

THOMPSON Kelly & BARTON Margo (NZ)

A conversation: Virtual and actual spaces – textile practices in an era of new technologies - paper

Questions will be posed between two colleagues - from fashion/millinery and textile arts background - who work with computer-assisted technologies in their individual practices. The discussion will contrast art/design outcomes and debate theoretical positions in relation to the experiential, highlighting the differences and similarities that exist. A conversation prompted by selected illustrations will explore the following issues.

The space between the seduction of the virtual world and creating in the physical can be a great chasm. What bridges this for artists and designers? What from the making / production gets taken back to the virtual? How does each of these spaces affect the choices or decisions made? What affect does the screen or choice of software have on the process? What freedoms or constraints are there that are specific to the virtual or actual methods of creating textile / fashion ideas?

Assessing when the tools used move the outputs beyond the facile gimmick to contribute new readings is vital. What strategies can be used to help identify this change, or is it important?

Computer assisted jacquard designing and weaving enables almost any image to be reproduced in cloth. The novelty of accessibility and unlimited possibilities must give way to addressing conceptual concerns. Why make this in cloth? The space of digital photographic captures, sampling (as in music) and the digital surface of woven structures generates many possibilities. What relationship does this have to textile histories as a means of communicating identity or context?

Traditionally drawing [2D] and fabric draping on the stand [3D] have been the tools and methods for conceiving and developing ideas. Fashion conception and drawing using new technology offers an investigative tool to the fashion designer. How can visualising fashion ideas in a virtual environment lessen ambiguity and uncertainty? Ironically the 3D digital space is a drawing board, a drapers dress form and creates movement of the wearer / object towards the viewer through illusion.

Both practitioners are pushing their respective crafts, embracing the technologies yet recognising the dilemmas each new development poses. Conversations provide the space for positions to shift and move.

Biographies

Kelly Thompson is a Senior Lecturer and co-ordinator of Textiles in the School of Art, Otago Polytechnic in Dunedin New Zealand. She regularly exhibits in New Zealand, Australia, USA and has work in various public and private collections. In recent years she has worked with computer assisted dobby and jacquard looms, constructing narrative textiles that explore postcolonial themes of identity and location. kellyt@tekotago.ac.nz

Margo Barton is Lecturer in Charge of Design at The School of Fashion, Otago Polytechnic in Dunedin New Zealand and is currently undertaking her PhD through Fashion at RMIT University, Melbourne. This research titled - Conceiving and Communicating Fashion: the ideas, the image, the prototypes has a specific focus on the use of new media and CAD technologies, and their potentials within a millinery context. She creates millinery for NZ designers and exhibits in New Zealand and Australia.

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