women used my dresses as a prompt to challenge, make sense of, and communicate their definitions of sustainable fashion. My dresses did not possess a communicative agency of their own. This could be regarded as the “collective selection” (Blumer 1969) of the meaning of sustainable fashion. Anna’s resulting article (Byrne 2011) (Figure 22) represented the understanding formed during the discussion. There was also a subsequent, and fascinating dialogue that resulted through the public comments posted in response to the online version of the article. These ranged from the congratulatory:

Beans of Melb Posted at 9:00 AM April 24, 2011

Good on her, great stand to take AND she looks gorgeous and stylish too! Hope all the other high carbon-footprint starlets take notice. Respect lady!

To the derisive:

Mariann rural Victoria of 3377 Posted at 12:08 AM April 24, 2011

If that ‘dress’ she is ?- wearing in the photo is the Logies one, I think she will look as though she is wearing a half-made nightie. Go and buy something better at an op-shop for almost anything would look better than that. If you are making a ‘statement’ at least have it looking as though it is a statement worth making.

Such comments represent a one-off observation rather than a substantive media analysis, but demonstrated to me a further negotiation of the sustainability message of my dress. They also
highlighted to me why the stylist and publicist had been so careful to maintain traditional notions of glamour during the design process in an effort to contain criticism of this kind.

**Walking the Red Carpet**

The crucial communication event of importance associated with this event was the walk along the red carpet itself. Zoe asked for guidance on how to discuss the dress, and I e-mailed a list of words for her, as an actress, to work with:

1. Georgia
2. Red carpet project (statements by celebrities)
3. The dye is eucalyptus leaves
4. Upcycling (remnants)
5. Making a ‘sustainability statement’
6. Australian theme: eucalyptus colours, ‘natural dyes’
7. Promoting sustainability
8. Sustainable materials (30 April 2011)

On the night of the event proper, I tuned in like everyone else to see what would happen. The television special unfolded over forty-five minutes, and as each actress came and went I began to think I - and my dress - would miss out. Finally, the four stars from ‘Winners and Losers’ appeared on screen. The host complimented them on their new television show, and turned to each actress, who announced the designer of their dress, and made short quips about their experience of the night. Zoe’s commentary was last:

I’m actually wearing an incredible dress. It’s hand-made from silk remnants and it’s all up-cycled fabric, and it’s made by a woman called Georgia McCorkill for the Red Carpet Project, which is to promote sustainable fashion design. (2011)
The metrics on my blog in the following twenty-four hours shot up to their highest ever. Photographs of Zoe taken on the red carpet appeared across several online articles and blog posts, many of them citing the purpose and intention behind the dress.  

Mapping Stakes and Stakeholders

The Logies project enabled me to unpack the red carpet occasion fashion network and reflect on the particulars of engaging stakeholders or actors within that system. These were documented in a map, an outcome of the project in addition to the dress (Figure 25). In line with an actor-network perspective on networks, it is comprised of both human and non-human actors. In considering this network, I noted firstly, the key actors encountered during the course of making Zoe’s Dress; namely the designer (myself) the actress (Zoe), the dress, the media and the television network. All of these had played a role in the project. However, on further consideration, I realised each was also a network in itself, comprised of a range of other actors. Additionally in this map, non-material effects, reflecting the function of cultural intermediary work are included. For example, the designer is responsible for achieving “the fitted aesthetic” that was really important in ensuring a glamorous (positive) critique of the dress. For the Logies, the actresses and the TV stars generally have their outfits arranged by network stylists or personal stylists contracted by the stars. Stylists participate in dress fittings and source jewellery and shoes. The publicist employed by the network is a protective gatekeeper who walks the red carpet with the stars (albeit, out of sight) and arranges who speaks to whom. It is the professional responsibility of these intermediaries to negotiate a persona that appeals to the public’s arbitrary sense of ‘good taste’ and ‘glamour.’ This map could be re-drawn for different red carpet

4. While I have not cited every media reference to the dress, the more substantial media interviews and articles are listed in Appendix A.
ACTORS WITHIN THE LOGIES RED CARPET ECO SYSTEM

Celebrity
Public/Private Face
Make-up, Hair & Nails

Wayward Body Parts

Stylist

Make-up, Hair & Nails

Jewellery & Shoes

Public/Private Face

Celebrity

Sustainability Message

Dress

Materials

Making

Sketches & Presentations

The Fitted Aesthetic

Melbourne Sustainable Fashion Community

Pre-Occasion Publicity

The Red Carpet Walk

Publicist

TV Network

ACTRESS

MEDIA

DESIGNER

ACTORS WITHIN THE LOGIES RED CARPET ECO SYSTEM
networks or other special occasions where the same actors may operate but the division of power is different, with the result that different effects could be observed. In this way, the Brownlow red carpet, observed over the fence at the beginning of this research, could be compared to the Logies, or even the Academy Awards, and the different forms of effects such as glamour or fame noted by comparing distribution of power, ordering and seamless functioning of each network.

Despite interjecting a message counter to the usual ones expected of such an event, this project functioned in a relatively seamless manner. Engagement of and cooperation between all the stakeholders in this network was key to the unified functioning of the network and subsequent communication of my intentionally alternate message. All stakeholders had different objectives, not conflicting per se, but a constellation of completely disparate concerns, and by bringing and arranging our concerns together, each party managed to accomplish them all. For example, my objective was to have sustainable fashion talked about in a public forum, while the actress’ was to communicate a public representation of her private self. The roles of the stylist and publicist were to facilitate this in a manner that would be positively received by the public. The stylist worked on a visual level, for example, ensuring no breasts went astray, while the publicist controlled the movement of people through various spaces: the walk along the red carpet being one such space.

From a fashion design practice perspective, the skills required in the design process are very different to those of ready-to-wear. Explanation, empathy, consideration, listening… all these have to be finely-tuned to not only put the client at ease, but to understand the perspectives of other intermediaries, and what is at stake.
A Note on Different Networks

The Logies Dress was different to the Black Dress due to aesthetics and material construction details. One was very constructed, and literally held together, while the other was loose, and in a metaphorical sense, came apart because it was unrestricted and needed to be interpreted differently each time it was worn. It was also a different dress to another considered briefly at the beginning of this chapter, the Brownlow Dress. Perhaps this is because of the actress, because the occasion is more universally known, or even more stylish. Overall, in the context of this practice, the Logies Dress could be described as the most durable, both materially and in terms of communication. But what form does this durability take? Law sees durability as a result of network relations.

There has been much effort to understand how it is that durability is achieved. How it is that things get performed (and perform themselves) into relations that are relatively stable and stay in place. How it is that they make distributions between high and low, big and small, or human and non-human. Performativity, then, this is the second name, the second story about actor-network theory. Performativity which (sometimes) makes durability and fixity (Law 1999, p. 4).

“Translation is the process or the work of making two things that are not the same, equivalent ” (Law 1999, p. 8).
Making for the Front Row

The *Black Dress* suggested to me that designing for occasions was a practice affected by, and dependent on interactions with others. In the Logies project, I came to see occasionwear as a system comprised of and determined by interactions between intermediaries. As a designer, this network will temper, mediate and elevate the objects that I envisage. I noted that the practice of wearing an occasion dress involved a range of preparatory and post-event activities. After both projects, my comfort within these heterogeneous scenarios began to increase exponentially.

Designing the Occasion Itself

A third project, The Front Row, was driven by two objectives. The first was to further the exploration of the genre of contemporary special occasionwear. To this end, The Front Row was presented in March 2012 as part of the L’Oreal Melbourne Fashion Festival Cultural Program inspired by the “red carpet” style status afforded to, and created by journalists, publicists and bloggers. Those occupying the front row of the fashion parade frequently generate greater media and public interest than the clothes presented on the catwalk itself. Therefore, the fashion parade can also be considered a contemporary special occasion.
The second objective of the project was to draw some of the social roles played by the various actors in the special occasion network into an expanded notion of design practice. With design for sustainability in mind, this objective drew on a Sustainable Product Service System method (Manzini, Vezzoli & Clark 2001; Roy 2000). Fashion Festival guests were invited to borrow from a collection of ten dresses I designed and made from remnants of silk fabric and wear them to a festival event. The dresses were subsequently altered and re-lent to other attendees, proposing a model of fashion design based on shared consumption with the designer acting as moderator. This method is aimed at dematerialising and reducing levels of consumption overall.

Actors & The Spaces of Fashion

Building on the notion of human and non-human actors that construct fashion as both material and symbolic production, invites the proposition of fashion as occupying and being composed of various spaces. John Potvin explains of his edited volume on the subject:

In sum, what The Places and Spaces of Fashion, 1800–2007 proposes is a sort of topography marking out various, while not all, spaces which influence the display and representation of fashion (Potvin (2009, p. 6).

Agnes Rocamora articulates the spaces of fashion as being “species of spaces: three dimensional as well as two-dimensional, geographical and material as well as representational and imagined” (2013, p. 159). From the hidden spaces of fashion, the workroom and atelier, to the front regions of fashion, the catwalk fashion parade, these domains are inclusive of virtual space and occupy the space within media and popular culture.
The notion of fashion spaces is a useful device with which to consider The Front Row because of its multifaceted nature across so many areas. The special occasion is also a space in itself, and the occasion garment is performed specifically in that space.

The chief spaces within The Front Row are documented below. As the designer, I was present across a wider spectrum of these than I had been previously. In particular, the atelier space and the communications within were actors of my design direction. This is in line with the trajectory throughout all three projects whereby I increasingly took on an expanded role.

The ‘Festival’

The Melbourne Fashion Festival is an event directed at and open to the public, focussed on current season’s fashions. This is the chief distinction that sets it apart from a “fashion week” such as the famous Ready-to-Wear Fashion weeks in New York, London, Milan and Paris that are primarily for the presentation of future collections to industry and stakeholders. Despite this difference, The Melbourne Fashion Festival shares a similar format to a fashion week in that it contains a mixture of fashion parades, exhibitions and parties. Even though it is a festival for the public, the main fashion parades and many of the events are still dominated by media and VIP guests. This unique mix of public accessibility and insider exclusivity appealed to me as a setting in which to locate an interactive project that absorbed and engaged with the culture of the Festival.

A fashion festival is one example of “the institutional development of fashion” that at a macro-sociological level impacts on “the social organisation of fashion” (Kawamura 2005, p. 40). While the Melbourne Fashion Festival does not enjoy the same gravitas of an event such as Paris Fashion Week, which is regarded by
institutional and government stakeholders as crucial to French culture, it is nonetheless supported by local and state governments for its value in achieving both commercial (retail sales) and cultural (events and exhibitions, promoting a cosmopolitan city) ends.

The Fashion Parade
The fashion parade is customarily thought of only in terms of clothes modelled on a catwalk. However, Lise Skov et al (2009) argue that the fashion show:

Consists of two performances encased in each other. One is the clothes parade on stage, planned and scripted down to each pose and turn. The other is the performance put on by the audience, whose behaviour is scripted, if not literally then sociologically. Members of the audience are simultaneously observers and part of the spectacle. (p. 5)

Joanne Entwistle and Agnes Rocamora also view the fashion parade as comprised of two distinct performance spaces; that of the catwalk, and secondly, the world of the audience, comprising elements such as the front row, the ‘other’ seating, the spaces outside the venue and so forth. Their study of London Fashion Week (LFW) (2006) describes the way in which LFW “mapped out, quite literally in spatial terms, all the key agents and institutions within the field of fashion” (p. 736) with reference to Bourdieu’s field theory regarding the location of agents and their social status in their field of operation, their interaction, habitus and capital. I use these two accounts to position the audience space at the fashion parade as another stage for special occasionwear.
ATELIER SPACE PLAN

KEY

1. Rail of Dresses
2. Table and Chairs
3. Project Map
4. Fitting Room Curtain
5. Mannequin
6. Shelf and Cupboard
7. Entrance from Level 3 Corridor
8. Matt Showroom
9. Window onto Swanston Street
The Atelier

Creative Spaces is a website run by the city of Melbourne that “underwrites cultural production by brokering, letting, subletting and developing affordable space for the creative industries” (Creative Spaces 2015). Through this website, I located a physical space, a spare room sub-let by a satchel bag designer-maker, Matthew Thomson on the third floor of the Nicholas Building, which is itself a long time home to various artist and designer spaces in the central business district. I occupied, worked in and invited participants to my ‘pop-up atelier’ to attend for selection and fitting from a range of dresses that they would then wear to a festival event, ideally one of the high profile fashion parades. The atelier was furnished sparsely with the props symbolic of a permanent atelier: A table at which to work, two chairs, a hanging rack for the collection and a curtain that formed a fitting room (Figure 27).

The Collection

The project revolved around a collection of ten dresses (Figure 29) that employed the strategies of design for sustainability developed throughout the previous projects. In contrast to the high stakes and traditionally executed made-to-measure process for the Logies dress, this project allowed for a more playful appropriation of made-to-measure and co-design methodologies. Dresses were created with the intention that they would be semi-customised for each client after creation; it was also the goal for the dresses to be shared. Here, client involvement and fitting was still crucial but it took on a different style. The clients attended the atelier where they selected pieces they liked, and tried them on. What does a practice look like when the designer performs dual roles of service designer and fashion designer/maker? The answer would be a little more like a tailor who sells a suit with ongoing maintenance and repair. The suit is
designed in such a way that its seams remain accessible. In this case, however, the designer would retain ownership of the dress. What are the possibilities when the designer takes responsibility for ongoing maintenance and ownership of the dress?5

Communicational Materials

In his contribution to the book Graphique Couture, Marco Pecorari discusses practices of fashion communication that emanate from the designer in relation to their collection. Focussing on designers who place a priority on conceptual expression such as Yohji Yamamoto and Maison Martin Margiela, he identifies three key “communicational materials”; the catalogue, the invitation and the press release, which designers develop in collaboration with other disciplines. The collaboration takes the form of “zones in between.”

In this sense, the creation of these communicational materials moves within the gaps between fashion, graphic design, art, fashion writing, etcetera, and within spaces of intersection: ‘zones-in-between’. Here, contemporary disciplines meet and interact in order to facilitate the translation of ideas (Pecorari 2013, p. 70).

These materials vary in nature from functional description of the contents of the fashion collection, to, increasingly, thematic expression of the ideas behind the collection. Pecorari describes the deployment of these materials within and around the material collection as:

Communicational materials become materialisations of these encounters, a sort of creative communion where creators, on a micro level, and disciplines, on a macro level, fuse together dialectically. These dialectical encounters, originating in the

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5. There are already existing examples within special occasionwear of hire services such as the American company Rent the Runway (Wortham 2009) and Melbourne’s Style Carousel (since closed) (Dobson 2013). These, however, use dresses from designers’ existing collections, as opposed to dresses designed with the intention of sharing. The designer is also not involved in design of the service itself, as I was proposing through The Front Row project.
‘zones-in-between’, give birth to new forms of practice that expand the possibilities of fashion. (Pecorari 2013, p. 70)

In *The Front Row*, I created two of these communicational materials as part of the project’s development. I had a publicist friend edit the press release and she tempered my academic language to extend its appeal to a wider audience. The invitation was via e-mail, a short text explaining the project and inviting participants to visit to select a dress (Figure 30).

**The Blog**

The spaces of fashion can also be virtual. In my blog (2012), I documented the project as it progressed in a journal-like manner. While it was important that the physical space of the atelier was there, it was not necessary to actually visit it. It existed because one saw a photo of it on the blog. The blog also became a space that others could link to in their own accounts of the project.

**The Participants**

The *Front Row* refers to the importance at the fashion parade of the guests who sit in the front row, and while the meaning was conceptually applied in a tongue-in-cheek sense, the participants were nonetheless selected based on their front row or VIP potential from within my fashion connections. These participants included fashion writers, academics, bloggers, curators and publicists.

*The Front Row* acquainted me with the world of style blogging, with many of my participants in the project being style bloggers themselves. A key element of style blogging is the outfit post, where the blogger presents a photographic essay of an outfit. Frequently, the outfit post is a fashion story in itself, set on location, but devoid of context (Findlay 2011).
Alternatively, as experienced through this project, the outfit post is the means through which the blogger accounts for their experience. It functions both as a narrative and method of depicting the physical fashion space in a virtual space. I attempted to create my own outfit post on my blog, a task that served to emphasise for me both the sense of purpose and the photographic and sartorial accomplishment required to prepare and present an apparently nonchalant outfit post.

The style blogger mimics the established fashion media, using the conventions of fashion photography, be it the look book or the editorial genre to “literally dress yourself into view” (2011). Rosie Findlay points out that the style blogging genre has evolved in terms of presentation to the point that the purpose of the outfit, details of where it is to be worn, or the reasoning behind the photo shoot location are ambiguous or unexplained (2011). However, this was not my experience during The Front Row. The bloggers who wore my dresses used their outfit as a conduit to report on the event for which the outfit was procured. Their posts constituted both journalistic reportage of the event, whilst maintaining the conventions of the outfit post. The event consisted of the author wearing a particular outfit to it and the outfit post is therefore a valid and personalised means of describing who was present or what happened at the event.

The other line of research that these outcomes support is the vast recent body of work on the tension that exists between established fashion media outlets and the citizen journalist embodied in independent fashion blogs. I mention this because many local fashion bloggers did respond enthusiastically to my project and they therefore dominate in my reflections. My interest in bloggers is as simultaneous consumers and commentators of fashion, which is a generic role that many people perform in fashion.
The specific implications for fashion systems as a whole of the citizen journalist is beyond the scope of this project.

A further interest lay in the fact that they weren’t celebrities in the Logies sense but created celebrity in a very personal way, and so played with notions of celebrity production through their own dressing practice. In this way, they ended up being fascinating participants.

Mapping

On one wall of the atelier, I created a map on a pinboard to document project outcomes over the course of the exhibition and it served as a tool for reflection on these artefacts (Figure 32). Tracing the interactions between actors was done using materials and techniques familiar to me through pinning and using string, replicating my garment making process on the wall. There were different colours to note different types of interactions. Black string was employed for a mention of the story by the participant herself; red for a story by someone else. Grey string noted other links and associations between participants. Blue traced the dress itself from one wearer to the next. At the commencement of the project there were only the press release and the collection of dresses, then it grew.
Figure 33.
The map at the conclusion of the project
19th March 2012.
Spaces, Occasions and Effects

By embedding the project within this cultural context, I was able to extract and document what I term “cultural artefacts.” These artefacts are regarded equally as outcomes of the project alongside the production of material artefacts. The importance of these observations in reflecting on this project is couched in a view of design practice as an holistic activity comprising of not only the act of conceiving and making material artefacts, but also the actions undertaken and experiences encountered before and after the making process. Such effects are material outcomes representative of forms of participation within fashion practice, and ways that occasions are created within the spaces of fashion.

Arriving Early

In facilitating these different encounters, participants engaged in the creation of events around the event itself. These included opting to arrive early, so that they might photograph themselves and others in specially styled outfits. Arriving early also facilitated a situation of being “seen with” – that is, the acquisition of photographs with others of renown, for example, well-respected fashion designers.

Lisa, co-founder of the fashion blog Couturing visited the atelier early on in the project, selecting a dress of chiffon wedges stitched together with gold threads to wear to one of the fashion parades. She accessorised her dress with a Chanel handbag borrowed from a vintage retailer in Melbourne and a “bunny ears” headpiece borrowed from Melbourne milliner Richard Nylon. In her account of attending this fashion parade on her blog (Teh 2012), which was traced on the map in the atelier, she featured photographs of herself with several prominent fashion
designers including; Toni Maticevski, Richard Nylon, the milliner and designer of her bunny ears headpiece with which she accessorised the dress, and Gwendolynne Burkin. The dress I created was legitimated through its pictorial association with other renowned designers (Figure 34).

Different Encounters/Unique Engagements

I noted that while the Fashion Festival organising body has an official stance on the Festival, including serving a variety of stakeholders, this purpose will not always be shared by the participants who engage with the Festival on their own unique terms. Fashion blogger Lady Melbourne in her report on the Toni Maticevski parade contained scant reference to Maticevski’s celebrated special occasion collection that was being officially shown that evening. Instead, Lady Melbourne’s unique engagement with this event was through wearing a dress from The Front Row (me), sitting front row herself and writing a generous review of my exhibition (Montague 2012) (Figure 36).

Taking (A)Part

Kyra and Iolanthe were the first to visit me in the atelier (Figure 37). Kyra is a publicist who I had seen at various events and she worked on the floor above The Front Row atelier in the Nicholas building. She brought Iolanthe, a writer and blogger who shared her office. They were intrigued by the project and the invitation, and quizzed me on my background and what I was doing. They selected dresses that caught their eye and I assisted them in trying them on. I advised on alterations I could make to fit and aesthetic details, such as altering necklines, and began to unpick and pin the dresses to demonstrate. The pair began to take photos of the process, and of each other. Iolanthe talked about publishing a story; there was an implied reciprocity, that the photos constituted their participation.
Continuing on from Lisa’s account of the chiffon dress in which she was “seen with” various other attendees at one fashion parade, Leeyong of the blog *Style Wilderness* wore the dress next. She gave the following account on her blog:

Remember my post about The Front Row project? Georgia made this dress which Lisa from Couturing.com wore early in the week at LMFF (picture from Couturing.com). But Lisa didn’t just take it home and hang in her (amply stocked!) wardrobe. The point of Georgia’s project was to make some dresses which would be worn once, then altered for the next wearer. I was the next wearer for Lisa’s dress, and as Georgia had told me about an indigo dyeing workshop she’d been doing, we decided to see how the dress would turn out if we tie dyed it (Soo 2012a).

The participants took part in the taking apart and remaking of the collection. Their participation took the form of not literal sewing, but taking photos, recording and attending. They took part in a sustainable product service system through making a very small adjustment to regular patterns of consumption, and through the enjoyment of a consumptive experience. They took part in sharing fashion through the literal wearing and re-wearing of garments and also the through the telling of stories about them.

In *The Empire of Fashion*, Lipovetsky states that “the dominant feature of our societies [is] the advent of a society restructured from top to bottom by the attractive and ephemeral – by the very logic of fashion” (1994, p. 5). On one hand, a cautionary meaning might be inferred from fashion’s proliferation, or else one might explore whether this might not mean the existence of a fashion of possibilities, that involves different encounters,
unique engagements in the act of taking part. These practices demonstrate a joyful engagement in a social performance that is certainly based on materialism, but these material objects have been acquired through borrowing from a designer who has a clear intention for their responsible care and next life. This has in no way impeded the impact of the event but rather heightened its ephemeral moment of enjoyment.

**Eco-Chat**

The artefact eco-chat is the discourse a fashion-interested audience uses to describe and understand fashion and sustainability. Eco-chat takes a material form through blogging, tweeting, radio interviews and so forth. I engaged in this as part of my practice by tailoring a media release and some of my own blog to the conventions of public relations, a language that could easily be reproduced by the participants. Note that in this eco-chat, the provenance of the dresses that were shared and the wearers own social links to its previous wearer, far from being a faux pas, heightened the sense of fun experienced by participants. Eco-chat shows that sustainability in a fashion context will always be described through a filter of the ways in which fashion itself is understood and discussed by groups.

Some examples of eco-chat include snappy headlines or plays on words:

“*What a difference a dye makes*” (Soo 2012).

“*Re-hashin your fashion*” (Gower 2012).

Cheryl, of the blog *Business Chic* became a particularly enthusiastic and reflective participant in the project, choosing a white chiffon scarf made like an accessory to wear (Figure 38).
Her pieces are beautiful and get me thinking about what I consume in terms of clothing. It gets me interested in being a more conscious consumer – paying attention to the quality of workmanship and sticking to ‘what I need.’ (Lin Rodsted 2012a)

Much literature exists that examines the consumption of sustainable or eco-fashion among celebrities or within the luxury sector. This focuses on purchasing and wearing of the garment itself and tends towards a cautionary discourse. It raises questions of authenticity (Dafydd Beard 2008) (i.e., can the celebrity be trusted to always live by the right ethical values?) or whether eco-fashion depoliticises the issue because it supports their eco values and lifestyle without compromising their tasteful and luxurious images (Winge 2008).

Eco-chat is, however, a suite of observations based on the consumption and communication of eco-fashion through language, rather than consumption and communication of sustainable fashion itself. In this analysis, I have focussed not only on the content and meaning of the words used, but the mechanisms by which these words are formed, through material objects of correspondence such as press releases, but also through pre-existing modes of communication. Or, as Sue Thomas points out, “Language is created or co-opted to map and navigate the new territory of developing ideas” (2008, p. 525).
Porosity: An Expansive View of Special Occasion Practice

My design practice in special occasionwear has been re-shaped by the act of placing or staging each dress I have made within its special occasion. My practice is primarily concerned with the making of material artefacts, particularly dresses. However, this making activity is framed; primarily, within the experience of staging the dress in an occasion, but also within the personal interactions between the stakeholders engaged in each project. The following discussion points consist of a study of reflection-in-action in which I, as a researcher, observe my reflective process as a designer.

Appropriation of Activities from Other Professions
As a designer, activities such as writing press releases, creating look books and other public relations activities have been approached so that they take on a certain flavour and become part of the design process itself. Mapping is a strategic and reflective activity unusual within fashion design practice that is also appropriated as a fashion designer. These activities take on a particular style and aesthetic as they are worked into fashion design practice. I have gained an appreciation of the strategic
role these functions take on. This places this practice among an emerging cohort of designers to become involved in the material creation of artefacts or communicational materials such as press releases, invitations and catalogues (Pecorari 2013). Over the course of the three projects documented in this chapter, the creation of communicational materials took on greater significance each time. This both coincided with and contributed to marked shifts in my agency as a designer within each project.

Three-Staged Design Process
In staging each project within its occasion, I performed such activities as the need arose, in order to “get the job done” - to enable me to make a dress. But it was on reflection that I realised that this labour was characterised by three distinct temporal phases.

The Invitation – constitutes the preparation, engaging the wearers, writing press releases, making invitations, designing catalogues and negotiating initial design ideas, as well as sourcing and arranging physical spaces. These are all activities that take place before a dress is made, and indeed some must take place (for example, engaging a wearer and initial design ideas) before a dress can be made.

The Making – constitutes iterative design development activities such as sketching and draping, and the physical construction and fitting of the dress. At the commencement of the research, the making is what I assumed my design practice solely constituted. Whereas the other two stages can take on an ephemeral quality, this stage is necessarily material in nature.

The Performance – constitutes wearing the dress and activities such as conducting interviews, blogging, distributing imagery; artefacts designed to amplify the effects produced by the dress.
While each dress is carefully and deliberately constructed for its particular occasion, the performance is always unpredictable and surprising.

The Three-Staged Process in the Context of Micro Practice

The activities within commercial fashion practices are assigned to professionals with different skill sets, for example public relations, buying, patternmaking and manufacturing are all jobs performed by different people. Design practice is a job that is focussed on creation of the artefact. While the fashion designer role intersects with others in the fashion supply chain, and can expand or contract based on the scale of the enterprise in which the designer is located, there remains points at which the designer begins and ends their engagement with the fashion creation process (Gwilt 2010). Such an approach suits the commercial manufacturing context, be that of a mass production or high end ready-to-wear scale, but not designers who wish to work in other ways and contexts. Should designers wish to function autonomously, at a micro scale, and outside mass production, then what should they do, and how should they be?

One goal in developing this practice in special occasionwear was to arrive at a form of design practice in which I could be creative, autonomous and flexible. Developing my practice to an intentionally micro-scale, outside commercial practice, whereby I could conceive and execute projects by myself while enlisting the participation of others, was one way to achieve this end. The appropriation of activities conventionally assigned to other professions involved in the production of fashion as a symbolic means of communication, and the ordering of these activities into a three-staged design process is one way of working autonomously at a micro-scale.
Human Qualities of Porosity

I was struck as I read back over the notes from my journal, and on my blog how keenly at times I felt the “compromise” of having to change the aesthetic ideals to which I strove to design. That dialogue of “compromise” now seems petulant and irrational. I do, however, recall times of high anxiety and frenzied deliberation as I worked through each project. Over time, these worries have dissipated and I have been able to move away from concerns of “not my aesthetic” or “creative vision” that often haunt fashion designers. The aesthetic alterations that so bothered me have come to be seen as enjoyable parts of the design process rather than incursions on creative freedom. Over time, I have begun to value creativity in terms of the structure of the project and thus the focus on the creative dress itself is less keenly felt.

In terms of reflection-in-action, there are several things occurring throughout these staging scenarios. Firstly, the surprise of unintended outcomes within each project stimulated my reflection-in-action. This was most apparent in the case of the Black Dress. As I became accustomed to unintended wearing outcomes, the knowledge of this occurrence became more tacit, and the capacity for surprise diminished. Maintaining new practice situations by seeking out new stages and networks in which to locate my work where I continued to face the unexpected is one way I continue to experience surprise within my practice in a way that stimulates reflection-in-action. Another feature of reflective practice was displayed, in particular, through the Logies project. In this case, the design of one dress unfolded over several meetings, alongside my understanding of the requirements of the situation and the appreciation of the position each stakeholder contributed to the project. In other words, I allowed the situation to “talk back,” to which I responded. According to Schön:
The designer may take account of the unintended changes he has made in the situation by forming new appreciations and understandings and by making new moves. He shapes the situation, in accordance with his initial appreciation of it, the situation “talks back,” and he responds to the situation’s back-talk (Schön 1983, p. 79).

Lastly, Schön’s depiction of the mutual obligations of the client-designer relationship resonates with the position I take as a designer in the relationship with the various stakeholders within my projects. I reject the notion of the designer as a figurehead or creative genius. Instead, reflective practice implies an obligation on the part of both the client and the designer to approach the project in an open-minded manner. The practitioner agrees “to make himself readily confrontable by his client; and to reflect on his own tacit understandings when he needs to do so in order to play his part in fulfilling the contract” (1983, p. 297). Likewise, there is an obligation that the client must suspend their disbelief in the designer’s authority. He cannot have blind faith in the design’s competence, but rather “remain open to the evidence of the practitioner’s competence as it emerges” (1983, p. 296).

The distinctive feature of this creative research practice is its porosity, the openness to interpretations of the work and to experiences beyond the control of the designer. The act of putting the work in various situations and letting wearers, writers, stylists and other intermediaries make of it what they will requires a range of social skills. These qualities of porosity are assumed of designers, but opportunities arise by being explicit about them.

Conviviality – works with people on friendly and respectful terms. Humour – a light-hearted and playful approach to situations. Encounters – doesn’t seek to change, seeks to attach and collaborate for a time.
Porosity and the Production of Culture

The qualities of porosity also informed a way of working with a certain agenda in mind, that of sustainable fashion. Communication and realisation of this agenda took on a particular flavour, one that was not overtly political, and if subversive, was only so in the very gentlest of senses. The implications of this are discussed further in the third chapter.

The production of culture approach to studying fashion networks and communities, while enlightening, only extends as far as pointing out the interdependent nature of this network. What is missing is a blueprint for how such valuable information relates to design practice. The objective of a contextual understanding of fashion is not to produce a sociological case study of the “special occasion fashion system” but to use this understanding in the development of a fashion practice that contributes to sustainable fashion discourse. The points made here describe ways of practicing arrived at through reflection on the projects undertaken within a particular theoretical framework. This approach to design practice enables the designer to re-think their agency within the fashion creation system; that it is less about luck or about the creation of artefacts, but also about working to find, negotiate and define a context for the work. I described at the beginning of this chapter the effects of enchantment, fascination and captivation and asked if they could be manipulated and used towards ethical effect, but I discovered that these effects had first to be constructed.

I use the notion of porosity as an instrument to do three things with my practice. Firstly, to expand my conception of fashion design practice so that it might encompass acts beyond the making of the material artefact. Secondly, to articulate personal qualities that permit an expression of my personal ideology.
And thirdly, this practice is porous because it allows people to enter my practice in a few ways; in making, I have used co-creation whereby the processes of making are opened to the viewer. In my writing, for example, the blog, sets of questions and answers I have responded to and interviews and talks I have given (Appendix A), I describe, as well as the ideology that informs my work, the hidden and “behind-the-scenes” work that impacts each outcome. Finally, the theoretical underpinning and readings affect the writing, and creates the practice as a text.
Chapter Conclusion

In this chapter, I commenced with an observational view of special occasionwear, looking at the genre at one remove, and defining it in a contemporary context. I noted that special occasionwear as a genre of fashion is importantly linked to its manner of staging at a particular special occasion. This chapter then discussed three projects from the perspective of staging. As I progressed through these projects, my role changed from observer to practitioner, and as my practitioner role expanded, I became adept at moving through the spaces of occasionwear as a designer, with my practice becoming an occasion in itself.

On commencing this creative research practice, I held the view that the special occasion dress possessed an agency in and of itself. I described this magical quality variously as captivation, enchantment or fascination. But over and through the course of the research, I arrived at a view of the agency of the occasion dress as socially constructed by a series of cultural intermediaries operating within a network.
Designing one occasion dress for an individual client for a specific special occasion and engaging with others within that occasion’s network has lead to a way of practicing that encompasses a broad range of tasks not typically considered the domain of the designer. These tasks are approached as a designer and, when combined with material garment creation comprise a three-staged design process. Additionally, this method calls for a complement of social qualities described as porosity. Porosity also permits multiple ways into my practice: through garment co-creation, through writing and through reading.

Through actively considering the nature of popular culture, and a range of emerging scenarios and spaces that can be construed as stagings, I have positioned special occasionwear as a contemporary fashion design genre and practice.
Chapter Two

Making Practice
Chapter Introduction

This central chapter is concerned with making practices through a sustainable lens. Making is the nexus of my practice. The outcome of my making – a dress - is the primary tangible focus of my practice. Implicit in the discussion of staging in the previous chapter was that the occasionwear in question was the product of my own making. My reactions and conclusion of porosity was arrived at as a result of my investment in the making of each piece.

My making is informed theoretically by two significant discourses of craft production. Firstly, the ‘linked binaries’ of craft/mass production, and the associated fashion binaries of haute couture/ready-to-wear or bespoke/ready-made inform the location of my practice within the craft space as mass production’s ‘other.’ Secondly I have identified qualities of poetics in the engrossment and reverie I find in making through Visual Arts author Peter Dormer’s writing on craft practice,

In this chapter, I unpack the reflection-in-action processes inherent in my making. I highlight the way in which strategies
such as upcycling, stitching and designing for sharing become enmeshed as I seek to achieve the goals of the project from a garment making point of view. Sewing, draping, pinning and fitting are guided by a very personal logic about the ‘right way’ to make a dress. And they are but some of the reflective activities through which I create both artefacts and knowledge. Both Donald Schön (1983) and Peter Dormer (1994) highlight the value of tacit knowledge – or practical “know-how” as a form of knowing. Dormer’s discussion of “tacit knowledge” as it relates to craft practice assists in reflection on the “designing through making” approach I have identified in my work.

I share the quality of engrossment with several ‘communities of practice’ whose practices are likewise located outside of mass production. Three groups of makers are described in this chapter, focusing specifically on aspects of their practice that are similar to mine. However, while my practice draws on elements from making traditions including craft, made-to-measure, bespoke or couture, there is no one making context within which I can locate it. Identifying that my practice was singular in its construction led to further reflection on what exactly it is, and the naming of a unique context: “Serial Individualities.”

As a context, Serial Individualities encompasses a community of practitioners working in similar ways, alongside the local and technological conditions that facilitate these practices. As a practice, Serial Individualities is the process of making a series of dresses, one following another, each with a unique character. It is a making practice, of one dress for one person, with making as the central activity, informed on one side by staging, and on the other by sustainability.
Making Practices

Which fashion practitioners do I respond to? Throughout this research, I have identified many designers and practices from which I have derived inspiration, or identified common values, methods and approaches. After reflection, I distilled these practitioners to three groups. Among each group, I identify some parts of my practice that are similar, while there are other aspects that are not. What became apparent about these communities of practice is that they are all involved in making. By this, I denote that making occupies a position of privilege within the practice. This could be due to economic or geographic necessity, perhaps because one can ‘make’ and is good at it, or because to do so carries notions of prestige. The other element that is apparent about these practices is that they are ‘niche’ in the sense that they won’t be found in the seminal texts on fashion. They also sit outside mainstream systems of garment production (for example, seasonal ready-to-wear) and cultural production (fashion weeks, magazine editorials), often made by only one person or a small team.
Made-to-Measure

The first community I encountered in this research employs a type of making that is commonly called ‘made-to-measure’ or it might also be referred to as ‘bridal couture.’ These terms signify creations that are made to the measurements of the client rather than to a standard size. The design is either entirely ‘one-off,’ or else partially-customised from a sample. Of course, my association with made-to-measure practice as a location of former employment pre-dates this research. It is with this familiarity that I feel justified in irreverently dubbing such practices, “The Armadale System” – as though they were the forgotten cousin of Paris or Milan.

The strength of this community is in the proliferation of many small practices commonly, but not always, centered in particular geographic locales. For this reason, I have declined to identify specific designers. Made-to-measure as a community of practice is significant to me primarily because of a past association, which has enabled me to identify some idiosyncratic social qualities that have a bearing on material aspects of practice. These social qualities are expanded upon through a discussion of two newspaper articles below. Additionally, over the course of this research, I have used remnants donated from various designers in the creation of my projects; therefore there is a current material linkage.

Intimacy of the Client-Designer Relationship

In 2010, when my fascination with the Brownlow Medal found me peering over a wall at a line of cars spilling dressed-up men and women into Crown Casino, I was also influenced by a sympathetic and insightful newspaper feature about the preparations of women leading up to that same night. The article

6. Made to measure is practiced in Melbourne most prolifically by the bridal couturiers of High Street in the affluent suburb of Armadale south of the Yarra River and also Sydney Road, Brunswick to the north. On Saturday mornings in particular, groups of women centred around a bride-to-be can be seen moving from one boutique to the next for pre-booked, hour long appointments to try on dress samples in the search for “the one”. They emerge clutching postcards inscribed with a personalized quotation that includes all necessary fittings to ensure an expertly crafted gown. Doubtless too, other cities and countries have their own particular instances of the “Armadale System”. Over time, the value we place in these types of services has dropped. This might be due to our waning domestic dressmaking skills, making us less appreciative of the workmanship involved, or the proliferation of ever-cheaper ready to wear. The “Armadale System” invokes polarised viewpoints. On the one hand, the dresses are unjustifiably expensive and on the other they are the stuff of dreams for a day when only the best will do.
explored relationships, evolved over years of collaborations between local Melbourne made-to-measure designers and the Brownlow women they dress. The story discussed the important and trusting relationship between woman and designer in relation to a football red carpet event, exemplified in this quote:

‘I think having that trust and developing a relationship with a designer is really important because not only do you then have faith in them to be honest with you and tell you what they think is going to look best, but you can also feel free to suggest changes or tell them when there’s something you’re not comfortable with,’ says Twigley, who this year will wear a gown by Perth-based designer and long-time friend Aurelio Costarella. (Wells 2010) (Figure 41)

The point made in this article that behind the dress itself is a series of intimate relationships made an impression on me. Preparations for the event involved strategic discussion as to the purpose of the dress: the ‘message’ to be conveyed that year. While serious in their intent, both designers and women displayed great humour in laughing off dresses that had been panned by the media. The women interviewed also spoke in convivial and empathetic terms of other women.

High-Stakes and Emotionally Charged
A second newspaper feature that influenced my thoughts about made-to-measure practice was one by author Helen Garner about brides and made-to-measure wedding dresses. (Figure 42) Quietly humorous, the piece conveys the tense and emotionally charged nature of interactions within a bridal salon, whilst also expressing the very human qualities of the clients and seamstresses: their exuberance, wisdom, youth or contemplation, with a sensitivity rarely applied to this industry.
But her face has softened. She decides to risk lowering the bodice at the back. (revealing a tattoo) Everyone utters discreet sounds of applause. The mother makes a faint joke in Greek. Marina laughs: ‘My Mum says I should have the dress made so my navel ring shows.’ The mother cracks up and so do we. The fitting room is flooded with relief (Garner 2001, p. 22).

Micropractice: Special Things, Achievable Scale

Micropractice is not a term typically associated with fashion practice but it is an excellent description for a current phenomenon whereby designers are choosing to eschew a mantra of economic growth (Jackson 2011) and remain as solitary concerns: designing, making and selling fashion or fashion related products via small markets, online stores or from their studios.

Supporting this is another concept - industry of one, deriving from industrial design, whereby technology such as personal 3D printing combines with the ideals of the craftsman to enable an industry of solo designer-makers. (Christopher 2012; McGuirk 2011) There are many such micro-designer-makers throughout Melbourne and compilations such as *Handmade in Melbourne* (Phyland & De Silva 2006) attest to the richness of this design ecosystem. Likewise, micropractice intersects with made-to-measure in the practices of many designers.

I constructed a frame analysis of two micropractitioners encountered over the course of this research in Matt Thomson of bag label mattt, and Kara Baker. Schön suggests frame analysis as one type of reflective research that supports reflection-in-action. In the analysis of these two practitioners, I have attempted to obtain an inside view of their practices through conducting an unstructured interview with each, and observation. This enabled me to
“try-on” their practices, “getting a feeling for it and for the consequences and implications of its adoption” (Schön 1983, p. 315).

**Mattt**

I met Matthew Thomson when I was looking for a temporary atelier in Melbourne’s Central Business District in which to base *The Front Row*. Matt rents a collection of interlinked rooms in the iconic art deco Nicholas Building, the well-known hub for designers, artists, galleries and independent retailers. I was already familiar with these rooms as the former home of RJ Harvey tailoring supplies. I had bought precious tools there such as huge shears and weights for holding down paper and fabric, which were always wrapped in brown paper torn from a roll. At Mariana Hardwick, Mr. Harvey was a familiar figure lugging orders of shapewell and linings by the roll up the back staircase to the workroom. On his retirement, the business was closed and Matt took over the rooms. He didn’t need all the space and so hired out a room on a temporary basis, open to the possibility that this might lead to interesting collaborations for his own practice.

Matt started making bags in approximately 2000, when he was part of a scooter club, and needed a backpack for trips away. He then progressed to selling bags at craft markets such as the Rose Street Artist Market and the Arts Centre Sunday Market. In time, he set about establishing a shop and studio in Gertrude Street, Fitzroy before making an economic about-turn, ending his wholesaling operations, and relocating to the Nicholas Building. This current space comprises three rooms, loosely divided into a retail showroom, an office-sewing-printing space, and a tea-meeting-general purpose room. There is also a storeroom across the corridor and two other rooms that are sublet. The space is light and airy. The stock on the shelves

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9. The *Rose Street Artist Market* has operated in Fitzroy since 2003, inspired by similar projects internationally that provide spaces for makers to sell their products (*The Rose St Market* 2015). In recent years, these markets have transformed the urban craft market scene from staid and old fashioned into a hip and fashionable locus.
represents his entire inventory - there is nothing stored, and he produces to replenish this as needed. On Sundays, he packs the stock in crates and wheels it a short distance to the Arts Centre craft market on St. Kilda Road.

When I occupied the room next door during The Front Row, I was inspired and impressed by Matt’s work ethic and environment. He would arrive in the morning and great music would start blaring over the computer from quality speakers. Errands were run, and then making would commence. Sitting at the sewing machine, he works quickly and methodically. The computer and sewing machine sit close to each other in the same room, and over the course of the day he moves between both of these (Figure 43). When an assistant is in working, Matt uses the sewing machine while she uses the computer. Other tasks include printing, cutting and bonding. In between, customers wander in and out of the shop (Figure 44). It is located on the third floor, so there is a small amount of passing traffic, but for the most part, his is a destination store - customers search him out. Sometimes Matt returns in the evening, perhaps to wait for a friend, and he sews while he waits. I was struck by the relationship between working, making and music, the idyllic and meditative passing of the day. Outside the windows, on Swanston Street below, trams clang and construction works make things noisy and dusty. The noise floats in the windows, and the music goes some way to keep the peace.

Kara Baker
Kara Baker is a fashion designer based in Melbourne’s CBD in a beautifully decorated space that is at once her home, salon and studio (Figure 45). In an unstructured interview at her studio on 10 September 2013, she described her practice thus:
What I make for my clients, first of all, is beautiful quality fabrics and then the clothes are actually custom-made. So everything is fitted and made to measure which is obviously the opposite of wholesale, …everything is tweaked, so it might just be hem lengths or it could be a completely starting from scratch from a toile and actually fitting the toile and then possibly having a second fitting.

After founding and running Sirens, a prominent label in the 1980s and 90s structured around a wholesale business model, Kara described to me how she now designs two main and two supplementary collections per year of approximately twenty pieces each. She creates a sample range of individual garments designed around the principle of a coordinated “wardrobe” from which orders are taken (Figure 46). Fabrics come in limited quantities; often they are vintage fabrics of incredible quality purchased from a network of contacts with links to a garment manufacturing industry long since gone from Melbourne, or else they are the ends of rolls from Italian mills. As such there might only be sufficient material for a bare minimum of one style in a given fabric or colour.

In speaking with Kara, it is clear she has strong views on the aesthetic she likes, and clear opinions on how professional women should dress. She also has the technical acumen, including garment construction and in particular garment pattern-making skills, which she points to as her strength, to achieve a refined yet unique silhouette and finish appropriate to this market. It strikes me that she has appropriated an haute couture model, and realised it on a micro scale. Where a Parisian house employs many, she performs all the roles in the house herself. Her own confident design authority is that of a couture designer in control of her métier. The salon environment is a bohemian Chanel, the
eye for altering garment proportion to a wearer is that of one of the hands in the house, and the luxury fabrics, accomplished patternmaking and the hand finishes, such as bound hems and silk linings are all the epitome of high dressmaking.

Designer-Maker
Importantly, neither designer crafts each piece individually in the manner of an artisan: a production line of sorts still needs to be maintained. This indicates that the binary between one-off and production within the micropractice space is a territory the designer must negotiate. Such negotiation takes the form of personal distinctions and time management between production and design; neither designer enjoys an overload of production at any one time. Designing and production, as well as being a negotiated balance, is also a method of design for these designers.

In describing these practitioners as designer-makers, it follows that not only is this describing two aspects of their work, but also that making constitutes a key role in designing. Making becomes a design method with sewing and patternmaking intrinsic to the design process. The other key factor in this is that designs evolve steadily over time, serially, rather than the constant innovation associated with seasonal fashion. For Matthew Thomson, designing through making is about sewing, as he recounted in an unstructured interview at his studio on 5 September 2013:

My design process is that I just evolve the products. The aesthetic of the design and materials I use hasn’t changed a great deal, it’s quite certainly been refined so I supposed I like to refine what I do over time rather than one product being themed and that sort of thing, that’s the benefit of doing similar products over a long period of time.
For Kara, designing happens through the process of creating the sample range. Pattern-making is crucial to the design process, as she refers back to patterns from her library:

I’ve got a huge pattern library, which I now refer to more and more because it’s my own, you know, that cliché word, ‘handwriting’. So, a lot of what I do now is continue to develop ideas I’ve already developed. I also have garments that sell so well to everybody from a very sophisticated 50-something lawyer to the edgiest, grooviest young girl that walks in here that keeps responding to the same design and also tell me continually they literally get chased down the street. Well, obviously I’m going to repeat that design (K Baker 2013, pers. comm., 10 September 2013)

While hand-making is a priority, both practices rely heavily on digital technology. For Matt, this takes the form of being able to own his own digital printer for creating his fabric prints, and being able to run an online store at low cost. Kara is making forays into social media in order to connect with her clients, and she maintains a website at a high aesthetic standard that belies her small scale. Such technologies are crucial actors that position these designer-makers as contemporary iterations of the craftsman.

**The Dress as Project**

A third community of practice describes those employing a project-based approach to design that is not only removed from the creation of seasonal fashion ranges but is removed entirely from commercial aspects of practice. Instead, the objective of such projects might be fundraising or activism. Kate Fletcher and Linda Grose, in speculating on the spaces in which fashion designers
focused on sustainability might work, suggest a range of roles for fashion designers who have identified that their objectives around sustainable practice cannot be met from within commercial practice, offer this perspective:

There are a number of roles designer-activists have invented for themselves in order to circumvent such a conflict of values. Working independently offers one means of release from the established corporate culture and enables designers to direct their practice based on their own ethics and goals. Many find this self-directed ‘free’-lance way of working to be liberating (2012, p. 168).

These projects might be initiated and run by fashion designers, in which case they will take on distinctive design characteristics, or else they might be run from the perspective of an entirely different discipline. While they might be focused around various garment types, such as t-shirts or jeans, a large number use the dress. It is the dress as an object of collective fascination, as described in chapter one, that makes it an ideal subject for projects that seek to project a deliberate message (Hemmings 2008, p. 271). This purpose is summarised by Helen Storey, in regards to her 2008 collaboration Wonderland (Figure 47):

We chose dress to manifest our new approach because we wanted to create something beautifully familiar with which to stimulate an emotional connection, particularly here at LCF. To watch a dress, that has taken months to create, disappear in a few days seemed to connect directly to that place of unfathomable loss. We hope this may work as a metaphor for our disappearing world (Storey 2008).
Wonderland, a collaborative project between a scientist and a fashion designer amongst other collaborators (Belford 2013), addressed themes of waste and recycling, alongside cross-disciplinary collaboration in the development of a plastic material that could dissolve in water.

The Spirit of the Black Dress event, for which I created one black dress, is also an example of this genre. The curated exhibition of ten black dresses and associated events within the context of a fashion festival cultural program displayed a number of ways designers could deploy sustainable design strategies. It was also a showcase for the creative and event management skills of the organisers.
Serial Individualities

While my making practice draws on elements from several traditions including craft, made-to-measure, bespoke or couture, there is no one making context, or frame within which I can precisely place it. As expressed by Schön:

When a practitioner becomes aware of his frames, he also becomes aware of the possibility of alternative ways of framing the reality of his practice. He takes note of the values and norms to which he has given priority, and those he has given less importance, or left out of account altogether. Frame awareness tends to entrain awareness of dilemmas (1983, p. 310).

An overriding feature is that mine is a singular making practice, where each piece is fashioned in a one-off way. My solution to a singular making practice that draws on many contextual references and precedents is to coin a new term in which to locate my practice: Serial Individualities. Name term domain.
Serial – pertaining to, arranged in, or consisting of a series. Serial refers to the manner of making dresses that are linked through stylistic features and materials, but are created outside systems of seasonal fashion collections. The term implies that while each piece is conceived under the specific conditions of its project, or particular occasion, and within the context of its staging, there remains a continuous narrative within the creation of dresses. Such continuum is expressed through design elements such as aesthetic style, material choice and construction methods.

Individuality – the state or quality of being a separate entity. Individuality refers to the state of each dress being made for a particular occasion and individual. It refers to the fact that each dress is producible solely by me, the individual designer, dependent on my individual combination of tastes and skills.

Serial Individualities therefore, describes a practice of making a series of dresses, one following another, each with a unique character. As a context, it encapsulates a community of practitioners working in related ways, and the local and technological conditions that facilitate these practices.

I identify with some aspects of the practices described in the previous section. From the “Armadale” system, I derive made-to-measure garment construction and fitting techniques, as well as the methods for structuring social relationships with clients through processes of fitting and discussion of design details. With Micropractice, I share a ‘designing through making’ approach, alongside the application of craft-based making facilitated by contemporary technologies and structures. And within the ‘Dress as Project,’ I locate my practice outside commercial practice, amongst a community of designers exploring potentials for design practice within a range of sectors external to commercial fashion systems.
However, I do not share or subscribe to all aspects of these practices. Thus, I have coined the term ‘Serial Individualities’ to describe both the context in which the practice sits, and the practice itself. The making tasks I perform are my practice, but through the iterative repetition of these is also a sense of practice (Schön 1983). Serial Individualities is my practice of making a series of dresses, one following another, each with a unique character.

Linked Binaries: Craft/Mass production

Hierarchical issues between art, craft and design (Adamson 2013; Dormer 1996; Gauntlett 2011; Sennett 2008), bespoke production and mass production or between ready-to-wear, haute couture and mass market fashion systems (Kawamura 2004, 2005) have been well documented.

In The Meaning of Craft, Glenn Adamson constructs this dualism as “linked binaries” rather than in terms of hierarchical struggle. He describes both craft and mass production as products of modernity and the advent of mass-production:

Rather than treating craft as an ever-present aspect of human behavior increasingly threatened by technological advances, I argue that craft is itself a modern invention. It is customary to speak of the century from 1750 to 1850 as the time of the ‘industrial revolution,’ a phrase that conveys a sense of radical transformation. And rightly so: it is impossible to miss the novelty and importance of the mechanization, factory organisation, mass production, and division of labor that characterized this period in history. Yet, it is easy to overlook the fact that craft was taking shape at the same time. It emerged as a coherent idea, a defined terrain, only as industry’s opposite number, or ‘other.’ Craft was not a static backdrop against
which industry emerged like a figure from the ground. Rather, the two were created alongside one another, each defined against the other through constant juxtaposition (2013, p. xiii).

A similar system exists within ready-to-wear and haute couture where, while haute couture is characterised in a production sense by its employment of hand techniques, it, in fact, evolved as a system of production alongside ready-to-wear enabled by the conditions of industrial society. While haute couture is commonly assumed to have preceded ready-to-wear, it was Charles Worth, the “father of haute couture” who developed a series of garment components that were the forerunner to the mass production garment systems later employed in ready-to-wear.

Unlike the craft/mass production binary, in hierarchical terms, the binary between haute couture and ready-to-wear is more complex. Importantly, where craft and mass production can be considered generic terms, haute couture and ready-to-wear describe precisely organised systems as detailed by Kawamura. There have been times in the history of fashion when fashion’s equivalent of craft, haute couture, has enjoyed predominance.

While Adamson locates craft and mass production as a product of the industrial revolution, fashion historian Christopher Breward locates a similar binary, that of haute couture and ready-made fashion as products of modernity, citing in particular, the sophistication of their marketing techniques. The binary, however, is more complex.

Paradoxically, the myth of sartorial individualism which encouraged the symbolic predominance of couture also pervaded and influenced the increasing provision of
mass-produced, ready-made and wholesale clothing to a fashion-literate market from the mid-nineteenth century onwards. So much so that sometimes the boundaries between bespoke garments-tailored on the premises to the measurements of the individual customer-and those that were ready made-constructed to a range of sizes in bulk or to order, either in a factory or by a network of outworkers, and sourced directly or through a wholesaler-appear very blurred (2003, p. 53).

Breward sees haute couture as most distinguished from ready-made clothing through its production techniques where, “the language and technology of the production line were taboo in the philosophy of couture” (2003, p. 52). Diana De Marly, however, describes an example of this blurred binary through the practice of Charles Frederick Worth, regarded as the “father of haute couture” who developed a range of interchangeable “serial” or component parts that enabled him to meet demand for individual dresses.

[Worth] was influenced by contemporary industrial practice, and adopted ‘mass production’ techniques into his dressmaking. With so many hundreds of ladies all wanting day costumes, dinner dresses and ballgowns all at the same time, and for each fashionable season, he had to evolve a very adaptable system. Maison Worth therefore came to operate with a range of interchangeable parts, using stock patterns of sleeve, bodice, skirt and drapery which could be combined in different compositions, like pre-fabricated parts. Such patterns did sturdy work, for they were used time and time again over the years (de Marly 1980, p. 40).
This process foregrounded the development of ready-to-wear fashion, and demonstrates one way in which the haute couture and ready-to-wear processes are intertwined within one system. Craft/mass production, haute couture/ready-to-wear or bespoke/ready-made represent a by no means exhaustive list of binaries that are located as artefacts of modernity and industrialisation. They also contain socially constructed hierarchies that influence the construction of dominant design discourses, for example, sustainability.

Serial Individualities is located within the craft-bespoke-customisation space as mass-production’s other. This location is crucial to the decision-making process. As a making practice, the materials and techniques of production are those both favoured by and possible only within the craft-bespoke space. Additionally, as a sustainability practice, certain strategies and approaches are more apt than others. Decision-making is guided by the poetic values of the material within a functional utilitarian space. Defining features of designing Serial Individualities include the individual construction of each garment for a specific user or client. In this process, the acts of making and designing cannot be separated. This particular way of designing is different from industrially produced garments and other objects of industrial design: in mass production, design is defined as specifications - the production must then be negotiated with a manufacturer. Executing the design oneself as one does in bespoke practice allows infinite changes of direction along the way. Such flexibility in the design process has a direct bearing on the poetic nature of bespoke fashion practice.

Therefore, approaches to bespoke and to mass production mean that the designer functions in a certain way within which is contained a crucial distinction in order to contextualise
designing and making practices. It is also significant that because the mass production context is hierarchically dominant, the dominant discourses in regards to sustainable fashion and to design practice relate to mass production. This necessitates that as a designer of Serial Individualities, I must develop a new approach to sustainability that is appropriate to that specific context.
Socio-Material Practice

A feature of Serial individualities is the intertwined nature of material and social ways of designing. While each project centres on a material outcome – the dress, the process of arriving at this involves a range of social encounters that determine the form the dress will take. Here, I re-examine two projects, the Logies Dress and the Front Row project from a socio-material perspective. The socio-material approach is a theory of the manner in which the social interactions with intermediaries, wearers and networks as documented in the first chapter intersects with the materiality of the dress design and making processes. It is also a device to consider how the dress as a socially-based proposition determines its materiality. Reflection on the relationship between designer and client evolves through overlaying theoretical design methodologies on material methods of making. This is a reflective proposition that enables me to reconfigure production methods in new ways, in particular in ways that sees multiple types of relationships between actors, instead of privileging the material artifact first.
Two examples of the application of this theoretical framework are given. In the first, the application of a co-design framework to made-to-measure practice sees relationships between and stories about client and designer come to the fore and are seen on equal footing with the dress or artefact. This offers opportunities to identify points of intervention in the formation of alternative design propositions based in sustainability. In the second, the application of product service system and sharing methodologies to delicate hand-sewn dresses results in technical and aesthetic material propositions for shared consumption.

The Logies Dress: Making-to-Measure

‘Made-to-measure’ is one term that comprises Serial Individualities. Made-to-measure is a garment-making process. It is a word familiar to me: It has been stored in my fashion lexicon for a long time, and to me, it means, unremarkably, a garment made to individual measurements. It is a term in frequent use in the “Armadale System.” A technical term, it describes a production and, sometimes, a creative design process, that is structured around a series of fittings with a client. At each fitting, the dress is prepared to a requisite stage of manufacture, and through decisions made at the fitting, can be progressed to the next. While technical in nature, made-to-measure is inherently social: it deals intimately with a wearer or client, alongside other actors.

‘Co-design,’ is a term for the process whereby stakeholders are involved in the design and creation of outcomes. In fashion or apparel, co-design principles can be applied across a range of sectors from mass-production, where it is associated with mass-customisation, to the intimate made-to-measure processes that are the subject of my practice. Co-design involves greater or lesser degrees of involvement from stakeholders, and can be
conducted in face-to-face, or technically mediated encounters (Wu 2010). Significant in considering the co-design framework in relation to made-to-measure is that where made-to-measure assumes a certain process is always followed, co-design is critical: it offers the tools to open up, question and map the design process. Additionally, where made-to-measure assumes a hierarchically-based relationship between designer and client, co-design makes no assumptions as to participant status.

**Actors Within Making**

The Logies Dress followed a made-to-measure process, beginning with a series of sketches, and followed by four fittings at various stages of construction (Figure 49). A starting point was a “design brief” from Zoe given over our first lunch meeting, and taking the form of a loose list of “ideas.” I noted the brief in my journal as follows:

As she is very thin, likes to emphasise her waist.

No emphasis on boobs

Shoulders and back are good, so happy to show off, likewise legs, ie, split

Likes the idea of lace edges, where the skin blends into the dress in the form of a lace edge.

Likes the idea of the white and ivory colours mixed together. Likewise likes coffee and pale pink shades and apricots – as pink is calm and happy.

Interested in natural dyes

Perhaps also pale blue
Colour influences come from her studies into emotional associations of colours. Different parts of the body give off different colour auras [McCorkill, 2011]

The informal list of materials, colours and body features was left to me as the designer to interpret. With these notes in mind, I pinned to a wall all the heavy sequined georgette remnant pieces I had to hand as a means of examining them; getting a sense of the quantity I had, considering how they could be used. These were then draped over the mannequin to think about how they might be applied to the design: to get a sense of the weight, how the fabric moved and whether they represented the points in the design brief. These drapes formed the basis of my sketches. The brief was subsequently refined through the presentation of sketches for comment and the introduction of other actors or cultural intermediaries, as described in the first chapter.

At the first fitting, measurements were taken, exact colours discussed; proportions and amendments to the design were brokered. For the first fitting, toiles for both the fitted corset that would be concealed within the dress and the overlay of silk georgette were prepared and fitted. This fitting was perfunctory and highly technical. As the designer, I moved around Zoe marking the toile with pins and pen. The toile at this stage was difficult for the client to understand as it was made from alternative fabric in a different colour. I made bullet point notes of a technical nature in my journal as follows:

Make underbodice as per pinned shapewell bodice. Lines have been drawn on for neckline and waist. Top waistline is where belt should sit. Bottom line Zoe’s natural waist. Readjust back line drawn on to match shape of georgette overlay.
Overlay – overall, make this ½ size smaller. Sleeve length to finish where toile does. Make sleeve wider at hem, more bell shaped. Take in back sleeve and look at front sleeve – to fit closer to body at curve?? Not sure how.

Neckline as drawn

Skirt – add godets and fullness at points of sequin pieces. These will be asymmetrical.

Lengths as written on measurements (2011).

At the second fitting, dyed fabrics were viewed and the placement of the geometric shapes discussed. These final materials were easier to “read” than the toile fabrics and enabled the other stakeholders to participate in a conversation about the details within the dress. The initial drawing was also an important actor in this scenario, as discussion ensued over the placement of the geometric shapes on the drawing, which are read in various ways, as I noted in my journal:

The next step was to look at the placement of the diamond shapes. We tried different options, and I drew lines on the georgette bodice. Zoe liked that they were a little different and jagged in the picture and we tried pinning pieces at different angles. I explained that I had planned then to have a slightly acute angle top and bottom and a slightly obtuse angle at the sides. We pinned three shapes at the top and then we pinned four in an even pattern. This looked best and everyone agreed that I had been right all along. I drew some lines on the sleeve as well to mark where this would go. I showed the dyed colours of fabric and everyone liked the colours they had been dyed to (2011).
The beaded pieces of different shades were dyed in eucalyptus leaves, molded over the bodice and fixed in place with an invisible hand stitch. With very little left over at the end from this assortment of offcuts, there was no room for error (Figure 50). This fitted and precise treatment of the remnants was necessary because a drawing had been agreed on. The remnant fabrics were added where possible, but aspects such as a fitted aesthetic meant that certain other things also had to happen. The dress was partially made up for the third fitting, and tried on with shoes and jewellery. It was missing a zip at the back and the beaded pieces were mostly pinned in place onto a tear-away vilene backing. The aesthetic negotiations that marked the previous fitting were over as the attention of the others turns to accessories: shoes, jewellery and handbag, while I worked through construction problems to be resolved such as taking in beaded sections to make them tighter, or the addition of more boning to the front to prevent the bust caving in.

These adjustments are largely invisible to the others: they appear relaxed and view the dress as a finished product while I move round Zoe, my mouth full of pins, wearing a concentrated frown.

By the fourth fitting, the gown is largely finished but for the belt and the hem, and some of the pieces still need to be sewn in place. This fitting is relaxed and celebratory as everyone can see how it will be when completed. The finished form can be seen. Zoe wants to show different people in the building. It is taken away, completed and delivered to Channel Seven the day of the event.

Reflection on Made-to-Measure Design Processes
What do I like about the made-to-measure design process? On a creative level, I enjoy the negotiation of the design throughout the process: the way a design is open to change right up until it
is worn. From a communication perspective, the skills required in the design process are very different to those in ready-to-wear designing. Explanation, empathy, consideration, listening, all these have to be finely tuned to put the client at ease. From the client’s point of view, there is also much trust bestowed on the designer that they will use their taste and aesthetic judgment and act with honesty and integrity. I like the way relationships with people are mediated through the dress, and the way journeys are embarked on through material. Other people might forge new relationships through their jobs, kids, or food. For my part, I enjoy being able to do this through a dress. I genuinely liked the people I worked with on this project: I found them all to be interesting, fascinating women. Making a dress enabled the formation of these relationships. And from the production perspective, I like the way the dress is “crafted.” I draw on my accumulated experience of the properties of each fabric to know how to piece the sections together. In the case of Zoe’s dress, the design differed substantially to the unstructured dresses I had been making, so the process became a combination of remembering old skills, research and experimentation.

Made-to-measure production viewed as a socio-material process is one method by which the porosity in my practice is achieved. Made-to-measure is a way that people enter my practice; the materiality of the dress is an entry point to my practice. The processes of making are opened up to the viewer. Hazel Clark (2008) lists “transparent production systems and less intermediation between producers and consumers” as one characteristic of fashion that might be considered under the banner of “slow fashion,” an idea currently very popular in sustainable fashion practice. “More transparent production systems and less intermediation also provide greater opportunities for collaborations between designer, producer, and user, which, in turn, can bring
Figure 50.
Cutting, draping and placing the remnants in place.
new definitions to those roles” (Clark 2008, p. 435). The made-to-measure fashion system, while admittedly prohibitively priced for an entire wardrobe, nonetheless achieves, on a theoretical level, these objectives of design for sustainability.

The made-to-measure process in the Logies project encompassed two of the three qualities of porosity described in the first chapter. Firstly, *conviviality* is employed in the friendly and respectful fittings that take in the viewpoints of all actors. Secondly, the fitting and making process for the Logies dress was an encounter, a transient collaboration. The third quality of porosity, *humour*, is less easy to identify. Though in no way *humourless*, the process was nonetheless a serious undertaking.
The Front Row: Design for Sharing

Another example of the socio-material approach was the application of ‘design for sharing’ methodologies during The Front Row. In The Front Row, I set out to create an event that explored the lending and sharing of special occasion dresses. As special occasion dresses are often only worn once, this was an appropriate approach. The “occasion” was to be various fashion parades and events in the Melbourne Fashion Festival. This event required a collection be prepared from which clients could make selections. The garments were created from the outset with the intention that they be borrowed and worn once, and then worn again. They were materially made to theoretically facilitate sharing, but they also required a larger network of actors such as the atelier, festival and associated parties for this to occur in practice.

From a technical garment construction perspective, there are multiple ways of constructing a multi-use garment. The durable construction methods of the hire costume come to mind, as do the robust fabrications of the formal hire tuxedo. My approach was to do the opposite to durability - creating instead pieces that would likely come apart, and that would require constant repair and refitting. In doing so, I designed myself into the dresses as their custodian.

Adjustable and Unsized Aesthetics
Silhouettes and garment structures of the collection were based loosely on gowns from classical Greek and Roman antiquity. The garments were based on garment types such as the tunic, with simple backs and fronts, and all darts eliminated. For example, the tunic shape featured a back and front, fastened at the shoulder and flowing from that point. The collection I created offered full-length gowns as well as tunic tops and dresses.
A range of garment types was offered, and I imagined different people in them: a selection of slips for slim, young girls, two day dress tunics with wide straps, imagined layered over other pieces; two cocktail dresses, one in flighty chiffon and one in soft organza and one tunic top. The weather in Melbourne is never predictable, but March is still warm generally, and the sleeveless styles were suitable. The use of the remnants in as raw a state as possible became the unifying factor within the collection. The unconventionally shaped triangles were cut as little as possible, and the aesthetic features were guided by how I could work them into the designs. For example, a quilt of fabric proposed multiple possibilities for interpretation and styling (Figure 54).

There is an interesting ambiguity in fashion festival attire: fashion people have strict ideas about what they do and don’t like, but they will adopt and make something new their own. The possibilities for wearing and styling were open, and I gave no clues as to how this should be done. Everything was photographed on mannequins, and the studio space was devoid of any styling or other visual hints, save for a small number of scarf and soft necklace constructions, and ties, to function as belts. This was for an audience with an eye for adventure and opportunity when presented with a rack of clothing. The pieces should work as a cohesive collection, and I knew my sophisticated clientele would understand me through this visual language.

**Stitching Lightly**

Sharing is facilitated technically through the use of hand stitching, as this enables the garments to be altered for wearers of different sizes. The thread used is either restyled/upcycled rayon metallic jacquard thread, or colour-matched spun silk thread, so that it will dye and shrink with the fabric. I uncovered a rayon metallic thread at a Japanese textile reseller that I believe was used in
weaving obi fabrics. It is slippery and runs easily through the fabric, but is not very hardy and breaks easily. But strong seams are not required for such loose pieces, as the seams will not be overly stressed when worn. The bulk of the seams were sewn by hand created by a single running stitch. It can be pulled out easily so that when adjustments are required it causes very little damage to the fabric as compared to a machine-stitched seam (Figure 53). Other decorative elements with edges were folded back on one another and topstitched in place to create a reversible garment. The stitch is ornamental as well as purposeful; it joins the remnants in a functional manner while justifying their odd shapes. The stitch holds the fabric together as required, but also comes apart with a pull, and in this way, it facilitates disassembly, refitting and repair with a view to being shared among different wearers.

The hand stitch typifies socio-material practice as it sets it apart aesthetically from other ways of producing, whilst figuratively, stitching maker to user as it does two pieces of cloth to one another:

The craftsman’s wares were expressive of the hand, and implicit in every craft product was the idea of one human being producing for another, rather than the anonymity which is implicit in mass-production (Dormer 1988).

The adaptability of a length of fabric that can be draped and hung in different ways is a logical conclusion to the problem of fitting differing body shapes and tastes. In actual fact, however, it is not a single cloth because it is made of many pieces. I’ve treated the technique of joining and quilting as a method of fabric creation. So the pieces are joined to create a new textile. In the act of textile recycling, there are two types of textiles in use: textile as raw material, and textile as new material.
The new textile contains seams and joins, yet they are not joins that relate to fitting. Only some pieces of conventional garment sewing are used. These might be attached to a waist stay, a shoulder seam, a hem, or the addition of a strap. There is a sculptural approach to my making practice where I build or craft the dress, and in fact, I have eliminated the flat patternmaking stage from the process.

Long roulet ties were offered as belts in some styles. Straps were lightly attached so they could be re-made if a longer one was required (Figure 52) with longer ends tucked into the back so they could be lengthened and shortened as needed. In one case, front and back straps crossed over each other at the shoulder then hung down the other side as a necklace or scarf. This appeared to be a decorative function, but the two straps were attached with a stitch at the shoulder that could be unpicked and re-sewn at a different length.

Intentions for Transformation
The collection was created with possibilities for altering and transformation, but it was difficult to know what form these would take in practice. The main methods of sharing were twofold; firstly, through alterations to fitting and sizing, and secondly, through alterations to aesthetic features and design. Dyeing was one way this could be achieved: as such, some pieces were left in their raw white stage so that they could be dyed for a second life. A day was set aside during the project to activate a vat of indigo dye and apply these blue tones to selected pieces (Figure 55). Repair was another method of transformation, with the potential to patch and remake. The quilts of fabric could be draped in a different way, belts added or removed, and with the constructed garments, the seams could be opened up or narrowed and the necklines brought up or down.
Tensions within Sharing as an Approach to Fashion Design

A focus upon sharing is an unusual proposition for a fashion designer who customarily focuses on the design of the garment only. In this account of sharing however, the focus on the physical garment design, on the manner of its craftsmanship retains its importance at the centre of the practice. Activities to facilitate sharing and the contract of garment ownership occur around the central act of garment making and differ to a conventional model of sale and ownership.

Service outcomes are more common for an industrial designer familiar with product service systems and the prevalence of these systems as a method in sustainable design studio practice (Manzini & Vezzoli 2003; Penin & Vezzoli 2004). My interest in this area is in exploring what it might look like if my own materially based practice in special occasion designing and making were to meet a product service system, or ideas of shared consumption (Botsman & Rogers 2010). What does fashion practice look like when the designer performs dual roles of service designer and fashion designer-maker? The rational and pragmatic aspects to service design are potentially challenging for fashion design practitioners who have been trained to express innovation through aesthetic and stylistic change. One example of this tension is that product service systems, when approached through sustainability are done in a very technical way, and the benefits must be measureable (Roy 2000). Measurable reduced consumption is difficult to ascertain in fashion, particularly in the micropractice context, which does not have access to the necessary tools.

The socio-material process employed during The Front Row embodies the quality of porosity described in the first chapter in two ways. Firstly, porosity is evident in the expanded
conception of fashion design practice as encompassing acts beyond the making of the material artefact, although in this account, the material artefact is the central act. Secondly, porosity is evident the creation of unsized garments with deliberately ambiguous ways of wearing such that a sophisticated and fashion literate client might delight in the wearing and temporary ownership of my creations.
Poetic Practice

Poetics describes the immersive nature of bespoke craft practice. The way a designer engages in the tasks of designing and making, as well as the sensory concerns of form, colour, texture and that are of principal concern in the creation of artefacts. Poetic practice contributes to sustainability through relationships with wearers, the sense of value imbued in the artefact through hand creation.

Craft, Immersion and Tacit Knowledge

Visual arts writer Peter Dormer produced many reflections on the knowledge and meaning generated through the practice of craft. His definition of craft was wide ranging, encompassing forms of visual art as well as mass produced objects and professional as well as domestic practice, grouped under the title of the “plastic arts” (1994). His analysis of craft has been applied to my practice of Serial Individualities, where it is instrumental in my description of Serial Individualities as an immersive and sensory “poetic” practice. In *The Art of the Maker* (1994), Dormer positions craft knowledge as tacit knowledge; knowledge through
making which cannot be theorised, it must be experienced in order to be learnt: “Tacit knowledge may be impossible to articulate precisely, but it may certainly be demonstrated: the virtuoso knows how in a way the amateur does not”. Central to tacit knowledge is the immersive act of producing craft. In another essay, Dormer makes reference to Vermeer’s painting, *The Lacemaker (1669 – 1670)* (Figure 57):

Vermeer’s lacemaker looks as though she has no need to make an effort to be attentive: the work engrosses her. Her complete engagement with her task is like a reverie and takes her out of the world, possibly out of herself. She has an expression of interested calm, untroubled by worries or queries (1988, p. 136).

I very much relate to this “reverie.” Making the Logies dress for Zoe, for example, involved many long sessions of painstaking handwork to join the remnants of fabric assembled for the design. Time absorbed deeply in this work did indeed become immersive and meditative. By this measure, the practice of hand-stitching is eminently more complex than a strategy to facilitate disassembly, and a socio-material linkage between maker and wearer: it is an intensely personal act whereby the mind’s vision is expressed through the hand. These tasks demand painstaking attention but also an affinity for the materials and a sensory delight in the process of transforming the materials into garment form.

In tacit knowledge, it can be difficult to describe or unpack decision-making processes. This is because designing happens through the process of making, doing and experiencing, trying out, as Dormer explains:
Suppose as a painter you wish to capture and convey the quality of an empty urban street at noon on a hot summer’s day.

In order to explore and accomplish the goal you need to be able to rely on your knowledge of colour, tone, devices of illusion including one, two-, three point and colour perspective, and also to know how your materials will behave. The more craft knowledge you have the more you can tackle pictorial problems that emerge as you move towards your goal.

Craft knowledge not only enables you to achieve your goal, it also enables you to imagine what your goal might look like. It becomes not merely the means of achieving the goal but the means of visualising it in the first place. Craft expertise (more than mere competence) allows the subject to be explored in full confidence of the expert’s ability to find solutions [Dormer 1994, p. 20].

Sensory Poetics

It can be a cloak, but if you put a belt around it, which is what I’ve done, it can be a dress...and you wear it with boxer shorts...Don’t spend money, just take what you can find. Take your old things, keep on wearing them.

- Vivienne Westwood [Mrcelebritygossip 2009]

In recent years, Vivienne Westwood (1941 - ) has adopted techniques of draping single lengths of cloth into constructions that simultaneously recall a grecian goddess, Westwood’s signature 1950s style couture gowns, and a nod to her design origins in a punk-esque making do with a (very expensive silk) bedsheets.
Figure 58.
Development pages from my sketchbooks.
She uses this aesthetic employing single cloth principles to speak about ideals of sustainability, pointing out multifunction and creative reuse as methods of adaptability.

Another dimension of poetics is the sensory. Principles of form, colour, texture and so forth guide the design of each dress, and sensory poetics also describes the emotional or thematic connotations the designer seeks to evoke though such principles of aesthetic design. While a draped length of cloth or a loosely fitted tunic, both referencing classical antiquity, is a pragmatic solution to the strategy of facilitating garment sharing, it is also a poetic solution: such references have long been used to express idealism, or a break with convention. Howard Koda refers to the way in which they also symbolise the notion of the classic, worn over and over transcending fashion trends:

Invariably, the invocation of designs impervious to the capriciousness of fashion has resulted in a referencing of the Hellenic antique. Like the mythic attributes of Graeco-Roman gods and goddesses, discrete classicising motifs and conventions have been, and continue to be, the mechanism by which ephemeral fashions are imbued with an ostensible sense of timeless and enduring beauty (Koda 2003, p. 11).

Madeleine Vionnet (1876 – 1975), for example, used draped lengths, squares and triangles in the construction of her eveningwear that sought to develop a new aesthetic liberating women from corsets (Kamitsis 1996). Likewise, Mariano Fortuny (1871 – 1949) did the same with his pleated Delphos gowns which were retained and worn decades after they were first created at the beginning of the twentieth century (Deschodt & Davanzo Poli 2001). The simply draped, loose garments of The Red Carpet Project are similarly styled interpretations in that they are:
“an exaggeration of the qualities of cloth, drapery and even garment construction that might or might not have existed in the original examples” (Koda 2003, p. 12). They seek to engage wearers through evoking a sentimental idealism.

The allure of classicism in fashion during this period is a result of the enduring mythic ideal associated with ancient Greece. At the core of the designers’ fascination is the iconography of an idealized beauty that is represented in the sophisticated simplicity of Hellenistic dress. Although draped around the body in fantastically stylized pleats and folds, classical dress had no form in itself and was constructed from a single rectangular piece of cloth (Park 2011).

Pages from my sketchbooks demonstrate the choice to also reference such a period through material questions of drape and simple patternmaking (Figure 58). This also draws on the use in other cultures of uncut, draped cloth; for example, the sari or the sarong.


A montage of making pictures from my sketchbook depicts the design through making process for the Black Dress as examined in chapter one (Figure 59). Rectangles of fabric are pinned to a wall, and I observe, note what I have to hand. I divide the pieces of black cloth, setting aside those that are too fine or too stiff to be able to be joined to one another. In between, I have a selection of softly draping satins and crepes. I had hoped for a crisper collection of fabrics with which to create a more dramatic silhouette, but I will work with what I have collected as I know that I must let the drape of the fabric guide what can be made.
Figure 59.
Making montage of the Black Dress.
I re-do the jigsaw puzzle in a pattern that can be stitched together. Pieces are taken off the wall, and joined to one another. The quilt of black fabric grows in size. Using the small collection of crisper material set aside from the body of the dress, I construct roulet straps by rolling strips cut on the bias between my fingers and holding them in place with a gold running stitch. They are malleable but, at first, I am unsure what to do with them. I determine they will be contorted and coaxed into a knot motif held together with invisible black stitches. This will form a decoration at the shoulder and the waist. The quilt is finished but I still don’t know what silhouette it is to take as a dress. I drape it over my mannequin, adding the black ties in different positions until I decide a fastening at one shoulder, bloused and gathered at the waist is the best way to contend with the length of slippery silk and to display the geometric patterns created by the joins.

Immersive engrossment is apparent in the meticulous joining of each rectangle to the next, but also in the task of pinning to the wall, studiously regarding the pattern, adjusting, then pinning the next piece. Engrossment can also be seen in the draping and arranging of the quilt. There is pleasure in handling the high quality fabric, but it is also a physical process to manage the fabric at full scale, to stand and bend and to move around the mannequin. Additionally, the processes of “designing” and “making” are interlined. Designing happens through making. For example, I start to “make” the dress at full scale on the wall before I have any notion of what needs to be sewn. Then, I make the bundle of roulet loop straps, but I don’t know quite what I will do with them. I have to complete the quilt first and start to drape it before I determine to make them into the knot motifs. It is not possible for anyone else to make this dress, or rather, for me to delegate its production. I make decisions, I design, as I make. Perhaps an assistant who would sew to my directions could aid
me? But I fear this would spoil my reverie… and I doubt I would find someone to join me in the long, late hours I keep when thus immersed! This “know-how,” the enjoyable engagement in something I know well how to do, and the deployment of it as a design approach is tacit knowledge.

**Triangles in Silk: Making Sense of Upcycling**

In this practice, the use of recycled remnants emerged as a logical and possible material choice for sustainable special occasion projects. Remnants of non-uniform size and shape were sourced from bridal couture designers, the pieces left behind when a wedding dress is cut. A tussle between the bridal dress ensues as a source of design inspiration. The fabrics are inescapably wedding dress fabrics, yet I employ unique design development methods to seek to break these connotations in the pursuit of a unique aesthetic.

**Collecting**

I knew from my past employment that made-to-measure designers within the Armadale System use large pattern pieces to form garment components such as full-length, A-line skirts, which result in correspondingly large spaces in between, generally triangular in shape. The designers collect remnants in boxes and bags throughout the year using them for client swatches, small accessory projects, and stitching tests. What is left is thrown away in periodic clean outs. However, being silk fibre of exceptional quality, most couturiers are happy to give away these valuable pieces to others prepared to arrange expedient collection and work with the random sizes and qualities. I called some designers, explained my project and asked if I might collect remnants. Several designers were happy to pass on bags of pieces (Figure 60).
Noticing
At a point in this project, I worked in a room that was intended for multidisciplinary design practice. The white walls were clad in pin board, to facilitate the popular critical evaluation method of the “poster pin-up” favoured by industrial designers and architects, among others. Fashion designers tend to prefer mannequins on which to observe their creations, but faced with this expanse of white pin board, unusual to me, I wondered about how I might employ it. And so, I started to use a long length of wall to sort, pin up, make sense of and come to terms with pin up the shapes I had collected. On observation, patterns emerge (Figure 62).

I sort the remnants by fabric type, creating piles of different fabric types (Figure 61). Although all sourced from silk fibre, the various weaves create different effects of drape, stiffness and opacity. There is slippery, satin charmeuse in heavy and light weights, double-sided satin charmeuse, traditional duchess satin, slubbed dupion, smooth and crisp Thai silk; the imperceptibly lustrous duchess satin and sheer chiffon, organza and georgette. The colours are a subtle palette of ivory, white and variations on pastel shades with names such as blush, coffee and mushroom. In addition matte and satin sides of the same fabric can produce different colour effects. Nothing is very white: that glaring bleached white can only be achieved in synthetic fibre. When I designed wedding dresses, I initially bemoaned the “boring” traditional bridal shades, but came to love mastering the subtle variations in pale neutral tones. From there, decisions of matching exactly the shades, or building texture and depth through contrast can be made.

Piecing and Joining
The pin board technique began as a means of observation and reflection, but it morphed into a design method. Silk fabrics hang
and stretch in different ways depending on the placement of the grain line. Madeleine Vionnet’s use of the bias cut is legendary. But some of these pieces require joins on various oblique angles, neither straight nor forty-five degrees. Sometimes a bias edge needs to be joined to a straight edge. If this is done on a flat surface, matching the fabric lengths at a ratio of one to one, will cause puckers once the seam is hung. Edges must therefore be joined when hanging vertically: predetermined seamlines have to be ignored to a degree and the fabric allowed to fall where it wants. In cases where I wanted to join large sections—perhaps four pieces, front and back, left and right, I pinned them vertically on the dressmaking mannequin (Figure 63). To piece garments together in this manner is a common technique of the couture dressmaker, but impossibly time-consuming within mass production where seams must be sewn flat by machine. Where I wished to create a quilt of fabric from small chiffon pieces, I pinned the pieces in place on the wall and let gravity work with them. I pinned a line through the fabric, and folded back edges, leaving them raw and exposed. On removal from the wall, I laid the fabric flat and stitched over the pinning (Figure 64).

Triangles
Typically, cloth is rectangular, but here it is triangular. This poses a conundrum, and new ways of approaching the cloth must be developed. It can be shaped and quilted into a length of sorts; it can be made into certain garments, but not others. It is a curious blend of breaking with established garment-making rules to create unique seams, grain lines and fitting methods, while working within tight parameters of possibility. The garment starts out almost formed, yet remains totally unknown to me until it is made. This problem-solving employing tacit knowledge is a defining feature of Serial Individualities, the context in which this poetic upcycling occurs.
Figure 62.
Remnants pinned to the wall.
The dresses for The Front Row were pre-made rather than made to an agreed sketch, which permitted me to be a different type of designer to that of the Logies Dress; to react to the remnants in an intuitive manner, and to create an aesthetic based on a more personal sense of expression. Some of the dresses are designed to be multi-fit, drawing inspiration from classical antiquity to create tunic inspired shapes, or single length pieces of cloth. These simple shapes make an excellent match for the high quality pieces of silk as they drape and fall around the body. The triangular shapes mean certain things must be done: for example, joins become important. Although there are many joins, they are more akin to the decorative joins of patchwork than the functional joins implied by a shaped armhole or dart. Many joins create textured fabric lengths, which can be draped and fitted, as would an unbroken length. The hand-stitch evolved into a decorative element in the dress, executed in metallic thread, used to highlight and draw attention to the angular shapes of the remnants, creating an abstract pattern over the surface of the fabric. In other garments, each triangle forms a pattern piece in itself. A group of four is a left and a right, front and back, one point is the shoulder, another an angular hem. The four identical wedges are arranged in a gored camisole: two sides facing up and two sides facing down, creating contrasts of satin and matte. Sometimes the arrangements reveal themselves early on, and they are sewn up first into dresses. The difficult end pieces of the puzzle remain, at once exasperating their complexity, while a reassuring reminder that the design process is yet to be guided to its most creative solutions.
Figure 63.
Four identical triangles are a left and right, front and back.
Bottom right photo source: Lou Pardi
Figure 64.
A dress from thin wedges of chiffon.
Bottom right photo source:
Couturing.com.
Figure 65.
A long satin dress.
Bottom right photo source:
Chapter Conclusion

And so we always come back to the essential nature of handicraft activity: the pleasure of losing oneself in a practical activity offers a way of life which is different from that of the designer or the designer-cum-overseer (Dormer 1988, p. 144).

This chapter has described the definition and rationale of Serial Individualities. I use Serial Individualities to define both a context for practice, being an amalgam of the contexts of made-to-measure, contemporary craft and design activism. Serial Individualities is also used as a descriptor for my own practice, and has particular, personal meanings that are derived through the intimate processes of making and mediating my world through the custom-made dress.

In this chapter, I described and reflected on the material making aspect of my practice. My making practice can be seen in two ways. Firstly, as socio-material practice whereby making occurs in response to the socially-based staging of the garment. The connection between maker and producer is established through
evidence of the hand. Socio-material practice embodies the elements of porosity detailed in the first chapter. And secondly, as poetic practice, which contains both immersive and sensory-aesthetic elements to it. The discussion of poetic practice places it as a form of tacit knowledge, which is tied up with an approach to designing through making, and engrossment in enjoyable making work that I do well.

I articulated a design through making approach to Serial Individualities whereby making constitutes a key role in designing. Making becomes a design method with sewing intrinsic to the design process. The other key factor in this is that similar designs are refined steadily over time rather than the constant innovation associated with seasonal fashion.

In her chapter in Dormer’s compilation, The Culture of Craft, Helen Rees reflects on another binary, that between craftsperson and designer (specifically from the perspective of the industrial design discipline). The critical distinction between the two is as follows:

Designers are distinguished by their critical engagement with consumers, which is manifest in their ability to give material expression to consumers’ desires and perceived needs – sometimes before consumers themselves are even aware of them (1996, p. 120).

Whereas:

... Innovation in the crafts is likely to be maker-led. The craft object may thus reflect an exercise in personal choice, self expression or an experiment with materials and techniques (1996, p. 118).
In the first chapter, I described qualities of porosity as they related to being a designer. In this chapter, I have elucidated the qualities of being a craftsperson or maker. In my practice, I design through making, but I am also a designer-maker. This implies two types of characteristics: the socially-driven skills of porosity are those of the designer, while the maker in me is introspective and reflective, driven by creative expression. Design through making is the method of the designer-maker that can only exist in the context of small-scale practice that is mass-production’s other. This context that I refer to as Serial Individualities, is a making practice imbued with my particular predilections, skills and values. In chapter three, I consider what exactly these values are, beyond the compulsion to make, create and to enjoy the interactions that result from such activity. I discuss the overlaying of sustainability as an embodiment of a moral dimension within my practice.
Chapter Three

Modelling Sustainability and Special Occasionwear
Chapter Introduction

Sustainability in fashion is currently a topical subject in academic, industry and public discourse, reflecting broader concerns within society posed by the threat of climate change and other environmental problems. Being a designer who deals explicitly with sustainability in my work has afforded me the opportunity to participate in a range of occasions, involving fashion industry stakeholders as well as the general public, focused squarely on that topic (Appendix B). At each of these events, I have been struck by the breadth of priorities and definitions each participant has brought to the discussion. Many times, I have been inspired by the diverse yet somehow united points of view, but on some occasions, I felt I was speaking a different language to the person next to me and have struggled to articulate my thoughts in a meaningful way. Likewise, in my making practice, I have frequently felt “stumped” by a didactic and technical approach to sustainability that firstly, was beyond what I could achieve in the context of small-scale micropractice, and secondly, entailed decision-making at odds with the socio-material or poetic priorities of my practice, which I refer to as Serial Individualities. Nevertheless, through teasing out the tensions at the junction of
sustainability and special occasion wear, I found ways to identify and apply sustainable approaches appropriate to my practice.

In the first chapter, I detailed one strategy employed in my practice, that of staging. While in the second chapter, I discussed the use of two particular strategies related to making, upcycling and sharing. These strategies were enacted in particular ways that were guided primarily, by the context of my practice, and secondly, by my design preferences and making skills. Elsewhere, other designers have selected similar strategies to achieve alternate goals, but I selected them because they were design strategies that delivered sustainable outcomes. In this chapter, I unpack the decision-making processes within my practice, and the formation of an approach to sustainability suitable to the context and genre of my practice.

The final chapter of the dissertation is centred around a discussion of the “Model of Serial Individualities” which is a reflective model devised to explain my practice and to reflect on the recurring themes and methods within it. Models, as representations of a process or phenomenon are useful explanatory tools that play a role in epistemology as well as serving a reflective function, both through their creation and use. The intention in developing a model was that it could explain each project and the way they differed from each other through variations in certain common characteristics. Furthermore, it could explain the ways in which practice in sustainability was explored within a special occasion wear context. The model of Serial Individualities is particular to my practice, and I propose, adaptable to others. This model is an outcome of my practice and a contribution to the field of sustainable fashion practice.
Design texts that address the issue of sustainability call for radical overhaul of existing practices and patterns. However, in the practical application of strategies to achieve that, too often existing patterns of fashion practice are reproduced. One compelling element about this space is that while the contextual language speaks of a “complete overhaul” of the way we do things, such as Tony Fry’s “redirection” (2009), in fashion practice, the practical strategies proposed intentionally reproduce or reinvent existing techniques and operations. Sustainable fashion literature adapts a larger discourse of sustainable design into the existing language and practice of fashion design.

Sustainable fashion design seeks to express a commitment to a ‘right way’ of doing something through practice. It constitutes a form of practice that enables designers to express a range of moral concerns through the act of their designing combining creative expression with strategic problem-solving approaches. One design approach is to begin by articulating a problem, and to address it with the design solution. Another approach (and a familiar one within fashion practice) starts with a design

Sustainable Fashion Design

MODELLING SUSTAINABILITY AND SPECIAL OCCASIONWEAR

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brief (detailing market, season, price-point) followed by design proposal. It is entirely possible to consider sustainability according to either of these approaches. Indeed, there exist many useful accounts that begin with an articulation of the essential problem, being the large range of material, social and economic issues caused or encountered by the fashion industry followed by the range of ways in which these problems could be addressed. Implicit in both of these approaches is a technical way, where problem-solving takes a linear and pragmatic perspective. These approaches are very well suited to the commercial context of mass-production where methodical and streamlined design processes are important. However, working at a micro scale, my speculative design practice, Serial Individualities is able to approach sustainability in other ways, and in particular ways that are compatible with the poetic priorities of my making practice. The possibilities this revealed through a practice that teases out tensions between poetic ways of fashion practice and pragmatic approaches to sustainability are discussed later in this chapter in the context of an explanatory model.

I have developed a personal framework with which to consider sustainable fashion practice that is different to the problem-solution or brief-proposal approaches. In my framework, I begin by locating my practice on a contextual level with consideration given to the human motivations to explore the sustainability space. From the contextual, I move towards locating and then deploying my practice with reference to a range of functional methodologies. In this framework, the “problem” being addressed emerges through practice, as a result of what can be done within the selected design context. I frame this as two intellectual spaces; the first is a contextual space, encompassing ways of expressing the motivation behind performing in a certain way, and the second space is a functional version of sustainability, specific binaries,
strategies and methodologies that inform and guide practice. The two operate in a reciprocal manner: the contextual motivates the functional, while the functional articulates the contextual. I propose that sustainable fashion design practice constitutes a form of design practice that explores the moral and human dimensions of practice. The designer seeks to practice in a manner expressive of their whole self, inclusive of their values, skills and interests.

**Contextual Space**

Several viewpoints are discussed here that I find compelling in their expression of a macro role for design both in the articulation of values and beliefs, and as a transformational practice. Victor Papanek speaks of the “social and moral judgement” of the designer, asking “will his design be on the side of the social good or not?” (Papanek 1984, p. 55) Papanek’s questions around whom designers actually design for and whether this encompasses minorities is particularly interesting to consider in relation to my practice of Serial Individualities. The design of individual items worn by people of privilege can certainly be read as contradictory to such an inclusive idea of what a designer should seek to do. Papanek’s model, based on the Finnish medieval word “kymmenykset” or the religious “tithe” (1984, p. 68) is for a designer to spend one tenth of their time engaged in design that is of benefit to others, alongside existing commercial practice.

Alastair Fuad-Luke positions design as a potential form of activism:

Activism is about taking actions to catalyse, encourage or bring about change, in order to elicit social, cultural and/or political transformations. It can also involve transformation of the individual activists (Fuad-Luke 2009, p. 6).
Fuad-Luke’s notion of design activism is interesting for me because it varies from the stereotypical view of activism as a placard-waving, combative or subversive pursuit. I am not opposed to this view: I share the sentiments, however my practice functions differently. My views are expressed in a quiet, gentle and conciliatory manner. As design activists, designers might be interested in either changing the culture of design, or in effecting change in the broader community. Ideas of participatory and co-design are explored and promoted as being useful and beneficial for activist purposes. “Beautiful Strangeness” is the term Fuad-Luke (2009) uses for a definition of beauty that encompasses social and environmental factors rather than just the physical.

Tony Fry’s challenging and transformative notion of “redirection” towards a goal of “sustain-ment” argues that the design professional cannot rely on mere “attitudinal change” in order to address the very serious and immediate environmental problems the world faces. Instead, the designer must be completely remade:

Redirection offers an ontological shift in the mode of being of the actor. The value of what one knows and does may have to be fundamentally altered. So, for instance, a great deal of knowledge that historically has been acquired as the corpus of the discipline underpinning a profession, and the manner of its deployment, could well need to be discarded and replaced in order for any real ability of the ‘remade professional’ to drive affirmative change. By implication this means that the being of professional identity and conduct is radically and structurally changed (Fry 2009, p. 11).

Fuad-Luke also discusses transformation within the context of “design activism”:
Transformational activism – a concept where the activists and subjects of their activism undergo a personal internal transformation as well as expressing it outwardly. This suggests that being an activist is part of a personal developmental and life journey to realize a state of being, as well as a desire to contribute to a greater societal good (2009, p. 20).

That transformational activism articulates my purpose in undertaking this research is something I only discovered through the research, and process of transforming my own practice. Fuad-Luke’s proposition is that transformation, in itself, is a valid goal of design practice. Thus, the object of my reflection becomes my inner being, posing more self-reflective questions than: “What values and beliefs do I wish to express through activism?” Rather, my question is the more reflective one of: “How have I been transformed through the practice of my activism?” And further to that: “How will I embody that transformation through design?”

Such viewpoints are inspiring, if challenging, articulations of the role that design practice might take in addressing questions of sustainability. Moreover, they are all joined in being explicit about a moral role for design practice as an embodiment of socially conscious and environmental values and beliefs.

Functional Space

Production/Consumption

Sustainable fashion practice takes many forms depending on context. One contextual division is between production and consumption. On the production side, in the past few decades, sustainable fashion design has been described and evaluated based on rational and quantitative approaches to sustainability. This is based on Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), which is...
the dominant approach to sustainability in fashion. CSR, as the name suggests, is an approach intended for large corporations, and one that can operate, given the corporate motivation, alongside dominant economic models. Within fashion, this approach is seen at its best deployed by large companies with the means and need to monitor their extensive supply chains.\footnote{Companies such as H&M and Nike are seen as leaders in this regard.}

The other dominant approach to sustainable fashion practice is a consumer focus, either through a focus on behavior change methodologies, and empowered decision-making (Morgan & Birtwistle 2009), or collective conventions (Shove 2003; Shove, Trentmann & Wilk 2009). While some designers might claim to influence behavior change or collective conventions through the design of garments with particular qualities, practitioners can also address consumption through other sorts of campaigns. Several activists encourage behavior change through evocative and accessible writing. Lucy Siegle is a noteworthy practitioner in this regard. In her practice as a journalist for The Guardian newspaper and author of To Die For: Is fashion wearing out the world? (2011), she draws the public’s attention to the ethical and environmental problems behind “fast fashion.” Safia Minney practices in both the production space through her fair trade label People Tree, as well as in the consumer space through her activism and publishing (Minney 2011). Another way of viewing a consumer focus is in framing the wear or “use” of clothing as a design practice in itself, examining patterns and lessons that can be derived from resourceful and innovative ways that people wear clothes (Fletcher 2012).

Whilst I have identified my practice as operating in the production context, I have sought to identify ways within this space that are better suited to my practice of Serial Individualities than the dominant CSR framework. There are also aspects of my practice
that are located within the consumer space and draw on methods that are similar to the practitioners discussed above. These include accessible writing, consumer education, and themes of use. Thus identifying the production/consumption binary is an effective way to identify the means by which I approach both sides.

**Material/Social**

Another distinct binary within sustainable fashion practice is between material and social approaches. On the material side, a discussion of sustainable fashion commonly begins with an analysis of fibres and textiles (see for example; Fletcher 2008; Hoffman 2007; Scaturro 2008). This is understandable when fabric selection is a natural starting point for many fashion designers. Therefore, fibres and textiles are an obvious point at which the sustainable fashion designer might intervene to make changes in their practice. They can seek to mitigate the damaging environmental impact of the two fibres that dominate the global textile market: polyester and cotton, through seeking out alternatives. Materials such as bamboo, organic cotton and lyocell offer alternatives to polyester and conventional cotton.

In the material approach, science and technology can seem to dominate the sustainability debate, where, as Fletcher points out, “for many manufacturers, being innovative means ‘adding’ technology to a problem.” Fletcher cites several concerning ramifications of a view of technology as the primary fix. Firstly, that it overlooks the possibilities of other forms of change, such as behaviour change, also that it potentially sidelines the contribution of non-technologists, such as designers. And furthermore:

Relying on technology to ‘fix’ all our problems can also have the more subtle and insidious effect of reinforcing our tendency to avoid accountability for our choices and behaviour (Fletcher 2008, p. 43).
The social occupies a different sustainable typology. It addresses areas such as behavior change and accountability for choices neglected through the material approach. Associated with forms of fashion practice that might have dematerialised outcomes, it may be directed to the creation of services and artefacts other than garments. The adoption of such strategies by designers represents a less familiar way of doing fashion design practice when contrasted to the adoption of material strategies, which are more familiar (from my perspective). Material strategies involve direct contact with materials and textiles whilst social strategies require direct contact with people. For me, social strategies represent a newer way of approaching sustainability, but also of approaching fashion practice. In thinking through the social, it became apparent that this is what I had been doing for a long time as a designer, albeit intuitively. Meeting with clients. Design presentations. Planning. All these represent socially-based design tasks. The difference, through this research, was my identification of these activities as a part of fashion design practice. This identification was enabled though the location of my research in proximity to the discipline of industrial design within RMIT University’s School of Architecture and Design. Certain streams within industrial design have embraced social design as a form of industrial practice; for example, in service design (Stickdorn & Schneider 2011). Fletcher and Grose (2012) provide an overview of the various roles for fashion designers that embrace this way of working. Designers designing within the social is explored by multidisciplinary design scholars (see for example; Fuad-Luke 2009; Thorpe 2007) who propose several clear methodologies for how designers could work on social projects. In sustainable fashion however, this approach is less developed. It is possible for both social and material approaches to co-exist, but it is valuable at this point in time in sustainable fashion practice to make a distinction between the two as typologically variable.
Instructional Design Methodologies

‘Instructional methodologies’ is a term I have coined to group together and understand a range of sustainable design methodologies. Each approach could be expanded on in much detail, as they are all rich and interesting. Such approaches could be considered as either contextual or functional within the theoretical division established in this section. They contain strong philosophies of how design should be approached, however, within each approach is also a range of methods that can be deployed towards the end goal. I have drawn on aspects from all of these in my practice.

Emotionally Durable Design deals with the idea that product longevity is not only a result of physical durability, but also of psychological function. Emotionally durable design encourages designers to come to terms with these psychological factors and to consider them in tandem with requirements for physical durability. Jonathan Chapman presents a “six point experiential framework” encompassing: Narrative, detachment, surface, attachment, delight, consciousness (2009, p. 33). This is a “theoretical architecture” and also a vocabulary to help focus exploration of design for durability. If these are not taken into account, are designers engaging in “simply the designing of durable waste?” (Chapman 2009, p. 34)

Slow design also considers the relationship between physical and psychological functions of clothing and seeks to balance these through appropriate means of production. Hazel Clark regards slow fashion along three lines of reflection:

The valuing of local resources and distributed economies; transparent production systems with less intermediation between producer and consumer; and sustainable and sensorial
products that have a longer usable life and are more highly valued than typical ‘consumables’ (Clark 2008, p. 429).

Any designer who is questioning, through their work, traditional patterns of consumption or making an effort to encourage increased interaction and a more personal relationship between consumer and garment may be considered an exponent of Slow design. Fletcher (2010) expands on this holistic view with a temporally based account of slow design focused towards matching physical and psychological functions of fashion through employing design approaches that can work on along both slow and fast lines.

**Hactivism** is the term Otto von Busch uses to describe a type of social design that “explores a new designer role for fashion. It is a role that experiments with how fashion can be reverse engineered, hacked, tuned and shared among many participants as a form of social activism” (von Busch 2008, p. 22). Von Busch’s approach involves appropriating the language, popular icons and theory of fashion in creative projects such as co-design, remaking and repair workshops (von Busch 2009) and textual accounts including self-published books (von Busch 2015).

**Deployment of Strategies**

Another way of approaching sustainable design practice is through the deployment of a range of strategies that could be materially or socially-based. Such strategies can operate in tandem with instructional methodologies. They offer a structure for the fashion designer to engage functionally with the contextual space of sustainability (Gwilt 2010, p. 69). A good explanation of this approach can be found in Sandy Black’s *Eco-chic: the Fashion Paradox* (2008) in which she sets out a comprehensive list of strategies particularly well, framing the application of such strategies as the means by which the environmental problems
that the fashion industry faces and contributes to (also described in the book) can be addressed. Examples relevant to this include to recycle, to up-cycle and to apply new technology. Another explanation of this approach is given by Textiles Environment Design (TED) at Chelsea College of the Arts, University of the Arts, London which has developed TED’s Ten, a useful resource for designers articulating the strategies designers can use, and encouraging them to apply as many as possible when designing. The aim of the strategies is explained in this way:

These strategies have emerged out of a need for a toolbox for designers to help them to navigate the complexity of sustainability issue and to offer real ways for designing ‘better.’ While the environmental impacts of our production and consumption system have become increasingly discussed and brought to the fore, and textile/fashion designers have begun to consider their responsibilities as creators of unsustainable products and systems, there have been few tools or frameworks for designers to be pro-active (Textiles Environment Design n.d)

The TED strategies draw on all the approaches mentioned: the producer-consumer focus, they address the material and the social, and in particular, encompass the instructional methodologies discussed in this section, as well as many others. They are incorporated into lists and headings, and generally enable accessible ways to explore and apply ways of doing sustainable fashion.

**Sustainable Fashion is a Community of Practice**

Sustainable fashion design is practiced across a variety of sectors. Within commercial practice, there are many companies incorporating sustainable principles into their business along
corporate social responsibility principles. In the independent designer sector, and in the experimental field, designers are exploring materials and production through a variety of methods, or new models for facilitating relationships between producer, consumer and economy. Many consumers are engaged in how they might make more responsible or conscious purchasing decisions within the existing economic context, or how they might subvert that system in a creative rejection of consumption whilst continuing a love of fashion and clothing.12 Many schools are developing specific sustainable fashion and textiles programs and research centres.13 And within academic publishing, the fast growing body of literature exploring the topic of ethics and sustainability attests to its currency as a model of research and practice. Within this field, there are many texts that make ideas accessible; that articulate the convergence between philosophies, economics, design, and fashion practice (see for example: Black 2012; Fletcher & Grose 2012; Gwilt 2013; Gwilt & Rissanen 2010). This literature gives voice to a feeling about how a certain way of practicing design might be approached. I have delineated between different approaches to sustainable fashion relevant to special occasion design practice, as it is the topic of this research. However, sustainable fashion is in itself a community of practice. It is influenced by commercial, consumer and academic perspectives, which cross-pollinate one another in interesting ways. Within the sustainable fashion ecosystem, both ecological concepts and social innovation are discussed, to present “a broad, pluralistic view of sustainability ideas, issues and opportunities”(Fletcher 2008, p. xii).

**Fashion + Sustainability**

In sustainable fashion practice it is common to delve into the myriad ways fashion is, or has been, practiced in order
to glean methods that could have a useful life in a “virtuous cycle” (Black 2008). For example, both Black (2008) and Gwilt and Rissanen (2010) have used the example of bespoke tailoring and its links to remodeling and luxury to illustrate sustainability potential through personalisation and customisation. Another example of where dialogues of fashion design and sustainability converge is in recycling. Countless fashion designers have adopted recycling as an approach for many reasons over time; often, because of the creative inspiration in an old garment that can serve as inspiration for something new. Martin Margiela (1975 - ) is one designer particularly celebrated for such an approach, something Gill describes as “seamlessness through seams ... ‘traces’ of both history and innovation” (Gill 1998, p. 43). This way is easily transposed into a sustainable approach, where recycling, reuse and upcycling represent material saving measures, methods of dealing with waste, and so on. Fashion and sustainability create a two-way dialogue, whereby approaches and strategies that resonate with established fashion practices gain particular momentum.

I have chosen a pyramid diagram to represent the literature and approaches to sustainable fashion practice, depicting a top down flow from ideology to practice. This compact diagram of philosophies, approaches and strategies has clean demarcations between ideas. However, in reality, I discovered sustainable fashion practice to be a much messier domain. Most importantly, this diagram is not inclusive of fashion itself, which embodies slippery and contradictory notions such as “ingratiation and outrage,” (Martin 1997) and “ambivalence” (Wilson 2003), is a complex and creative materialisation of thematic concerns (Evans 2007; Gill 1998), or, most importantly for the purposes of the research, the definition favoured within my practice, a symbolic meaning determined by collective activity (Blumer 1969; Kawamura 2005).
This research has highlighted that the junction of sustainable design and special occasionwear is messy. In reality, while the pyramid of approaches serves as a starting point to articulate how values and beliefs might be embodied in design practice, to my mind it is too neat, too logical. As fashion, and sustainability, for that matter, are always changing, so too does this pyramid need to be unpicked, examined and remade in the lived experience of my practice.
Values and Beliefs (Papanek 1984)
Redirection (Fry 2009)
Transformational Activism (Fuad-Luke 2009)

MATERIAL / SOCIAL

INSTRUCTIONAL DESIGN METHODOLOGIES
- Hacktivism (von Busch 2008)
- Slow Design (Clark 2008, Fletcher 2010)
- Emotionally Durable Design (Chapman 2005)
- Collaborative Consumption (Botsman 2010)

PRODUCTION / CONSUMPTION
- Upcycling
- Recycling
- Design for Disassembly
- Sharing
- PSS
- Repair
- Plant Dyes

DEPLOYING STRATEGIES
LOCATING PRACTICE
CONTEXTUAL SPACE
FUNCTIONAL SPACE
In Constructive Design Research, the authors identify three spaces in which constructive design research occurs: the lab, field and showroom. Each of these spaces offers particular conditions that can be useful in research through practice. In my practice, I have worked in all three spaces, but of them, the "lab" is a particularly relevant space from which to consider my explorations at the junction of special occasionwear and sustainability. The lab is an ideal space for experimenting with theory – which, in this case, embraces sustainable design strategies, because the real world problems that can cloud design propositions are removed for a time.

Studying things in a laboratory means that something is taken out from its natural environment and brought into a controlled area where it can be subjected to experimentation. Almost anything can be studied in the laboratory: armies, design, chemical reactions, rich interaction, and so forth (Koskinen et al. 2011, p. 55).
It is within the lab that I decided and developed the strategies I would employ in my practice. The controlled nature of the lab enabled me to develop the following hypothesis: "That the occasion dress is overly constructed for its requirements for durability." Crucially, inspiration within this lab came from a variety of sources: the hypothesis developed in response to these sources, and thus the process was in no way neat, linear or methodical. (Koskinen et al. 2011, p. 52)

What to study and what to leave out within the lab is a matter of judgement, and my lab is specifically concerned with the mode of special occasionwear – an excellent genre in which to explore ideas. The special occasion setting as described in the first chapter is one of flux in which what constitutes an occasion and the associated actors within this setting change over time and through cultures. The occasionwear genre - laboriously constructed garments to be worn often only once, is surely scandalous in its wastefulness. But we don’t know the extent of the problem of unsustainable or wasteful special occasion dresses in a quantifiable sense. For instance, a discussion paper titled Sources of textile waste in Australia (Caulfield 2009) gives no indication of how much textile waste is constituted by discarded evening dresses. This is where the framework developed in the previous section based on sustainable fashion literature becomes useful. It acts as a guide in decision-making. Therefore, this lab is one that works on educated assumption to tease out the viability of different methods and approaches. Further testing occurs in the field, in the actual staging of a dress at its occasion.

The following is an account of fully exploiting the possibilities present within this scenario. This is considered along the socio-material framework as detailed in the description of Serial Individualities in chapter two. By this, I mean that in exploring
the sustainability question within special occasionwear, there are both approaches to the materiality of the dress itself, as well as those afforded by the social setting of the occasion. Addressing questions of materiality is one starting point for exploration, however, the occasion dress is also a potent artefact at the convergence of mass media, celebrity and fashion, and as such, exploring potentials within this socially-grounded scenario is another tangent for practice. In such an exploration, several instructional design methodologies inform practice, alongside specific design strategies. However, there is no one approach that succinctly explains a navigable path. In this lab, therefore, many ideas are tested. What became apparent through exploration is that the questions of materiality and the social are very much interlinked, and inform each other owing to the conjoined nature of special occasionwear with its occasion. In this investigation, the question of materiality was approached in a three-layered approach initially entailing broad philosophies, then questions of garment construction and thirdly, the question of fibres and fabric. The social question was divided into two separate methods; one, an explicitly activist approach, the other in terms of facilitation.

**Approaches to Questions of Materiality**

I approached the question of materiality from a guiding methodology, which proceeded to answer questions about specific garment construction strategies, and from there, broached choices about textile selection. The pyramid diagram (Figure 69) represents this decision-making process as one of “honing in” from conceptual idea to technical detail.

**Instructional Methodologies**

One philosophy that helps to understand ways that occasion dresses could be designed in a materially sustainable manner is speed.
Speed as an approach to design involves understanding the way in which a garment will be used, and matching an appropriate rhythm to it. Fletcher uses the term “rhythms of use” (2008, p. 163) to explain that apparel should be designed in a way that is appropriate to its requirements for durability. By ‘durability,’ she refers to both physical and emotional durability. “Making a product last is very different to making a long lasting product” (2008, p. 166). “Finesse” is the term used for artful restraint in the design process – not doing everything it is possible to do, rather, only that which is required. “Physical durability is extended only when it is needed” (p. 168). Therefore, slow is a more appropriate approach for a long-lasting, low-fashion item. Fast is appropriate for a one-off wear special item, and as such, the designer may work with notions of disposability. By understanding the patterns of use of a garment, one might then determine if it should be designed along fast or slow lines. With these considerations in mind, I began to consider that the type of occasion gown under consideration was over-designed and constructed for its required durability. Therefore, matching the physical durability of an occasion dress to its fleeting
Interfacing: Polyester + Fusible (Glue)

Lace Overlay: Nylon/Cotton/Polyester

Outer Layer: Silk

Interfacing: Polyester + Fusible (Glue)

Shapewell: Cotton

Tulle/Netting: Nylon

Hook & Eye: Metal

Beads: Glass

Boning: Polyester

Covered Buttons: Metal and Silk

Lining: Acetate or Polyester

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CHAPTER THREE
requirements for use became the basis of my hypothesis to be tested through material (making) exploration.

Textile and Garment Construction

I considered the product life cycle¹⁴ of an occasion gown of the type commonly produced within the “Armadale System” in order to identify where one might intervene in its design. In its material choice, the problems are numerous as many fabrics make up a typical gown (Figure 70). While one might be inclined to think of this gown only in terms of expensive fibres such as silk, in reality, it consists of a fairly equal proportion of natural and synthetic fibres, when linings and petticoats are accounted for. All of these are problematic, from the resource issues associated with synthetic fibres, to the land management and pesticide issues commonly associated with natural fibres. The sheer volume of fabric used is an issue: a gown might be comprised of metres of cloth, and the large pattern pieces and individual production runs result in sizeable remnants and substantial wastage. In terms of use, the gown is intended to be worn once, so cannot be used again by the wearer, and the fitting is so specific to that wearer that it is difficult to adjust it for another person. All seams are tightly sewn as they must withstand the pressure of a corset-tight fit and the layers are stitched and stuck together in the manner of a tailored jacket, which will make it hard to pull apart for recycling. The worn-once aspect actually means that its impact from a use perspective is low: it will not need frequent washing, which in other apparel categories can account for a significant impact, however, it requires dry-cleaning in dangerous chemicals. At its end of life, recycling will be difficult because of its multiple fibre categories. Re-use is unlikely due to social taboos of another being seen in the same dress and the gown will likely be relegated to an archive box, or back of a wardrobe. Strategies such as using mono-fibre fabrics and

Figure 70.
The various textile compositions in a typical made to measure gown.

¹⁴. The product life cycle as it relates to sustainability involves the cradle to grave phases of material extraction, manufacture, packaging and transport, product use and end of life. Life cycle thinking involves using knowledge derived from Life Cycle Assessment (LCA) in an informed and analytical manner in order to identify the important areas for meaningful intervention. Life cycle thinking can therefore be used as a tool for generating creative projects that re-imagine more sustainable product life cycles. LCA itself is one example of a framework that might be used in the decision-making process, but it returns quantitative answers that overstate the technical. Furthermore, it may be inaccessible to micro-practices owing to its reliance on expensive software and data gathering processes.
construction techniques instead of the complex array of fibres could alleviate many of these issues.

**Fibre and Textile Selection**

The special occasion dress has particular requirements in terms of fabric. At the commencement of this project, I was faced with the question of material choice. In the sustainability framework, typical answers to the question of materiality come in the form of natural or organic fibres. Organic cotton is a popular choice for casual t-shirts and baby’s apparel. On the synthetic side, the use of industrially recycled polyester is well-documented in outdoor and sports apparel. But what is a special occasion fabric? I baulked at the thought of using these textile propositions (organics and industrially recycled) for special occasionwear. An occasionwear fabric must drape and fall around the body; it must be malleable and pliable to be shaped and sculpted. And, as a designer-maker, it must be a pleasure to handle and sew with. I could only fathom using silk.

I considered the ethical and environmental issues related to silk, and what alternatives were available to me. Overall silk is relatively pesticide-free, as toxins will kill the delicate silk worm. However, the process of silk production takes place under difficult circumstances as the silk filament is reeled from its cocoon under hot and steamy conditions, hardly an ideal working environment. In order to achieve the long silk filament, the silkworm must be killed *in situ* before being allowed to emerge from and break its cocoon. *Peace* or *ahimsa* (non-violent) silk is created from fibres collected after the moth has emerged from its cocoon and thus does not demand the death of the insect. Yarn must be spun from fibre as the filament no longer exists. The intact filament is the key attribute that lends much of the properties listed above to silk. So peace silk becomes a certain type of ‘worthy,’ and in its
own way, a beautiful fabric. However, it is not a replacement for conventionally cultivated silk. The death of the insect is opposed by some on humanitarian grounds, but I was influenced by the opinion of a silk enthusiast that I found online (Cook n.d.) to concur that killing the moth should not prove problematic to those unopposed to the killing of animals in principle.

With all these things in mind, and access to new textile technology denied by virtue of my position as a small designer maker, I turned to recycling as a strategy. It was the means of acquiring the fabric I so wished to work with in a manner I deemed sustainably and logistically satisfactory. The upcycling of silk remnants emerged as the only way possible to source sustainable materials. Additionally, a certain typology exists of a special occasion garment that demands certain fabric selections be made. These can be subverted, as in the case of designers who make wedding dresses from paper tissue or sculpture from glass, but this material selection exists in a context of provocation and demonstration of design alternatives. In the context of bodily worn and real-life performed fashion, a certain typology of textiles is demanded.

Approaches to Socially Grounded Scenarios

I approached the socially-grounded scenario for special occasionwear from two different perspectives: one explored an explicitly activist mindset, while the other visited a more subtle view of design as a process of facilitation (Figure 71).

Explicitly Activist Framework for Special Occasions

One potential the socially-grounded scenario presents is that the dress function as a ‘billboard’ of sorts, on which to project an idea. Assuming that material re-design is of negligible impact because of the low volume of one-off garments produced, the dress as
an artefact only fully serves its potential when a mass audience understands that it has been designed in a sustainable way. Therefore, the staging of the well-designed dress at its occasion is positioned as a type of activism. Several examples of the billboard approach have influenced me. Gary Harvey is an example of a designer who has done this through the creation of a series of dresses couture inspired that use multiples of waste or surplus materials to draw attention to such waste. The gowns are attractively photographed in an editorial style and the images are widely distributed to illustrate the deployment of sustainability in fashion. Harvey produces his one-off ‘recycled icons’ in the same manner as couture pieces. These have become a commentary on contemporary fashion and to show that recycled can be beautiful and fun. For Harvey, fashion is about image, drama, excitement and transformation, about challenging perceptions with the unexpected (Black 2008, p. 204).

Livia Firth has also used the staging of the red carpet as an opportunity to create a project around sustainability, wearing

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Figure 71. Approaches to socially grounded scenarios.
eco-fashion to red carpet events she attends with her husband, actor Colin Firth and documenting this in a blog for Vogue.co.uk (Firth 2011). Similarly, in 2009, activist and actress Suzy Amis-Cameron created the annual “Red Carpet Green Dress” (Amis Cameron 2011) competition in which designers submitted a design for a sustainable gown for the Oscars, with the winning design being created and worn to that year’s Academy Awards. In 2012, I submitted an entry to this competition (Figure 72). In all of these examples, the ideas being communicated by the dress relate specifically to materials: unconsidered consumption of materials in Harvey’s case, showcasing the beauty of new fabric technologies or natural techniques in Firth’s, and creating a dress employing the cradle-to-cradle methodology (McDonough & Braungart 2002) in Amis-Cameron’s project. However, the staging of the dresses at particular occasions represents a socially-based strategy. One key factor in this staging includes the connections of the figurehead within the fashion and celebrity worlds. The billboard approach is therefore not about being subversive, rather about employing the three qualities of *porosity*; conviviality, humour and adding encounters.

Design as Facilitation

The billboard opportunity is one way of exploiting the agency of the special occasion genre. There are others. The socially-grounded scenario also poses opportunities for highlighting the *social relations* between wearers of special occasionwear as a scenario. ‘Social relations’ refers to the way that people interact in the wearing of garments. How can the use of special occasionwear itself be designed? This question is challenging for fashion designers because it doesn’t necessarily require the creation of a new garment, or the investment of a traditionally trained designer. Which raises questions about what designers might actually do in this case. As a facilitator, the designer mediates between
production and consumption. The challenge as a fashion designer is to avoid the tendency to “dictate” an idealised form of consumption to an audience, but rather to act in a reciprocal and porous way to facilitate alternative relations with the use of clothing.

The manner in which special occasionwear is worn once presents opportunities for ways that involve sharing of dresses. Sharing provides a framework around which use can be facilitated by designers. Sharing is a pragmatic response to the questions of one-off wear, disposability, and the social taboo of being seen in the same dress twice. Sharing is also a response that draws primarily on two approaches that have been adopted within sustainable design. On the one hand, a pragmatic approach such as Product Service Systems in which design of a service connected to an artifact aims to deliver a measurable level of dematerialisation over design of a product alone (Manzini, Vezzoli & Clark 2001; Mont 2002). And on the other hand, an approach such as collaborative consumption that focuses on the ways in which network technologies are being used to facilitate alternative methods of consumption such as bartering, renting and swapping. Dematerialisation is highlighted as a benefit alongside increased social interaction among participants (Botsman & Rogers 2010).

The scenario envisaged below by Fletcher as part of a project titled “Lifetimes” is another example of the amplification of fashion concepts that have potential within sustainable practice:

In contrast to the ultra-disposable party top, the one-night wonder is also the ultra covetable vintage piece and is perfect to rent, as it’s desired for reasons of ‘fashion’ and ‘occasion’ and not for sentimental value. Just as celebrities borrow designer gowns or jewellery for film premiers, ‘ordinary’ people rent a desired garment for a specific time. (Fletcher 2008, p. 176).
Exploration Within the Lab

The point of these examinations is to give an account of how I considered the sustainability approaches and strategies in relation to my practice in special occasionwear. The approach to sustainability was one of working between sustainability and fashion. As this research has exposed, sustainable design strategies are deployed in context dependent manners. Strategies are co-opted to meet the priorities and requirements of the design context in which the designer practices. The result is that a practice will employ a unique configuration of material and socially based strategies (Figure 73). This process is one of navigating a tension space between elements of the poetic and pragmatic, material and social. Therefore, the outcomes and conclusions derived from the application of sustainability strategies to special occasionwear are not solutions to the problem of sustainability; rather, they are observations that reveal as much about the nature of fashion and practicing as a designer as they do an attempt to transform practice to a more responsible way of functioning.
In the space of special occasionwear, I did not have tangible information or data of a situation to be improved; rather, I worked in a speculative manner, brainstormed and interrogated the special occasion genre through my own prior and tacit knowledge of material elements of construction and textiles. I thought about what things could be modified, and what had to remain as the status quo. In the staging of the dresses, much changed. This staging and its associated interactions meant that many things had to be transformed. The ideal dress can be made, but if that idealism means it cannot be worn in a staging, then what is its inherent worth? As mentioned at the outset of the chapter, special occasionwear is a fertile place in which to experiment because by its very nature, to be fully realised it needs to be staged at an occasion. By staging at an occasion, the material artefact itself becomes a social entity. This social situation thus became a space that affected and changed the material artefact, but that also became a sustainability staging ground and a sustainability strategy in itself. The socially-grounded situation is problematic because it both thwarts design ideas and the conceptual perfection inherent in the first idea, and is opportunistic – because it informs, and develops.

The lab as a metaphorical research space is one readily available to the special occasion micro-practitioner. It requires no elaborate set-up, merely the simple technology of needle and thread. It is an area where a spontaneous approach to design – that of literally, taking up scissors and cutting into cloth, intersects with theory in the formation of a design hypothesis.

Figure 74.
Inspiration for a textile influenced model.
Reflection on my practice lead to model creation as both explanatory and reflective method. Through the “Model of Serial Individualities,” I have been able to tease out elements of significance that have impacted on each project. Each project is represented by a new iteration of the model. Through these iterations, I am able to convey the functioning and context of each project, and to graphically represent the role of actors within my practice such as the staging, making, artefact, and theory.

**The Model of Serial Individualities**

**Representation, Reflection and Explanation through Modelling**

A model is a *representation* or *abstraction* of an object or situation. It represents interrelationships between phenomena, data and theory. Models can describe a process, for example, a design methodology, and this might take a linear step-by-step account, or represent process in more abstract terms. Shafique and Mahmood (2010) suggest that evaluation of the completeness of a model should be based on its representation of reality. The visual design of the model can vary widely and encompass “a scale model, a mathematical model, a sketch, a segment of computer code, an analogy, a working device, or many other things” (Bissell & Dillon 2012, p. v).
Alongside a representation, a model can be considered a research method in itself. According to Shafique and Mahmood this is because it “assists researchers, investigators and scientists in relating more accurately to reality; it also aids them to describe, predict, test or understand complex systems or events” (2010). Models can be reflective tools. Downton identifies that:

… the act of modeling is a creative and explorative process. It facilitates learning. Exploration of the model’s qualities and an evaluation of the theory of its connection to the thing modeled is a means of learning about the thing modeled, the field of inquiry, and also about the processes of making appropriate models (2003, p. 86).

Within the field of social work, for example, reflection on practice is used in building an ongoing model of practice that embodies theoretical perspectives but also the worker’s own beliefs and experiences (Fook 2002).

Models have a role in epistemology. They can describe the relationship between research and its use within society (for example, policy, legislation, or enterprise), described by Weiss (1979) as “research utilization.” Derman (2011) contrasts models with theories, arguing that in the social sciences, and economics in particular, one can only make models, metaphors or analogies, not theories, owing to the impossibility of predicting the complexity of human behavior. John Monk, charting the nineteenth century history and philosophy of mathematical models, points to the role of models as tools within knowledge creation: in their function as tools of representation and ways of thinking about reality, models play a role in our understanding and therefore, knowledge of a phenomenon. Models as epistemological tools are linked to their explanatory function. As a representation of
reality framed in light of the context of that situation, “models as part of our descriptive practices, therefore, make a contribution to the construction of reality” (Monk 2012, p. 2). Models can be “also vehicles for spreading knowledge” (Downton 2003, p. 86) in the way in which they ‘stand in’ for the entity being described.

I constructed a model in my PhD as an explanatory tool so that I might describe and explain the knowledge generated through my practice. As an example of constructive design research, modeling is a method of extracting further meaning from the material prototypes. The model has enabled me to evaluate the relationship between theory and practice. The diagram presented at the beginning of this chapter represents theory in a deductive, top down manner, where theory determines decisions about choice of strategy. However, while theory played an important role in my decision-making process, I suspected that tacit knowledge, expressed through practice was also at play in that process. In addition, the context of special occasionwear, as a particular type of fashion practice posed an additional problem in defining exactly what was occurring in my practice. Therefore, I sought to represent, explain and reflect on the heterogeneous ecosystem of my practice and tease out the tensions between material and social, sustainability and special occasionwear, technical and poetic, making and staging.

Composition of the Model

Monk contends that models are discourse specific, constructed from the tools, instruments and measurements of the discipline in question, and furthermore, according to the “techniques and conventions for producing explanations that are acceptable within that discourse or community of practice” (2012, p. 26). In developing the final model design, I experimented with several model styles. For example, I tried a linear path model that represented the
process for each project, and then revised it into a circular format to suggest that one project informs the next. A linear diagram however, can only be read in one direction. Downton points to a creative turn in modelling, that to be effective, my model should aesthetically represent my practice in that: “The patterned internal relations in a model and those of its referent must share a pattern of patterns – a model of both” (2003, p. 86). Furthermore, “any model intended as ecosystemic, for example, must not embody boundaries that are incompatible with those ecosystemic intentions” (2003, p. 86). As the ecosystem of my practice is characterised by porosity, the model must therefore be demonstrative of this openness. I turned to the materials from my own practice, specifically, the organza triangles of one dress and used their sheer and overlapping character as a metaphor in the construction of a collage-based model with more ambiguity (Figure 76). This model was developed through paper collage with the intention that iterations would be recreated in textile form. A textile rendering adds a third dimension to the model in that its tactility and sheer-ness is representative of design processes. The model becomes a fluid thing, it can change, and as it is made from the material of the projects themselves, its creation is an outcome in itself.

Project Initiation
The first three elements at the top left of the model represent the project initiation. The line is the stage (Figure 76:1), while the triangle (Figure 76:2) represents the functional sustainable design strategies to be deployed. The central point (Figure 76:3) is a proposition & occasion, the intent or the mission of the project, and is always a simple statement.

Project Staging
At the bottom right of the model, the three triangles depict three distinct phases of the project’s execution. This execution unfolds in three stages.
The first is the Invitation (Figure 76:I), representative of a range of interactions and artefacts that take place before a garment is even made. Examples of such interactions include written and verbal contact with wearers and others who will have involvement in a project. Examples of artefacts through which this interaction is facilitated include e-mails, press releases, design boards and sketches, brochures and social media content such as tweets or Facebook invitations.

The central triangle is the Making (Figure 76:M) – the envisaging and sewing of the dress. This phase is probably the most easily understood as design activity, constituting material making of artefacts. In this model, the making itself is inseparable from the design. Some fashion design practices, particularly within the mass production context make clear distinctions between design and production, however in the Serial Individualities context making and designing are interlinked because as the designer, I perform both roles, and in performing both roles, have developed a designer-maker method whereby, like the craftsman, the two are conjoined.

The third triangle is the Performance (Figure 76:P), the wearing of the dress at the occasion as well as the activities undertaken to amplify this wearing. The performance, for me is in the staging of special occasionwear. The wearing of the dress at the occasion is considered ‘performance’ as it occurs within a staged setting, such as the red carpet, or the front row. The activities to amplify this performance might ordinarily be undertaken by other design professionals, such as publicists. But again, within the context of Serial Individualities, I, as the designer, undertake this activity and as such, it is drawn into the design practice.

These three stages can overlap or not depending on the project. Just as the silk filament is woven into textiles of varying opacity,
THE MODEL OF SERIAL INDIVIDUALITIES: TEMPLATE

PROJECT INITIATION
1. Stage
2. Design Strategies
3. Proposition & Occasion

PROJECT STAGING
1. Invitation
2. Making
3. Performance

THEORETICAL BASE
A. Functional
B. Contextual and Relational

OUTCOMES
1. Garment (Dress)
2. Cultural Effects
drape and lustre, so too can this model take forms represented by the qualities of various silk fabrics. The interconnected nature of the triangles, that they can lay over and influence each other is a feature of this model, and allows for a representation of the design process that is useful where the stages need to be seen as separate entities, but also need to overlap, and there is a haziness where one stage finishes and one begins. A linear project planning process cannot depict this ambiguity.

Outcomes
Emanating from the project execution triangles are Outcomes. The making triangle produces a dress as outcome (Figure 76:4), an extension of the making triangle. The dress is the primary, most obvious and easily definable outcome of the practice.

However, there are other outcomes that are more intangible yet very interesting. From the Performance emanate lines that represent effects (Law 1992)(Figure 76:5). These can take material and non-material form. Noting, documenting and reflecting on these effects through mapping, blogging and writing is the method through which the realisations and conclusions within the practice have been reached.

Theoretical Base
To the top right are an A and B (Figure 76:A&B). This is the theoretical base of the projects. A, in the beginning of the project is functional theory, relating to sustainable design strategies and functional methodologies as well as an historical review, while B is contextual representing relational theory and informs how I execute, but also make sense of and reflect on the projects.
### Model Iteration for the Black Dress

#### Project Initiation
1. **Stage**
   - [Fashion Exhibition & Project](#)
2. **Design Strategies**
   - [Upcycling and Sharing](#)
3. **Proposition & Occasion**
   - [Make a Black Dress for “Spirit of the Black Dress”](#)

#### Project Staging
1. **Making**
2. **Performance**

#### Theoretical Base
1. **Functional**
   - [Design Strategies and Sustainable Fashion](#)
2. **Contextual and Relational**

#### Outcomes
1. **Garment**
   - [Black Dress](#)
2. **Cultural Effects**
   - [Surprise at Garment Interpretation](#)
Iterations

Three iterations of the model are discussed below:

Black Dress

The stage is a fashion exhibition and project and the particular occasion is another fashion project called “Spirit of the Black Dress” while the proposition is to “make a black dress.” This model varies from the template in the initiation phase in that there are two forms of strategies being employed: material strategies of upcycling, and social strategies of sharing and re-use. On the Execution side, there are two triangles instead of three. The invitation stage was managed by others, so does not form part of my practice during this first project. The functional theoretical base represents a larger part of the model, as this was a stage in which I was absorbing substantial information about how one might “do” sustainability. I was reading information on design strategies, and sustainable fashion. The review of literature at the beginning of this chapter took shape at this point. I felt a novice in the area of sustainable fashion, and approached it as if there must be a “right way” to do it, expecting through functional literature to find this.

Logies Dress

For Zoe’s Logies dress, the stage was “The Red Carpet.” The strategies were all materially based - upcycling remnants, dyeing using plants. Despite the diversity of strategies employed in this project, they are represented by one triangle. The reason for this is that material strategies all occupy a certain typology of sustainable fashion practice. Material strategies can be applied to a way of doing fashion practice typified by creation of an artifact. The proposition was “dress and actress for the Logies.”
MODEL ITERATION FOR THE LOGIES DRESS

PROJECT INITIATION
1 Stage (The Red Carpet)
2 Design Strategies (Upcycling and Plant Dyes, both Materially-Based)
3 Proposition & Occasion (Dress an Actress for the Logies)

PROJECT STAGING
1 Invitation (Brochure, Coffee Meetings, Design Sketches)
2 Making (Made-to-measure)
3 Performance (The Red Carpet TV Broadcast, Interviews, Press Release)

THEORETICAL BASE
A Functional
B Contextual and Relational (Fashion as a Network, Cultural Intermediaries, Collective Selection)

OUTCOMES
1 Garment (Zoe’s Dress)
2 Cultural Effects (Porosity within Made-to-Measure Process)
Project execution - The Logies project was the point in the research where I realised the design process as involving three interconnected but clearly delineated stages. They occurred one after another, in an opaque manner which mirrors the aesthetics of the dress itself, where the pieces were joined meticulously and shaped into even triangles. The model takes a form that aesthetically symbolises the project. At the time of this project, the contextual and relational theory began to open up for me. My understanding of fashion began to form as being constructed of a series of interactions between taste-determining intermediaries, based on Blumer’s theory of collective selection, and Kawamura’s study into Japanese designers within the Paris fashion system. The Invitation in this project constituted the brochure passed to Donna and the coffee meetings. It also constituted the first meeting with Rachel and Zoe, the initial design boards with fabric swatches and rough sketches. And finally, the invitation was the pdf of four dress designs e-mailed early one morning after an ‘all-nighter’ spent sketching. These sketches should be part of the Making, and the final sketch is, but up until I received a positive response to these sketches, I felt the project remained unknown.

The final sketch continued as an artefact into the Making stage, therefore this deliberation as to what phase it belongs to manifests the beginnings of the realisation that these phases are not methodical but interrelated. As a result, one of the artefacts from this project was the map of actors within the Logies red carpet ecosystem, reproduced in chapter one. That map was created initially as an afterthought, in a reflective state, and to communicate what I had experienced. It is an artefact of my practice at that particular mid-point in the research although the idea that an outcome of a design practice could be a stakeholder map was a new concept to me.
MODEL ITERATION FOR THE FRONT ROW PROJECT

PROJECT INITIATION
1 Stage (The Fashion Festival)
2 Design Strategies (Upcycling & Plant Dyes, Sharing & PSS)
3 Proposition & Occasion (Dress the Front Row at the Melbourne Fashion Festival)

PROJECT STAGING
I Invitation (Press Release, Postcards, Festival Program)
M Making (Including Alteration & Transformation)
P Performance (Wearing to Events, Photographing, Blogging)

THEORETICAL BASE
A Functional (Sharing & PSS)
B Contextual and Relational

OUTCOMES
1 Garment (Small Collection of Dresses)
5 Cultural Effects (Arriving Early, Eco-chat, Taking (A)Part)
Of all of the projects, this one had the most resounding impact in the Performance phase. This is represented by the deep tone and extended form of the triangle. The performance of this project was executed in the popular mass media form of a television broadcast, seen by a broad cross-section of the community. The statistics for site hits on my blog was another way that the impact of this performance was evidenced. I arranged for a press release to be written for the project through the RMIT University publicist, who distributed it to various media outlets where it yielded several media interviews (Appendix A). As with the distinction between the invitation and making phases, which entailed a marker of reasonable clarity between the two, this phase shift also involved a distinct point at which the dress was completed and handed over to be worn. In addition, the activities such as the press release that led to media interviews and the subsequent amplification of the project were generated entirely within this phase of the project.

The Front Row
The final iteration produced is for The Front Row Project. While the Logies Dress was the most intense project in terms of the performance stage, seen by its deep tone, because it involved celebrity and popular culture to such an extent, for me the Front Row Project was the most creative and fulfilling. The Occasion is “The Melbourne Fashion Festival” and the Proposition is “Dress the Front Row”.

There are two sustainability propositions; material strategies around upcycling and plant dyes, and a social proposition around sharing or product service systems, which in this case goes on to be realised in the performance of the project, whereas in the Black Dress, sharing was designed in a material form as a possibility through multifit, but never actually enacted. In this iteration, the invitation informs a greater part of the project.
I took an active part in creating press releases and paraphernalia that went on to be adopted by others in the performance of the dresses. In some cases, the press release was used verbatim whilst in others, the spirit was interpreted. As outcomes, it was in this project that the cultural effects really took shape as interesting outcomes in their own right. There were a number of observations about the way in which the wearers interacted with, participated in, and shared the dresses that feed back to inform how the strategy of sharing can be deployed with the practice of serial individualities and within fashion practice for further iterations.

Functional and Contextual Theory
The functional theory component contained a bulk of reading on product service systems and sharing methodologies. The contextual theory built on the understandings of fashion as a system that were developed during the Logies Dress, and specific examples to understand the operation of fashion as collective activity such as Entwistle and Rocamora’s (Entwistle & Rocamora 2006) study of London Fashion Week were incorporated at this point. The other point of significance about this project was that the design of the physical artefacts was completed without a specifically named client. A series of dresses were made instead of one individual dress. The press release was written and distributed as part of the invitation, rather than as part of the performance as it was in The Logies Dress scenario. The map of stakeholder interactions could be considered a development on the ecosystem map created after the Logies project, but this one is more ambitious in scale. Importantly, it was part of the project itself: crafted as the dresses were, in the atelier using scissors, paper, pins and thread.
A model, as a representation of a situation, encompasses theoretical, contextual and practical information; is created through iterative reflection on action with the tools, from the materials, and according to the measures of the relevant discourse. On reflection, it is the process of mapping, from the Logies stakeholder map to the Front Row interactions map that led to the model of Serial Individualities discussed within this chapter. Both mapping and modelling are processes of collaging and layering theory with material practice, of stitching together material and social aspects of practice. As I use the model for explanation, I notice, reflect and learn through the repetition of telling and re-telling each project. The model, helps me to visualise my own practice, and therefore more clearly articulate what it is I have done. This model, as a reflective tool, has facilitated a great degree of clarity on a personal level, as to what this practice is.
Poetics and Pragmatics: Discussion of the Model

Poetics and Pragmatics is a device to describe the relationship between my making practice of special occasionwear, and sustainability. It refers to a way of working between the technically-focused language of sustainability and the creative and intuitive approaches of fashion design. Quantitative, rational and systematic approaches to sustainability are described as the pragmatics of sustainable fashion design, while the immersive and sensory priorities within my practice of Serial Individualities are described as the poetics of sustainable fashion design. The strategies of upcycling, dyeing, handstitching and design for sharing have thus far been described as the obvious strategies of my sustainable fashion practice. However, far from being conceptually resolved, two opposing yet complementary discourses are occurring within this practice. Poetic and pragmatic elements are apparent throughout the model of Serial Individualities. The model becomes a useful tool for reflection though teasing out the places where these dynamics are overlaid or in tension. The model is a device from which to describe and evaluate sustainable fashion practice with the goal of expanding the ways in which fashion design can be understood as contributing to sustainability.
Immersive and Sensory Poetics

Throughout this document, I have used both poetic and pragmatic discourses to describe my practice. The second chapter examining making practices, described my practice in largely poetic terms. I used Peter Dormer’s accounts of the knowledge and meaning generated through the practice of craft to describe a type of immersive poetics. In immersive poetics, hand and mind are linked in the deployment of the maker’s tacit knowledge; knowledge through making, which cannot be theorised: it must be experienced in order to be learnt. Time spent in work done well is engrossing and immersive. Poetics is also a sensory pursuit whereby design principles such as form, colour and line are used to evoke thematic and aesthetic connotations, perhaps of historical periods that hold a particular idealism.

Technical and Social Pragmatics

Likewise, I understand pragmatics in two senses. The exploration of special occasionwear within a lab environment discussed earlier in this chapter is a pragmatic discourse. It is a technical type of pragmatism derived from the functional theory and strategies used to embody sustainable design principles within my practice. While my use of technical theory has been affected in a poetic manner, in other scenarios, pragmatic sustainability discourse takes the form of formal codes of conduct or certifications. In chapter one, I detailed another type of pragmatics - a social one. In social pragmatics, relations with stakeholders are enacted in convivial terms in order that projects are accomplished to the satisfaction of all.

Pragmatism, in the context of design research can be a very useful concept; for example, the application of functional...
strategies within a lab approach to special occasionwear was a productive way to explore sustainability within my practice. A problem arises, though, when the pragmatic, particularly the technical, is overstated. An example of overstating the technical sustainability elements of special occasionwear would be attempting to measure in precise numbers the fabric wastage of made-to-measure designers and the fabric savings presented through the strategy of upcycling when this figure is unfeasible to calculate in the context of Serial Individualities, and is also negligible in relation to overall textile wastage. Jay Lemke’s work in discourse analysis as it relates to scientific communication, positions technical discourse as a language communicable among a knowledgeable group that establishes theories and rules of operation:

In its own terms, technical discourse minimizes its use of the interpersonal, exchange, and dialogical resources of language because it claims to be a value-neutral, objective reportage of the facts. It claims to present facts, speaking for themselves, and not merely the inferences and judgments of researchers. Its general conclusions are meant to be universal, within the limits set for the subject (Lemke 1990).

Technical discourse refers to the language used to describe discipline-specific tasks and operations. It functions as a specific tool amongst those familiar with an area of specialisation. The focus of technical discourse is upon its claim to “an objective reportage of the facts” (Lemke 1995, p. 61). In communicating my practice, technical language, in the form of design strategies of upcycling, or design for disassembly, is presented factually as explanation of the sustainability of the design practice. Technical discourse is therefore appropriate for evaluating quantitative scientific impacts of sustainable practice among a technically
fluent cohort, but it is not a universally applicable approach to sustainable fashion practice. Sustainable fashion practice should ideally be an evolving language however the consequences, if seen only in terms of a technical discourse, are that it becomes limited in scope:

In the wider social context, discourse types that rely heavily on such features divide the world of potential readers into initiates and the uninitiated to a much greater degree than do other kinds of texts (Lemke 1990).

As well as making a greater claim to factual accuracy than other types of discourses, the pragmatic technical discourse can be overstated because it is the prevailing approach to the dominant mass production fashion context. In this context, measurable sustainability approaches such as Life Cycle Analysis (LCA) certifications (organic, fair trade) and materials (renewable, natural or recycled fibres) are appropriate and can be effectively executed. These are technical elements, but they do not describe the full scope of sustainable fashion; nor do they account for the practices existent within sustainability and fashion that have emotional or qualitative bases.

**Modelling Poetics and Pragmatics**

In identifying two different discourses operating in fashion design for sustainability, the poetic discourse at first appears at odds with established understandings of fashion design for sustainability. This is because discussion of sustainable fashion practice tends towards too keen a focus upon technical discourse. This is understandable as one is easily lured to making a logical explanation of a situation as offered by a pragmatic reasoning. As such, the pragmatic impulse in sustainable fashion practice
tends towards favouring a technical and logical explanation of the sustainable elements in any given design. But in doing so, the design process is distorted. In my sustainable fashion practice, I navigate between poetics and pragmatics, and the model helps demonstrate how this occurs. For example, in the project execution phase, the overlapping triangles place the immersive poetic approach of making next to, and sometimes overlapping, the largely socially pragmatic design stage of the performance (Figure 83). Another example is the way the model pivots/reflects the technically pragmatic strategies at the central point of the occasion proposition, and from that spawns a variety of poetic and pragmatic approaches to design, as well as an artefact that also embodies both poetic and pragmatic values (Figure 84).

In the model, neither poetic nor pragmatic discourses are privileged. Sometimes though, the decision-making is made out of sheer pragmatism itself because when designing a made-to-measure special occasion dress, there are only certain sustainability strategies that can be employed. For example, upcycling of fabric remnants emerged as the sole way that materials could be sourced for the creation of these garments, given the knowledge, skills and predilections of this designer. Other strategies for the selection of materials, such as the application of new technology in terms of high tech synthetics, or the selection of organic fibres were ruled out as options because the properties of these fabrics were unsuitable to create the aesthetic the designer sought. Therefore, strategies are selected based on both poetic and pragmatic criteria that includes appropriateness and effectiveness to the nominated occasion, but also skill and pleasure in the act of execution. The decision-making is also a means of simply doing the things available to me as well as the things that I can do given my prior and tacit knowledge.
I Invitation (Socially Pragmatic)
M Making (Immersively Poetic)
P Performance (Socially Pragmatic)

2 Design Strategies (Technically Pragmatic)
3 Proposition & Occasion (Poetic & Pragmatic Outcomes Derived From Design Strategies)
Tension Spaces

Negotiating poetics and pragmatics also involves working in a tension space. Considering tension as a space provides a framework for seeing multiple agendas. Tension is not a combative word; rather, it is a gentle and productive actor that gives form to things and it takes social, material and communicative forms. The Front Row Project is the best example of where this tension space was not only encountered, but also embraced and actively worked into the practice. In addition, the use of the stakeholder map helped me to effectively capture and explore the effects generated during the project. The artefact of “eco-chat” described in chapter one is one example of the deployment of technical discourse within the practice. Technical words such as “upcycling” are used to describe the sustainability of the practice. Yet, when employed in the hands, or keyboard, of a fashion blogger, they become part of a lexicon about fashion; a poetic discourse, and a considered theory with a range of meanings, and thus the inherent complexity is nominalised. Paradoxically, the tension between the full range of pragmatic meanings and complexities I wish to convey through my work, and the poetically simple yet beautiful outcome is something I have sought to cultivate through practice at the same time as it troubles me on a more personal level.

However, the most interesting tension revealed to me through the reflective process of modeling, is that between what I believe my practice to be and what it really is. The model demonstrates the role of sustainability theory within my practice, and notably, while it is personally essential to me that I maintain a practice that deals with a moral dimension, in actual fact, that does not occupy a large part of my designing. As Ilpo Koskinen et
al., authors of Constructive Design Research (2011) point out, for the most part, my time is occupied elsewhere, in design:

This is where there is tension... research prototypes are not pure expressions of theory; they also embody design values. The more they do, the more difficult it becomes to say with confidence that the theory that inspired design actually works. The secret of success, quite simply, may be design. This is a catch-22. On the one hand, the more seriously researchers take design, the more difficult it becomes to draw unambiguous theoretical conclusions. On the other hand, when the theoretical frame and the aims of the study guide prototyping, a good amount of design relevance is sacrificed. Ultimately, the way in which prototyping is done is a matter of the researcher’s personal criteria for quality and taste. Most design researchers think design quality is more important than theoretical purity, but opinions differ (p. 62).

John Law’s perspective indicates to me that the process of teasing out tensions is where the designer locates their unique agency:

But, or so I firmly believe, the real chance to make differences lies elsewhere. It lies in the irreducible. In the oxymoronic. In the topologically discontinuous. In that which is heterogeneous. It lies in a modest willingness to live, to know, and to practice in the complexities of tension (Law 1999, p. 12).

My practice in special occasionwear, as indicated through the reflective activity of modeling, is one that embraces tensions; that deliberately pieces them over one another like fragments of sheer organza, building depth and complexity with each realisation. Conversely, this complexity locates special occasionwear as a lively, contemporary, and where the intention exists, a moral genre of fashion practice.
Application of the Model

I have used the model as an explanatory and reflective tool; firstly, to describe variations in each project, and secondly, to tease out tensions between Poetics and Pragmatics. But the model could be applied in other ways. In my practice, it is possible for this model to take several forms through altering its components. While the broader design, fashion or sustainability communities interested in the junction between sustainability and fashion practice could also apply and adapt it for their purposes.

Personal Practice

One example of the application of the model within my practice occurred recently, when I was asked to give a talk about my practice to a group of students at another fashion school in Melbourne who had embarked on a project of upcycling unsold wedding dresses. I have given several presentations of this nature, but sometimes I find myself becoming engrossed in a detail of a project, and struggling to convey the links between the various aspects of my practice. On this occasion, I showed images of my work on a projector, but did not present the model.
Instead, I held it in my mind as I spoke. When I felt I was drifting off topic, I referred back to it and I was able to draw the elements I wished to speak about together. It is logical that the model, a representation of my practice, made from the materials of my practice and in a form matching my practice, is also able to guide my thought processes as I give an account of my practice. I do not need to memorise it by rote: it sits comfortably in my mind and I can recall it when I need to.

Sustainable fashion methodologies are expanding quickly, and the model is flexible to allow for this expansion. The observations that have arisen through each project can guide the selection and formation of new strategies that resonate with my fashion practice. For example, the artefact of “eco-chat” observed during The Front Row has caused me to wonder if the use of social media to participate in fashion can be shaped into a project that applies a strategy such as “harness new technology” (Black 2008, p. 47). At the time of The Front Row project in 2012, I was reliant on others to do the sharing, as I was yet to make forays myself into social media platforms such as Instagram and Twitter. Just three years later I am reasonably conversant with these platforms and wonder if I could design garments and associated services where the provision for sharing through social media is of my own designing. It might be possible to encourage further dematerialization within such a service owing to increased sharing of the digital image.

**Broader Practice Environment**

During the course of my research, I taught a fashion studies elective to a multidisciplinary group of students from the RMIT School of Architecture & Design. I asked the students to analyse an artefact related to their discipline, informed by the framework
that has gone on to be depicted in the Serial Individualities model. For example, they learnt about and used the production of culture contextual theory that I use in my own practice. They also speculated on the role of invitation and performance activities that occurred alongside the artefacts. Topics of this speculation were diverse, and included eyewear, ageing, the social construction of the colour green in landscape architecture, and handmade jewellery. Though the topics chosen were speculative examples, the students could as easily have reflected on and explained the actual artefacts of their own design practices using the ‘Serial’ model. Such reflection could also be applied not only by students, but by other professionals and practitioners, with particular reference to those previously identified as my “communities of practice.”

It is possible to view any number of artefacts or phenomena as constructions of fashion practice. Application of a model of fashion practice is relevant to those outside fashion because fashion is a pervasive trope. As Gilles Lipovetsky states:

The dominant feature of our societies [is] the extension of the fashion form to spheres that once lay beyond its purview, the advent of a society restructured from top to bottom by the attractive and the ephemeral - by the very logic of fashion (1994, p. 5).

From a sustainability point of view, the proliferation of “fashion thinking” (Nixon & Blakley 2012) has serious ramifications, particularly in increased production and consumption of consumer goods. It is valuable for all sorts of professions to be able to evaluate and critique the function of fashion within their field - to be as Otto von Busch terms “Fashion-able” (2008); to be able to critically work at the junction of sustainability and fashion practice.
Chapter Conclusion

The junction of sustainable design and special occasionwear is messy. Ways of doing fashion and sustainability are perpetually changing, and therefore, the relationship between the two is in a constant state of negotiation and remaking. My practice in special occasionwear, as indicated to me through the reflective activity of modeling, is one that embraces tensions and deliberately pieces them over one another. Tensions are present particularly between the poetic impulses of fashion practice and the pragmatic nature of sustainability. Conversely, this complexity locates special occasionwear as a lively, contemporary, and where the intention exists, principled genre of fashion practice.

The lab as a metaphorical research space is an area where a spontaneous approach to design — literally taking up scissors and cutting into cloth, intersects with theory in the formation of those approaches and strategies best suited to the Serial Individualities context.

A model, as a representation of a situation, encompasses theoretical, contextual and practical information: it is created through
iterative reflection on action with the tools, from the materials, and according to the measures of the relevant discourse. Modelling enables layering of theory and material practice, of stitching together material and social aspects of practice. My model also performs a reflective function in several ways. As I use it for explanation, and tell and retell each project, I reflect and learn through the repetition of telling and re-telling. I notice new aspects. The model, in its reflective role, helps me to visualise my own practice and therefore, more clearly articulate what it is I have done. One important clarification noted through the model, is that my practice, while embodying sustainability as a crucial component, is in fact, predominantly concerned with making and with design, and conversely, through making this point, contributes to sustainability discourse.
Conclusion

As doctoral research, my practice contains two epistemological outcomes. The first is a practice-based example of the application of current sustainable fashion design methodologies to a made-to-measure special occasion micro practice. The second is the representation of this application in an explanatory and reflective model of my practice and its concomitant theoretical context. Constructed of the angular textile remnants of my practice, the model is porous in that it allows multiple ways to enter and read my practice. Through reflective processes, I have arrived at, initially tolerance, and then delight in divergent readings and interpretations of my practice. But, receptivity and porosity do not preclude conclusiveness. I contend that the most significant contribution the special occasionwear genre can make to sustainable fashion practice is not in the improvement of garment materiality alone, but in its performative role within the staging of contemporary popular culture. Furthermore, the role of the special occasionwear designer must extend beyond the creation of artefact alone to encompass a cross-disciplinary range of activities aimed at amplifying the impact or use of the material artefact. Additionally, the designer must consciously locate their
practice within its context in order to develop an approach to sustainable design practice appropriate to that context.

**Reflection on Method**

As constructive design research, or research through design, my practice developed around a simple premise; that of making one dress for one person. Since 2010, a number of such dresses have been, and continue to be, made (Appendix). Though projects vary in their choice of occasion, each involves the making of a singular dress or small series of dresses employing sustainable design strategies. Of the completed projects, three formed the principle objects of reflection within this doctoral research. My reflection on these dresses was along three lines. First and foremost, I reflected on the nature of their making, as the focus of my practice. Secondly, I reflected on each dress within a social ecosystem or staging, and thirdly, I reflected on the sustainable strategies embedded in the dresses, alongside the communication of the sustainable intent. The research was speculative, in that it was based around broad rather than specific research questions that asked about the form that a making practice operating at the junction of sustainability and special occasionwear might take. The research also had a propositional nature; it was based on a premise that the dress has fascinating possibilities as a staging for sustainable fashion practice.

**Realisations**

Reflective practice, employing both reflective research and reflection-in-action was the manner in which I was able to tease out the tensions I perceived and experienced between sustainable fashion and occasionwear. According to Schön, reflection-in-action
can seem dangerous, as it surfaces complexity, but it is also a source of satisfaction:

As the practitioner moves towards new competences, he gives up some familiar sources of satisfaction and opens himself to new ones. He gives up the rewards of unquestioned authority, the freedom to practice without relative challenge to his competence, the comfort of relative invulnerability, the gratifications of deference. The new satisfactions open to him are largely those of discovery – about the meanings of his advice to clients, about his knowledge-in-practice, and about himself (p. 299).

Through similarly being open to new sources of satisfaction, I arrived at a number of new discoveries or realisations:

**Porosity and Staging Occasions**

In the first chapter, I examined the genre of special occasion-wear as a type of staging. I identified a dependent relationship between occasionwear and special occasion as a unique feature of this genre, distinct from other garment types that have more ambiguous relationships with their context of wear. The result of this relationship in material terms is that specific details of the dress design are determined by the protocols of the occasion to which it will be worn. While special occasionwear has always rendered women as objects to be gazed upon, recent popular culture phenomena such as the ubiquity of celebrity culture, and the mass media distribution of the photographic image mean that the singular occasion dress is now visually consumed, critiqued, and even derided by a mass audience.

My framework of occasionwear staging was initiated through observation of the Brownlow Medal Australian Football event,
continued through participation in *The Spirit of the Black Dress* project and further developed during an audacious mission to create a sustainable dress to be worn to the 2011 TV Week Logie awards, Australian television’s “Night of Nights”. At this point, I located staging alongside perspectives on fashion that see symbolic meaning as socially constructed through interactions between groups of actors. For example, Kawamura (2004) identifies important cultural stakeholders with the Paris Fashion System and how this larger framework contributed to international recognition of several Japanese designers. Kawamura’s perspective enabled me to identify the institutional and cultural factors that create a unique fashion network for each place in which I staged my work. Blumer’s account of the “collective selection” of fashion buyers within an American ready-to-wear system points out the personal qualities and skills of various taste-determining intermediaries, who, through unspoken yet collective processes, determine the fashions that will be made available to the public. Blumer’s account inspired me to reflect on the role that I play as a designer, and whether I might adopt other roles, and as with Kawamura, to identify my place within the collective and institutional functions of fashion. A framework loosely derived from Actor-network theory also assisted in the identification and equalisation of all factors within this system as a network of heterogeneous actors.

From the definition of special occasions and perspective on the staging of special occasionwear I had set out, I went on to develop the staging of my own practice through *The Front Row* project in 2012 which occurred within the stage of the fashion festival. The staging of dresses resulted in the incorporation of *invitation* and *performance* activities associated with wearing – actions ordinarily carried out by other professionals - into fashion design activity where they are conducted from the perspective of the designer. Such an expanded framework enables the
designer to consider the ways in which socially-based activities are part of material making practice, and to reflect on a range of personal qualities, described as “porosity”, which facilitate a practice that encounters situations with conviviality and good humour. A practice that is porous is important because it enables this designer to deal with complexity. It enables me to engage with different people in a co-creation manner, which is how I develop depth and complexity in my practice.

**Serial Individualities: Designing Through Making Practice**

In the second chapter, my reflective attention turned to my making practice. In making, I employ my skills and knowledge - attained through past professional experience in this field - in the practice of made-to-measure special occasionwear. I located my practice amongst other making practices, made-to-measure practitioners, contemporary craft micro practitioners, and the project-based application of a dress within an activist framework. I am inspired by and identify with these fashion practices that I see around me in my city of Melbourne, but I do not seek to replicate any of them by establishing a traditional commercial business. Many people undertake small scale practices such as mine, but there is much less representation of them than there are dominant systems of fashion creation; for instance, the more formal haute couture or ready-to-wear systems, or the larger mass production, or fast fashion systems. This research articulates many of the features of small scale, making practices, while emphasising the individual nature of each practice. In identifying what this making practice is and aligning it with the practice of others, I realised there was no existing term to describe the amalgamation of concerns and methods I had assembled over time. Thus, the term ‘Serial Individualities’ was coined to describe my approach of making one dress after another; none the same as the previous but within a unified visual typology, one follows another.
I identified two themes within my practice of Serial Individualities. The first is as a form of socio-material practice, whereby engaging with stakeholders within the staging of each project impacts on the aesthetics and materiality of the dress. This was evidenced through the made-to-measure processes employed in making the Logies dress, involving personal consultation and design processes. In this work, the qualities of porosity were essential within the socio-material nature of practice. Secondly, it was evidenced through an application of a socially-based sustainability methodology of sharing and product service systems through The Front Row Project. In this project, the material characteristics, techniques and aesthetic of a collection of dresses were determined by the socially-based mission that they be shared among wearers. The second aspect of the making process is that it is a poetic method. The notion of poetic draws on methodologies and theories of craft-making whereby the making of craft is an intensely personal act employing tacit knowledge, and an emotional affinity for materials and crafting, and designing through making method whereby sewing, cutting and draping activities of production are interlinked with and inform the design activities of aesthetic decision making.

Making is a type of designing, and a method of expression. In my practice, designing happens through making, necessitating that the two become one and the same, which is a feature and a possibility only achievable within contexts located outside mass production, such as Serial Individualities. Making and designing happen in certain contexts. The ways of designing and making that occur within my practice of Serial Individualities are unique to that context and as such, certain ways cannot happen. Likewise, it implies that sustainable strategies occur in certain context relevant ways.
Representation, Reflection and Explanation of Poetic and Pragmatics Through Modelling

In the third chapter, I reflected on my approach to sustainable fashion practice within the genre of special occasionwear and the context of my making practice. In doing so, I constructed a framework from which to envisage sustainable design theory, in which I considered sustainable design; firstly, at a motivational level - that being the philosophies that have influenced my reasoning. From the macro perspective flowed a functional level comprising a range of instructional methodologies, practical design strategies that can be enacted in practice. I interrogated this framework through my practice, and considered for a time, my special occasionwear designing practice from the metaphorical location of a lab in which exploration of sustainable design strategies removed from real world concerns might occur through making practices - literally, taking up scissors and cutting into cloth. In such a consideration of the various strategies and approaches to sustainability, the genre of special occasionwear and context of Serial Individualities became crucial within the decision-making context. From the ‘lab’ evaluation of design schema, I arrived at a suite of suitable strategies, including up-cycling and hand-stitching to facilitate disassembly and colouring using plant dyes. But the material clarity that forms in a lab is disturbed by the complexity of real world, field-based situations. I posit that porosity therefore enables a way to negotiate such complexity.

Therefore, I made a model as an explanatory tool that I use to explain the execution of each project, and the knowledge generated through my practice. Modelling enables layering of theory with material practice and tacit knowledge, and the stitching together of material and social aspects of practice. My model also performs a reflective function in several ways. As I use it for explanation, and tell and retell each project, I reflect and learn.
through the repetition of telling and re-telling. I notice new things. The model, in its reflective role, helps me to visualise my own practice and therefore, more clearly articulate what it is I have done. Poetic and pragmatic elements are apparent throughout the model of Serial Individualities. The negotiation between the quantitative and rational, or “pragmatic” approaches to sustainability on the one hand with the immersive and sensory or “poetic” priorities of design on the other demonstrates a fine tension existent in sustainable fashion practice. Teasing out the places where these dynamics are in tension, are balanced, or are overlaid is another means by which the model becomes a useful tool for reflection. In using the model as a reflective tool, I noted that, as a representation of my whole practice, the component of sustainability is in fact, small. It is very important to me personally: indeed, it was the catalyst for my research practice, but actually, my practice is predominantly concerned with making and with design, and conversely, through making this point, contributes to an honest sustainability discourse.

**My Practice: Future work**

If I were to construct metaphors from my making practice to describe the way in which this doctoral research contributes to my design practice, I would say that two things have occurred. Firstly, my practice has become one of joining and stitching, whereby actors that are contrasting, contradictory or binary in nature are laid over one another; their grain lines matched, and using my hands, I gently smooth and ply the two slippery edges until the bumps are eradicated. I then invent a suitable seam, sometimes a wide join, sometimes a narrow aperture will suffice; other times a strong machine join is required, either for strength or expediency. I use right and wrong sides to create contrast of satin
and matte, representative of the contrasts between sustainability and occasionwear, poetics and pragmatics. The precise form is unknown at the beginning in an explicit sense, but in a tacit or innate sense, is formed by guiding principles, those stemming from my making skills, moral compass and inclinations. When joining and stitching, one seeks out tension as a productive, useful device - through tension, everything holds together in dynamic ways.

In the metaphorical joining and stitching of my practice, I also make judicious selection of materials. Not everything can be used. In 2010, I embarked on this doctoral research having made a list of various sustainability issues in fashion design. I believed there were specific ways of doing sustainability that would be revealed to me and enable me to solve the various problems on my list. Quite quickly, my research solidified around a special occasion making practice and so I set about making occasionwear my material of choice, but it took me some time to persuade myself out of the tendency to answer every single problem, for example to feel that I must also be an expert on organic cotton systems or on the CSR policies of large companies, and instead to tell compelling stories only through my practice itself. I realised that in the role I am cast in as a designer-maker: my context within the city of Melbourne, my limited connections, that these are all my materials, and with them in concert, is what I can make and do. Despite it being a constrained role, there remains plenty that I can do.

Secondly, my practice has been up-cycled, in that I have transformed an existing practice into something of greater value than the original. What determines such value than the original is personal and subjective. My measure of such value is in the satisfaction I derive from a practice that is multifaceted in the way it combines the material making of artefacts with communicative
reflective outcomes. My other determinant of value is the manner in which I have arrived at a framework that combines explicitness about a personal moral dimension - that being the integrity of my values, politics and beliefs with my professional practice.

The willingness to submit my practice (and myself) to this transformation was deliberate and sought out through the process of undertaking the research; and as such, is placed as an example of transformational activism. This research has made a transformative contribution to shaping and articulating my design practice. Mine is a practice that is inclusive; that is resilient, and multi-dimensional in terms of the additional academic forms of reading and writing. Furthermore, it encompasses a type of explicitness about sustainability that elsewhere might not be permitted; this might be because of time constraints, or because the earnestness directed towards the topic sits outside the ambiguity required of fashion practice. This practice would not have developed in this way had it been initiated outside the reflective space of a creative research practice that became doctoral research. One important difference in my practice is that now I have incorporated views of design practice that are located outside fashion specifically. For example, the staging of the invitation and performance activities that sit before and after the making process is a crucial innovation within my practice, and was facilitated from within the location of this research outside the fashion discipline within a multi-disciplinary design school.

The realisations resulting from this practice-based account of the application of sustainable fashion theory to special occasion practice contribute not only to the development of my own practice, but are applicable to other designers, especially those working in contexts outside the dominant mass-production context, and particularly those within the fields of micro-design

Figure 86.
Fair@Square parade, chiffon triangles finale dress.
Source: Chealse Vo
practice and special occasionwear. Though the Model of Serial Individualities is an idiosyncratic reflection of my practice, through explaining the role and benefit of personal practice model creation, and providing an example of how this has been applied within one practice, other designers can use the same technique of model creation to depict and thus aid reflection and explanation of their own practice. The second contribution for other fashion practitioners are the strategies developed for working within and embracing complexity and tension. Poetics and pragmatics, for instance, is a device through which one can identify, evaluate and tease out the potential in the competing tensions one finds within their practice. It also offers a way to consider sustainability practice that is specific to the context of customized or made-to-measure production. Porosity provides a means through which designers can privilege the range of tasks they undertake that sit outside garment creation itself, as well as pointing to a range of personal qualities necessary to deal adeptly with complexity in fashion ecosystems.

However, having undergone such a personal and professional transformation, I could certainly not state that I have arrived at my destination. The fields of special occasionwear, sustainable design, and micro practice have been presented as dynamic and evolving contemporary spaces for fashion practice, and will continue to evolve. The robust and adjustable model of practice that I have developed allows me to anticipate and respond to such fluidity.
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Appendix
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15 April 2011

Georgia McCorkill
Flat 4, 673 Park Street
Brunswick VIC 3056

Dear Georgia,

Re: Human Research Ethics Application – Register Number CHEAN A—2000449-02/11

The Design and Social Context College Human Ethics Advisory Network (CHEAN), at the meeting on 15 April 2011, assessed your resubmitted ethics application titled; ‘The Red Carpet Project’.

I am pleased to advise that your application has been approved at a Low Risk classification. This approval will be ratified at the meeting on 20 May 2011 and reported to the University Human Research Ethics Committee for noting.

Your ethics approval expires on 31 December 2013.

Please note that all research data should be stored on University Network systems. These systems provide high levels of manageable security and data integrity, can provide secure remote access, are backed on a regular basis and can provide Disaster Recover processes should a large scale incident occur. The use of portable devices such as CDs and memory sticks is valid for archiving, data transport where necessary and some works in progress. The authoritative copy of all current data should reside on appropriate network systems; and the Principal Investigator is responsible for the retention and storage of the original data pertaining to the project for a minimum period of five years.

You are reminded that an Annual /Final report is mandatory and should be forwarded to the College Ethics Subcommittee Secretary by mid-January 2012. This report is available at http://www.rmit.edu.au/browse;ID=6sqox7sd0wkp or can be located by following the link under Policy at http://www.rmit.edu.au/dsc/chean.

Should you have any queries regarding your application please seek advice from the Deputy Chair of the College Human Ethics Advisory Network (CHEAN) Prof Joseph Siracusa on (03) 9925 1744, joseph.siracusa@rmit.edu.au or contact Lisa Mann on (03) 9925 2974, lisa.mann@rmit.edu.au

On behalf of the DSC College Human Ethics Advisory Network I wish you well in your research.

Yours sincerely,

Lisa Mann
Secretary
DSC College Human Ethics Advisory Network (CHEAN)

cc. Assoc Prof Soumitri Varadarajan
Notice of Approval

Date: 9 September 2013

Project number: CHEAN B 2000411-10/10

Project title: Eschewing Growth: Fashion Design Micropreneurs

Risk classification: Low Risk

Investigator: Dr Soumitri Varadarajan

Approved: From: 09 September 2013 To: 31 December 2014

I am pleased to advise that your application has been granted ethics approval by the Design and Social Context College Human Ethics Advisory Network as a sub-committee of the RMIT Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC).

Terms of approval:

1. Responsibilities of investigator
   It is the responsibility of the above investigator/s to ensure that all other investigators and staff on a project are aware of the terms of approval and to ensure that the project is conducted as approved by the CHEAN. Approval is only valid whilst the investigator/s holds a position at RMIT University.

2. Amendments
   Approval must be sought from the CHEAN to amend any aspect of a project including approved documents. To apply for an amendment please use the ‘Request for Amendment Form’ that is available on the RMIT website. Amendments must not be implemented without first gaining approval from CHEAN.

3. Adverse events
   You should notify HREC immediately of any serious or unexpected adverse effects on participants or unforeseen events affecting the ethical acceptability of the project.

4. Participant Information and Consent Form (PICF)
   The PICF and any other material used to recruit and inform participants of the project must include the RMIT university logo. The PICF must contain a complaints clause including the project number.

5. Annual reports
   Continued approval of this project is dependent on the submission of an annual report. This form can be located online on the human research ethics web page on the RMIT website.

6. Final report
   A final report must be provided at the conclusion of the project. CHEAN must be notified if the project is discontinued before the expected date of completion.

7. Monitoring
   Projects may be subject to an audit or any other form of monitoring by HREC at any time.

8. Retention and storage of data
   The investigator is responsible for the storage and retention of original data pertaining to a project for a minimum period of five years.

In any future correspondence please quote the project number and project title.

On behalf of the DSC College Human Ethics Advisory Network I wish you well in your research.

Suzana Kovacevic
Research and Ethics Officer
College of Design and Social Context
RMIT University
Ph: 03 9925 2974
Email: suzana.kovacevic@rmit.edu.au
Website: www.rmit.edu.au/dsc
The aim of the project was to arrive at several examples of occasion dresses that could be used to illicit commissions from a celebrity to create a dress for a specific red carpet occasion. An exploratory collection of three dresses crafted entirely by hand investigating ways of designing occasionwear informed by sustainable design strategies. They are based around large collar-like shapes made from remnants of silk that are wrapped and bound into cords with silk thread. The cords are knotted and looped into shapes and fastened by knotting and lashing. A length of silk fabric is draped around the collar to form the rest of the garment. The draping is done in such a way as to require minimal stitching and minimal cutting and wastage of the length of fabric. Most joining of the fabric is done by hand with machine stitching used sparingly.
2011 **Spirit of the Black Dress**

(Disposed throughout the dissertation.) Selected to design and make one black dress as part of a group exhibition of ten designers exploring and advocating sustainable fashion design. The event was organised by a collective of young people establishing various careers within fashion (eg, PR, styling, wholesale agent, academia). Held at The Trust venue in Melbourne’s CBD as part of the L’Oreal Melbourne Fashion Festival in March 2011. The project also comprised a photoshoot by photographer Peter Ryle and a fashion parade.

Image Source: Peter Ryle

2011 **Zoe’s Dress**

(Disposed throughout the dissertation.) Design and making of a made-to-measure dress for actress Zoe Tuckwell-Smith, a star of the Channel Seven show “Winners and Losers” to wear to the TV Week Logie Awards in May 2011. Zoe’s dress employed a custom made-to-measure process. It was constructed from upcycled silk fabric sourced from the remnants of bridal couture businesses. It was dyed in eucalyptus leaves following instruction in plant dyeing techniques from the Natural Dye Group at Plant Craft Cottage in the Botanical Gardens.
2011  **Jacquie’s Dress**

A wedding dress designed and made for Jacquie exploring a participatory design method whereby I facilitated sewing and fitting evenings at which Jacquie, her mother, and her friend Lou participated in the construction of the wedding dress over food, drinks and discussion on the upcoming wedding.

2012  **Evergreen: Fresh Sustainable Fashion**

Exhibition at Object Gallery, Sydney from 27 January – 25 March 2012, curated by Kathryn Watkins. I was one of three designers, alongside Holly McQuillan (New Zealand) and Julia Knüpfler (Germany) pursuing sustainable design practice. The aim of the exhibition was educational, as well as presenting sustainable fashion in an innovative and aesthetically sumptuous light.
2011 Fair@Square Fair Fashion Parade

A collection of five dresses shown as the finale to the Fair Fashion Parade during the Fair@Square fair trade and ethical living festival at Federation Square Melbourne. The parade featured collections from designers employing fair trade or ethical principles in their practice. The collection employed strategies of upcycling and design for disassembly, with the bulk of the construction through hand sewing. Many of the pieces went on to be included in The Front Row project. Additionally, I was asked to create a dress for the host of the parade, radio presenter and comedian Em Rusciano. Image Source: Chealse Vo
2012 The Front Row collection

(Discussed throughout the dissertation) A collection of ten dresses employing upcycling of remnants of silk fabric sourced from bridal couture designers and constructed in such a way as to facilitate ease of disassembly and alteration for a new wearer. The collection was part of an exhibition-event of the same name staged as part of the L’Oreal Melbourne Fashion Festival Cultural Program from 1-18 March 2012. In this event I displayed the dresses in a pop-up atelier where participants were invited to wear a garment to a fashion festival event of their choosing on the understanding that while this was at no cost, they would return the garment after use for re-use by another participant. The proposition was of a shared model of consumption, demonstrated through an event that appropriated spaces of fashion practice such as the atelier, and the front row of the fashion parade.
2014 **Shared Matter: The Matter at Hand, RMIT first site**

The Matter at Hand was held at RMIT first site gallery as part of the Virgin Australia Melbourne Fashion Festival (VAMFF) Cultural Program from 26 March – 4 April 2014. The exhibition showcased the work of RMIT students who explore the act of making and its relationship to social change. My contribution Shared Matter was an unsized tunic-style dress constructed from a large remnant of lace specifically for display in a gallery setting. Gallery goers were encouraged to try on the dress displayed hanging on a hanger, photograph themselves in it and share the image via a facebook page created for the event, or on social media platforms twitter and instagram using the hashtag #sharedmatter. A poster with tear off slips fixed to the wall behind the dress communicated these instructions. A mirror was also included so that participants could observe themselves trying the dress.