Editorial

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This special edition focuses on pedagogical themes in fashion education, and its articles are selected from the International Foundation of Fashion Technology Institutes (IFFTI)'s 2017 conference. IFFTI is the most comprehensive and prestigious international organization representing leading fashion higher education institutions. Founded in 1999, the foundation currently represents 48-member educational institutes from 22 countries.

As issues such as climate change, sustainability and depletion of resources gain in significance for fashion students, the importance of maintaining international relationships is increasingly important. IFFTI plays a significant role in acting as an international forum to debate and exchange ideas on these issues, and develop collaborative research and new approaches to teaching and learning in fashion education. Every year IFFTI's conference is hosted by one of its member institutions. As delegates from all over the world come to debate, discuss, explore and learn from each other so the invited speakers, presentations and papers all provide a new set of very real learning experiences for these fashion educators and IFFTI members. IFFTI has set the standard for fashion education throughout the world.

The 2017 IFFTI conference held at Amsterdam Fashion Institute (AMFI) addressed the theme of 'Breaking the Rules', bringing together education and industry to look at some of the critical issues facing the fashion industry and academy today, drawing

attention to the role of education in interrogating current models of practice and leading change. One of the key features of the IFFTI conference is the research stream, where academics present current research, representing studies and projects from Ph.D. candidates, early career researchers and more established researchers to provide a critical platform for debate, to share diverse practices, test new approaches and strengthen the rigour within the discipline, which recognizes diversity, and acknowledges the complexity of the fashion discipline.

Fashion occupies a particularly interesting position in art and design higher education. In large part this is due to the number of dimensions that frame its curricula and research. Crane (2012) summarizes four of these: first, fashion as a form of material culture related to bodily decoration; fashion can communicate perceptions of an individual's place in society. Second, as a kind of language in which clothing styles function as signifiers, in which meanings of some items of clothes are relatively stable and singular but others are more nuanced. Third, a system of business organization in which fashion is created, communicated and distributed to consumers but in which the public plays an increasingly important role in its dissemination, and finally, as a phenomenon in which clothing and accessories are used to express and shape personal and social identity. Together they suggest a diverse and multifaceted agenda for both pedagogy and research, and more broadly, creativity for fashion.

However, we must also recognize that fashion studies have experienced a problem of credibility. In many universities they tend to be subordinated within an established academic discipline, typically sociology, anthropology, cultural studies and business and management. Fashion institutions by contrast focus on design and the processes

of creating fashion, which often extend into studies of textiles and the contextualization of fashion in culture and its commercial mediation to consumers. Given these contexts, in this edition we highlight how researchers have identified themes that expand the conventions and prevailing rules of fashion and how they may be more broadly applied in higher education.

In the first article in this special edition Hall and Velez-Colby's research examines the theme of sustainability and how it can be holistically redefined across an entire institution's teaching and learning strategies. Hall and Velez-Colby use Amsterdam Fashion Institute's (AMFI) Reality School to demonstrate how a model of industry-led projects creates a knowledge network hub to focus on the realization of a circular economy and a new fashion system.

The Reality School concept unifies the direction of all AMFI's third- and fourth-year students' work. Building on the development of operational learning skills in the early years, the structure of the Reality School enables deep learning, independent judgement and complex problem solving that are required in re-thinking the prevailing fashion system. Within its programmes students explore their selected area of specialism through the industry-connected or industry-led projects, but also engage in interdisciplinary practice through collaboration with students from different areas of specialism. The project outcomes result in professional products that are sold in the marketplace and strategies that are developed with and/or presented to industry.

To achieve these objectives, the Reality School has embedded a flexible structure to change its curriculum content in response to industry requirements and new projects.

It provides space in which to challenge subject context and norms: the Reality School recognizes that industry and employability frameworks can directly conflict with the circular economy agenda. Thus, learning outcomes can also conflict with it. What is important here is the student's ability to recognize these conflicts, take a critical view of them and understand their position as change agents. It also means that change in different programmes will occur at different rates, and that a circular economy agenda will integrate different levels in the curricula. Finally, it requires partnerships with knowledge providers to support the adoption of the circularity model rather than assuming that the institutions themselves are sole providers of knowledge.

For Hall and Velez-Colby, the circular economy presents a dynamic learning environment where underpinning knowledge and research is both evolving and rapidly accumulating. It lacks the accepted structures, boundaries and seminal theories that underpin more long-established areas of study, linked with more rigid patterns of teaching and learning. Critically, this means that the pedagogical processes for learning must be problem-based, focusing on an effective combination of mastery and discovery learning. This creates a pedagogical challenge: on the one hand, the circular economy's framework can provide the scaffolding that students need to take a strong personal interest in its issues, but on the other, the environment must be conducive to learning.

While changes to the fashion system require complex disciplinary and industry interactions, the design of fashion in any system requires the acquisition of skills, techniques and practices with materials and their understanding of and engagement with the body. Clothes have to fit the form of the body in particular ways. The

'fitness' may be more or less defined; 'wearables' for example may be an increasingly more appropriate term than clothing. Clemens Thornquist has posed some demanding questions about the relationship of body and fit: what does it mean to wear, to combine or wear clothes to build around the body? Conventional design systems are based on draping the body, with three-dimensional (3D) scanning following the same approach, and focusing on hanging things on the body. The body needs to be more introduced into this process to explore the relationship between fit and form in relation to the body. What is the garment? Does it need to hang in a certain way, how does the body and garment interact and are there new systems of wearing?

There is a significant gap in research relating to these questions and specifically the cut of materials and the use of patterns in design. Articles by Almond and Power and Susanne Baldwin address some of the problems of body, fit and garment construction and propose innovative ways of addressing them. The two articles propose more creative approaches to the practices of pattern cutting that extend understanding of students' tacit knowledge and its application in design education. Almond and Power explain pattern-cutting as the combined knowledge of body measurements and proportions to create a 3D form that fits the human shape. It conventionally requires students to use systematic and precise rules that are arithmetically derived and objectively applied, which design students can find problematic. One answer proposed by the authors is to explore the possibilities for students to apply their creativity to pattern-cutting using a more limited set of rules to explore a garment's fit to form. This can lead to more exciting methods of pattern cutting, which enable students to use their tacit knowledge to re-think and experiment with the medium.

Almond and Power's research demonstrates how techniques emerge by combining different teaching approaches, for example through an exploration of the symbiotic relationship between pattern cutting and design. Based on evidence synthesized from a sample of secondary research, their investigation considers that student creativity can be stimulated through innovative, interdisciplinary approaches to teaching and student-centred exploration to challenge an established modus operandi.

Student knowledge also forms one of Susanne Baldwin's themes as she examines in detail the interface between physical and digital pattern making. She contrasts the materiality of fashion designers, and their close attention to forms, patterns, folding and cutting with the possibilities arising from 3D digital pattern technology. Adopting digital technology reduces physical sampling, accelerates the creation of ranges for style selection and the evaluation of graded sizes and their fit. This leads her to question how student knowledge, derived from analogue techniques, is changed by exposure to digital practices. The research is contextualized by working with museum curators and archival materials, which raises further questions about knowledge exchange and student learning from the detailed analysis of objects – garments in the museum collection – from their documentation and from the curators themselves. With this approach, objects, object-based research and their location in the museum, rather than the studio or classroom, are central to student learning.

The focus on objects in museum archives and their digitization for student learning is continued in Guo Chen, Fenfen Ma, Yan Jiang and Riupu Liu's article. In this case their research questions are directed towards accessibility: how to enable students to access culturally significant garments that are materially fragile and inaccessible, for

example in distant museum collections. They also push the boundaries of physical fashion design through the development of digital applications to enable students to undertake a detailed examination of garment construction in 3Ds while protecting historical garments and their heritage.

The article demonstrates how the introduction of Virtual Reality (VR) techniques provides a new opportunity to protect the inheritance of Tibetan costume culture. In recent years, researchers have developed virtual 3D modelling for clothing, which has tended to focus on static models. Other research has focused on the dynamic design of 3D models, with limited success. While old and worn fabrics can be hard to preserve for use in teaching and learning, digitization and the use of VR can overcome problems of handling and accessibility by design students, to create 3D models of historic clothing. The processes have the potential for a general application in the protection of historical collections and their heritage and inform future research about the design and content of more interactive exhibitions and the conceptualization of digital museums.

In these three articles there is an implicit tension between the individualism of fashion designers and collaboration with others whether through co-design, working with museum curators and multimedia technicians or more broadly, through inter-disciplinary studies. It raises questions about who is the designer and where the design takes place, and leads to consideration of the location of creativity, creators and the concept of design. Very often these questions in curricula and pedagogy reflect a developed world or westernized world-view. However, as Vandana and Kalra observe, creativity and craft have been synonymous in most cultures. From a

traditional Indian perspective, art, craft (*shilpa*) and creative thinking have not been differentiated: the creator was also an innovator. However, the separation of art, design and craft in twentieth-century western culture, not least through its institutions, has had a profound impact. Vandana and Kalra pose questions about whether designers need to always provide designs and take craft as a muse for craft development, and whether a craftsperson eventually becomes a designer.

Such questions of agency, the designer and the objects of design demonstrate a second important development in fashion research and curricula, co-creation, the co-creators of fashion and the spaces of collaborative activity. With its antecedents in a number of design activities, including human–computer interaction but pertinently the slow fashion movement, fashion design has increasingly extended to consumers and communities in design, and co-creation. The reciprocity between designers and street fashion has been observed and studied for some time. Combined with more knowledgeable fashion consumers using personalized access to social media point can create new forms of consumer empowerment.

Empowerment and user engagement are important elements in another important and unresolved element in fashion education, sustainability. The development of a circular economy in fashion with a 'cradle to cradle' approach to fashion design, production, distribution and consumption has become a significant research theme for many essentially inter-disciplinary research teams. Mohajer's article shares Delgado's challenge to the business system, but with a focus on sustainability. She proposes that fashion design education teaches students to keep the systems of fashion production hidden from consumers, while placing on them the responsibility of consuming

ethically. In this view, consumers have little agency over or knowledge of how garments are produced in the global top-down fashion system, a system that could be characterized as a black box that does not reveal its inner workings.

The distance between consumers and the materials that they wear, distance in terms of knowledge and access, has grown wider despite the increasing ease with which goods, images and information can travel globally. Mohajer proposes that one way of reducing this distance and returning agency to the consumer may be to adopt 'hacking' as a design practice way of reducing the distance between them and the materials that they wear. Hacking in fashion design can be a 'networked and collaborative […] constructive practice rather than subversive' which builds on a '[...] do-it-yourself practice of direct intervention' (Otto von Busch 2009: 163). Hacking in this sense is not necessarily a destructive activity but instead becomes a method for reclaiming ownership, forming alternative worlds and resisting dominant systems of consumption by using data and systems in ways that were unintended by designers.

With the introduction of sustainable fashion curricula students are in a privileged position to question the existing system and to develop alternative pathways for fashion design, and a more ethical and environmentally sustainable fashion system. In order to 'mainstream' sustainability in design curriculums, more interdisciplinarity is needed. For Mohajer, this means that Design students will need to look at other industries and grassroots phenomena to develop new tools and niche strategies that oppose the dominant system, citing for example, scale from small to large, collaborative or top-down (Sanders and Stappers 2008), open or closed (Von Busch

2009, 2012). Sharing behaviours, as disruptive innovations, could offer new insights into the production and consumption of fashion.

Openness, transparency, collaboration or sharing may not at first seem to be appropriate approaches to fashion design. However, Mohajer's article shows that these values are at the core of multiple emerging projects and ventures aimed at empowering consumers. Fashion can be promoted as a space where new strategies are developed; fashion does not have to be a burden on the environment. The essence of this alternative fashion system is the sense of inter-connectedness between all the actors and materials. Indeed, rather than using sustainability, ecology may provide a more relevant model for future developments. Future generations of designers will not only be dealing with new shapes, colours and traditional tools of the designers, but will design new ways of living, embodying and making fashion that considers sustainability as a central part of their learning.

However, for some students the prevailing fashion business system provides the rationale for their future managerial careers in which they do not see an important role for sustainability. This is the context for Radclyffe-Thomas et al.'s research into sustainability education. Their starting point is Barber et al.'s (2014) argument that while a large body of students believes that the for-profit sector should address social and environmental issues and see themselves as future agents of change, others see fashion business courses as a fast-track to management employment and want a curriculum that focuses exclusively on professional skills and knowledge. The question then is how to engage a disengaged student group.

With many fashion business curricula designed to reflect the predominant business discourse, the responsibility of incorporating sustainability and business ethics into schemes of work is often left to a small core of educators. The absence of a large body of prior pedagogy to draw upon the topics inherent in sustainability and ethical education can become overwhelming for teachers and students. A core pedagogic question for educators is how to engage students in a 'liberating and empowering' learning process, which allows them to envision actions with respect to sustainability (Hicks cited in Wayman 2009). To this end, they can identify their personal values and motivations with a model of 'social conscience' to support the development of their sustainability literacy (Goldberg 2009).

Using a case-study approach, Radclyffe-Thomas et al. found that the majority of students viewed sustainability as closely linked to values, being 'the right thing to do', and that they were also conscious of sustainability's temporal relevance to the future: their own, the fashion industry's and the planet's. The students effectively synthesized three different perspectives on sustainability, associating it with an ethical position based on values and caring (about animals, the environment and humanity), second, with business philosophy (corporate social responsibility) and third, the lived experience of fashion industry workers. The researchers demonstrate how the boundaries of sustainability have been stretched to include not only personal and business management ethics and values but also empathy for the workers in the fashion system and their working conditions.

The final article from Henry Delgado stretches the boundaries of the fashion system in a different direction by focusing on consumers and communities. He moves from a

designer-centric fashion world to one that allows students to experiment with and advance alternative fashion business models. Delgado demonstrates the capabilities for community engagement with fashion methods and practices and the possible applications of social practice fashion as a framework for community-centric businesses models. Rather than following the prevailing fashion system's profit-making goal, which contributes to and reinforced a commercialized image of Hawaii the Ahola project aimed to achieve an authentic vision of Hawaii and its people. Instead of an individualistic process in which direct feedback from audiences is absent, Ahola took advantage of the sophisticated creative methods of fashion and persuasive promotional principles of fashion advertisement to engage and empower Honolulu residents and communities.

Delgado's approach provides a challenge to the study of fashion business. First, it exposes students to problems of objectification of consumers, communities and social constructions of knowledge about them through commercialized imagery and discourses. Second, it provides students a decentred approach to the consumer and fashion consumption, and methods to involve people in creating an alternative, authentic image of their world in their terms. In this case, it enables students to re-position and apply sophisticated corporate marketing communications techniques from a consumer perspective. It enables students to find ways of subverting the conventions of the fashion system. But these may also lead to new commercial insights, that, by working with communities, new possibilities for fashion businesses emerge. Finally, the approach allows students to explore the nuanced concept of authenticity through issues of objectivity and social construction through images and discourses by different people and groups.

Drawn from the 2017 IFFTI conference theme of 'Breaking the rules', this edition has emphasized two important influences on the future of fashion education, sustainability and the mediation of fashion, in part through digitization but also through new forms of engagement – co-creation and collaborations – between designers, consumers and communities. In some respects they are opposites; the world of slow fashion, a focus on communities and making, seems distinctively different from the digital visual, immediate and immaterial world. Nevertheless the convergence of the physical and digital worlds will continue to have a significant impact on fashion curricula.

The challenge for fashion educators is to assess, select and implement strategies to manage the dynamism and complexity not of a singular fashion system but a plurality of systems. In higher education, these articles contribute towards a progressive and contemporary agenda for '[…] an engaged and expansive education […] that is layered, ethical and deals with complexity as an antidote to the shallow, overly simplistic debates that our young people often listen to' (Astle 2017).

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