

A Portfolio of Fashion Practice

CONSTRUCTING A NARRATIVE OF FASHION PRACTICE AS INQUIRY .

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PORTFOLIO OF PRACTICE

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Date: May 2014

Fashion Practice as Knowledge

A FOUNDATION OF THOUGHT .



Figure 1. The Living Sketch.

A CONTRIBUTION TO KNOWLEDGE HAS MANIFEST THROUGH, IN AND OF A VISUAL AND LITERARY LANGUAGE OF FASHION PRACTICE THAT RECONCILES THE TACIT DIALOGUES EMBODIED WITHIN A REASONED KNOWING AS A KNOWING KNOWLEDGE OF PRACTICE. AN ARCHAEOLOGY OF A CRITICAL GAZE IS ARGUED, AS A NARRATIVE OF SEEING EMERGES AS A TELLING OF A KNOWING OF A DOING OF PRACTICE IN A CURATED CONTEXT OF A DIALOGIC METHODOLOGY.

A Collective Understanding

THE PRACTICES OF THE FASHION PRACTITIONER .

This portfolio of practice comprises an introduction, three narratives and an e-Exhibition and becomes the practitioner's stage and monument to their fashion practice (as spectacle). As a collection of 'thinkings and doings', ponderings if you like, this portfolio of practice aims to construct a narrative to expose and to capture the practitioner's unabbreviated oeuvre as it emerges as fragments of pure expression during the making of an eight-piece collection of fashion womenswear. In a curated context of a dialogic methodology, the creative-authorship, production methodologies and theoretical underpinning considered whilst engaging with the development of a body of creative work is to provide a consciousness of seeing the cognitive and behavioural activity of the deeply engaged fashion practitioner.

The contextual references, reflective interactions and visual traces as a narrative of seeing, as a way of seeing, is documented through reflective practice, journal keeping, writings, sketchbook work, contextual reference points, film and photographic narrative etc. This storytelling approach aims to open out discussions concerning the inquiry of fashion practice as the practitioner, the spectator and the practice aesthetic are to construct a narrative of fashion practice (as inquiry) in both situational and relational terms.

WITHOUT THESE TRUTHS, AS PRACTITIONER TRUTHS, THERE WOULD BE NO REASONING THROUGH, IN AND OF PRACTICE .



Figure 2. My Tussie-Mussie.

Contents

INTRODUCTION	A FUTURE NOW (INTRODUCTIONS)	A NARRATIVE INQUIRY (PRACTICE AS KNOWLEDGE)	1 - 79
As a preamble to a constructed narrative of practice the voice of the deeply engaged fashion practitioner, as author, mediates a journey of what might be.			
NARRATIVE 1	LIVING PORTFOLIO (PROCESS)	ENGAGEMENT THROUGH PRACTICE (PRACTICE DEVELOPMENT)	1 - 30
Narrative 1 interprets the cultural contexts, visual traces and reflective interactions of the engaged fashion practitioner whilst developing a body of creative work (the collection). A process of practice is engaged with through a lived reality of a doing of practice as the voice of the deeply engaged fashion practitioner interprets a journey of visual and literary note-taking 'through' a doing of practice.			
NARRATIVE 2	THOUGHT STRUCTURE (KNOWLEDGE)	ARCHAEOLOGY IN PRACTICE (PRACTICE RESPONSE)	1 - 30
Narrative 2 constructs a foundation of thought in support of what is known at the time of knowing. The 'in' practice contexts contextualise a theory and method, as knowledge, of a lived reality of a doing of fashion practice. A thought structure is to emerge as an archaeology whilst in practice that frames the practitioners' narrative of thought and that links both the process and the action of practice in response to how it is experienced and perceived in the here and now.			
NARRATIVE 3	GAZE OF PRACTICE (PRACTICE)	CONSCIOUSNESS OF SEEING (PRACTICE CONCLUSION)	1 - 30
Narrative 3 locates both the practitioner's and spectator's reflective interactions and practice responses. As a commodity of practice, conversations with the practitioner, the spectator and the artefact extend a consciousness 'of' seeing practice. This gaze of practice acknowledges that there is no end to a narrative of seeing only a consciousness of beginnings.			
E-EXHIBITION	SPECTACLE OF FASHION PRACTICE (THIS VOICE)	PRACTICES OF LOOKING (A WAY OF SEEING)	1 - 30
Concluding with an e-Exhibition this voice' of the practitioner engages with the practitioner as 'other'. As a provocative visual communicator, an editor of meaning and message, a writer of cultural interpretation and as a curator of a lived reality, this spectacle of fashion practice proffers that seeing is an act of choice and often comes before words.			
RESEARCH ACTIVITY			1-14
	A. RESEARCH OUTPUTS		15-38
	B. SKETCHBOOK ENTRIES		39-42
	C. CONVERSATIONAL ANALYSIS (RESPONDENT DATA)		43-77
	D. SPECTATOR ENGAGEMENT		78-112
	E. RESEARCH EXERCISE		113-120
	F. DATA ANALYSIS (KEY THEMES)		121-123
	G. RESEARCH ETHICS SURVEY CONSENT FORM		123- 132
	H. FINAL EXHIBITION		

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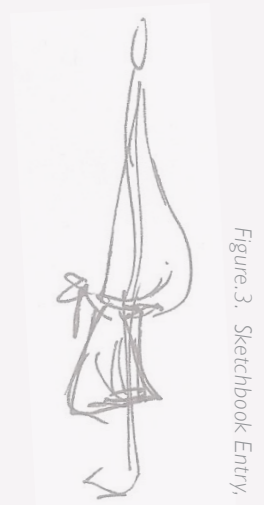


Figure 3. Sketchbook Entry.

[

THIS SEEING IS BOTH SITUATIONAL AND RELATIONAL TO THE HERE AND NOW, OR THE MOMENT AS A CONDUIT TO THE 'CONDITIONS OF POSSIBILITY', AS FOUCAULT (1963, P.XXII), ARGUED

]

.

What do I
know... NOW
THAT I know
what I know?

Figure 4. Sketchbook Entry.

Introductions

A WAY OF SEEING .

[THESE VOICES AS INTERPRETATION OF WHAT IS BECOMES A WAY OF SEEING] .



Figure 5. Sketchbook Entry.

A Future Now

CONSTRUCTING A FASHION NARRATIVE •

A journey of encounter and of what might be is considered by the fashion practitioner as author of the portfolio of practice. Contextual references are sought, pondered and contextualised in the here and now in order to determine the practitioner's mise-en-scène in a cultural context and how this might construct a narrative of fashion practice as inquiry. Is this what fashion practitioners think and do?



Figure.6. Sketchbook Entry.

I LOOK UPON THE POETRY AS AN ART, WHOSE CHARM LIES IN THE EXHIBITION OF VIVID IMAGERY, NEW, VARIED, BEAUTIFUL, AND SUBLIME; AND IN APPEALS TO THE SIMPLE AFFECTIONS OF THE HEART. THE POET, IF WE FOLLOW THE ETYMOLOGY OF THE WORD, IS A CREATOR; ONE WHO FASHIONS FROM THE STORES OF HIS MEMORY IMAGES OF WHICH EARTH FURNISHES NO REALITY, AND WHO COMBINES THEM INTO GROUPS WHICH HAVE AN EXISTENCE ONLY IN THE IMAGINARY WORLD HE HAS CHARMED INTO BEING

The poetical works of James Gates Percival, (1795 - 1856) p.396



Figure.7. Image from The Language of Flowers postcard, circa 1902.

This Voice ...

Knight (ViceUKI) believed fashion to be concerned with communication and invited new narratives to see and understand the world around us similar to that of any art or art form. Could the critical moment of judgment that I have cogitated be the optimum moment for fashion practice to communicate it's integrity and ideologies? Is this a window of opportunity to confidently and meaningfully construct a future narrative that contributes to fashions' discourse cycle?

It's not often a designer reveals their thinking or creativity that leads to the finished artefact. The narration and short film forming part of the exhibition 'Rodarte: States of Matter' at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Los Angeles (Mulleavy and Mulleavy, 2011) positions the designer as author of the narrative.

Situated in a gallery environment, the fashion artefact invites a way of seeing where the concept and context of the designer's thinking is purported to be as integral to the viewing experience as the artefact itself. However, the narrative in this case appears to limit the viewing experience to only what is visually concluded by the designer as the master of their practice. The exhibition appears more as a subjective and conclusive portrait of the artefact and does not fully explore or engage with the visualities of the practices of the fashion practitioner.

Hindsight of the practitioner's journey of practice are narrated as statements of fact, albeit a little limited, broad and singular. I am left wanting more. Does this narrative approach demonstrate the potential for a curated intervention of practice? Could exposing the practitioner's unabbreviated oeuvre attribute a significant role for the spectator in constructing a discourse of their practice?



Figure.8. A Visual Note.

A CONVERSATION BETWEEN THE PRACTITIONER, SPECTATOR AND ARTEFACT

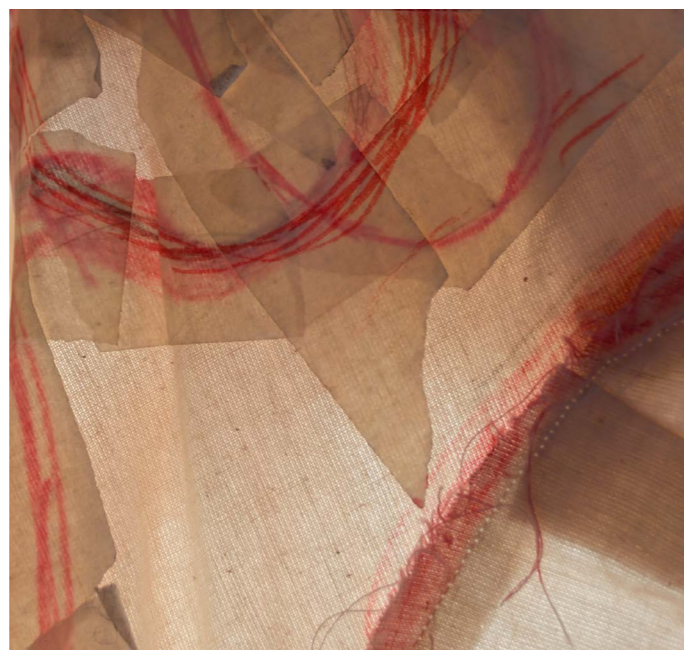
Curating Practice

CURATED INTERVENTION .

Figure 9. Shadows of Me (Research Activity A(v))



Figure 10. Knowing in Time, (Research Activity A(v))



Townsend (2002, p.18) suggests a perception that art has an imagined and nobler construction such as paints, canvas and brush that enables pure expression whereas the craft-driven processes of stitching and sewing somehow demans fashion's status. Over the decades, if not centuries, it appears that the arts have achieved a cultural superiority due to the immediacy and innate able-ness of literary review and critique against a visual image rather than an object to study (Rose, 2007. P.3).

Beard (2008, p.190) interviews Penny Martin, editor-in-chief of SHOWstudio, suggesting Martin's approach to fashion and fashion imagery sits within a fine art or museum framework. The work of SHOWstudio intentionally exposed symbolic representation of the fashion process and fashion practice without closing down the meaning to encourage dialogue and viewer responsive engagement. Martin (Beard, 2008, p.190)

acknowledges that the object is distanced from its original context as the online dialogue through social fora abstracts the context and provided a textual platform to view fashion, not as a perfect aesthetic, but as a cultural and user-generated domain interested in enquiry and engagement.

This novel approach provides opportunity to expose the moments of pure expression that was lacking in Townsends' view in 2002 and supported 'Wells' (Rugg and Sedgwick, 2007, p. 42) view of curatorial intervention as a strategy for presenting possibilities for critical exploration and debate. O'Neill (2008, p.254) acknowledges in his review of the exhibition, *Malign Muses / Malign Spectres: When fashion turns back*, the role of the 'curator's hand' and of the collaborative and interdisciplinary nature of the fashion medium that enabled a rich curatorial dialogue to take place. As curator, Clarke's

execution of display, structure, manipulation of viewer engagement and exhibition provides a future landscape for curating fashion practice. Holtby and Jones et al (Clarke, 2004 p.7-12) distinguish's Clarke's genius as opening up the 'work in progress', thus externalising Clarke's manifesto for suggestion as a valid method of exhibiting fashion practice.

In 2007 Hilary Alexander, fashion editor for the Telegraph comments on Hussein Chalayan's, 2007 fall collection declaring that it "Totally transforms anything you ever thought about Ready To Wear" (Moritzwaldemeyer, 2007). The theme of the collection was 'Airbourne' and describes the visual and sensual synergy of body, season and climate. The collection proposes hats as table lamps and dresses emerging as smart fabric technologies butting with the interface of fashion practice and curated exhibition in that the practice existed as both suggestion and proposition, as Raizman (2007, p.151) and Loppa and Debo on Clarke (Clarke, 2004, p.9) both suggest.

Why is fashion practice not considered as similar to art practice?

[THE PRACTITIONER IS NO LONGER SINGULAR TO THEIR JOURNEY OF PRACTICE] .

This Voice ...

The difficulties of bringing together the literary and visual mix of my practice is playing on my waking and sleeping moments. Where do I start when committing my research journey as explicit knowledge of practice? McIntosh (2010, p.130) talks of 'Drawing together metaphor, symbolism and dialogic'. Is this what I mean?

If I consider the practitioner, as both author and curator, then this dual role could assume a more objective position. As a practitioner I am reflecting on my practice journey and curating a knowledge of my practice for others to explore and debate. This conscious seeing now needs a voice, a voice of practice in support of a critical exploration and suggestion for others to engage with. My practice knowing through, in and of practice, through curatorial project work, now needs to construct a narrative of practice like never before...or so it feels. The enormity or challenge is revealing itself although my confidence grasps onto what little I know or understand of what has been argued before?

My contribution to knowledge now needs to unfold. This, I feel, is where my practitioner-self emerges as practitioner-researcher and I am no longer concerned with the self that I have come to know very well.

The research journey, as curated practice, will investigate situational and relational order of my practice thinking and doing. As spectacle (artefact), as narrative (discovery), as contexts (reflection) and critical engagement (spectator) my practice as research as knowledge can begin. I am no longer singular to my research practice journey.

My Voice Now needs to be Heard



Figure 11. Sketchbook Entry.

The Practice Aesthetic

FASHION'S RELATIONSHIP WITH THE ARTS .

Deep in the arts psyche fashion emerges as a formalised storytelling prop that flatters the designer by sheer inclusion and subject matter and confirms the flirtatious role that fashion plays with the arts. The art world has flirted with the domain of fashion long since the critics deemed fashion's worthiness for critical debate. The twentieth century accepted the fashion aesthetic and theoretical link in that fashion often formed the subject matter, thematic interest and/or backdrop to the art works, or indeed with the artists themselves dipping their toes into the fashion arena.

For example, Madeleine Vionnet during the 1930s influenced new structural forms with the introduction of bias cutting to explore the female form. Vionnet demonstrated a quiet collaboration with the body considered as the canvas and the bias cut of the fabric as the medium. In the 1920s fashion became a form of artistic expression, demonstrating the link between fashion and the arts movements of the time, such as Art Deco, Cubism or the Fauves.

Was it at this moment that Fashion became fashionable in a cultural space?



Figure 12:

My Peony : Cotton Organdie Dress.

This Voice ...

The literal representations by Mike Roles sit side by side with the abstract works of Greta Berlin. I first visited Broomhill Sculpture Park in Devon over a year ago and my memory of the artworks still remain important to my thinking. These sculptured works sit firmly in an



Figure 14: Berlin, G. (1999), Shoe.

arts domain with the subject material teasingly portrayed as representations of fashion or clothing. The relevance to my research is concerned with the artists' engagement with the conceptual and contextual references of the work. Berlin's 'Shoe' (1999)

celebrated the continued freedom of women and their achievements throughout the 20th Century whereas Roles (2007)



Figure 13: Roles, M (2007), Welcome to the Third Millennium.

attempted to make sense of his own humanity and immortality by exploring the hopes, fears and anxieties of both body and mind. I wonder if these deep engagements with meaning and message can be explored through my practice? How can the spectator meaningfully and critically respond to fashion as practice in a cultural domain? These works are supported by the artists' statement and without this I am left with my own version of what is meant or understood ...maybe that's ok?

THIS VOICE, THIS CULTIVATED STATE WHERE THE ARCHAEOLOGY OF A CRITICAL GAZE MERGES BOTH VISUAL AND LITERARY LANGUAGE AS ALL STAKEHOLDERS, AS INDEPENDENT VOICES, AS A 'MULTI- VOICEDNESS ... OF METAPHORIC, SYMBOLISM AND DIALOGIC' (McINTOSH, 2010, P.129) DISPLAY A CONSCIOUSNESS THAT IS AS HOMOGENEOUS AS IT IS PECULIAR TO ALL AND THEIR RELATIONSHIPS WITH ONE ANOTHER

Integrity of Practice

FASHION PHOTOGRAPHY •

Fashion photography has long since grappled with its duality of commerce and artistic integrity (Hall-Duncan, 1979, p.9) and it appears that fashion practice is now experiencing a similar journey toward recognition, status and cultural identity. There is a growing norm where fashion and art are reported more equally and the boundaries of both fashion and art converge as leading-edge publications, journals and media repertoire reach out to the widest possible audience.

Is it that a (re) positioning of fashion practice in a high culture context is needed?



Figure.15. The Fashion Shoot.



MY USE OF AESTHETICS IS NOT RESTRICTED TO THE PHILOSOPHY OF ART AND BEAUTY; RATHER, I REGARD AESTHETICS AS CONCERNING EVERYTHING THAT GOES INTO OUR ABILITY TO GRASP THE MEANING AND SIGNIFICANCE OF ANY ASPECT OF OUR EXPERIENCE, AND SO IT INVOLVES FORM AND STRUCTURE, THE QUALITIES THAT DEFINE A SITUATION, OUR FELT SENSE OF THE MEANING OF THINGS, OUR RHYTHMIC ENGAGEMENT WITH OUR SURROUNDINGS, OUR EMOTIONAL INTERACTIONS AND ON AND ON

Professor Ian King (2011)



This Voice ...

What has become clear is that my practice needs to embrace a more triangulative model if it is to be validated as authentic in a research practice context. The practitioner, the spectator and the artefact need to emerge as equal stakeholders. The chronology of my practice, although important to me, becomes less important to the narrative of my practice. My research is concerned with an archaeology of a critical gaze, of (fashion) practitioner thought and action and how the spectator sees and responds to fashion practice beyond the surmise of the practice aesthetic

Beyond the Practice Aesthetic

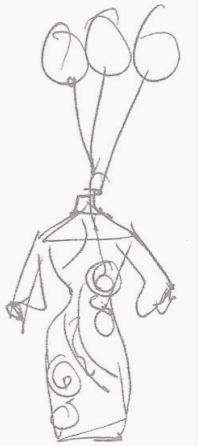


Figure.16. Sketchbook Entry.



Figure.17. Immortality of Sentiment.

Inner Conversations

NARRATIVE AS STORY .



Figure.18. Guthrie (1883), A Hind's Daughter [Oil on Canvas].



Figure.19. W.Y. MacGregor (1884), The Vegetable Stall [Oil on Canvas].



Figure.20. W.Y. MacGregor (1884), The Vegetable Stall' [X-Ray].

Gray (2010) examines the works of four Glasgow artists from the late 19th century, John Lavery, Sir James Guthrie, George Henry and Edward Hornel, in the BBC documentary *The Glasgow Boys*. Gray travels through Scotland and northern France plotting their friendships, highlighting their inspirations and moments of determined storytelling as the artists' talents emerged through a very active period of new movements and exploratory painterly techniques.

In an interview with Frame (in Gray, 2010, 29.55) discussing Guthrie's 'A Hind's Daughter' (Figure 18) Frame describes the painter as attempting to 'resolve visual things...like the hand of the girl and the knife blade'. The visual representation of the hand was important as it engaged the viewer toward the central message that Guthrie wished to contextualise that of a young girl working the land. The background is of lesser importance as the detail of the little girl's hand holding the knife is lit with contextual reference of the toil experienced by the girl at the time.

The four men built on emerging artistic movements and blazed a trail in new techniques of realism. Whilst developing their craft in Paris the four artists explore detail in their works where it mattered and where the detail is central to the story that was to be told. A broad brush, where the composition was less important or merely supported the context intended, was used to generalise the landscape and background detail. The composition was curated as a visual conversation between artist and

viewer.

Muriel also explores a painting by W.Y. MacGregor (in Gray, 2010, 1884, 24.43 - 59.09); 'The Vegetable Stall' (Figure 19) where in a Glasgow social magazine in 1883 a comment was made that MacGregor had finally finished a painting with a girl counting her takings at a vegetable stall. The work does not exist, but the painting 'The Vegetable Stall' has since been x-rayed (Figure 20) and a figure of a girl can be seen to the right in the painting and later painted over:

The inner conversations are exposed in Guthrie's work as the subjective-objective relationship emerges as constructed contexts of his practice. MacGregor's 'The Vegetable Stall' [Xray] revealed a tacit moment of judgment as the artists' likely torment of 'what is' was not right. A moment of self-critique as he likely draws and re draws the young girl before a moment of knowing or frustration meant that the girl was no more of the composition.

The messages by the artists are considered for as long as the painting endures. It is clear that the hand of the fashion practitioner cannot claim such resolve due to the transient nature of the narrative in both social and cultural terms?

Perhaps the time is now right to assert such 'inner conversations' of the fashion practitioner as meaningful to their practice?

THE TACIT SAID IS IN FACT NEVER SAID

This Voice ...

This storytelling approach, with skilled attention to detail by Guthrie, aligns to the thematic storytelling approach of my fashion practice where context plays a significant role in the development and narrative of the artefact...albeit as visual abstract or metaphor. The painter's narrative is visualised through his canvas and the fate of my visualisations are to be seen in the guise of the human form as my canvas. I find myself pondering over the difference? I am unsure about, if not nervous, by the assimilations that I make, as if I can be taken to task

by more assumed experts than I.

MacGregor (1884) was obviously dissatisfied with 'The Vegetable Stall' and considered the work 'unfinished' in its evolving incarnation as MacGregor chose to

over paint the small girl watching over the stall.

I am not an art critic, nor for that matter an artist. This is an inadequacy that sometimes weighs on my mind. As a practitioner I recognise the feelings of frustration that MacGregor experiences as once in practice contentment or conclusion remains elusive and with no obvious end.

This experiential continuum whilst in practice represents a series of unknown beginnings and integral to the doing of my practice. I often experience an obsessive and compulsive need to develop an idea or to evolve a set of ideas from a moment of inspiration or a moment of just knowing.

This heightened moment, as a knowing of my practice, becomes the exhilaration that drives distinction, perfection and or excellence of my practice or so it feels. I wonder how this moment of knowing can be authenticated? As a practitioner my decisions are often tacit until after I have acted on my practice intent. An unknown knowing of 'what is' or might be apprehends my mind.

The Glasgow Boys

Figure.21. Practice Reasoning.

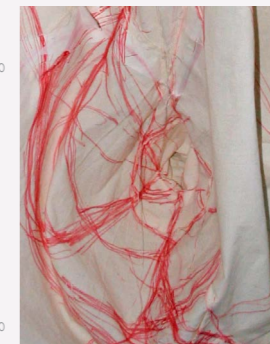
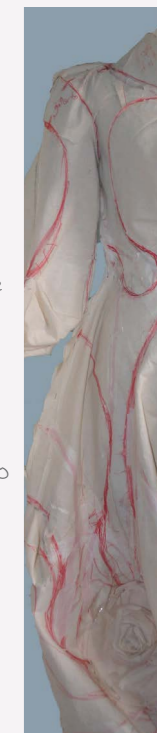


Figure.22. The Living Sketch.



Reasoning with My Knowing

Cultural Contexts

MEDIATING KNOWLEDGE .



Figure.23.Hartley (2006), Project Facade [photograph].

The work of Hartley (2006) in 'Project Facade' was the artists' response to the lives lived and personal stories of the servicemen of the First World War who had received surgical reconstruction by the surgeon Sir Harold Gillies. The patients' journals and surgical diaries consisting of notes, sketches and photographs held within The Gillies Archives at the Queen Mary's Hospital, Sidcup, were examined to develop a collection of soft sculptures embroidered with narratives on uniforms similar to those worn by the men during their reconstructive traumas.

The sculptures, as emotive and provocative responses, document the humanistic evolution of plastic surgery as had never been considered before (as knowledge). The narrative was of process (experimental plastic surgery), practice (as experienced by the patient) and the object (aesthetic outcome) that mediated a powerful and thematic truth to the stories being told.

Is this what fashion practitioners do when adopting a fashion theme and could such process, practice and object be simultaneously considered for the purpose of knowledge construction?



Figure.24.Hartley (2006), Project Facade [photograph].

THE SYMBOLIC CONTEXT IS THE CHOICE OF THE FASHION PRACTITIONER



Figure.26. Visual Note.

This Voice ...

I want my practice journey to be as powerfully exposed as the work of Hartley (2006). I wonder if my practice reasonings can be compared to the surgeon's experimental approach to the new and largely untested process of plastic surgery and the practice aesthetic, as artefact, to that of the patient's experience and aesthetic outcome?

Hartley's curation of the artefact aimed to reconcile with the origins of surgical facial reconstruction during the first world war.

The justification of Hartley's work is through the cultural construct of a moment's history. Hartley's practice outcome provided a way of remembering and of understanding the social narrative of the time. Through military-style clothing the sculptural representations of the lives lived at the time are to construct a powerful way of seeing.

As I begin to develop my toiles inspired by the Victorian Art of the Language of Flowers I am both exploring and describing a methodology of contemporary fashion practice that is deeply rooted in cultural meaning, albeit in a symbolic context, from a chosen period and time.

The work of Paddy Hartley

The Immortality of Sentiment

Does the onset of war or famine have an effect on how practitioners practice? Do such global concerns influence trends as they emerge? Is it a melting pot or does practice rebel? Why do practitioners continually look back to look forward?

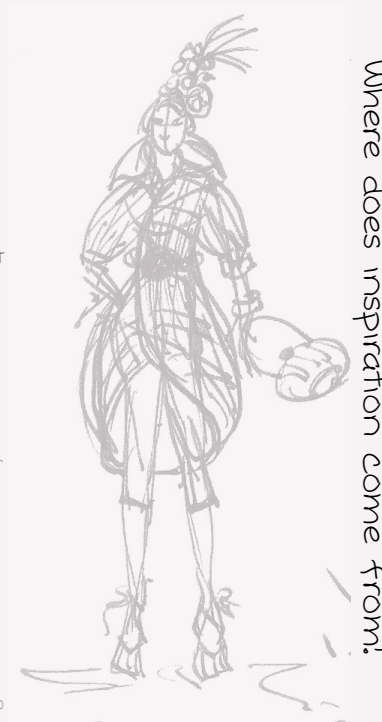


Figure.25. Sketchbook Entry.

Where does inspiration come from?

Knowledge Production

NARRATIVE AS INVENTION .

Examples can be drawn from Hussein Chalayan's video dress or wearable furniture pieces (in Moritzwaldemeyer, 2007). Catwalk shows are no longer just for the buyers and press to enthuse and discuss the clothes presented before them, but to set the scene as an extravaganza of experiential repertoire to inspire and direct the future interface of a new fashion aesthetic. Does this suggest discussion can take place at this critical moment in fashion's discourse cycle to encourage debate beyond frippery and whim?



Figure.29. Looking inside, (Research Activity A(iii)).

THE DIALOGIC PRIORITISES FASHION PRACTICE AS KNOWLEDGE OVER FASHION PRACTICE AS AESTHETIC



Figure.27. To Flora Said.

This Voice ...

If the method of inquiry is practice-based is it that the practices of the fashion practitioner are to be considered as a paradigm for the production of knowledge? The context for consumption can be broad, such as cultural, economic, social, etc. and where the use of mixed media could support the narrative in many forms. My method of inquiry, as studio practice, happens as a complex thinking and doing through, in and of a doing of my practice.

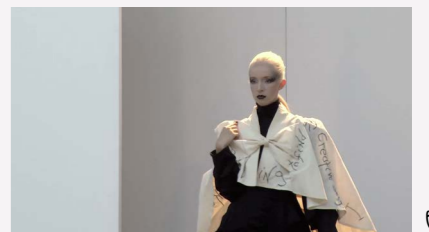
Could the through, in and of practice contexts contribute towards an alternative mixed-method approach to practice-based research; one which fashion practice may find a comfortable place in which to sit as an emergent research methodology?

Observations and experiences concerned with my practice lead the inquiry as I explore tools for telling a story of practice that purposefully documents the interface between the narrative and the unpredictable nature of a doing of practice. Through the use of mixed media a narrative of fashion practice can speak.

Could natural selection versus genetic drift be interpreted to rationalise what practitioners do in thought and action to become the archaeology of fashion practice itself? Could Darwinian theories be applied to the fashion (practice) narrative and the evolution of practice as physical and material knowledge?

If evolution results in diversification, then the uniqueness of my thinking and doing continually evolve also. If I am to be governed by shape and form, theme and fabric, etc as commodities of practice, then is it that my thinking and doing simultaneously diversify as my practice evolves?

Figure.28. On the Catwalk.



Fluid lines lead my pencil whilst on the page. I have no idea what I am about to draw until it is committed to canvas...this 'drift' is significant and perhaps provides some clues as to why I find difficulty in linking theory with my practice, as practice is just what is done and is mostly tacit until after the fact.

The Language through which Practice can speak

Curating Meaning

Drift

Discourse of Practice

A VISUAL PROPOSITION •

Evans (2007, p.78-79) wrote of Hussein Chalayan's 'artful experimentations' as an outward preference to collaborate more widely with other industries and practitioners, acknowledging the value of the interdisciplinary whilst ignoring commercial pressures. The popularisation of the fashion practitioner working in an interdisciplinary sphere suggests that mixed forms of narrative are more commonly sought as visual image prevails over fashion artefact. The fashion practitioner is to become the director or curator of their visual domain,

orchestrating the creative direction of what it is that they wish to say. Pugh (Fury, 2010) talks of his frustrations of not being in control and comments on his belief of how the audience takes away the image and not necessarily the show as a mnemonic of the fashion artefact as spectacle.

If this is so then the practitioner's mastery of his or her practice might be missed or granted only a cursory or fleeting glance?



Figure.32. Calico Study : Wilted Rose.



Figure.30. Calico Study : Early Bud yet to Bloom.



Figure.31. Calico Study : Under Me.



Figure.33. Calico Study : Tormented.

This Voice ...

There appears to be a hierarchy over image and object. No wonder I am struggling to consider my practice beyond the fashion artefact?

I have argued the hierarchy of image and word and how they can sit side by side to inform practice. The hierarchy that exists between image and object is not so easily argued. How we consume knowledge is clearly about perception and memory and how this is reinforced. The object is seen as momentary and the least accessible whilst the image has the capacity to be sustained through imagination and invention.

As a practitioner I am obsessed with the fashion artefact, the craving, the intensity, the inspiration etc. that have been my focus and my goal and yet I wonder how accessible they are to others? What do they say? Can I say it better through image and word? Is it as obvious as that? Film, photograph, sketch, audio all have an innate ability to say more, a lasting more? The fashion show prevails, as intonation of meaning or message can tap into emotional responses through the production of the show, but exist only as memorable events of the moment and for those who were there. More accessible than ever, I am venturing into a mixed narrative approach to invite cultural commentary and debate of my practice.

I am wholly consumed by my practice in its 3D state and I have just realised it is the wrong ambition. I now feel my practice is in danger of becoming lost. If I am to build the monument of my practice, as a seeing of practice, the hierarchy of word over image and image over object needs to be recognised.

These images remind me of Da Vinci's drapery studies (Popham, 1953). The drapery and fold of fabric mesmerises my senses. The light and shade intrigue a viewing experience and invites engagement beyond the practice and process of garment construction. The line and form excite and invite a seeing that I have not engaged with or even noticed before?

THE VISUAL IMAGE PREVAILS OVER THE FASHION ARTEFACT

The Hierarchy of Image and Object

Consumed by Practice

Interpretative Practice

FASHION PRACTICE AS EXHIBITION .

In a review of the exhibition held at the re-named (2004) Department of Textiles and Fashion Arts at the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston, USA, entitled 'Fashion Show: Paris collections 2006' Welters and Lillethun (2008 p.385a) argue that one of the aims of the exhibition was to 're-create the excitement of the Paris runway as a tool for artistic expression'. Critics questioned if this was achieved, but the unquestionable measure of its success was the goal of displaying and exhibiting fashion in an arts domain. Critics of the show enthused over the visual and live experience of viewing the collections but commented on the lack of excitement that was gainfully experienced during the live shows. This perhaps is where critical theory can declare an advantage. The significance of this exhibition places fashion as a conceivable spectacle for exhibition, acknowledging the surge in exhibiting fashion and the similarities that can be drawn from the art world. The work of Viktor and Rolf as contemporary self-critics, for example, display a higher order of creative application and cultural context with their practice than those with a more commercial parameter to work within. The design duo, seemingly not driven by commerce, created a perceived authority of their practice in that fashion is their art. Further, Clarke's (Palmer 2003, p.221) reverence for challenging existing curatorial preconceptions situated contemporary fashion practice in provocative compilations by stimulating viewer-responsive engagement as an open dialogue involving both the curator and the spectator.

The gauntlet is firmly on the ground for a convincing argument that contemporary fashion practice could be construed as a high culture discipline and that application of the same critical theories stemming from the arts could be applied.

Figure.34. Our Love Collides.



Figure.36. My Heart.

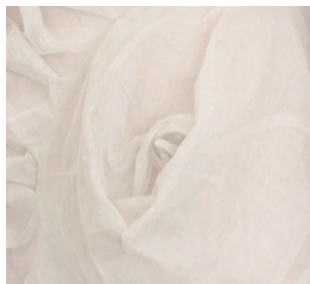
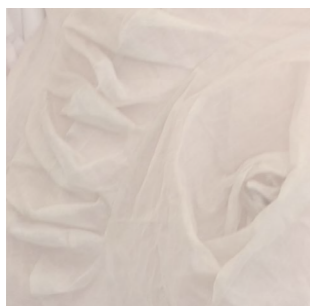


Figure.39. Our Glory.



Figure.37. Forget Me.



The discussion moved towards inferences of fashion as art, noting the distinctions that can be drawn of fashion practice and fashion design. I am even more convinced that there is a place for fashion practice in a cultural context. These moments, King suggests, are equally experienced by the fashion practitioner. Why is it in the twenty-first Century we as the fashion (design) practice research community are only just beginning to recognise fashions' potential beyond social and historic influences?

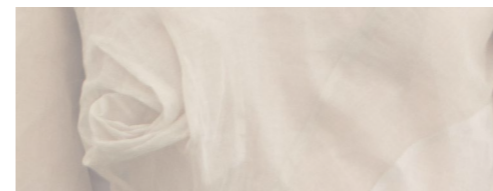


Figure.38. Calling Card.

THINKING BEGINS TO MAKE SENSE WHEN VALIDATED BY DAILY THOUGHTS AND LEARNING; A PROCESS THAT BRINGS BOTH THEORETICAL AND CREATIVE THOUGHTS TOGETHER IN ORDER TO DEVELOP AND MOVE IDEAS AND PRACTICE FORWARD .

This Voice ...

I am experiencing a state of uncertainty as I ask myself the question 'How do others see what I see?' I attended a cognition seminar where King (2011) discussed the 'moment' that is experienced by artists and the significance of meaning during the moment that is experienced.

The discussion moved towards inferences of fashion as art, noting the distinctions that can be drawn of fashion practice and fashion design. I am even more convinced that there is a place for fashion practice in a cultural context. These moments, King suggests, are equally experienced by the fashion practitioner. Why is it in the twenty-first Century we as the fashion (design) practice research community are only just beginning to recognise fashions' potential beyond social and historic influences?

To curate the spectacle of my practice I want to determine a viewing experience that is holistic; a viewing experience that is somehow at one with itself? One that argues a common cultural dialogue exists and one that the discipline so needs. Is it that my narrative of practice needs to engage the spectator through a more responsive, interactive, and themed approach to actuate a deeper critical engagement when viewing fashion practice as exhibition or in a museology context? As a practitioner I am experiencing a vulnerability and a nakedness that can be disconcerting at times. At this moment I don't even know if I can do this, given the complexity of thinking and doing that I am experiencing. I can relate to McQueen's 'Bridegroom Stripped Bare' (McQueen, 2002), as my conscious thought is stripped and laid bare on the pages in front of me. Perhaps this is what McQueen alludes to? A brief window into seeing how McQueen sees perhaps?

Could a curated intervention of fashion practice progress a knowledge of practice? Could my every-day truths construct a narrative of practice in a contemporary context?

Figure.35. Journal Entry.



Professor Ian King

The Curators use of Creativity

A Knowledge of Practice

What is as Fashion Practice ?

KNOWLEDGE CREATION .

In order to build a value system for fashion practice, Taylor (2005, p.446) suggests that it is necessary to understand the value of an object and position that object in a wider context in order to build a framework of reference. Fashion's shift towards a high culture position is gathering momentum: Storey (1996, p.3) describes the consumption of culture as a dynamic construction of everyday truths. Spectators are poised to readily accept the contemporary view that fashion as a discipline could share, equally, the same cultural landscape as the arts (Taylor, 2005, p.457). Canaday (1958, Vol 4, p.25), art editor and critic for the *New York Times* argues that art flows from the deepest sources of life and that the world that we see consists of emotions and intellect that are part of the world of painting. Canady discusses the linkage to the cultural status that the arts easily manage to achieve and an innate ability, if not invite, for discerning critique of the art itself.

The 2009 exhibition, 'Weird Beauty, Fashion Photography Now' held at the International Center of Photography, New York described by Woods (2009) of the Daily Telegraph as an 'Exhibition of cutting-edge image makers'. The images are described as 'compelling and edgy' yet without commercial meaning or necessary relevance. This connectivity of the disciplines, as fashion image or constructed artefact, is where the magic happens (Formichetti on England in Baron, 2012, p.97).

Is it this object-focused and experience-centred dialogue that fashion practice now needs to consider?

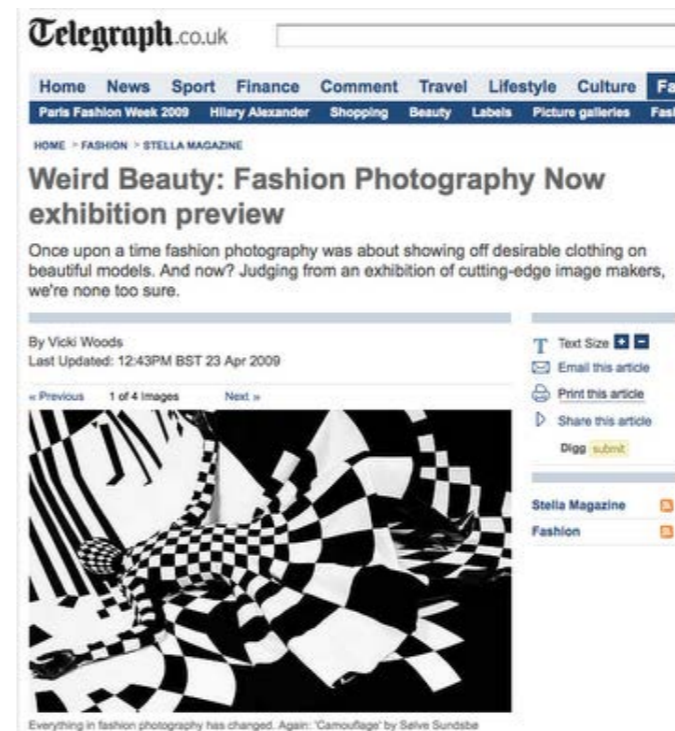


Figure.40. Woods, V. 2009, 23/04/2009-last update, *Weird Beauty: Fashion Photography Now exhibition preview* [Homepage of Telegraph.co.uk], [Online]. Available: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/fashion/stellamagazine/5207127/Weird-Beauty-Fashion-Photography-Now-exhibition-preview.html>, 2009 [screen shot, 5/14/2009].

THE COMPOSITION OF STORY CREATES A SPECTACLE AS LITERARY METAPHOR .

The exhibition 'Weird Beauty' is a collection of fashion images from 40 photographers and has appeared on the pages of a number of

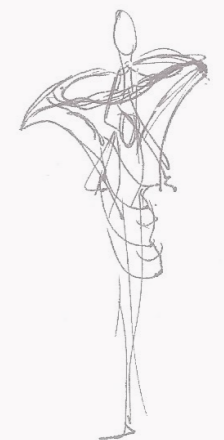
mid-to-high culture-led magazines such as Pop, Purple and Another Magazine. The images are striking and it strikes me that fashion appears to be considered a fashionable viewing experience.

It is this method of image capture that I find myself drawn to and wanting to explore. The partnership between Formichetti, as the stylist, and Solve Sundsbø the photographer in the image 'Camouflage' bares testament to the emerging equality of the disciplines and how fashion practice can be considered in its widest context? Knight (Baron 2012, p.97) extols Formichetti's mastery of 'radical' image making. I pause for a moment as I realise that fashion (as a dialogue of lasting visual knowledge) is still in the hands of the image rather than the artefact.

The twenty-first century is consumed by the visual image extracted and constructed of fashion practice much like Salvador Dali in the 1920s when acquainting Elsa Schiaparelli with his distinct ideas of when art meets fashion. The disciplines are emerging as equal, the photographer is no longer King. The fashion practitioner, the photographer, the stylist and the make-up design are partners of the image creation yet ...the superiority of the image still resonates over the fashion aesthetic (as artefact) and this frustrates me?

I want the spectator to become a key stakeholder of the practice outcome, as knowledge, and actively respond to my practice. My portfolio of practice is to be organised as a curated project acknowledging the conditions of possibility that Kant (2008 [1790]) in 'The Critique of Judgment' argued so long ago.

Am I arguing the values of a priori knowledge as critical gaze or gaze of practice that is to become an extension to the narrative of my practice?

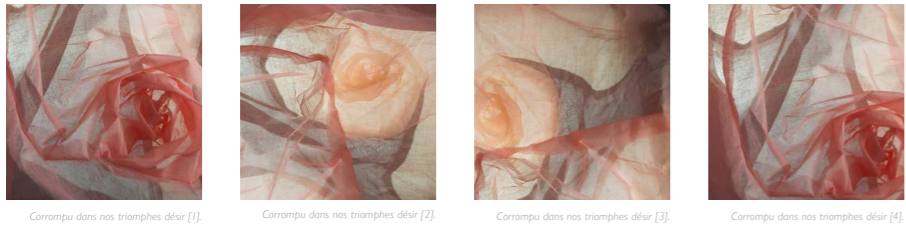


Curating Practice

FASHION AS ABSTRACT METAPHOR .

Loscialpo (2010, p.9) observed a trend for exhibition of fashion practice where the norms of chronology or taxonomic organisation was not recognised. The curation 'listens to the traces' that the garments portray as cultural contexts, or moreover, the art of creating taradiddle or far-fetched narrative as exemplified by John Galliano's pirate collection in 2009 or Alexander McQueen's Plato's Atlantis in 2010. The reference points are abstracted and extreme, testing and exercising viewer understanding, and encouraging critical debate. In an interview about his first retrospective exhibition 'Fashion and Back' held at the Design Museum, London, Hussein Chalayan (2009 [Audio]) described his work in narrative terms. Chalayan explained his fashion practice as cultural and social metaphors. The presence of themes appear as indulgent lived experiences evolving from, or reacting to, Chalayan's ideas and interventions. Film, image and soundscape have an important voice in the exhibition, that vitalises the collaborative nature of the contemporary fashion practitioner. Each collection, as an epic and thematic installation, was described in meticulous detail as to its meaning and message. Chalayan's avoidance in describing the garments in relative terms to clothing or fashion clearly signified a choice to see them as abstract metaphors, albeit an unconscious choice. This supported the view, presented by Cosgrave (2008), of the surge in 'catwalk curators' acknowledging a redefinition of the traditional notion of static display as the use of mixed media takes hold when exhibiting fashion practice.

Figure.44. Corrompu dans nos triomphes désir (4 series), Research Activity A 9vi).



THE EXPERIMENTAL CREATOR .

Loscialpo (2010) discusses the progressive role of the experimental curator and describes the practice as 'mirroring fashion theory' where a curators role was purposefully a tool for 'listening, interpreting, plotting and re-plotting'. This argument in the context of a curated intervention of practice considers both practice and theory as a construction of narrative towards exposing the practices of the fashion practitioner. Fashion

practice is distinct in that the experimentation of the practice is both a visual and conversational landscape of references interlaced with meaning and metaphor.

Could sculptural form, abstract statement, technological proposition, cultural and or social inference serve as starting points, where tacit knowing translates into a visual language of meaning and message as the fashion artefact is to be exhibited and curated for the purposes of knowledge creation?

[THE PRACTITIONER NEEDS TO LOOK IN ORDER TO BE INSPIRED]

This Voice ...

I have come across an exhibition celebrating 20 years of Li Edelkoort at Trend Union that explored the defining fashion themes of the period. The exhibition was curated as a labyrinth of experiential and inspirational staged sets. Interior and lifestyle styling strike a keen balance with fashion image and dressed mannequins to become a series of what could be best described as thematic installations?

The mix of 2D images and 3D artefacts of both fashion and art again test the boundaries of my assumption that the two disciplines can co-exist in the same cultural space.

In viewing this exhibition I have encountered a curated project that mixed visual metaphor with abstract references to tell a story of fashion theme. Edelkoort has created a landscape of visual metaphor through her own eyes.

I am feeling vulnerable once again. The significance and longevity of the research journey is becoming apparent to me as I ask myself why I am undertaking such an enormous journey of what might be? I don't know what I don't know. Maybe if I tell myself this journey is of discovery and has yet to surrender the clarity that is needed....?

Archaeology of the Future..20 years of Li Edelkoort

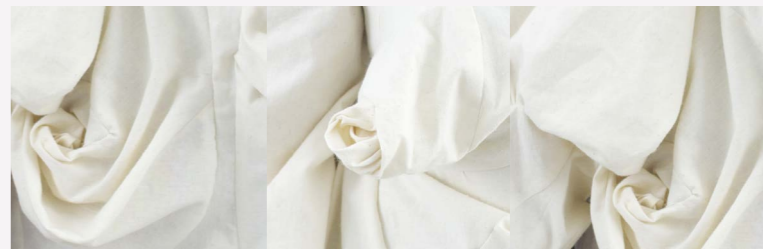


Figure.43. What is it that is seen ?



Figure.42. Sketchbook Entry.

Visualities of Practice

A CURATED CONTEXT .

Granata, (2009, p.377-378) describes the 'allowing' of practitioners to become involved in the curating of their own work and this modern panacea, observed by Granata at The Mode Museum (MoMu), Antwerp in 2008, during the exhibition of Bernhard Willhelm's 'Cabinet of Wonder' exposed an experimental and surprising curatorial approach. Willhelm chose to work with a number of visual artists in the staged environments and involved museum staff directly as a series of graffiti style proverbs were translated onto placards.

The authority granted of the practitioner and spectator in the curating of the work is now affirmed. Could this be considered a meaningful recognition and engagement of all key stakeholders when viewing and engaging with creative practice in a curated context?

This Voice ...

In placing fashion practice in a curated context am I constructing an unbiased inventory of corresponding visual and written material? As moments of reflection emerge as meaningful commentary I am constructing the many unwritten contexts of my thoughts and actions.

My visual and literary reflections accumulate as neutral and performed functions of my practice. It is only as the whole emerges that I can confidently hypothesise of my research intention.

My narratives are to be captured in action using photography and film, creative writings, audio, sketch and illustration etc. These mixed medias will contribute to the visualisation of my practice. The enormity of the challenge sits heavily on my shoulders as I contemplate how I might begin to make sense of it all?

A Curated Context

DISCOURSE SURROUNDING THIS POSTMODERN VISUAL CONTEXT SUGGESTS THAT CONTEMPORARY FASHION PRACTITIONERS PRACTISE ON THE EXTREMITIES OF BOTH ART AND FASHION

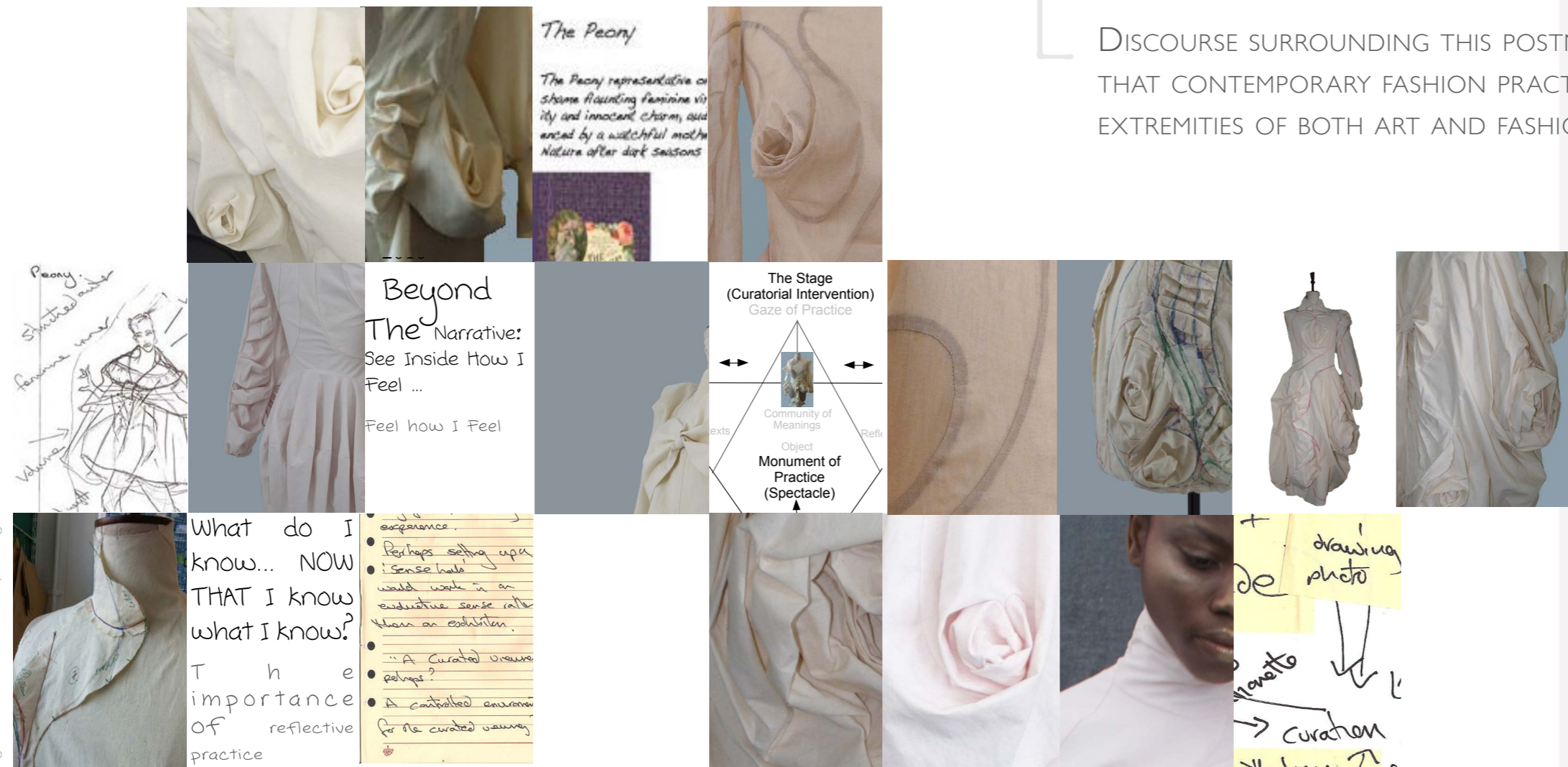


Figure.4.5. Sketchbook Entry Collage.

Am I to authenticate my research findings through spectator engagement? A case study that argues the experiment in support of my findings seems logical, yet this approach requires a question before I have one? I do not have a question just yet. If the truth be known I am not even sure that I have an explanation of what I am doing or where I am going. Can I say this out loud? Is it OK to not know?

My confidence wanes as I ponder the reality of moving too far away from my research intention. I do not fully know or understand where my journey of discovery is leading.

I have yet to discover what I need to know

A Journey of Discovery

Discovery of Practice

FASHION EXHIBITION .

The exhibition SHOWstudio, 'Fashion Revolution' (2009) led by Nick Knight explores the interactive and experiential dialogue negotiated between the fashion image and/or fashion artefact and the viewing experience. The communication channels are laid bare in that viewer participation is invited with the viewer seen as very much part of the creative process resulting more in an immersive and sensory experience. This interaction with the fashion exhibition affords a sense of art-making in that the viewer assumes an intrinsic and responsive role of the infinite possibilities in the creation of the fashion image or fashion artefact. The spectator's interpretive senses are fascinated with the use of mixed and trans media experiences and the installations attempt to link fashion and art as participatory and interpretive. The curator has granted the fashion image or artefact a function with which to be critiqued.

Knight's aim is to demystify the, often intuitive, creative process and explored process, performance and participation with Knight interpreting the critical reference points that exposed the layers that contributed to the fashion image or fashion artefact. Does Knight's playfulness redefine the relationship of the viewer when engaging with fashion as exhibition?

THE THINKING HAS EXTENDED BEYOND EXHIBITION
RECOGNISING THE IMPORTANCE OF WHAT IS

This Voice ...

I recently experienced a transforming journey of recognition that helped inform my thinking journey. I was overwhelmed by a deep sense of knowing that I had not experienced before. The fashion exhibition SHOWstudio was curated as a participatory experience playfully discerning of the process, performance and participation of fashion practice.

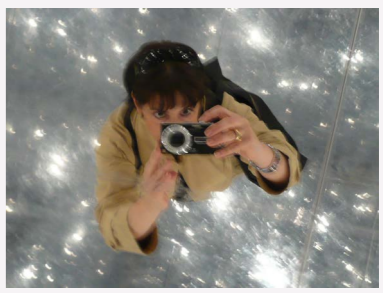


Figure.46. The Mirror Room, Fashion Revolution, Somerset House, 2009.

I was inspired by an image of a model wearing a fanciful and frilly shirt that was layered with sound as I was invited to move a tracker ball over the image. A unique piece of symphonic sound echoed the complexities of the decorative shirt as I moved the cursor over the image. The decorative shirt was described by a short film to the side in tantalising depth and extended the seeing of the artefact by sharing the senses and experiences of others. As the spectator I experienced a connectivity to both the creation and creativity.



Figure.47. Paper Dress, SHOWstudio, Fashion Revolution, Somerset House, 2009.

Immersed as an engaged spectator I become part of the creative process. As I moved through each exhibit I was conscious of the part I was playing in the narrative being told. It was momentary until my footsteps were covered by another. Each of my experiences were unique to me; a moment of seeing that was to be no more. These lost moments construct a narrative of seeing beyond what is meant to what is understood, yet are lost to a moment's seeing as knowing.

I will take these moments of inspiration into my practice and explore the notion of communication as a two-way experience from concept through to conclusion of the practice aesthetic. The vital clues are often intrinsic within the creative process as Knight (2009) attempted to expose the senses using an array of interactive media in a museology context.



Figure.48. SHOWstudio, Fashion Revolution, Somerset House, 2009.

Knowing in Action

MOMENTS OF PURE EXPRESSION •

'The Bridegroom Stripped Bare' (McQueen, 2002), as fashion practice, exposes

McQueen's immediate thought and action much like an artist transforms his canvas by a fluid set of unplanned brush strokes. McQueen's thinking intrigued as the immediate and pure

expression revealed the conceptual ideas of the constructed fashion artefact as it evolved. A sense of knowing or a rush of ideas takes over McQueen's thinking and visibly the senses appear heightened. The spontaneity and immediacy of the creative act exposes an ingenious demonstration of draping and cutting purposefully metaphoric in its ambition.

Although there are no neat boundaries to cultural acceptance, is it that fashion practitioners such as McQueen, situated on the experimental edges of the fashion discipline, now borrow from the arts (as an elitist domain) where discerning critique and observation concerned with how a practitioner works through his composition and technique are apparent?



Figure.49. McQueen (2002), *Transformer: The Bridegroom Stripped Bare*, SHOWstudio Fashion Revolution, Exhibition, Somerset House, London, [multi-media] filmed by author, 2009.

Click to View, stop and play

BUTLER EXPERIENCES AN EXCITEMENT AS THE TIME PASSES UNNOTICED AND ENJOYMENT OF THE MOMENT SUPERSEDES ANYTHING ELSE (IN DAVIES, 2010 PG.88)

This Voice ...

The exhibition SHOWstudio: Fashion Revolution at Somerset House (2009) led by the work of Nick Knight and Ruth Hogben has no doubt made its mark on me. I am drawn to the short film entitled 'Transformer: The Bridegroom Stripped Bare' that captured the work in progress of Alexander McQueen in 2002 whilst a bridegroom was transformed into a bride. The spontaneity and immediacy of the creative moments capture McQueen's ingenious and intuitive demonstration of draping and cutting based on the human form. These are often private moments of discovery rarely seen or captured as part of the fashion practitioner's creative practice process. McQueen's performative act of confidence to simply create these dynamic moments appeared strikingly effortless evidencing a heightened sense of knowing whilst in thought and action. The use of video and audio capture provided an ethnographic dimension that I had not considered before. This thinking aloud as a performative act may provide a deeper narrative when constructing practitioner thought and action? I am compelled by the possibilities as a narrative of seeing emerges facilitated by video and audio capture of the practitioner whilst in thought and action.

I can relate to this heightened awareness as a rush or a moment of knowing. I am some-how connected to these moments but as a practitioner I am experiencing these moments as an onlooker as if I am looking outside of me at me? What I cannot do is predetermine these moments? These moments as instantaneous reflections on my practice just happen and progressively become what is. Is it that immediate reflection whilst in action heightens my sense of knowing?

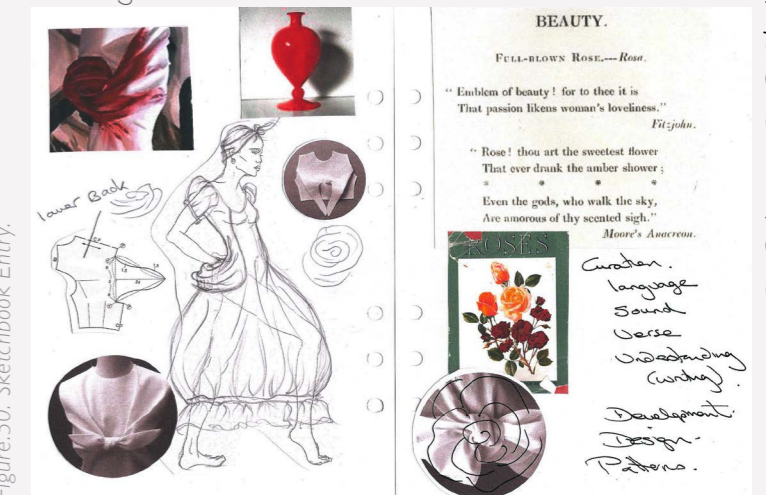


Figure.50. Sketchbook Entry.

As immediate reflection appears intrinsically connected to my process of practice this sense of knowing intensifies.

A Performative Act

The Immediacy of Reflection in Action

Looking becomes *What Is*

A CURATED INTERVENTION •

De la Haye. & Clark. (2008) argues that curatorial intervention contextualises and informs interpretation and provides the viewer with a series of location points to decipher and interpret the qualities, peculiarities and characteristics that contribute to the act of practice. The role of the fashion practitioner, as researcher, as curator, is to transform the exhibition purpose and the way in which the viewer, as spectator, situates, relates and responds to fashion practice as knowledge.

THEMATIC FASHION PRACTICE •

Museum curators are developing a more thematic approach to exhibition work. Beyond the obvious of looking for new artists' work or new artwork, Hart (2010, p.12) cites Rudolph, curator of the Akron (Ohio) Art Museum, who believed that it was important to consider new ideas when curating an exhibition and that establishing a theme or point of view could offer new perspectives or responses. Hart discussed the notion of organising material in this museology context from a thematic perspective and how a current theme, from one gallery owner, emerged out of reading an anthology of poems and tales that provided a connectivity for the purpose of curation. The fashion practitioner constructs his narrative through the production of ideas and the mise-en-scène of their fashion aesthetic.

Is it that the contemporary curator takes inspiration from such assemblies and this trend for thematic representation is personified through the curation of the contemporary fashion exhibition, as seen in *'Chanel: Designs for the Modern Woman'* (Mint Museum Randolph, North Carolina, USA, 2011) or *Alexander McQueen: Savage Beauty* (The Costume Institute, NY, USA, 2011) or *'Fifty Years of James Bond Style'* (The Barbican, London, 2012) for example?

[BUTLER (IN DAVIES, 2010 PG.88) DESCRIBED HIS EXPERIENCES OF 'EUREKA MOMENTS' AND TO NOT ACTUALLY KNOWING WHEN DIVINE INSPIRATION WILL STRIKE] •



Figure.53: Visualisation Translation Design.



Figure.52: The Living Sketch.



Figure.51: Calico Study.

A Critical Moment

A HIGH CULTURE DISCIPLINE •

As contemporary fashion exhibition, the Haute Couture or high end Ready-to-Wear markets suggest a construct of ideological expression, a fascination in dressing the human form and an indulgent creative think-tank for innovative and sometimes extreme ideas (Welters and Lillethun, 2008 p.385b). Fashion, as with the arts, seeing in the flesh leads to fuller appreciation. This thinking may lessen the link made to commerce, which appears to be the cultural stumbling block in support of fashion's status as a high culture discipline and worthy of exhibition and critical debate. It appears the unique expectation of a cyclical renewal of style (Taylor; 2005, p.445) and the pedestal that designers are placed upon in the twenty-first century demands innovation and is fraught with high expectations?

KNOWING IS NOT SOMETHING THE PRACTITIONER CAN CALL ON AT WILL

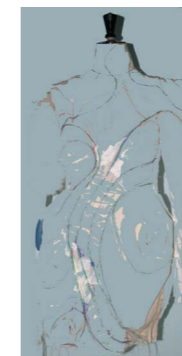


Figure.54. Sketchbook Entry.

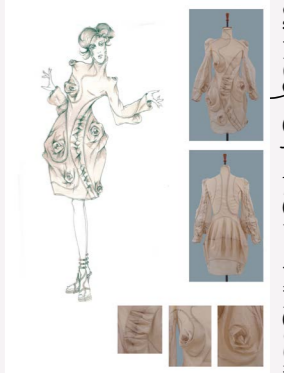


Figure.56. Outfit 5 & Cape.

This Voice ...

I wonder why I am not in command of what might be? If I think about this too much feelings of inadequacy begin to shadow over me.

Figure.55. Sketchbook Entry.



At last, I am closing the cycle, or so it feels. I know I know.. I am at peace with my practice. This is me, an extension of me, I am me and I know who I am.

I am reminded of the thematic inferences of Gareth Pugh's autumn/winter 2009 collection; Pugh's curiosity for the dark, the angular and the sinister mixed with medieval futurism juxtaposes both mood and theme to embody a coded language known only to Pugh. Fashion as metaphor is the language of the fashion practitioner and I find Pugh's creative notoriety visually mesmerising.

A nonverbal communication abstracts itself from more orthodox semiotic values and elevates beyond invention and imagination. As a spectator I am intrigued by what is not known.

Why it is that the practices of the practitioner remain elusive and generally lost to infinite moments of discovery? Why is tacit knowledge so elusive? Understanding more of the practices of the fashion practitioner appears as a missed opportunity. I know very little of how I and other practitioners think through their practice. Is it commercial pressures or a perceived lack of confidence and value to the hows and whys of what is known, meant or understood of their practice?

A Journey of Not Knowing

An Extension of Me

The Fashion Metaphor

Index

A

A Collective Understanding 2
 A Critical Moment 12, 21
 A Future Now 6
 A Narrative Inquiry 3
 Archaeology of a Critical Gaze 3, 9
 A Way of Seeing 6

C

Community of Meanings 2
 'Conditions of Possibility' (Foucault: 1963, p.xxii) 4
 Consciousness of Seeing 3
 Cultural Contexts 11, 19. See also Fashion as Art
 Curating Practice 2, 7, 14, 16, 17, 20. See also The Experimental Curator

D

Darwinian Theories 12
 Discourse of Practice 13
 Discovery of Practice 18

E

e-Exhibition 3
 Engagement Through Practice 3
 Exhibiting Fashion 14

F

Fashion and Art 9, 21
 Functions of Practice 20

H

Hierarchy of Image and Word 13

I

Inner Conversations 10
 Integrity of Practice 9
 Interpretative Practice 14

K

Knowing in Action 19
 Knowledge Creation 15
 Knowledge Production 12

L

Looking becomes What Is 20

M

Method of Inquiry 12
 Mise-en-Scène 20
 Mixed Forms of Narrative 13
 Moment of Knowing 10

N

Narrative 1 3
 Narrative 2 3
 Narrative 3 3

P

Practice-Based 12
 Practices of Looking 3, 20

S

Spectator 15, 17, 18
 Storytelling Approach 10

T

The Language of Flowers 11
 The Practice Aesthetic 8
 The Practices of the Fashion Practitioner 6
 The Tacit Said 10, 21
 Triangulative Model 9

U

Unabbreviated Oeuvre 6

V

Virgin State 13
 Visual and Literary Language 17
 Visualities of Practice 17

W

What is as Fashion Practice? 15

[A NON-VERBAL COMMUNICATION ABSTRACTS ITSELF AND ELEVATES BEYOND INVENTION AND IMAGINATION] .