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Raiding the Past, Designing for the Future

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Abstract

Academic staff involved with fashion teaching are often concerned at the level of research engagement by students; much of it tends to be over-reliant on Internet search engines and magazines. From the authors experience this is also something external examiners often comment upon. Many students lack understanding of the value of wider-ranging and deeper engagement with research at both primary and secondary levels. There is a clear need to demonstrate the ways in which meaningful research can underpin and inform their practice, allowing for stronger design outcomes and a richer understanding of the contexts in which they operate, both as lifelong learners and as future professionals. This paper investigates the meaning and background of retrospective research in fashion, in order to assess its relevance and importance in developing students' research skills. It describes two initiatives that asked students to *raid the past in order to design for the future*. Although the initiatives focused upon looking at the past, they were devised to promote and establish an understanding in students about the need for expansive and relevant research, away from the 'Google culture'. The first initiative was an interdisciplinary symposium, held to consider the impact of visual culture in the 1970s. Fashion students were asked to produce research that required reflection upon the visual and cultural significance of the period under investigation, and then produce design outcomes based on the event. The second initiative describes a live project that drew on the valuable collection of menswear held in Leeds Museums and Galleries and on existing research into the Leeds tailoring industry. It asked students to investigate this rich heritage to inspire the design and production of a range of contemporary tailored garments. These garments were amalgamated with the historical garments in a curated exhibition, which highlighted the importance of referring to historical textile artefacts when understanding how to research, design and produce future products.

Keywords: fashion, research, retrospective, past, future

Methodology

Through conducting this research the author developed knowledge of research methods in fashion and was able to draw on prior experience as a fashion designer and lecturer. The focus was on action, object-based and ethnographic research. Action research involves the practice of participating actively in activities whilst conducting research (Reason & Bradbury 2007). This occurred through the student researchers developing research skills for fashion design projects with students and their subsequent realisation of garments in the design studio. The author conducted object-based research to develop understanding surrounding the physical nature of garments in terms of design, construction, silhouette, intellectual and social value by examining how, where and when they were worn (Steele, 1998, Taylor, 2004). This included examination of garments and patterns in museum collections, student garments and fashion retail. Ethnographic research, which involves field studies that reflect the knowledge and the system of meanings in the lives of a cultural group (Agar, 1996), enabled consideration of professional and cultural environments. Secondary research came from literature that investigated research processes and methodologies in both art and design (Gray & Malins 2004, Hickman 2009, Seivewright 2007, Sternberg 1988, Sullivan 2010, Trochim 2006, Walker 1990) and in fashion and textiles (Foster & Zaccagnini Flynn 2009, Jenkyn-Jones 2002). Literature was considered that reflected upon how students learn in art and design in order to contextualise the investigations, this included Denscombe (1991) and Eisner & Day (2004). The literature review also considered design process theories that reflect on how a designer thinks and works (Lawson 1980 and 2011, Ambrose 2011, Cross 2011,). These theories base their understanding on evidence from observation and investigation of design practice, designers at work and interviews with designers. A questionnaire was sent out to over three hundred fashion students and academics in a large University fashion department in the United Kingdom (UK) which sought opinion surrounding various aspects of the research process. The questions included:

- What is your understanding of primary research?
- What is your understanding of secondary research?

- What are your thoughts about retrospective research (i.e. raiding from the past in order to create a design theme for the future)?

Insight regarding issues, complexities and enjoyment with undertaking research were also acquired. Questionnaire responses provided valuable commentaries and demonstrated enthusiasm for retrospective research. Many considered it fundamental, as today's fashion is tomorrow's costume. Understanding what has been created historically helps us to understand what new technologies, processes and designs are possible and how they can be adapted to produce cutting edge contemporary design. A small proportion of replies criticised historical research yet still considered this type of enquiry interesting. One lecturer remarked: 'I subscribe to the maxim that there is nothing new in the world - simply new interpretations and applications of the same old issues. Applying this to my interpretation of design, I'd suggest that without understanding the past, the future cannot be understood' (questionnaire response). The majority found historical research both exciting and inspiring, one declared "I love historical research; it is part of who we are today' (questionnaire response). In considering 'who we are today' and future fashion markets this investigation aims to consider the importance of in-depth retrospective research and how this can be used to understand and inform research methodologies. The main objectives being to:

- i) Identify why many students lack understanding of the value of wider-ranging and deeper engagement with research at both primary and secondary levels;
- ii) Identify the meaning and background of retrospective research in fashion and textiles and its relevance and importance in developing student's research skills;
- iii) Identify the ways meaningful research underpins and informs practice, allowing both for stronger design outcomes and a richer understanding of the contexts in which student designers operate, both as lifelong learners and as future professionals.

What is Research in Fashion?

The Oxford English Dictionary defines research as: 'The study of materials and sources in order to establish facts and reach new conclusions' (Soanes 2006: 640).

Research is a search for knowledge and new facts and applies to all academic disciplines including, science, art and history. The goal of the research process is to produce new and original knowledge and ideas. This takes three forms: investigative, productive and observational. From this, the data collected falls into two definitive types:

- Primary - the collection of original material and data;
- Secondary - the collection and synthesis of existing research and data.

On commencing research a pattern develops beginning with the research question, establishing issue, collecting data, analysing data, taking action, evaluating the results of the action and formulating new questions. As evidenced in the literature reviewed regarding research methodologies in art and design, research is either undertaken to prove an idea or uncover different approaches to exploring an idea and during the process of analysis new questions develop. Much research involves:

'Conducting the study, collecting data and preparing the written document, including recording and interpreting the results. It is accepted that the written results of research are factual, limited to interpreting the data collected, and devoid of unsupported opinions and that they add something to the field.' (Flynn and Foster 2009: 7)

However, visual research is usually pictorial or practice-based. Creative works such as photographs, paintings, designs or artefacts and the majority of other visual sources in the world: from the natural world to technology, can often be analysed as part of the research enquiry. This differs from scientific research and other disciplines where research studies tend to be disseminated through written text. The artist or designer when creating new artworks or products tends to use research in order to inspire creative endeavours and developing new knowledge or theory. New knowledge or artefacts can however be developed through the visual solution. In fashion this constitutes new and innovative products for the consumer and products that will move fashion forward.

Fashion products constantly change and the practitioner must always strive to create something new in order to sustain a marketable cycle. Designers have to burrow deeply and search further for new inspiration and ways of interpreting this in their work. Eisner and Day (1974) suggested that training in art schools has not tended to

develop analytical skills in the use of language and theory and cite this as the reason why research in arts is seen by some to be alien to the study of art. Fashion education is very much concerned with visual processes, through research, to idea, from production, to product. It is the designer's ultimate job to produce an artefact that has visual, aesthetic and marketable appeal. The judgement of a work of art as original is negated if it seems to be the result of an application of appropriated techniques. In design this does not necessarily matter as the past can be raided and reinterpreted as a future design providing it looks contemporary and has commercial appeal.

Visual research for fashion needs to consider influences such as; colour, print and surface embellishment, details, structures and shapes, contemporary trends, textures, culture and history. This all needs to be collected and assimilated in the light of both definitive primary and secondary research. In art and design this can include the following:

- Primary sources – individually sourced or collected information. These could be objects that have been found, for example, historical costume in a museum or sketches taken by observing people or events. Primary sources are generally recorded through drawings or photographs.
- Secondary sources – the findings of other people. These may be found in books, the Internet, journals, magazines etc. They are as important as primary sources of research and allow individuals to see and read about things that may not be easily accessible.

Sources of inspiration can include nature, science, architecture, film, theatre, costume, music, travel, street and youth culture, artist and designer case studies, trend forecasting and can be found in second hand shops, nightclubs, bars, cafes, museums, galleries, books, journals, magazines and on the internet. It is essential that the creative practitioner clearly grasps the meaning of primary and secondary research and that a balance of both are maintained. Primary research draws upon abilities to record findings visually and secondary research necessitates inspirational and investigative approaches. The fashion writer Sue Jenkyn-Jones (2002: 146) made the research process sound incredibly exciting when she said: 'Fashion expresses the Zeitgeist, or spirit of the times, and therefore mirrors changes in society. In their search for inspiration, designers must learn to keep their eyes and ears open'. Designers

need to be aware of a cornucopia of influences and to mix and match this research at the design stage in order to innovate exciting ideas. This also helps to develop and maintain awareness of markets, trends and technological shifts within the industry.

The Problem / Issue

Teaching students how to conduct research successfully is challenging. We live in an instant culture in which it is easy to access visual information, predominantly through the internet. As Allen and Evans (2011: 4) said: 'The 'Google generation' are about to enter higher education. This generation is often criticised for skittering their way through continuous streams of information, constantly multitasking and never focusing in on any one thing for long'. It has to be emphasised to students that this is only secondary information and is predominantly another's work. It is also a challenge to help students understand the relevance of both primary and secondary research and how this can be analysed and developed into a successful art or design proposal. The illustrations below from fashion students demonstrate both successful and poor analysis of research. Both students have developed collections of co-ordinated outfits from their sketchbook references. Figure 1, is a good example, the page from the student's sketchbook demonstrates fabric experimentation, a surreal photograph of a doll, experimentation with colour and texture, drawings of insects and her own rough notes and sketches of designs.



Figure 1: Example of good analysis of research.

Shown in figure 2, the collection of garment drawings demonstrate a clear visual connection to the research, in terms of colour, texture, fabrication and the silhouettes of the garments.



Figure 2: Collection of garment drawings resulting from example of good analysis of research (figure 1).

The work in figure 3 is a poor example of research, the page from the sketchbook is shallow and visually confusing, there is a postcard of an emaciated female figure that contrasts with the sketch of the healthier figure, there is also a photograph of the student's own manipulation of calico that mimics the skeletal folds of the body in the postcard.



Figure 3: Example of poor analysis of research.

The collection of garment drawings (figure 4) does not really relate to the research as it shows healthy voluptuous bodies in strapless corsets and dresses with healthy manes of hair.



Figure 4: Collection of garment drawings resulting from example of poor analysis of research (figure 3).

The idea for the collection (figures 3 and 4) was based on anorexia however this is not clearly demonstrated through the research and the subsequent designs, which appear rather voluptuous.

The Symposium

The overriding philosophy for mounting the Symposium was to promote the value and importance of research to undergraduate students in fashion. The 1970's, has great currency for students, for whom retrospective research is often relevant to their studies. The decade was an exciting combination of glam, camp, retro, kitsch and overall hedonism in visual and popular culture. By focusing upon this decade it helped to emphasize how the design industry revives art and design styles from significant periods of history. This helps to make research appear more easily identifiable and accessible. Students rarely fully appreciate the breadth and depth of historical visual culture and often demonstrate a superficial awareness of this in their research and design outcomes, focusing on the most obvious stylistic references attached to a period and re-interpreting these in an often-uninspiring way.

Four speakers who were experts on the aspects of visual culture in the 1970's and who, through their own work had made a considerable impact either during or about the period participated in the symposium. Each speaker outlined the research methods

they utilised within their work, and described how both primary and secondary research informed their outcomes.

The four key speakers were:

- Sylvia Ayton MBE, Chair of the Costume Society. Talk; *'My Love Hate Relationship with Couture'*
- Professor Lou Taylor, Dress Historian. Talk: *'On Their Own Terms- an assessment of the development and impact of 'youth quake' fashions.'*
- Michael Bracewell, writer/cultural commentator, author of *'Re-make/Remodel: Art, Pop, Fashion and the making of Roxy Music'*. (2007).
- Dominic Lutyens, writer/journalist, co-author of *'70s Style and Design'* (2009).

A range of research methods were described and discussed. Each approached research from a different standpoint of interest/expertise/discipline that included: fashion design, costume/dress history and theory, cultural commentary/popular culture and design history. This breadth of approaches provided a varied platform to inform and inspire the students and allows them to consider their own utilization of research methodologies. Distinctions between primary and secondary research and the value of each were outlined. This demonstrated the need for a more analytical and relevant approach to both visual and written work, leading to a more informed level of dialogue within both studio practice and theory.

The symposium also had several other key aims and objectives:

- To create a dialogue between students and staff, to network and exchange ideas with creatives beyond individual disciplines;
- To promote and establish an understanding of the need for wide-ranging and relevant research, away from the 'Google culture';
- To promote the link between the practical and the theoretical;
- To promote an interdisciplinary approach to design research.

Fashion students attended in large numbers and entered fully into the spirit of the day by dressing in retro styles, recreating styles of the 1970s. This was also timely as it coincided with a brief '70's revival in fashion celebrated in English Vogue's February

article 'We Love the 70's', (Avansino 2011). One student wore David Bowie's distinctive 'Aladdin Sane' make-up and hair from 1973 (Bowie 1994: 1) see figure 5, another sported a huge 1970's Afro wig (figure 6) and another emulated the peroxide blonde glamour of 1970's icon, Debbie Harry (figure 7).



Figure 5: A student with 'Aladdin Sane' make-up.



Figure 6: A student wearing a 1970's Afro wig.



Figure 7: A student sporting Debbie Harry hair.

The students were given the opportunity through their “presentations of selves” (Goffman, 1959, p.1) to make authoritative visual statements and in turn inspire each other. This level of active participation in research is both fun and informative as it flooded the lecture theatre with stimulating attempts to appropriate the styles of the period. The symposium’s co-organiser, Ian Massey commentated:

‘There was a lot of kitsch in the 70s, a lot of new technology and the use of new materials, such as plastics, in different ways. The period was about camp and a kind of hedonism, so you did get those quite extreme hairstyles and platform shoes. As a decade it was incredibly rich and interesting and it did bring together and fuse these various historical styles with things that were happening in society to do with gender and sexuality’. (Personal communication 8th November 2011)

All the students were set a mini project in connection with the event. It asked them to select a theme from the symposium and produce a mood board, then a fashion or costume design inspired by their research (see figures 8, 9 and 10 for examples).



Figure 8: Mood board and design based on punk.



Figures 9 and 10: Mood board and design based on The Cockettes.

Although the project was basic in its requirements students felt enriched by their symposium experience and in general their enthusiasm and increased knowledge resulted in more in-depth visual research and design solutions. Mood boards are fundamental tools used to convey research ideas in the design industries, considered 'A vital part of the design process, facilitating creative and innovative thinking and application' (Cassidy 2011: 225). In this case they were used to convey research into historical aesthetics in order to *design for the future*. As one student commented:

'This form of research can provide a foundation for working in a contemporary way. Understanding the context of a time helps the understanding of why

something was done in a particular way and [can] lead to new developments in design and technology. Ideas have to have a beginning, a stimulus and historical research can be a rich source of starting points'. (Questionnaire response)

The results of the event were that students at the University of Huddersfield were able to make more intelligent, informed use of 70s influences often revived in fashion. From the author's experience, designers tend to be 'magpie-like'; they can take influences from past styles and genres without necessarily understanding what they were about. They may revive and celebrate the way periods in history visually presented themselves without comprehending the wider social and political contexts that first brought these styles into existence. The key point of the symposium was that it placed the styles of the 70s into the wider sphere of both visual and social culture, understanding the social context of design rather than just appropriating it in stylistic terms. From the author's perspective, this leads to more intelligent, creative and individualistic design that has a depth of intellectual rigor.

The Leeds Tailoring Archive

The Leeds tailoring archive was a live brief for second year fashion students and focused upon a specialist module in tailoring in which students are taught to design, cut and make a tailored jacket. Linked to this, Leeds Museums and Galleries invited the fashion department to collaborate on a project which asked the students to research the vast heritage of the Leeds tailoring industry. This provided an exciting opportunity to investigate Leeds Museums and Galleries huge archive held in an atmospheric, old industrial factory, Armley Mills, which has been turned into a museum (figure 11).



Figure 11: The interior of the Leeds Industrial Museum.

The costume curator wanted to revitalise the displays, her idea was for the students to create tailored fashion garments that reflected the heritage of the industry and to curate an exhibition that combined their garments with those from the archive, demonstrating how raiding from the past could inspire a forward thinking fashion collection. In a similar way to the 1970's symposium, this project was important because it provided the students with multiple research opportunities, beyond the visual that enriched their wider knowledge. It included investigating the importance of Leeds in the design and production of men's fashion in the period after the Second World War and drew on the valuable collection of menswear held in Leeds Museums and Galleries. It also linked the history of menswear to an understanding of consumerism in post-war Britain and the impact of this on fashion and design. With its focus on ready-to-wear garments and designer-shaped high street fashion, the students' investigations counterbalance much existing practice that associates fashion with high-end ready-to-wear and couture. The project also highlights the contribution of Leeds manufacturers such as Hepworths and Burtons to social changes in fashion in the post-war decades. The students had the opportunity to listen to a talk from the costume curator Natalie Raw as she guided them through the archive and the industrial museum.



Figure 12: Costume curator Natalie Raw discussing the tailoring archive.

For much of the twentieth century, the buoyancy of the Leeds economy depended upon the making and selling of men's suits. The firm of Montague Burton alone clothed 25 per cent of men in the UK in the years before the Second World War. Other important multiple tailors such as Hepworths, Prices (later Collier) were based in Leeds and became national household names. The Leeds tailoring industry first adapted and then provided leadership for the ready-to-wear men's fashion sector. They sought survival by raising the quality and fashionability of their garments through the employment of designers. This strategy met with short-term success and ensured the survival of several firms, including Berwin and Berwin and Sumrie, into the twenty-first century. The designs of Leeds manufacturers such as Hepworths and Burtons and their shop layouts enhanced their customers' shopping experience and maximised sales. In 1961, for example, Hepworths held the first fashion catwalk of men's ready-to-wear and introduced a range of coordinated shirt and tie packs.

Artefacts in the archive included tailored garments that were mass-produced as opposed to bespoke. As the students had to produce a mass produced tailored garment for part of their project this afforded them the opportunity to recognise the different levels of make in tailoring. Bespoke tailoring is pitched at the luxury end of the fashion industry. A tailor produces a made-to-measure garment for his client that fits to exact size specifications. It is usually handmade, using luxurious fabrics. Mass

produced tailoring comes from manufacturers and is graded to standard size specifications used by the fashion industry. The students followed a similar process as they produced tailored garments inspired by the menswear for sample UK womenswear size 12 and menswear size 38. Students are instructed about the use of canvassing, interfacing and padding that make up the inside of a garment to give it its tailored appearance, yet produce their garments by machine in a mass manufactured way. Other artefacts from the archive included leaflets and brochures from the 1930s to the 1970s that marketed and promoted the Leeds tailoring companies (figure 13), these included patterns, garments (figure 14), photographic records of factories and tailors at work, archive fabrics and industrial machinery.



Figure 13: 1950's tailoring brochure.



Figure 14: 1940's tailored de-mob suit by Burtons.

The industrial museum displays evoked the feel of the tailoring industry through mock-ups of the inside of a traditional factory, with workbenches, cutting tables and sewing machines. The students were encouraged to utilise all of this experience to inspire their design research, from considering detailing in the archive garments through to the look of the vintage garments and even the workings of the factory, which could inspire prints for linings or seaming and darting on jackets.

The overriding value of the collaboration between the fashion department and Leeds Museums and Galleries was the introduction to the various research methods the initiative afforded. The research methodologies included object-based research, which helped students understand the vintage garments in terms of design, construction, silhouette, intellectual and social value through increased knowledge about how, when and where they were worn. Ethnographic research enabled the students to consider the professional and cultural environment in which the Leeds tailors worked through the simulated displays of industrial workshops. This also allowed the students to consider exemplar case studies based on investigation of individuals, groups or events related to the archive and the skills and technology used to make tailored garments for mass production. The students were expected to record their research through drawings, photographs and written notes that would inform both the design and technical aspects of their project, taking them through initial design concepts through to the cut and make of their tailored jackets (figures 15 and 16) and the eventual curation of the exhibition.



Figures 15 and 16: Students working on tailored jackets.

The final exhibition enlivened the archive and showcased combinations of the historical and contemporary student work. Students on the BA (Hons) Fashion Communication and Promotion course used both the archive and student garments to show how the qualities inherent in the West Yorkshire tailoring tradition were relevant by creating ideas for lifestyle brands using the jackets. Both the jackets and the design and promotional material were mingled to emphasize how the past had been raided in order to design for the contemporary (figures 17, 18 and 19).





Figures 17, 18 and 19: Photographs of 'Cut, Cloth and the Luxury Brand'. The student curated exhibition that combined the Leeds tailoring archive with contemporary tailored design and promotion work from the students.

Under the title 'Cut, Cloth and the Luxury Brand' the exhibition highlighted that:

'Today's fashion consumer is one who seeks value. However value does not mean cheap; the brands, which thrive today, are those, which offer quality, distinctiveness and style, irrespective of price. Burberry, Mulberry and Barbour encapsulate British qualities and traditions and offer products of auspicious design credentials and impeccable workmanship despite their high prices these brands thrive in the UK and beyond. Perhaps by re-inventing the skills and techniques of the past, contemporary British brands may prosper in the future'. (Project brief)

Conclusions

This investigation seeks to consider the importance of in-depth retrospective research within fashion and how this can be used to understand and inform the research process. In order to assess students' comprehension of wider-ranging and deeper engagement with research at primary and secondary levels it is important to assess the links between ideas. Returning to the three main initial objectives in order to synthesise a coherent appreciation of the meaning and background of retrospective research in fashion and assess its relevance and importance in developing students'

research skills. In order to do this each objective is addressed sequentially in relation to the two initiatives discussed. Suggestions are also made regarding how this could inspire areas for further research using different methodologies within the wider fields of art and design.

- 1) Identify why many students lack understanding of the value of wider-ranging and deeper engagement with research at both primary and secondary levels.

The discussion throughout the paper emphasises that in fashion the future cannot be understood without some empathy for the past. Much research in design involves studying visual information from the past and applying this information to the development of future design projects. In the commercial world of fashion in which the product changes rapidly, retrospective research plays an important part in developing designs that are both creative, stylish and commercially viable. Research should not only inspire the creation of garments, but also the textiles used to make a garment and the way a garment could be styled and worn or appropriated as a fashionable item. The two initiatives described introduced students to wide ranging research opportunities and promoted deep engagement in both primary and secondary research through the many visual examples that were observed and discussed. Exploring the two rich visual and technological heritages provided opportunities to engage in thorough investigations and allow the students to make judgements about what constitutes superficial and comprehensive explorations. They also indirectly emphasised different methodological approaches, including action, ethnographic and object based research. In some ways this addresses issues that fashion students have in understanding in-depth primary and secondary research and how to apply this to the development of design and visual work. It broke down perceptions of research as being stuffy, solitary and library orientated, as both events involved a great deal of active participation and social interaction. This made research appear to be accessible, fun and hugely inspiring.

- 2) Identify the meaning and background of retrospective research in fashion and textiles and its relevance and importance in developing students' research skills.

'Retro' designs have been popular in many design disciplines at different times – for example the late 90s emergence of the 'remade' Mini in the car industry. This is significant as each instance of it serves to emphasise the power or value of the original design i.e. the classic status of the 'original' car is reinforced by the reinterpretation for contemporary times as a timeless, significant or influential piece of work. The author suggests that this represents the fundamental paradox of design in any given discipline including fashion. There are very limited opportunities for something genuinely 'new' to be created and so any 'new' item is inevitably informed by items and practices from the past. The close examination of 1970's visual culture and the tailoring archive both examined the past. Criticism applied to retro design is that it is contrary to the ethos of the design discipline's creative progression but it can also have importance and relevance to developing students' research skills through increasing their understanding of what is good or poor design. The student also needs to carefully consider the contemporary consumer or end-user in the creation of the design. Very few designers have the opportunity to engage completely with their creativity and imagination as inevitable commercial demands require that products perform a particular function, have a particular price or satisfy the desires of a particular group of consumers. Thus, to a degree a purist may suggest that design that harks too strongly back to previous eras becomes banal. The author believes for creative design to flourish there has to be a balance between designers who push boundaries forward and those who perhaps take a more deliberate view of the past and it is important to emphasise this in all aspects of pedagogy to fashion students.

- 3) Identify the ways meaningful research underpins and informs practice, allowing both for stronger design outcomes and a richer understanding of the contexts in which student designers operate, both as lifelong learners and as future professionals.

There are several key examples of meaningful retrospective research within the two initiatives which have resulted in stronger design outcomes. The symposium tapped into a decade from which design styles are often revived within the fashion industry. The visual culture of the decade was examined in relation to sociological, cultural and industrial perspectives that emphasized the depth and breadth of their influences. The

students had the opportunity to participate visually by wearing retro 1970's clothes which was fun but allowed them to experiment with and observe different looks on the three-dimensional body. The sketchbooks and design work inspired by the event demonstrated some lively design solutions balanced by an increased understanding of the context from which they originated. The tailoring project asked the students to research the heritage of the Leeds tailoring industry through a live analysis of the archive held in the industrial museum. This gave added relevance to the activities as the researchers operated within an environment that simulated the historical setting in which the garments were produced. Therefore, in both initiatives students were able to combine action, ethnographic and object-based research.

What can ultimately be learnt from this investigation? The students were provided with two events that promoted in-depth investigation in which they had to identify different research methodologies. The success of these events could be measured when students have to self-initiate and research their own projects independently. They would need to draw on the research methodologies acquired through the two initiatives and apply their experiences to their own self-initiated projects. Students could be encouraged to produce a checklist from such endeavors that enables them to compare and contrast what they have learnt. One of the limitations to independent research lies in diminished tutor guidance, however students develop a greater sense of their own research abilities through such projects. Although the two initiatives have looked specifically at fashion, the methodologies discussed could also be applied to the wider creative industries. This could link to further research investigating design process theories from analysts who consider the way a designer thinks (Lawson 1980 and 2011, Ambrose 2011, Cross 2011,). This paper has attempted to discuss the process of research in fashion and textiles design from a practitioner perspective. The author believes that the methodology has validity with fashion educators and the wider design industry because the research results have come from practical experience. There is scope for further exploration of approaches that bring together the historical, museological and practical, which could be an exciting methodology used in the future analysis of fashion issues.

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