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# Disrupting the Fashion Archive: The Serendipity of Manufacturing Mistakes

Teaching into Research: Research into Teaching

Dr Kevin Almond

**The research describes a case study that asked design students to identify mistakes in manufacture, in selected garments from the Yorkshire Fashion Archive held at University of Leeds.**

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# Vintage garments photographed in the Yorkshire Fashion Archive. Photograph Kevin Almond.



**The documentation of this process provides an important reference point for garment creators to disrupt conventional approaches to fashion design and technology and supports the development of innovative skills. These can be utilised to create new and novel clothing designs with which to enrich the global fashion industry.**

## Aims

- To discover the extent to which the practices of garment creation can be the subject of the serendipity of mistake.
- To explore if new conceptual and technical skills for garment creation can be developed from identifying mistakes in the construction of historical dress.
- To investigate how this knowledge can be promulgated in both fashion education and the industry to sustain an environment of risk taking that promotes creativity.
- To situate the practice of risk taking through garment creation within the parameters of the fashion archive, fashion education and the global fashion industry.

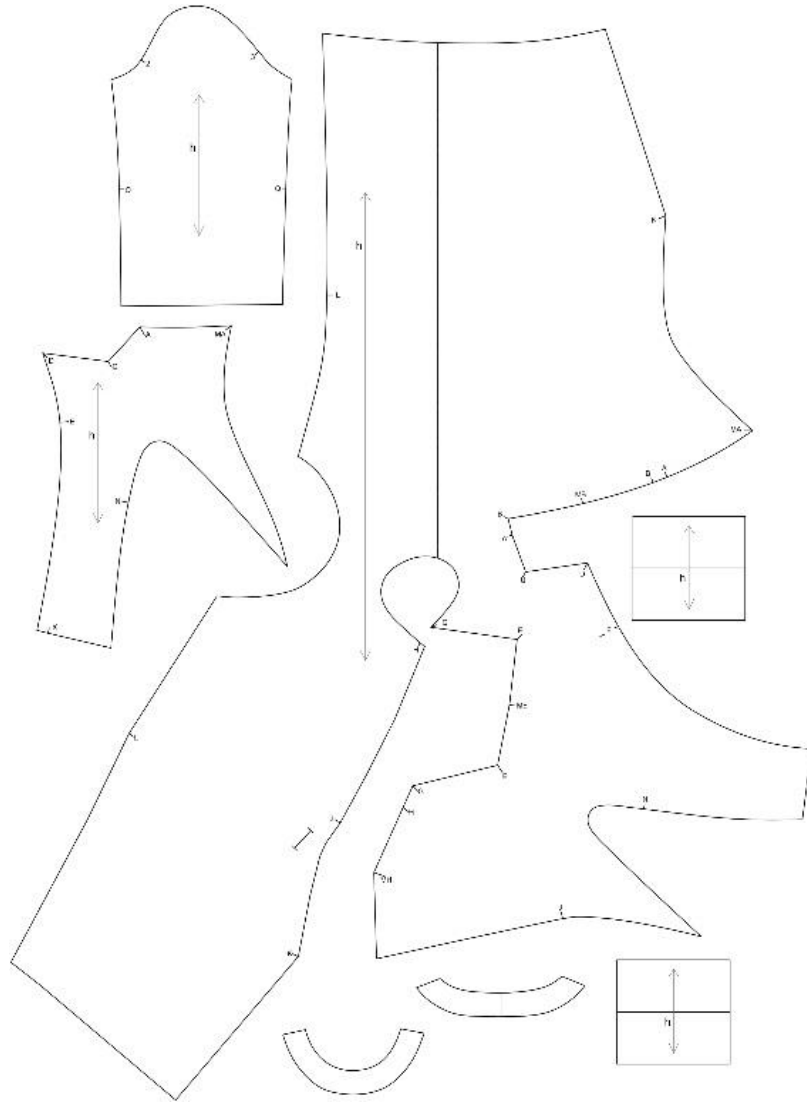


Risky Design Practice - MakeUse zero waste dress by Holly McQuillan. *Photograph courtesy of Holly McQuillan.*



Dress by designer Nabil Nayal inspired by Elizabethan costume from the Elizabethan Sportswear IV (A/W17) collection. Photograph courtesy of Luca Trevisani.





Pattern and dress using the accidental cutting method pioneered by Eva Iszora, Fall/Winter 2011-2012. Pattern photograph courtesy of Eva Iszoro. Dress photograph courtesy of Valencia Fashion Week.

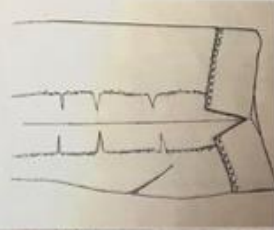


Pattern Cutting Workshop by Julien Roberts. *Photograph courtesy of The British Fashion Council.*



Holland Esq jacket c. 2000, Wool fringe dress c. 1945. Photograph Kevin Almond.

## Looking at the inside



The seams on this garment have been left raw and open rather than closed or overlocked which means over time they have frayed and come looser. The seams around the waist and shoulders have also been cut into to create more movement in the dress, I think this creates a distressed look if the garment was to be turned and kept inside out. Not properly finished garments with raw edges to create distressed look could be a way of bringing 'mistake' into designing. Having a garment inside out and having seams visible it also creates an interesting structured appearance. I think that this garment would work being inside out because it has a reconstructed deconstruction look to it and the black facing at the top and bottom of the dress matches with the trimmings.

Most of the stitch work has been done using a machine however some parts such as the hem on the sleeves have been tacked in place with a hand sewn cross stitch. The side panel edge has been finished with pinking shears and then cut into again for movement.



Wool fringe dress c. 1945, photographed inside out. Photograph Kevin Almond.



Garments were manipulated on the stand. Photograph Kevin Almond.



Ideas sketched from stand experiments. Photograph Kevin Almond.



Mistake, womenswear collection for COS by Annabel Williams. Photograph Kevin Almond.

# Student Questionnaire

## **1. Making mistakes teach us valuable lessons.**

“Even the knowledge of my own fallibility cannot keep me from making mistakes. Only when I fall do I get up again” - Vincent Van Gogh (Blackie and Son, 2008, 117). Question – *What lessons have you learnt from the approach in this project?*

## **2. Mistakes help us let go of our fears.**

“You can only go forward by making mistakes” - Alexander McQueen (Fulla, 2017, 202). Question – *How could what you have learnt in the mistake project be best communicated to foster an environment of risk taking in fashion education and the fashion industry?*

## **3. Mistakes inspire us.**

“Nobody made a greater mistake than he who did nothing because he could do only a little” - Edmund Burke (Gleditsch, 1996, 432). Question - *What benefits can you identify for the fashion industry from exploring mistakes in the construction of historical dress and what new knowledge do you think can arise from this?*

## **4. Mistakes serve as a warning.**

Never interrupt your enemy when he is making a mistake anonymously.” – Napoleon Bonaparte (Brainy Quote, 2018,1) – Question – *Mistakes can serve as a warning - from your experiences, describe any ways that error and mistake inhibited your development with the project and how did you overcome this?*



**This results of this  
research present a  
direction for encouraging  
much greater creativity in  
the classroom, as well as  
for practicing designers  
within the fashion industry.**



Finished garments from the White Vintage Collection 2018. Photograph Kevin Almond.

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