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Eliminating the Bust Dart: The Role of Pattern Cutting in the 1960–2002 Career of British Fashion Designer, Sylvia Ayton

Kevin Almond

Abstract

This article examines the role of pattern cutting in the 1960–2002 career of British fashion designer, Sylvia Ayton, whose career is significant for its flexibility and longevity. During the 1960s, Ayton worked as a fashion designer in business partnership with textile designer, Zandra Rhodes, and as a commercial designer for Wallis, the British women's clothing retailer, during 1969–2002. A review of the literature shows that pattern cutting has rarely been explored through the relationship of the designer with its technology and craft. The underpinning research will bridge this gap by investigating the thinking, practices, and paradigms of pattern cutting during a commercially orientated fashion designer's career. This article incorporates research cultivated from privileged access into Ayton's private archive, located in London, England. This study identifies a lasting reference point for the fusion of pattern cutting craft with design, expressed in the context of fashion design professions within the global fashion industry.

Introduction

This article explores the role of pattern cutting in the career of British fashion designer, Sylvia Ayton, MBE (Figure 1). Born in 1937, Ayton graduated in 1960 from the fashion school managed by Professor Janey Ironside (1919–1979)[1] at The Royal College of Art, London, England. In her autobiography, Ironside noted, "One of the best results of the social revolution in Britain since the Second World War has been the release of many young designers to the world, whose potentialities would have been wasted before the war."[2]

Figure 1:
Sylvia Ayton, Photographed in the Design Studio at Wallis, the British Women's Clothing Retailer,
Photographer Unknown, 1990,
London, England,
The Private Collection of Sylvia Ayton,
London, England.

After the Second World War, the British government needed to manage the high rate of unemployment, which was caused by soldiers returning home from the war who found difficulty securing employment. One governmental strategy to combat unemployment was to create a network of art colleges that enabled young people to study art and design. This fixed the problem of high rates of unemployment as students were not included in government unemployment statistics. The strategy also generated increased opportunities to study fashion design, which resulted in the

[1] Janey Ironside was Professor of Fashion at The Royal College of Art, London, England, during 1956–1968.
[2] Janey Ironside, *Janey,* M. Joseph, London, England, 1973, p. 113.

release of young designers to the fashion industry whose relationships with the craft of pattern cutting generated exciting innovations. This creative explosion was explored by Oakley and Banks in their study of art schools, class, and British higher education, in which they stated, "Empowered by creative freedoms integral to the pursuit of an art qualification, young people could find new worlds open to them, new ways of seeing and being in institutions that were geared to encouraging them to find their creative vocation."[3]

Ayton's career evolved during this social revolution, and her career is significant for its flexibility and longevity. During the 1960s, Ayton worked as a fashion designer in business partnership with textile designer, Zandra Rhodes (1940–). During 1969–2002, Ayton worked as a commercial designer for Wallis, the British women's clothing retailer. This study considers Ayton's experiences as a designer and pattern cutter for different market levels. A review of the literature shows that pattern cutting has rarely been explored through the relationship of the designer with the craft of pattern cutting, particularly designers such as Ayton who have designed anonymously for large companies or retailers. The underpinning research will bridge this gap by investigating the thinking, practices, and paradigms of pattern cutting during a fashion designer's career. It will also identify a lasting reference point for the fusion of technology and craft with design, expressed in the context of fashion design professions within the global fashion industry.

The purpose of this research is to review the long career of Sylvia Ayton as a fashion designer and to contextualize this with her relationship with the activities involved in pattern cutting. This article utilises a unique primary source: Ayton's extensive private archive, which was compiled by the designer over many years, and, unlike museum collections, has previously been inaccessible to researchers. Ayton's archive is an original and important body of work that spans more than four decades as a British fashion designer. The archive documents many of the changes in pattern cutting and design to which Ayton needed to adapt in order to remain technically and stylistically relevant with the changing times. This study also references an autobiographical paper that Ayton published in 2005, in which she described her career and her love–hate relationship with haute couture.[4] In the paper, she reflected how the refined

[3] Kate Oakley and Mark Banks, "The Dance Goes on Forever? Art Schools, Class and UK Higher Education," *The International Journal of Cultural Policy,* Volume 22, Issue 1, 2015, Taylor and Francis, Abingdon, Oxfordshire, England, pp. 41–57.
[4] Sylvia Ayton, "A Love–Hate Relationship with Couture," *Costume,* Volume 39, Issue 1, 2005, Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh, Scotland, pp. 117–127.

dressmaking, pattern cutting, and bespoke qualities of couture craft were a catalyst for her to develop her individual approach to fashion design and pattern cutting. This development was documented further in conference presentations authored by Ayton.[5]

The research findings take a systematic approach. The first part of this study is a chronological description of Sylvia Ayton's career. The second, third, and fourth parts explore Ayton's approach to pattern cutting and the importance of pattern cutting in relation to fashion design activities throughout her career. The analyses are split in half: 1960–1969, pattern cutting during her independent designer years, and then 1969–2002, pattern cutting during her corporate designer years.

The discussion of bust darts is imperative to the overall investigation because it was an endless source of fascination for Ayton. In pattern cutting, darts fold away fabric in order to shape the fabric around the bust (and other parts of the body). In many of her designs, Ayton sought to either eliminate the bust dart or integrate it into the seam lines of a pattern. As well as cutting her own patterns, Ayton often worked with a pattern cutter in consultation over a toile, a prototype of a garment made in an inexpensive fabric, often cotton muslin. This consultation was to ensure that the darts suited the fabric and design. At Wallis, Ayton worked in an advisory way with a team of pattern cutters (Figure 2).

[5] See:
Sylvia Ayton, "The 80s: Was It the Best of Times for the Wallis Woman?" Presentation, Costume and Textile Society of Wales, National History Museum, St. Fagans, South Glamorgan, Wales, 19 May 2006.
Sylvia Ayton, "How Crinolines and Couture Helped Me Create a Customer Friendly Clothing," Presentation, The Costume Society Symposium: The Price of Fashion, Leeds, West Yorkshire, England, 9 July 2010.
Sylvia Ayton, "Creative Pattern Cutting: Is Moving the Bust Dart a Means to an End?" Presentation, The First International Symposium for Creative Pattern Cutting, The University of Huddersfield, Huddersfield, West Yorkshire, England, 6 February 2013.

Figure 2:
Sylvia Ayton with Pattern Cutter, Joyce Monsanto, Fitting a Toile at Wallis,
Photographer Unknown, 1986, Hendon, London, England,
The Private Collection of Sylvia Ayton, London, England.

This article presents a discussion about what can be learnt from Ayton's relationship with pattern cutting. By assessing her relationship with the craft of pattern cutting throughout her career, the article seeks to establish a lasting reference point for the fusion of pattern cutting and design in the context of contemporary and future fashion design professions. This is evaluated through a quantitative analysis of the key skills Ayton acquired throughout her pattern cutting journey and their value in today's global fashion industry. The aims of this research are to:

1. Document the role of pattern cutting in the 1960–2002 career of British fashion designer, Sylvia Ayton, utilising her private archive as primary source material.
2. Consider Ayton's experience of pattern cutting as a designer for different market levels and assess the merits of these different roles in a creative and skills–based context.
3. Appraise the thinking, practices, and paradigms of pattern cutting during a fashion designer's career and their value within today's global fashion industry.

Methodology and Literature Review

The research firstly takes a qualitative approach that exposes the inner experience of the subject.[6] As Denzin and Linken stated, "Qualitative researchers stress the socially constructed nature of reality, the intimate relationship between the researcher and what is studied, and the situational constraints that shape inquiry."[7] In this study, the process is both explorative and observational, and it considers the characteristics, descriptions, and definitions of pattern cutting during Ayton's career. Archival research is the principle methodology employed through the scrutiny of Ayton's work. This involved searching for and extricating evidence from the documented records within her private archive.[8] Object-based research permitted the close analysis of garments that Sylvia had designed, patterns, press cuttings, interviews, photographs, sketches, and toiles in the archive.[9] Various conversations and unstructured interviews[10] were held with the designer over a three-year period, 2016-2018.[11] The conversations revealed much about Ayton's passion for the design and craft practices of pattern cutting. Additionally, a quantitative survey, conducted

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[6] See:
John W. Creswell, *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches,* Third Edition, Sage Publications, Thousand Oaks, California, United States, 2008.
Uwe Flick, *An Introduction to Qualitative Research,* Fifth Edition, Sage Publications, Thousand Oaks, California, United States, 2014.
Carole Gray and Julian Malins, *Visualizing Research: A Guide to the Research Process in Art and Design,* Routledge, Abingdon, Oxfordshire, England, 2004.
Yuni Kawamura, *Doing Research in Fashion and Dress: An Introduction to Qualitative Methods,* Berg, Oxford, Oxfordshire, England, 2011.
Ingrid Mida and Alexandra Kim, *The Dress Detective: A Practical Guide to Object-Based Research in Fashion,* Bloomsbury Academic, London, England, 2015.

[7] Norman K. Denzin and Yvonna S. Lincoln, *The Sage Handbook of Qualitative Research,* Third Edition, Sage Publications, Thousand Oaks, California, United States, 2005, p. 10.

[8] See:
Marie Riegels Melchior and Birgitta Svensson, *Fashion and Museums: Theory and Practice,* Bloomsbury Academic, London, England, 2014.
Lou Taylor, *The Study of Dress History: Studies in Design and Material Culture,* Manchester University Press, Manchester, Lancashire, England, 2002.
Simon Trafford, *Primary Sources in British Archives: A Practical Guide,* Bloomsbury Academic, London, England, 2018.

[9] See:
Mida and Kim, op cit.

[10] Unstructured interviews are a dialogue where the questions are not prearranged and encourages the interviewee to speak freely about the subject concerned, unlike the structured interview, which usually features a set of standard questions.

[11] Sylvia Ayton, Personal Interview Conducted by Kevin Almond, London, England, 28 April 2016.
Sylvia Ayton, Personal Interview Conducted by Kevin Almond, London, England, 26 June 2018.

through a questionnaire, analysed how the pattern cutting skills Ayton identified during her career could have value in today's global fashion industry.

Literature related to Sylvia Ayton's career is sparse. There is no published biography, however, there are anecdotal references to her work in several publications.[12] Ayton's private archive revealed press cuttings and interviews with the designer; however, these were again circumstantial and provided little depth of analysis about her work or approach to pattern cutting.[13] A comment published in 1995 by the journalist, Tamsin Blanchard, is particularly revealing, "Sylvia Ayton is one of the most important designers you've never heard of. For a quarter of a century she has set the style of Wallis clothes and that has meant lots to lots of women."[14] This anonymity as a designer encapsulates the position of many who are employed by companies or retailers as the significance of their roles, creativity, and skills, to the global fashion industry has rarely been recorded.

Ayton delivered a presentation at an international pattern cutting conference in 2013.[15] Her presentation explored her involvement with many facets of pattern cutting

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[12] See:
Christopher Breward, Edwina Ehrman, and Caroline Evans, *The London Look: Fashion from Street to Catwalk,* Yale University Press, London, England, 2004, p. 131.
Christopher Breward, David Gilbert, and Jenny Lister, *Swinging Sixties: Fashion in London and Beyond, 1955–1970,* V&A Publications, London, England, 2006, pp. 30, 62.
Marni Fogg, *Boutique: A '60s Cultural Phenomenon,* Mitchell Beazley, London, England, 2003, pp. 30, 41–44, 50–53, 114.
Joel Lobenthal, *Radical Rags: Fashions of the 1960s,* Abbeville Press, New York, New York, United States, 1990, p. 231.
Jane Mulvagh, *Vogue History of Twentieth-Century Fashion,* Viking Press, London, England, 1988, p. 297.
Brenda Polan, "Fashion on Fire," *The Guardian,* London, England, 3 November 1983, p. 11.
Iain R. Webb, *Foale and Tuffin: The Sixties: A Decade in Fashion*, ACC Editions, Woodbridge, Suffolk, England, 2009, pp. 17, 25, 26, 40, 43, 92, 139, 176, 214.
[13] See:
Caroline Baker, Title Unknown, *Nova,* London, England, Month Unknown, 1967, p. 38.
Tamsin Blanchard, Title Unknown, *The Independent,* Magazine Colour Supplement, London, England, 30 September 1995, p. 53.
Anonymous, "The Bag Lady Speaks," *Fashion Weekly,* London, England, 15 February 1990, p. 8.
Penny Graham, "Ribbon Dress," *The Evening News,* London, England, 8 July 1968, p. 7.
[14] Blanchard, op cit.
[15] Kevin Almond, Organiser and Chair, *The First International Symposium for Creative Pattern Cutting*, The University of Huddersfield, Huddersfield, West Yorkshire, England, 6–7 February 2013.

throughout her life and provided the main source and trajectory explored further within this article.[16] Ayton was also interviewed at the conference, and her commentary provides useful insight into her perspective, related to pattern cutting practice.[17] Further conference presentations by Ayton provided important information about her career although these presentations are retained in her private archive and remain unpublished.[18] Also useful to the research of this article was the case study published in the PhD thesis of Pammi Sinha, who analysed Ayton's working practices and approach to pattern cutting.[19]

Within literature there has been some exploration of the relationships between famous couture designers, the craft of pattern cutting, and how their cutting innovations have inspired fashion. This includes the work of designers such as Madeleine Vionnet (1876–1975), Cristobel Balenciaga (1895–1972), Madame Grès (1903–1993), Alexander McQueen (1969–2010).[20] Pattern cutting, however, has rarely been explored through the relationship of the working, commercial designer with the craft. The study presented in this article bridges this gap and provides a catalyst for exploring the thinking processes that coexist between pattern cutting and design for both designer level and high street clothing. Further reference to literature is embedded throughout the text.

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[16] Ayton, 2013, op cit.

[17] Sylvia Ayton, Personal Interview Conducted by The University of Huddersfield, Huddersfield, West Yorkshire, England, 20 February 2013, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7FPfQsOHpiY, Accessed 18 April 2018.

[18] See:
Ayton, 2006, op cit.
Ayton, 2010, op cit.
Ayton, 2013, op cit.

[19] See:
Sylvia Ayton, Personal Interview Conducted by Pammi Sinha, London, England, 6 August 1994. This interview was transcribed and published in an appendix of the PhD thesis of Pammi Sinha, *A Comparative Study of Fashion Design Processes in UK Womenswear Manufacturing Companies,* PhD Thesis, The University of Salford, Salford, Lancashire, England, 2000.
Pammi Sinha and Chris Rivlin, "Describing the Fashion Design Process," Presentation, The Second European Academy of Design Conference, Stockholm, Sweden, 24 April 1997.
Sinha, op cit., 2000.

[20] See:
Marie-Andree Jouve, *Balenciaga,* Thames and Hudson, London, England, 1989.
Betty Kirke, *Madeleine Vionnet,* Chronicle Books, San Francisco, California, United States, 1997.
Patricia Mears, *Madame Gres: Sphinx of Fashion,* Yale University Press, London, England, 2008.
Judith Watt, *Alexander McQueen: Fashion Visionary,* Goodman Books, London, England, 2012.

The Career of Sylvia Ayton

In order to contextualise Ayton's work, this section briefly describes her career. The designer was born in Gants Hill, London, a suburban world from which she eventually wanted to escape. Her interest in fashion began early as she notes, "As a child I loved drawing but have no mementos of my artistic work, but I have mementos of childish pattern cutting and sewing which started with dolls, small Rosebud dolls."[21] Ayton disliked school but loved drawing and painting, which led in 1953 to her enrollment on the dress design course at Walthamstow Art School, where she cultivated her drawing skills (Figure 3). This was followed by her acceptance in 1957 to study in the fashion school managed by Professor Janey Ironside at The Royal College of Art in London.

Figure 3:
A Pen and Watercolour Drawing,
Sylvia Ayton,
Walthamstow Art School,
Walthamstow, England,
circa 1953,
The Private Collection of Sylvia Ayton,
London, England.

[21] Ayton, 2013, op cit.

Janey Ironside is often credited as the spearhead of the "youthquake" phase of the swinging sixties.[22] Many notable designers from this era trained under Ironside, including Ossie Clarke (1942–1996), Zandra Rhodes, Bill Gibb (1943–1988), Marion Foale (1939–) and Sally Tuffin (1938–) who formed the design partnership, Foale and Tuffin.[23] Ayton noted, "I did learn an incredible amount at Royal College. I won a competition to design the BEA air hostess uniform (Figure 4) which went into production, and I learnt how to pattern cut and fit garments."[24]

Figure 4:
BEA Air Hostess Uniform Design,
Sylvia Ayton,
The Royal College of Art, London, England, 1958,
The Private Collection of
Sylvia Ayton,
London, England.

[22] See:
Ironside, op cit.
Virginia Ironside, *Janey and Me: Growing Up with My Mother,* Harper Perennial, New York, New York, United States, 2003, p. 189.
[23] See:
Ayton, 2005, op cit., p. 119.
Fogg, op cit., pp. 13, 30, 159.
[24] Ayton, 2013, op cit.

Sinha observed about Ayton, "During her studentship at The Royal College of Art, she had designed and made clothes for actresses, Suzannah York (1939–2011) and Edina Ronay (1940–), worked with Doris Langley Moore (1902–1989) at The Costume Museum at Bath, and designed and made hats for the film, *Freud* (1962)."[25] When Ayton began her professional career in 1960, she represented a new breed of fashion designer. These were professionals, unafraid to harness the cultural revolution that was unleashed in the aftermath of the Second World War.[26] The late 1940s was a time of hardship and economic shortage in Britain. During the 1950s, though, there was an increased affluence and prosperity, which had an influence on both the middle and working class across the country. Higher education also expanded rapidly, and the social and professional status of women slowly improved. A youth culture emerged during the late 1950s and 1960s that emphasised the importance of clothes, popular music, and lifestyle. This post–war climate helped shape a fresh direction for the British fashion industry and had a global influence on the way people dressed. It also produced designers who embraced these new opportunities, including Gerald McCann (1931–), Mary Quant (1934–), and Ayton. In an interview, Ayton explained that there was very little interaction between the designers during this time as they were all in competition with each other.[27] However, each embarked on careers with a basic set of design and pattern cutting skills that adapted to the changing needs of the fashion industry, as they sustained professions that stretched beyond the 1960s.

Ayton graduated from The Royal College of Art in 1960 with the confidence that she would be able to make clothes for private customers and the boutiques that were emerging on the high streets of London and cities across Britain. From 1960, Ayton's career combined teaching at art colleges with freelance designing and pattern cutting for friends who owned fashion shops in Carnaby Street and the Kings Road in London. Ayton worked on garments that were designed and sold to stores including Top Gear, Countdown, and Palisades on the Kings Road. As Ayton described, "I just made up the garments I liked, showed them to the boutique owners who loved them,

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[25] Sinha, 2000, op cit., p. 231.
[26] See:
Hazel Clarke, "Sylvia Ayton: Fashion Designer," *Encyclopedia of Fashion,* http://www.fashionencyclopedia.com/A-Az/Ayton-Sylvia.html, Accessed 18 April 2018.
Ironside, 1973, op cit., p. 119.
Lobenthal, op cit.
Mulvagh, 1988, op cit.
Webb, 2009, op cit.
[27] Ayton, 2018, op cit.

then I graded the pattern, bought the fabric, cut them out at home and the girl around the corner made them up."[28]

In the mid 1960s, a buying office in New York saw Ayton's clothes in one of the London boutiques. Ayton subsequently received an order from B. Altman and Company, a luxury department store and chain in New York. It was a small order: three different styles of dresses produced in four sizes, and six dresses each, which totaled 72 dresses. The dresses sold for a retail price of six guineas each, the equivalent of approximately £112 each in 2019 currency.[29] This was a price a customer would expect to pay for a high-quality dress in contemporary British high street stores, such as Reiss or Karen Millen. Ayton had the dresses delivered to the store in New York through door-to-door shipping, which meant the shipping company collected the product from the designer and delivered it to the retailer as part of the shipping package. The dresses sold and were re-ordered.

Whilst working as a tutor at Ravensbourne College of Art in London during 1961-1967, Ayton met textile designer Zandra Rhodes, who was also teaching at the college.[30] They formed a design partnership, and this became Ayton's first formal business (beyond her business as a freelance designer) before starting work at Wallis in 1969. Ayton described her partnership with Rhodes, "We worked from my flat. Zandra printed at her studio, and I made the patterns and samples. We paid cash for the cloth. We went to see the boutique buyers and tried to sell the clothes, but our garments were too different."[31] In 1966 this resulted in the establishment of their own boutique, The Fulham Road Clothes Shop (Figure 5), with backing from actress Vanessa Redgrave (1937-). Their meeting was initiated through friends of Rhodes who knew Redgrave. The friends arranged for Ayton and Rhodes to visit Redgrave's house, where she commissioned a dress. On a second visit, Ayton and Rhodes showed Redgrave their print design with the words "We love you and send you kisses," which was intended to be printed on satin fabric for the dress. Redgrave was so delighted she agreed to donate money as financial backing for the shop in return for the clothes. Ayton described their idiosyncratic philosophy, "Zandra and I did our own thing. We knew best. We were such egoistical little madams."[32] Despite tremendous publicity, as well as popularity with both customers and the press, a combination of lack of business acumen and debt forced Ayton and Rhodes to close their business.

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[28] Ayton, 2005, op cit., pp. 117-127.
[29] Currency Converter: 1270-2017, The National Archives, Kew, Surrey, England, http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/currency-converter, Accessed 25 June 2019.
[30] Zandra Rhodes, *A Lifelong Love Affair with Textiles,* ACC Textiles, London, England, 2009.
[31] Ayton, 2005, op cit., pp. 117-127.
[32] Ayton, 2006, op cit.

Figure 5:
Models Wearing Clothes from The Fulham Road Clothes Shop, London, England, 1969, The Private Collection of Sylvia Ayton, London, England.

In 1969, the fashion designer Brian Godbald (1945–) introduced Ayton to the British high street retailer, Wallis, where Ayton worked for two months as a freelance designer. Upon completion of the two-month design contract, Ayton underwent a formal interview with the managing director, Jeffrey Wallis (1922–2015), which led to permanent employment at Wallis as the outerwear designer (Figure 6). Designing for a mid-market retailer demanded a different mindset, and Ayton had to adapt. She said, "I had a few second thoughts about joining a retail company: would I have to design garments I did not like? I was a rebel, a young trendy designer, doing what I wanted."[33] The designer's long tenure at the company of 33 years enabled Ayton to experience significant changes both in the customer and in the British retail industry.

[33] Ayton, 2005, op cit., p. 123.

Figure: 6:
Coat Design that Sylvia Ayton Prepared to Take to Her Interview with Jeffrey Wallis,
London, England, 1969,
The Private Collection of Sylvia Ayton,
London, England.

From 1969 onwards, Ayton traveled periodically to Paris to visit couture shows at Yves Saint Laurent, Christian Dior, Chanel, and Patou. Ayton took notes about the clothes and patterns at the couture shows, but she did not sketch the designs as sketching was forbidden during the shows. The visits were used to inspire Wallis copies sold as part of a range called Pick of Paris.[34] Over time, Ayton witnessed the Wallis customer change as they demanded new, young, and instantaneous looks. Both Ayton and Wallis adapted to these changes, which helped sustain the longevity of the company. As Ayton described, "The only way for us to keep going was to recognize that fashion is constantly evolving. I always say that Wallis design is evolutionary, not revolutionary."[35]

[34] Ayton, 2016, op cit.
[35] Ayton, 2005, op cit., p. 127.

Sylvia Ayton complemented her career as a designer with her involvement and commitment to education. She taught at a variety of art colleges as well as acting as external examiner for many fashion degree courses. She has been a Fellow of and jury member for The Royal Society of Arts, Design Bursaries Competition (Fashion). In 1990, in recognition for services to the British fashion industry, Ayton was awarded Member of the British Empire (MBE). She was also involved, alongside Vanessa Denza (1937–) and Jeff Banks (1943–), with the establishment in 1991 of Graduate Fashion Week, the annual showcase for fashion graduates in London. Ayton was involved in the The Costume Society for several years, first as Vice Chairman, then as Chairman, 2008–2013.

Sylvia Ayton's Relationship with Pattern Cutting

This section explores Ayton's approach to the practice of pattern cutting and its relationship to fashion design activities. The term fashion designer is often given to the creator of a garment or outfit, whereas the pattern cutter is perceived to be the person who creates the pattern for a design. However, within the fashion industry different organisations have different interpretations of these roles and their value. In some organisations the roles are merged. Throughout her career, Ayton combined the roles of fashion designer and pattern cutter, so they became interchangeable. During her early career, until 1969, she cut all the patterns for her designs and often made the first sample garment. She used this hands–on, practical experience to inform her later career at Wallis, where she worked with a team of pattern cutters and was able to successfully communicate with them as they interpreted her designs.

Ayton observed, "As a designer I seem to have been involved with many aspects of pattern cutting all my life, it is the most effective and simplest way in which to achieve your design, your creation, which is your main ambition; your creation to be worn by, you hope, a thousand customers."[36] She said, "As you draw the design, you are visualizing the pattern shape. You become part of the design. You can feel the shape on your body. Then when drawn flat onto spot and cross, paper or card and cut out, the shape starts to become a three–dimensional paper garment. And then into fabric, it is a garment."[37] As a means to an end, she firmly acknowledged that pattern cutting was the route to a wonderful creation. The bust dart had always fascinated her (Figure 7). This often begins at the side seam of a bodice and ends near the apex of the bust.[38]

[36] Ayton, 2013, op cit.
[37] Ibid.
[38] Ayton, 2018, op cit.

Ayton's dislike of the bust dart began during her flat pattern cutting lessons at art college, and throughout her career she sought to eliminate bust darts in her design work.[39] Unfortunately, as a commercial designer she could not ignore bust darts and debated whether they were a means to a creative end or just a technical exercise used to develop another pattern.

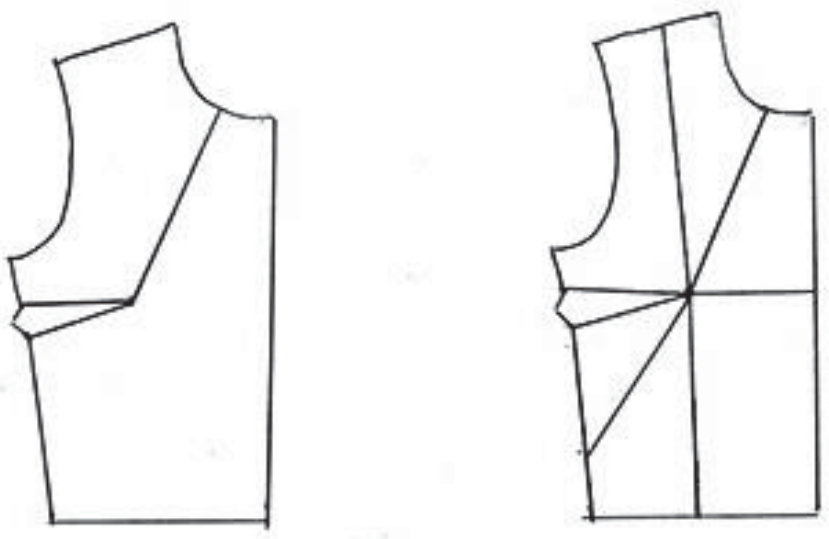

Figure: 7:
Drawing of a Bodice Block and Bust Dart,
Sylvia Ayton,
The Royal College of Art, London, England, 1958,
The Private Collection of Sylvia Ayton, London, England.

As a child Ayton loved drawing. She had memories of childhood pattern cutting and sewing for dolls (Figure 8). Her first encounter with bust darts was in the flat pattern cutting lessons at Walthamstow School of Art. Here, she realised there was something important called, *the pattern cutting class* or as some classmates described it, *moving the bust dart*. This was not as much fun as drawing. She recalled, "All we wanted to do was draw and design so when we were gathered around the cutting table, where a bodice block was pinned out like an animal skin, we stared in amazement, as we were told that from this simple bodice block, by cutting and folding we would be able to move the bust dart to wherever our design directed. Why? Most of us were young girls who had no bust; the lesson fell onto rather fallow ground."[40] Ayton was more enamoured of the second pattern cutting lesson, which involved draping on the stand, draping calico fabric onto the body form, pinning the shape, and drawing the design lines over and around the bust; then taking the fabric off the stand to reveal a three-dimensional shape. To Ayton, this seemed a far more creative approach.

[39] Ibid.
[40] Ibid.

Figure 8: *Pattern Pieces for a Doll's Dress without Bust Darts,* Sylvia Ayton, Gants Hill, London, England, circa 1945, The Private Collection of Sylvia Ayton, London, England.

While studying at The Royal College of Art, Ayton advanced her knowledge of flat pattern cutting and draping; however, she still disliked the flat pattern cutting lessons. The lecturer talked in measurements and showed how to move the bust dart around from the apex of the bust. Ayton observed, "The bodice pattern was cut out in calico and pinned onto an unsuspecting student to demonstrate where the bust dart had been and where it was now by pointing out the crucial bust point with a ruler or finger. I escaped from this class, hid, and read *Vogue*."[41] Despite these struggles, Ayton conquered her fears and graduated with a set of block patterns that she felt were her friends, ready to face the challenges ahead. A block pattern is a basic pattern shape for a garment type, such as a bodice or a skirt, that reflects the size, shape, and posture of a human figure. This is used as a foundation pattern by pattern cutters to develop many different pattern styles.

[41] Ibid.

Pattern Cutting during the Designer Years, 1960–1969

Ayton said, "I was there, in the sixties, but I wasn't actually aware of what was happening. I was always just too involved with work."[42] This statement defines a work ethic that permeated throughout the designer's career. During the 1960s, the British capital was christened "Swinging London," defined by a *Time* magazine cover story, published in 1966, which described the youth–driven social and cultural changes of the decade.[43] Ayton recalled how amazing it was to be a designer during this time. In a short time period, she advanced from creating refined, grownup outfits to designing uncomplicated shift dresses. A feeling of simplicity emerged during the decade, with an uncluttered approach to dressing and a new desire to escape convention.[44] This emerging style is depicted in the contrasting images of Figure 9 and Figure 10. Figure 9 depicts a garment designed in 1960 and shows Sylvia's elegant and sophisticated printed wool mohair coat, suitable for evening or theatre wear. Cut in a semi–structured way with dropped shoulders, the coat appears restrained and womanly. This contrasts with the outfit depicted in Figure 10, circa 1964, a relaxed, sleeveless, wool crepe shift, cut simply and fluidly from the fabric, without structure. The bust darts are opened into the gathers at the neck.

[42] Ayton, 2006, op cit.

[43] Piri Halasz, "London: The Swinging City," Cover Story, *Time Magazine,* Volume 87, Number 15, 15 April 1966.

[44] See:
Lia Towle, "A 60s Sensation," 3rd Floor, March 31, 2011, https://thirdfloorpublication.wordpress.com/2011/03/31/a-60's-sensation, Accessed 18 April 2018.
Richard D. Truman, *Mods, Minis, and Madmen: A True Tale of Swinging London Culture in the 1960s,* Universe, Milford, Connecticut, United States, 2010, p. 10.

Figure 9:
Printed Wool Mohair Coat Suitable for Evening or Theatre Wear, Drawn during Her Final Year, Sylvia Ayton, The Royal College of Art, London, England, 1960, The Private Collection of Sylvia Ayton, London, England.

Figure 10:
A Relaxed, Sleeveless, Wool Crepe Shift,
Sylvia Ayton, London, England, circa 1964,
The Private Collection of Sylvia Ayton, London, England.

As the mid 1960s approached, Ayton felt that the pattern cutting required for her designs needed to be simple, which made all the pattern cutting lessons at art college seem irrelevant.[45] As she considered grading to be time consuming, gradually her designs became simpler, pared down cutting with no darts, dresses with less but more impact. The grading of a pattern is the incremental decrease or increase of a pattern and is a technique used to develop different sized patterns for the production of a garment range. Bust darts continued to fascinate Ayton, and they were often incorporated into soft gathers, tied at the neck (Figure 10).

[45] Ayton, 2018, op cit.

Ayton believed there were two sorts of patterns. Firstly, there was the commercial pattern used for manufacturing, which was a pattern that was easy to understand, especially for the pattern cutters and machinists: very good, grownup patterns, but without a heart. Ayton stated, "Then there was the pattern that you immediately found interesting even if you hadn't seen the sketch."[46] Ayton considered that patterns were like interesting books that had a boring cover. By this, she meant that the pattern for a garment could often be more interesting than the actual design. She described one of her patterns from circa 1965 (Figure 11), "Looking at this pattern it still says to me this dress will sell. There is nothing much to go wrong. The tiniest bust dart is more for tightening the large arm hole, than to accommodate a tiny bosom. The only problem, no centre back seam for a zip."[47]

Figure 11:
Dress with Bust Darts, Sylvia Ayton, London, England, circa 1965,
The Private Collection of Sylvia Ayton, London, England.

[46] Ayton, 2016, op cit.
[47] Ayton, 2013, op cit.

Ayton and Zandra Rhodes had both studied at The Royal College of Art. Ayton graduated from the fashion department in 1960, and Rhodes graduated from the textiles department in 1964. In 1966, they decided to work together creating designs that incorporated Ayton's dress patterns and Rhodes' textile prints. The journalist Joel Lobenthal described how, "Working with Ayton taught Rhodes the rudiments of pattern making and eventually the two began sharing the fashion design responsibilities."[48] During an interview, Ayton described their approach, "Simple as possible but effective as possible. I think it worked. Interesting, wearable, wantable garments with the bust dart integrated onto the design lines."[49] By 1968 the design team were dressing celebrities, including the journalist Janet Street Porter (1946–) who modelled a shirt printed with Zandra's logo; designer Tania Sarne (1945–), originator of the fashion label, Ghost, who wore to her wedding an Ayton and Rhodes–designed white jersey dress trimmed with genuine snakeskin; and model Marsha Hunt (1946–), who was photographed wearing a long black PVC coat. Ayton and Rhodes pushed the boundaries of design. One dress designed with ribbons did not require any pattern cutting, just a strategic placement of ribbons around the body. Ayton recalled, "We did one dress with ribbons and liked the effect so much we made seven more. Fashion has got ribbon taped."[50]

In an interview with Marnie Fogg, Ayton discussed her business venture with Rhodes, "Although our innovations such as tattoo print transfers and paper dresses were commercially successful—the Miss Selfridge buyer asked us how to stop the customers from tearing the hems of the dresses to see if they really were paper—the business side of the enterprise was badly run."[51] This poor business sense led to the closure of their retail outlet, The Fulham Road Clothes Shop, in 1969. "We made super garments, but investment was missing. We had to go our separate ways: Zandra into a world of fantasy and me into my life as a coat designer at Wallis. It was very sad."[52] The world of fantasy that Rhodes entered was a business that provided Rhodes with the freedom to produce her glamorous, flamboyant, and dramatic designs, whereas Ayton left to work for a retailer designing very commercial, high street clothing. At Wallis, Ayton quickly moved from her Fulham Road Clothes Shop position in which she had sourced the fabric, designed the garment, cut the first pattern, and made the first sample—into the realms of designing for a high street retailer, with a team of pattern cutters who worked for her.

[48] Lobenthal, op cit., p. 241.
[49] Ayton, 2018, op cit.
[50] Graham, op cit.
[51] Fogg, 2003, op cit., p. 53.
[52] Ayton, 2005, op cit., p. 123.

Pattern Cutting in the High Street Years, 1969–2002

Ayton was shocked to discover upon joining Wallis that she was not required to cut her own patterns. It was a very different way of working. She designed the coats, suits, and raincoats while another person designed the dresses and separates. There were two completely different ways of creating patterns, in two different rooms, with different equipment, and two different ways of thinking. As she commented, "My tailors thought they were king, but the dress department knew they were equally as creative."[53] Ayton drew the highly detailed design, then the pattern was cut by someone else; then the toile was made by another person. All of these people relied on the accuracy of Ayton's detailed line drawing (Figure 12).

Figure 12:
Detailed Line Drawing and Finished Coat,
Sylvia Ayton for Wallis, London, England, 1989,
The Private Collection of Sylvia Ayton, London, England.

[53] Ayton, 2013, op cit.

Ayton's designs had to include the correct proportions with all design details clearly depicted, including top-stitching. Both a drawn front and back view were essential. Ayton reflected that there needed to be excellent communication with the pattern cutter if you wanted the coat to look like your design. "My design drawings were working drawings with a high illustrative content. There was no time to do a glamorous drawing and a working drawing, my sketch had to be glam enough to show the press and readable enough for the pattern cutter, the machinist, and the Turkish factory to produce a few thousand raincoats and coats."[54]

During the 1970s, Wallis was well known for its Pick of Paris range. The owner of the company, Jeffrey Wallis, had an association with some of the Parisian couture houses, such as Christian Dior and Yves Saint Laurent. The arrangement was that if Wallis paid for three people to attend a couture show, then Wallis would receive three couture garment patterns, of Wallis' choice. The patterns were delivered to Wallis after the release date of the couture garments and after photographs of the garments had appeared in the press. This allowed the couture customers to wear the garments before copies were in Wallis stores. Couture garment patterns were selected that were felt to be right for the customer. As sketching was forbidden at the shows, Ayton made notes and drew garments and patterns from memory. On return to London, this enabled the Wallis design team to produce excellent copies ready for delivery to Wallis shops at the same time as the Paris release date for the patterns they had bought. Once the couture patterns arrived, Wallis was able to check that the designs and patterns they had made from memory were similar to the original styles. Ayton commented, "It was very satisfying to find our patterns were always very close to the originals."[55]

In the early 1970s, Sylvia Ayton was still a new designer at Wallis. She remembered, "Half the time I designed my own thing, then as all retailers think alike the bosses said, 'Hey, the shop up the road are doing this or that and we should be doing it too; we mustn't be too different.'"[56] Ayton's clothes for Wallis were for a different size and shape than the girlish forms for which she designed during the mid 1960s—and the elegant, grownup clothes she had rebelled against during the late 1950s. For instance, the 1980s moved the company into a decade of differences. Ayton commented, "Although it was a glamorous mix of all things bright and beautiful, I will always

[54] Ayton, 2018, op cit.
[55] Ayton, 2013, op cit.
[56] Ayton, 2006, op cit.

remember it as a big shoulder, power-dressing era."[57] The shape of the shoulder needed to be adjusted on the pattern piece to accommodate the large sets of shoulder pads required, sometimes three at a time (Figure 13). By the 1980s, Ayton knew her customer. She was creating clothes for a Wallis woman who was forever 30 years old.[58] Ayton's creative approach was a mix of design and pattern cutting routes that included copying and adapting patterns from garments bought on shopping trips, as well as designing and cutting versions of what would be on trend, neither too early nor too late.

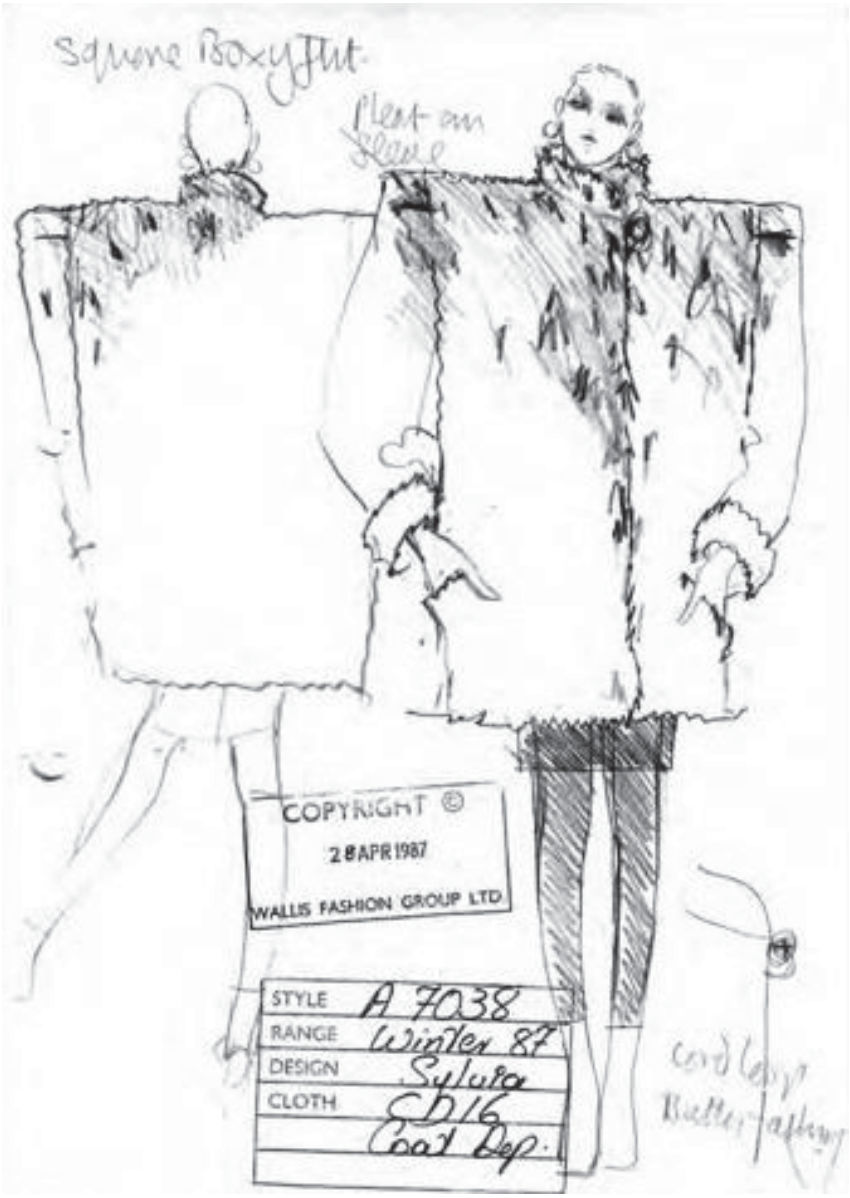

Figure: 13: *Coat with Wide Shoulders, Line Drawing for the Pattern Cutter,* Sylvia Ayton for Wallis, London, England, 1987, The Private Collection of Sylvia Ayton, London, England.

[57] Ibid.
[58] Ibid.

Sinha's case study, exploring the working practices of Ayton, acknowledged the designer's respect and admiration for the teams of pattern cutters with whom she worked. As a designer at Wallis, Ayton was involved in an advisory way. The team were concerned that her sketches were interpreted into patterns and toiles accurately, therefore the sketches needed be distinct and easy to understand. In an interview, Ayton said, "Design presentation is only a means of communication...drawing is so very important; it is the start of a long line of communication."[59] At the first range meeting, the pattern cutters were keen to ensure that any adjustments that needed to be made to patterns were minimal. The sample machinists worked with the pattern cutters to make up the toiles and the first samples. Once these were passed, the patterns were made up as final samples and sent on to the factories to produce the garments.[60] Commitment to work was another aspect that Sylvia considered important for the designer and pattern cutter. She felt that was part of the training at The Royal College of Art, "In the final year we all worked very hard and very long, not leaving until the last bus or train every night."[61]

In an early 1990s interview with the British trade magazine, *Fashion Weekly,* Ayton said, "You have to continually come up with new ideas which will make the customer return. There is no set formula and creating a new design is always a gamble. Women can be so fickle, so creating garments that a woman can feel and look good in can be quite exciting."[62] She considered that new ideas emerged from various sources and are often inspired by shapes within patterns and pattern cutting itself. Ayton reflected on some of her creative sources whilst at Wallis.[63] The book, *Costume Patterns and Designs* by the ethnographer, Max Tilke (1869–1942), proved particularly inspirational. This work is a survey of costume, patterns, shapes and designs from all eras and nations. Ayton considered it to be a favourite of many designers since its publication in 1974. She recalled the T–shape, illustrated in the book that evolved from a square shape, which formed one pattern piece. This inspired her to buy a sample garment in 1985 that resembled the T–shape, with no bust dart and turn the shape into a coat (Figure 14 and Figure 15).

[59] Ayton, 1994, op cit.
[60] Sinha, 2000, op cit., p. 230.
[61] Ayton, 1994, op cit.
[62] Anonymous, op cit.
[63] Ayton, 2016, op cit.

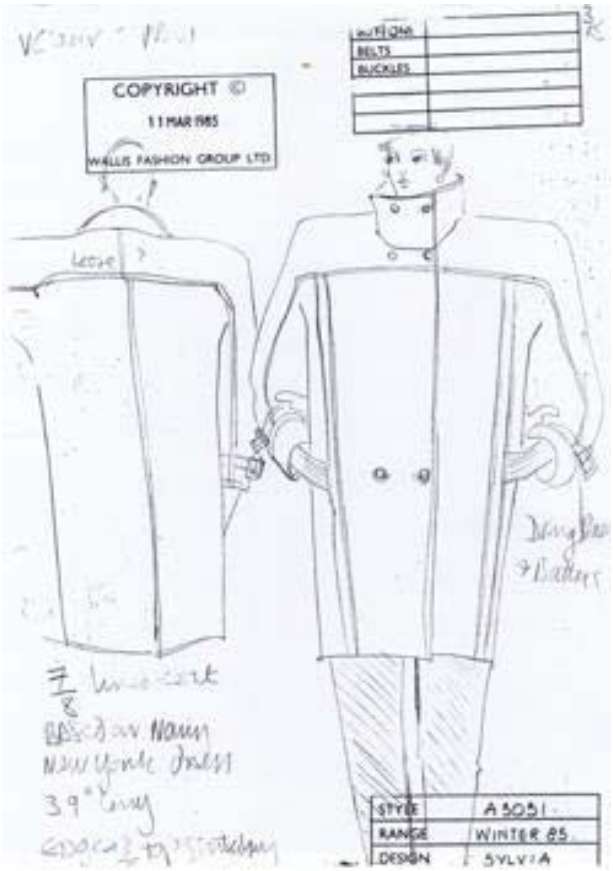

Figure 14:
T-Shape Coat Design, Designed by Sylvia Ayton for Wallis, 1985, London, England, Photograph Courtesy of Sylvia Ayton and Wallis, The Private Collection of Sylvia Ayton, London, England.

Figure 15:
T-Shape Coat Sample, Designed by Sylvia Ayton for Wallis, 1985, London, England, Photograph Courtesy of Sylvia Ayton and Wallis, The Private Collection of Sylvia Ayton, London, England.

Ayton also looked at other silhouettes inspired by the square, such as the knitted coats constructed from one piece of material by the designer, Issey Miyake (1938–). This led to experimentation with circular shapes based on an ethnic cape and to transpose these shapes into patterns. These ideas were turned into raincoats for the Wallis customer in the late 1980s (Figure 16 and Figure 17).

Figure 16 and Figure 17:
Experiments with Circular Shapes and Patterns,
Sylvia Ayton, 1989, London, England,
The Private Collection of Sylvia Ayton, London, England.

When computer aided manufacture moved into the pattern room during the late 1990s, Ayton was devastated because she felt these advances in technology removed a sensory connection between the physical pattern and the garment, which she considered to be an essential part of the design and pattern cutting process. Her team of pattern cutters, however, soon adapted to the technology. She noted, "The sensitive line they drew to shape a collar had gone; it was now a series of steps; pixels. I was no longer able to correct a shape on the pattern because it was now on the computer and no space on the table to draw and explain my alteration because the

table was full of the computer. Times change."[64] During the early 2000s, the concept of Minimalism began to influence high street fashion. Ayton said, "I tried to introduce the simplicity of the beautiful cutting of the French designer, Andre Courreges (1923–2016), but no; it was a great idea and a way to use beautiful, expensive fabrics frugally but my customer couldn't cope; she liked a bit of shush."[65] The Wallis customer could not relate to simple, minimalistic types of clothing. The Wallis woman wanted clothes that included an element of glamour, such as a classic raincoat with a generous cut and a touch of fake fur.

Wallis was also being frugal with expenditure on fabrics. Ayton found that using cheaper wool and cashmere blend fabrics, at £3 per metre instead of the more luxurious fabrics the company had previously used at £6 per metre, resulted in a scaling down in the quality of design and pattern cutting. She said, "Minimalism and cheap fabric do not work."[66] Sinha observed how the Wallis style, "...Was achieved through Sylvia's sketches and the Wallis block patterns (template patterns from which styles were cut). She endeavoured to design glamorous and expensive–looking coats with a plentiful cut, whatever the season demands were in terms of styling."[67] To go from the voluminous cutting of the 1990s design in Figure 18, to the restrained 2000s approach of the cut in Figure 19, was not the design journey Ayton wanted to travel. After 42 years of pattern cutting, designing and making many thousands of women happy with her designs, Ayton retired in 2002.

Sylvia Ayton's relationship with pattern cutting, from designer level to high street, evolved through creating patterns for many different types of garments (Figure 20). Whatever the style she believes that pattern cutting is a creative activity and a means to an end. It is a continuation of the drawing skill and the satisfaction of seeing the drawing come to life. She said, "For me it was the simplest, easiest and most effective way in which to achieve my dream design, for my ideal customer. My drawn designs achieved what I wanted. I wanted the drawing to look good, the pattern to look good, if it was near perfect and pleasing to my eyes the customer would also find it pleasing to her eyes."[68]

[64] Ibid.
[65] Ayton, 2013, op cit.
[66] Ayton, 2016, op cit.
[67] Sinha, 2000, p. 256.
[68] Ayton, 2013, op cit.

Figure 18 and Figure 19:
From Voluminous Pattern Cutting of the 1990s
to the Restrained Minimalism of the 2000s,
Sylvia Ayton, London, England,
The Private Collection of Sylvia Ayton, London, England.

Figure 20:
Designs Cut Fluidly with All Bust Darts Eliminated,
Sylvia Ayton, Late 1960s, London, England,
The Private Collection of Sylvia Ayton, London, England.

In her Wallis case study, Sinha noted the bulk of Ayton's Wallis designs were line drawings, comprehensive enough for pattern cutters to work with, without her being there to explain the design. She observed that, "Details such as stitching, pockets, collar and cuffs were clarified through detailed drawing or written notes by the side of sketches. Knowledge of pattern cutting helped to ensure that designs could be made up commercially for appropriate prices. Ayton also considered the ability to draw was a vital aspect in both design and pattern cutting."[69]

[69] Sinha, 2000, op cit., p. 252.

Lessons Learnt from Ayton's Relationship with Pattern Cutting

This final section considers what can be learnt from Sylvia Ayton's relationship with pattern cutting. Through documenting her activities as a working, commercial fashion designer, the research seeks to determine a lasting reference point for pattern cutting within the contemporary fashion industry. The research has pinpointed the key skills that Ayton acknowledged throughout her long career, as follows.

- The ability to draw as a vital aspect of both design and pattern cutting. — Drawing
- Pattern making is a continuation of the drawing skill, seeing the drawing come to life. — Creativity
- The design sketch needs to be readable enough for the pattern cutter, the machinist, and the factory to produce the garment. — Technical Skills
- Respect and admiration for the role of the pattern cutter. — Respect
- The creative approach being a merger of design and pattern cutting skills; one holistic set of skills. — Merging of Skills
- Excellent communication with the pattern cutter to ensure the finished garment looks like the design. — Communication
- Communication and commitment to deadlines. — Deadlines
- Commitment to work. — Work Ethic

In order, to appraise the value of these skills within today's fashion industry and in its future, the above list was sent to two selected focus groups. Individuals were asked to place the skills in order of importance: one being most important, and eight being least important. The results were analysed to establish a reference point for pattern cutting in the context of both contemporary and future design careers within the global industry. Focus Group 1 was comprised of delegates at The Association of Degree Courses in Fashion and Textiles, Futurescan 4: Valuing Practice conference at University of Bolton, Bolton, Lancashire, England in January 2019. The association is a subject organisation to promote and develop fashion and textiles

through academic debate, education, and research. Its networks have extensive links with industry, public and professional bodies. The conference was therefore aimed at a specialist audience, many of whom had considerable pattern cutting knowledge. Delegates were mainly UK based although a small percentage were international attendees from Europe and the United States. The questionnaire was issued to 76 delegates at the conference, and 39 replies were received.

Focus Group 1:
39 Responses from Futurescan Conference Delegates

Ranking	Skill	Points
1 Most Important	Technical Skills	84
2	Creativity	135
3	Communication	165
4	Merging of Skills	207
5	Work Ethic	216
6	Drawing	231
7	Deadlines	234
8 Least Important	Respect	249

Focus Group 2 was comprised of the network formed by the author after the organisation of The First International Symposium for Creating Pattern Cutting in 2013 (the conference in which Ayton gave her presentation about her relationship with pattern cutting).[70] This network was further strengthened by The Second International Conference for Creative Pattern Cutting in 2016.[71] Both conferences promoted research in contemporary pattern cutting and its significance to the global fashion industry. The conferences were also a platform for pattern cutters, fashion designers, educators, and students to explore the impact and direction of the craft. Delegates included representatives from over 20 countries. This provided a strong

[70] Ayton, 2013, op cit.
[71] Kevin Almond, Organiser and Chair, The Second International Symposium for Creative Pattern Cutting, The University of Huddersfield, Huddersfield, West Yorkshire, England, 24–25 February 2016.

international flavour to the responses and an important global reference. The questionnaire was issued to 348 people from the network, and 152 replies were received.

Focus Group 2:
152 Responses from International Pattern Cutting Network

Ranking	Skill	Points
1 Most Important	Technical Skills	257
2	Creativity	475
3	Merging of Skills	608
4	Communication	613
5	Work Ethic	755
6	Respect	882
7	Deadlines	849
8 Least Important	Drawing	988

Analysis of the results of Focus Group 1 and Focus Group 2 revealed many similarities in the score rankings. The value placed on the cutting skills Sylvia Ayton identified, within today's global fashion industry, is analysed in relation to these scores. Technical skills were considered of primary importance in both results. This suggests a thorough grounding in both manual, flat pattern cutting, and draping will continue to be essential in fashion design professions and that without these skills the fashion industry would not harness the promises of technology in the future. As Ayton acknowledged towards the end of her career, the adoption of computer aided manufacture began to advance pattern cutting technology. Today, these technologies include 2D and 3D CAD pattern development software. The advantages of digitised pattern cutting are in the saving of time and the ability to view and manipulate ideas quickly on screen.

Creativity was ranked second in both focus groups while communication placed third and fourth, respectively. This suggests a continuous dialogue between technical and creative teams is necessary to maintain an important and harmonious relationship. The merging of skills was ranked fourth in Focus Group 1 but third in Focus Group 2. The assimilation of the fashion design related skills of: design, technical, fabric

awareness and CAD will continue to be relevant, combined with the merging of skills from other disciplines that explore different concepts and approaches. The skills of general work ethic and meeting deadlines were valued similarly in both focus groups. Unlike technical and creative activities, work ethic and meeting deadlines are professional skills that could be transposed into many different types of career roles. Interestingly, drawing was valued at sixth and eighth place, respectively, despite Ayton emphasising drawing as an essential skill, necessary in both creative and technical approaches to pattern cutting. Respect was valued at eighth and sixth place, respectively, and can be interpreted as respect for the importance of pattern cutting as well as for the skills of the craftsperson. This was challenged by some respondents, who felt that respect should be an inherent quality in all professionals; therefore, the word did not belong on the list of key skills.

Conclusion

The study has explored the role of pattern cutting in Sylvia Ayton's 42–year career. It has also explored how her relationship with the craft evolved throughout her art school education, 1953–1960. This study significantly expands the range and depth of research in pattern cutting by giving a voice to her proficiency as a working, commercial designer and pattern cutter. The overriding value of the study is the emphasis it gives to the creativity and skills necessary to the role of the pattern cutter ––and the ongoing importance of creativity and skills to the global fashion industry.

Throughout her career, Ayton experienced a variety of pattern cutting techniques utilised at different market levels. Due to technological developments and fluctuations in fashionable styles, methods of pattern cutting evolved, and these have been appraised through her thinking and practice. The longevity of Ayton's career enabled her to identify the key skills she considered essential to the pattern cutting craft: technological, creative, communicative, merging of skills, work ethic, drawing, deadlines, and respect. The ranking of these skills by the two focus groups and the evaluation of these rankings can be used as a benchmark for inspiring future pattern cutters. The practitioner should also assimilate combinations of these skills for the craft to remain rewarding, creatively fulfilling, and to successfully realise garments in three dimensions. It is up to the pattern cutter to identify which skills they consider to be important when developing new thinking and practice within the craft. This includes the harnessing of new technologies such as CAD.

There are some limitations to this study as Ayton's career focussed on the womenswear market. An expansion to the research would be a comparable assessment of a working, commercial designer's relationship with pattern cutting for menswear or childrenswear. This would further expand the significant gaps in literature identified in this research. In conclusion, it is necessary to return to the bust

dart. Although Ayton's pattern cutting ideas evolved from her fascination with this dart, she never truly eliminated it. Instead, she used it creatively in her patterns, where it was needed. The closing words belong to Ayton—and the parting comments from her presentation at The First International Symposium for Creative Pattern Cutting (2013),[72] "She put the garment on, she knew she looked good, she felt great, she was confident, and she had the cheque book. Through pattern cutting I had achieved what I wanted. Just beautiful—pattern cutting."[73]

[72] Almond, 2013, op cit.
[73] Ayton, 2013, op cit.

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