

HIGH RISK
DRESSING,
17 JANUARY
- 13
2017

**MORE
HIGH RISK!**

**EXHIBITION
NOW OPEN UNTIL
APRIL 13!**

FASHION,
CRITICAL

RMIT Design Hub is co-located alongside the RMIT Design Archives – an extraordinary collection of design artefacts that reflect Melbourne’s rich design history. In High Risk Dressing / Critical Fashion we draw on this archive to display, interpret and interrogate the diverse range of materials related to the Fashion Design Council (FDC). Comprising some 1500 artefacts including videos, photographs, newsletters, articles, flyers and posters, the FDC archive will be considered in detail for the first time since the collection was donated twenty years ago. The exhibition has been developed by a curatorium of four members: Robyn Healy, Kate Rhodes, Nella Themelios and Fleur Watson.

The FDC (1983–1993) was a membership-based organisation established to support, promote and provoke avant-garde Australian fashion, founded by Robert Buckingham, Kate Durham and Robert Pearce. In using the FDC archive as a reflective tool, the exhibition opens up and queries ideas promoted by the FDC. Rather than looking back at the FDC’s history with nostalgia, our intent is to critically explore the legacy of the FDC, testing its influence and relevance to contemporary practice.

High Risk Dressing / Critical Fashion convenes a new ‘collective’, drawn from contemporary fashion practice yet framed through the lens of the FDC. Members of this new collective – many of whom had little knowledge of the FDC – were asked to research and respond to the FDC materials in the archive. Participants were provided with a curated collection of ephemera to use as the basis of their research and were encouraged to use this material to reflect upon the criticality of their own practice. The ‘new collective’ responded with a diverse range of projects – installations, fashion presentations, performances, films, publications, residencies – which will activate Design Hub over the four-week period of the show.

As such, we approached the exhibition design as a form of scenography, a performative, set like environment to house the diversity of practice taking place. We commissioned three local architecture practices – Sibling Architecture, Studiobird with Caitlyn Parry and WOWOWA Architecture with Andre Bonnice – to design an exhibition environment that references the creative, social and promotional spaces central to FDC activities: the office, the bar and the shop. Each studio was asked to capture the shift outlined in our title – High Risk Dressing to Critical Fashion – and in doing

so reflect upon the transition from an emerging, provocative, collaborative creative culture to today’s world of internationally-networked, conceptually-driven contemporary fashion practice. This approach to the exhibition design reflects the FDC’s inherently cross-disciplinary spirit and provides an opportunity to ask: are these sites still relevant to practice today? Each design studio looks over their shoulder to the FDC for inspiration, but with an outcome that firmly references the context, challenges and energy of working as a designer today.

In the adjoining gallery – Project Room 2 – the FDC collection is unpacked, discussed and catalogued throughout the duration of the exhibition in a new ‘archive’ space designed by Žiga Testen. This parallel zone is an active space, positioning the archive as a ‘living’ resource. Here we reveal and discuss the material in the archive, as well as draw on the critical reflections of original members of the FDC and others associated with the organisation. Our audience is invited to take part in the process by contributing their own recollections of the FDC. Fashion practitioners working today will also exhibit in this space – tackling and testing the nature of archives.

Design Hub’s core remit is to bring together a diverse community of designers, curators, academics and students dedicated to inter-disciplinary collaboration, education and research with the intent to share the making of design ideas with our audience both in Melbourne and beyond. In High Risk Dressing / Critical Fashion, we tap into the culture of the FDC, its ambition for cultural and social change through experimental thinking and shared creativity, mapping this onto the fashion culture of today. The result is two-fold: through this reflective and explorative process we enrich our understanding of the FDC’s legacy and relevance and, in turn, nourish the FDC archive for further investigation by our community. We also discover and identify a vibrant, contemporary fashion culture supported by the academy; a sophisticated, reflexive and critical world of thinkers and makers.

Kate Rhodes, Fleur Watson,
Nella Themelios, curators

OFFICE

Located within Stalbridge Chambers at 443 Little Collins Street – a 19th century building that most recently housed a warren of legal offices – the Fashion Design Council’s first office was a small, affordable and legitimising environment. The office gave the fledgling FDC credibility: a postal address for letterhead, a place to meet funders and potential funders.

It was a place for members to meet with the Council’s founders, where the newsletters were written, printed and posted and where new ideas were hatched. The office was part of a network of spaces at Stalbridge Chambers, which included artist and designer studios. The proximity of so many creative people to one another encouraged collaborative relationships, including a convenient and rich assortment of creative producers for the FDC’s events and activities.

WOWOWA Architecture and Andre Bonnice’s design for the ‘office’ in High Risk Dressing / Critical Fashion uses the idea of the shop front as a point of departure: the way a postal address and a physical work space can legitimise an organisation or brand. Their ‘fish bowl’ working space is composed of an acrylic decagon in hues referencing the rose-coloured filters of social media and the geometries of the UFC boxing championships, while the hand-stamped ‘terazzo’ floor draws upon the cut-and-paste graphic language of the FDC newsletters. This suggests that the office of today is like a stage, putting its inhabitants on show within a ‘shopfront of stability’, communicating confidence and success to potential clients. The office is the space that designers physically fashion into an environment that projects their values, showcases their tools and welcomes those with who they interact – peers, clients and followers on social media.

BAR

Melbourne’s alternative drinking and music spots – such as the Crystal Ballroom, Earls Court and Inflation – were key spaces for the FDC. The bar or nightclub was where the Fashion Design Council’s activities reached their zenith. These spaces were used as platforms for FDC members to present their latest work in highly produced, choreographed catwalk shows curated by the FDC founders. The FDC parades were infamous and attracted large crowds. Audiences experienced clothing created to reflect the moment and to fill a gap in the market for alternative fashion designed locally.

Studiobird’s ‘bar’ responds to the nightclub as a key site of the FDC’s legacy. It has been designed to accommodate interactive program-based activities around, within or upon it throughout the duration of the exhibition, such as conversations and fashion presentations, as well as function as an actual bar in which to dance and serve drinks.

Matthew Bird’s selection of materials – aluminium sheeting, LED strip lighting and fans – builds upon his design research, which seeks to subvert notions of traditional luxury by using everyday materials to test and expand upon a contemporary ‘DIY baroque’ and, in turn, references the rapid and responsive aesthetic of early FDC activities. The shiny surfaces and coloured lights, designed in collaboration with Caitlyn Parry, reflect a notional 1980s bar with a sunken central zone for the bartender.

The bar-in-the-round design flips the seedy strip joint with its high-low stage / seating, while also hinting at the intentional inclusivity of a circular United Nations forum. This deliberate clash of references captures the FDC’s dark and exhilarating nighttime gatherings with what were also – towards the end of the FDC’s life – stadium-scale, fashion block-buster events.

SHOP

The Fashion Design Council shop was the culmination of FDC activities and opened in 1989. Every surface of the striking Collins Street basement space (including the carpet) was painted in bright colours, aglow in 12v track lighting and bathed in a soundtrack of dance music.

The not-for-profit shop not only sold clothing but presented a changing program of exhibitions and education events for designers and students offering insight on how to grow and sustain a fashion practice. Before today’s diet of fast fashion and, at a time in Melbourne when it was difficult to buy alternative clothes, the FDC shop was a place to purchase original design in a central, non-exclusive space.

Sibling Architecture’s ‘shop’ for High Risk Dressing / Critical Fashion reflects the major shifts in spaces of consumption in the digital era with the rise of online shopping. Sibling’s landscape of large, pink foam cubes, orange ceiling mesh and video screens mark out an environment that captures the return to ‘programming’ – once central to the FDC shop – as bricks-and-mortar retailers seek out innovative ways to bring customers into contact with a brand. Now, in-store activities such as concerts, photo-shoots, signings and cocktail parties are designed to draw consumers out of bed and off the couch where we increasingly do most of our shopping. Sibling’s lounging environment mimics those sedentary places from which we browse, compare, share and confirm purchases from the screens of our phones and laptops. The shop houses a concentration of new works by contemporary practitioners who question how fashion is consumed conceptually, and as a product, by engaging with new forms of technology including film, soundscape and interactive works.

ARCHIVE

Unlike the office, the bar and the shop, an FDC archive never existed. However, the FDC was conscious of its ‘past-in-the-making’ and aware of the value of printed matter in forming the FDC’s identity in a pre-digital age. Graphic design was central to the way the FDC positioned itself as a leading-edge organisation, both for growing its membership and for influencing its funders, and, as a result, the FDC invested in and put great emphasis on printed matter as its main form of communication.

FDC founder Robert Pearce was a graphic designer who created the visual identity for much of the FDC’s newsletters, flyers, invitations and advertisements and these artefacts form a significant part of the existing archive.

Žiga Testen has designed a live cataloguing space for the FDC archive. Design Hub’s Project Room 2 is a space to exhibit the FDC materials from the Design Archives, a place for visitors to see the exhibition curators, researchers and exhibition assistants catalogue the collection. It also provides a zone to discuss and grow our knowledge of these artefacts. Standard archive shelving, and its cold, steely framework, runs the length of the gallery to house the multitude of printed materials and videos donated by Robert Buckingham on behalf of the FDC in 1998.

This purposefully staged ‘archive’ space is intended to give visitors a sense of the real home of the collection here at RMIT; its materiality and the handling and storage protocols required to transition it from a personal collection to an institutional one; to ensure longevity and instigate new relationships with future researchers and creative practitioners.

FASHION ROCKS MELBOURNE

Cover Title - Beat Magazine
issue 88, 1988

'FASHION-ABLE'

Title of the FDC Newsletter,
released December 1984.

'SLAVES OF VANITY'

Title of the FDC Newsletter,
released December 1988.

'NO FIRE ESCAPE FROM FASHION'

Leigh Bowery with Michael Clark
& Co, performance at Melbourne
Town Hall supported by FDC,
February 1987.

'THE POLITICS OF FASHION'

The FDC feature in Stiletto
magazine issue 17, in 1987.

'THE X-HIBITIONISTS'

FDC fashion event hosted by Moomba
with Keith Haring, 1984.

'REVOLT INTO STYLE'

Title of the Fashion '85 event,
presented at The Venue, St Kilda,
December 1985.

High Risk Dressing / Critical Fashion

explores venturous acts and narratives of fashion experienced through parallel practices set in Melbourne in the 1980s and today. The Fashion Design Council, a collective organisation established in 1983 by Robert Buckingham, Kate Durham and Robert Pearce, reflects a moment where independent designers and artists expanded fashion's commercial boundaries, exploiting its performative and cross-disciplinary potential. Coined by the group, the term 'high risk dressing' expresses the kind of confrontational clothing that was being produced at this time during the post-punk era. Today, in an entirely transformed cultural landscape, the notion of 'critical practice' is emerging in fashion, encouraging reflection on fashion beyond its market framework. Both these moments of practice, high risk dressing and critical fashion, highlight the innovative and speculative activities of independent practitioners to generate alternative approaches to mainstream fashion. The exhibition explores the lineage of the FDC to today, and how contemporary practitioners challenge how fashion is conceived, created, produced, distributed, communicated and consumed.

The critical device that inspires the exhibition is the FDC archive housed in the RMIT Design Archives. A collection that contains photographs, film material and graphic ephemera accrued over the course of the group's active years. During this period, the organisation was significant in championing the representation of local independent design, positioning fashion within a broader scope of creative practice and exchange across disciplines. The group's radical position is expressed in their manifesto, a device they used consistently to vehemently position their view of fashion as an idea as well as an industry. In one edition of their newsletter, they wrote the following with bravado and earnestness:

We were concerned with the status of fashion, the lack of cultivation and appreciation of style in Australia, the perceived superiority of imports, the overwhelming need to export Australian design effectively within two years. We wanted to assert that Australian designers, being more or less freelance and independent, tend to evolve fairly idiosyncratically, untrammelled by any reference to fashion conventions or allegiance to Fashion Houses. They retain a

viability and manoeuvreability that would not be possible in Tokyo, Paris or New York.

Fashion Design Council
manifesto 1984

For the FDC, the descriptor 'high risk' drew attention to other possibilities of creative expression. It reflected their anarchic and humorous tone that sought distance from the familiar conventions of the commercial fashion system of the time; one that was guided by formally-trained designers and industry benchmarks, based on European models of fashion. Established understandings of local fashion were challenged by the FDC which fostered a boisterous mix of members inspired by DIY culture to inform their individual style languages. The group encouraged the production of fashion across mediums - from illustration, photography, film, performance, installation, runway events and business forums - all of which were situated in diverse settings, from exhibition and retail, to bar venues. Supported by State Government funding - the group had a particularly strong relationship with Race Matthews, Minister for the Arts (and Police and Emergency Services) - the FDC provided an 'official' environment to support the growing creative cluster of independent designers, enabling less familiar models of enterprise and fashion experiences. The group instilled confidence and credibility in designers and artists that were operating outside conventional industry practices of design, production and communication.

Over a ten-year period, between 1983 and 1993, the FDC involved a diverse collective of designers, artists, architects, choreographers, musicians, hairdressers and makeup artists. Fashion designers included Martin Grant, Kate Durham, Kara Baker (formerly Sirens), Jenny Bannister, Fiona Scanlan (Scanlan and Theodore), Leona Edmiston and Peter Morrissey (both formerly Morrissey and Edmiston), Graeme Lewsey (formerly Gyro), Bettina Liano, Gavin Brown, Desbina Collins, Richard Nylon, Sarah Thorn and Bruce Slorach. Other practices collaborating in FDC activities were architects Roger Wood, Randal Marsh and Dale Jones-Evans (formerly Biltmoderne), Peter Corrigan (Edmond and Corrigan), hair and makeup stylist Kevin Murphy, filmmakers Mark Davis, Mark Worth and Simon Burton (Kino Productions) and choreographer Shelley Lasica, among many others.

The FDC's strategy to communicate and support emerging practitioners was prolific and often brash; publishing and documenting their activities to gain media attention and exposure to a broader community. Though the FDC's platforms were analogue and their message outspoken, their modus operandi remains relevant today, with current commercial practices of fashion dominated by homogenised, large-scale global design brands in an industry driven by increasing speed to put garments to market. In addition, major issues of the environmental and ethical impacts of the commercial fashion system are now more pressing than ever.

At this critical time - and as the FDC founders did - futurist and academic Lidewij Edelkoort has adopted the manifesto to confront the fashion system. Released in 2015, her 'Anti_fashion' text boldly declares that current commercial practices of fashion are no longer viable, nor relevant, today. This reappraisal and scrutiny of the fashion system of recent years has sparked debate and contemplation towards new approaches to fashion and its traditions in terms of design, manufacturing, communication and experience. A return to the niche, localised practice, as an alternative to the large-scale operations of the fashion system. As Otto von Busch and Pascale Gatzien highlight in their enquiry into alternative fashion systems, 'A true "democratization of style" must go beyond increasing the number of available consumption choices, engaging people more directly in the active and intentional development of their personal style, and of the clothing they choose to express it.'*

In a local setting like Melbourne and looking at contemporary practice, this changing fashion landscape presents both challenge and opportunity. High Risk Dressing / Critical Fashion embraces the latter by inviting a group of contemporary practitioners that approach fashion's critical and creative potential. These practitioners had little or no experience of the FDC, and were invited to engage with the organisation through exposure to the archive. Practitioners were offered a selection of photographs, printed matter and film materials in the form of a curated 'box' to respond with new works. Left with the box, the practitioners were allowed to be stimulated by particular details, conditions or events in the FDC archive relevant to contemporary practice today.

Members of the exhibition have been assembled under the banner of critical fashion, a concept that is emerging from contemporary fashion discourse. A critical fashion practitioner is characterised by a way of working that is abrasive to fashion's commercial framework, and, whether intentionally or inadvertently, critiques fashion by offering sustainable or speculative approaches. These practices scrutinise fashion, engaging with new forms of technology, social networking or sharing practices to put forward alternative experiences of fashion, how it is consumed as both a concept and a product.

A more globally accessible world and digital environment, where new forms of fashion are created and easily shared, has radically changed the fashion industry in niche geographies like Melbourne. Fashion practitioners are now self-publishers, working across mediums of performance, film, writing, curation and installation, many of which do not create clothing outcomes per se. The changing role of necessarily equate to economies encourages us to reflect on the relevance of an organisation like the FDC as one that supports independent and alternative practice.

The FDC promoted DIY and embraced ad hoc; with many members working from their bedroom, or garage, its members in many ways opposed formal design education, instead encouraging raw, un-institutionalised talent. Today, this kind of expanded and performative practice in fashion often emerges from the domain of the academy. In the current climate, the institution is a space that offers creative, conceptual and economic flexibility. The increasing number of fashion designers undertaking postgraduate studies to innovate their practice, and their field, has contributed to an expanded critical dialogue grounded by research. The growing role of the academy in bridging innovative practice with industry is important in proposing new, critical modes of practice that are both propositional and commercially viable. All invited fashion practitioners in the exhibition have a relationship with the academy, either as undergraduate or postgraduate students, as PhD candidates, or as academic staff.

Members of this new collective work as individuals but share with the FDC an expanded approach to the subject of fashion and disdain for convention. Their practices reflect clothing production in limited editions, experienced via film or alternative distribution channels, such as

in the works by Denise Sprynskyj and Peter Boyd (S!X), Amanda Cumming and Kate Reynolds (PAGEANT), Cassandra Wheat and Louise Pannell (Chorus), and Alexandra Deam (DIS/OWNED). They explore the potential of clothing beyond fashion, for instance, Annie Wu (Articles of Clothing) has designed a uniform for Design Hub staff and Martha Poggioli has produced a series of interactive wearable objects. The culture of fashion, the fashion system and its aura of hype is critiqued through performance and text by Ricarda Bigolin and Nella Themelios (D&K), Winnie Ha Mitford and Adele Varcoe. While the representation of fashion as a political and cultural phenomenon, from gallery to page, is interrogated in the installation by Centre for Style, and Laura Gardner and Žiga Testen's weekly exhibition newsletter.

What have we discovered about fashion as both concept and product in a radically different landscape since the FDC heyday? High Risk Dressing / Critical Fashion explores these shifts in fashion discourse and practice to interrogate how micro practices have the capacity to innovate, influence and critique the dominant market and explore fashion's creative and critical potential.

Professor Robyn Healy
Head of School
School of Fashion and Textiles
RMIT College of Design & Social Context

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[The Journal of Design Strategies, Volume 7, 'Alternative Fashion Systems' edited by Otto von Busch and Pascale Gatzien, September 26, 2014, published by Parsons, New York]

CURATORIUM

Professor Robyn Healy, Dr Fleur Watson,
Kate Rhodes, Nella Themelios

RESEARCH ASSISTANT

Laura Gardner

FASHION PRACTITIONERS

Adele Varcoe, Alexandra Deam, Annie Wu,
Chorus, D&K, Laura Gardner, Martha Poggioli,
Matthew Linde, PAGEANT, S!X, Winnie Ha
Mitford

SCENOGRAPHY DESIGNERS

Sibling Architecture, Studiobird and Caitlyn
Parry, WOWOWA architecture and Andre Bonnice

GRAPHIC DESIGN

Žiga Testen

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Tobias Titz

RMIT DESIGN HUB TEAM

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Part of the 2017 VAMFF Arts Program and
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THANK YOU

Robert Buckingham

Kate Durham

Harriet Edquist

Alasdair MacKinnon

Rickie-Lee Robbie

Michael Trudgeon

RMIT Design Archives

RMIT School of Fashion and Textiles

And all of the FDC practitioners,
designers and participants,
past and present.

- ① Chorus
(Cassandra Wheat and Louise Pannell)
in collaboration with Maria Montes
FOMO
2017
Residency

Chorus adopts a collaborative approach to design, developing an outfit a month, known as The Monthly Edition. For High Risk Dressing / Critical Fashion Chorus will be 'in residence' in the office, conceptualising the next Monthly Edition in direct response to FDC archival material. Working with collaborator and graphic designer Maria Montes, Chorus will develop a print-based graphic and exploratory garments forming the next edition.

Setting up a working space within the office, Chorus will design, pattern-make and sample cut the new garments, revealing the process of design from conception to production. The pieces developed in the first two weeks of the exhibition will then be sampled and made available for order in the final two weeks.

Chorus will be in residence in the office every Tuesday throughout the exhibition.

- ② Laura Gardner
High Risk Dressing / Critical Fashion Newsletter
2017
Limited edition publication
Graphic design: Žiga Testen

Prolific publishers, print collateral was central to the success of the FDC as an organisation. Postcards, invites, catalogues, business cards and other ephemera was shared with members and the broader public in a tactic aimed at promoting their officialdom. Particularly significant was the FDC newsletter, designed by co-founder Robert Pearce, that created a dialogue with its members, as well as reporting their activity. The newsletters were ad hoc; informal in language and format but expressing the energy and creative spirit of the FDC community and the technology of the 1980s.

Laura Gardner and Žiga Testen use the model of the FDC newsletter to produce a take-away, free publication in four editions over the duration of the exhibition. This rapid, finite periodical functions as an extension of the events and practices of High Risk Dressing / Critical Fashion. Each issue addresses an element of the FDC organisation - the archive, the bar, the shop and the office - with texts, interviews

and contributions from the exhibition's practitioners alongside facsimiles of print ephemera housed in the FDC archive. This new newsletter functions as a platform for disseminating ideas about the FDC then, and critical fashion now, allowing for new dialogues and reflections to coalesce.

Four editions of the High Risk Dressing / Critical Fashion Newsletter will be published during the exhibition and will be available from the office.

- ③ Interview with Michael Trudgeon and WOWOWA Architecture.
Produced by RMIT Design Hub.
Filming and editing: Marc Morel.

- ④ Annie Wu (Articles of Clothing)
Article N°132-136
(132 Sleeve protectors, 133 Apron, 134 Smock, 135 Lab coat, 136 Tool belt)
2017
Cotton drill

In 1985 the FDC ran a competition to commission the design of uniforms for the staff of Inflation Nightclub, the interior of which was being newly renovated by the architecture practice Biltmoderne. The competition ran parallel with the FDC exhibition Occupation Demarcation, featuring new ideas for work uniforms.

Using this aspect of the FDC archive as a starting point, Annie Wu has designed a set of uniforms to be worn by Design Hub staff and participants throughout the various stages of the exhibition. Made from the same utilitarian colour and fabric, the uniforms comprise several different items: a work jacket, sleeve protectors, aprons and a tool belt. These garments can be worn all together or one at a time according to needs of staff, participants working in the office, installation crew, exhibition volunteers, bar staff and other visitors to the space. The wearing of these garments will be documented and recontextualised within the exhibition.

The garments will also be added to Annie's ongoing fashion project Articles of Clothing, a continuous archive of clothing, accessories and homewares.

- ⑤ S!X
(Denise Sprynskyj and Peter Boyd)
Le Tapis Noir (The Black Carpet)
2017
Film, performance
Film direction & production: GoodJohn

Le Tapis Noir is a collection of garments, objects and films, culminating in a performance event. The work draws inspiration from the soggy, spongy, threadbare carpets and well-worn, scuffed floorboards and parquetry of the St. Kilda nightclubs used by the FDC as venues, as well as other dark haunts of the 1980s.

The interiors of the Venue, Earls Court, and the Seaview Ballroom present opportunities to explore textures and textiles for garments and embellishments. Materials that recall the floors, the deco chandeliers, the mirror balls and the carpets from these venues will be incorporated within a collection of garments and accessories, as well as in the space itself. In the performance models will take over the bar and merge with the surroundings, blending garments with interiors. Collaborating with a live DJ and capturing the moment on film, Le Tapis Noir will revisit the staging of the original FDC shows and involve the audience in the event itself.

'High risk dressing' means dressing for the black carpet.

The presentation of Le Tapis Noir will take place on Saturday 4 March, at 4pm in the bar. The event will be documented and available for viewing shortly after.

- ⑥ Interview with Kate Durham and Studiobird.
Produced by RMIT Design Hub.
Filming and editing: Marc Morel.

- ⑦ D&K
(Ricarda Bigolin and Nella Themelios)
All or Nothing
2017
Performance
Garments feature art work by:

Blake Barns
James Deutsher
Lewis Fidock
Christopher LG Hill
Chantal Kirby
Spencer Lai
Matthew Linde
Gian Manik
Kate Meakin
Virginia Overell
Joshua Petherick
Sean Peoples

Adele Varcoe
Alex Vivian
Hugh Westland
Garment production collaborator:
Chantal Kirby
Stylist: Adam Wood

The FDC was well known for staging large-scale, highly produced catwalk parades, which were documented extensively through photography and film. The parades were significant undertakings, showcasing the work of multiple designers, in a stage show consumed live, as a collective spectacle.

In contrast to this, All or Nothing is a performance unfolding over several hours, decompressing a traditional 15-minute catwalk show into a durational event. The performance will interrupt and slow down the continuous-walking, no stopping runway format that is currently du jour, to include moments of stasis, encounter and erosion in the mise en scène of the show. The performance explores the difference between the formal qualities of a fashion model, with those onlooking or incidentally just there.

They're the forever lurkers, cheap on the liking.

One model and a group of 'extras' will be dressed in D&K. The garments are on the peripheral of the value categories of a 'fashion collection'. Utilising a rich, complex and confused palette, the garments include both the language of expensive materials and less glamorous ones. The garments also comprise diffused and appropriated signifiers of different cultural and historical dress references in fashion.

One dimensional. Not much going on.

Boring.

Let the sumptuous fabric do all the talking!

Do hotels still boast about the thread count of their Egyptian cotton sheets?

D&K's branding signifiers have again been reconstituted, referencing the continual reinvention of brand signatures and graphic motifs in luxury fashion; how these proliferate as images and become arbitrary and easily replaceable.

The identity of these materials is that they are often flat.

All or Nothing will take place at the High Risk Dressing / Critical Fashion party, Thursday 16 March, 6 - 8pm.

- ⑧ Winnie Ha Mitford
Being at the after party without an invitation
 2017
 Audio
 Sound: Andrew McLaughlin

What's more important than being in fashion?
Being at the after party.

In this audio work Winnie Ha Mitford uses the idea of getting into the after party (the mythical belly of the fashion world) as a way of teasing out the social anxieties and identity crises of being in a collective. The work deals with notions of inclusivity/exclusivity that are linked to desire, as well as self-mythology, celebration and branding.

The newly formed contemporary collective at the centre of this exhibition – itself organised as a response to the FDC collective – is imagined as a party where façades are negotiated and performed. People meet and circle one another. Relationships emerge through curiosity, wariness, crushes, envy, (perhaps) disdain and (definitely) competition.

The collective, as a tribe, movement or scene, has unwritten rules of behaviour that prescribe ways of belonging. What if we are all pretending to belong? This is about enjoying the search for your authentic self (the perfect party outfit) in a social web where everyone is busy pretending to be someone:

the star designer,
 the despairing artist,
 the imposter,
 the outsider,
 the enigmatic new kid,
 the lone rebel,
 the mysterious plus one.

Sometimes we gladly become our affectations. If you didn't get the party invitation, then you'll know of it through gossip, PR spin and candid party shots, fomenting the myth of it all.

- ⑨ PAGEANT
 (Amanda Cumming and Kate Reynolds)
SIGNALS
 2017
 HD video
 Film production: MAXIMUM RIM
 (Antuong Nguyen and Warran Wright)

For PAGEANT, the idea of 'high risk dressing' still resonates today. It is defined by the attitudes of the wearer, foregrounding individuality and remixing subcultural references through dress. Technology and social media form a large part of how these attitudes in fashion are digested and communicated to a global audience.

Sampling PAGEANT's SIGNALS trans-seasonal collection, this video explores these notions of high risk dressing through codes of dress, mood and technology. Taking a lo-fi approach to casting and a performative mode of presentation, the film incorporates a multimedia experience that expresses the spirit of the PAGEANT brand.

- ⑩ Adele Varcoe
FASHRAP
 2017
 Performance, video

FASHRAP presents a series of life size clay characters who dance, move and rap, rhyming lyrics that experiment with fashion, clothes, words, bodies, designers and how these things affect, shape and build who we are.

FASHRAP will be performed at the opening of High Risk Dressing / Critical Fashion on Thursday 16 February and the documentation of the film will be viewable shortly after in the Shop space of the exhibition.

- ⑪ Martha Poggioli
A Modular Program
 2017
 Fabric, varying compositions:
 cotton, hemp, linen & wool/polyester blend, thread, buttons, 3D printed PLA (cornstarch, algae)

Today, our fashion desires are enabled through the purchase of bite-sized portions of the brand; affordable facets of luxury, re-constructed onto our own sense of self. These diffusions can be add-ons, up-sizes, or hacks.

Presented as a series of cloth objects available for observation and invited interaction, A Modular Program speculates on these ideas. Each piece is displayed as a flat object; its role to be defined by the user. As propositional offerings, these garment forms are intended to generate user-driven outcomes through arrangement and dress. Each shape, nominal in design, offering endless variations in its interaction, invites a conversation of flat to round, on 'body' or off; connecting and separating the animate and the inanimate.

The garment forms of A Modular Program will be activated through a series of performances and happenings.

- ⑫ Interview with Alasdair MacKinnon and Sibling Architecture.
 Produced by RMIT Design Hub.
 Filming and editing: Marc Morel

- ⑬ Matthew Linde (Centre for Style)
Dress Rehearsal again and again
 2017
 HD Video
 Film Production: Harry Hughes
 Costumes: Giovanna Flores

The styling of human futility or of a constant dress rehearsal...

Following the spirit of Party Architecture (the fashion parades in 1982 and 1983 that led to the formation of the FDC), Dress Rehearsal again and again restages the dynamics of these parties as a means to address the relational, and often disorienting, capacity of fashion. Centre for Style often employs the work of other fashion designers for runways, exhibitions and performance events and as such operates in a parallel manner to the FDC.

- ⑭ DIS/OWNED
DIS/OWNED in the Studio
 2017
 Video
 Creative Direction: Alexandra Deam
 Model: Casey Venning
 Hair & makeup: Mirjana (m4makeupartist)
 Videography & film editing:
 Alexander Rollo

Practicing under the moniker of DIS/OWNED, Alexandra Deam's work attempts to dissect and reinterpret cultural relics through fashion. Much of her practice is influenced by 1970s and 1980s pop culture, yet her experience of these eras is entirely through contemporary media such as TV, music, movies and books. Similarly, her knowledge of the Fashion Design Council is gained entirely from the archive, rather than first hand.

In this work, Alexandra responds to the FDC video archive, creating a new film featuring DIS/OWNED's work, and using the aesthetic qualities of aging VHS and archival video – such as colour saturation, static and image imperfections – as material sources to draw connections with the original footage. By creating a dialogue with the FDC archive, the film shares Alexandra's attempts to understand the archive through its mediation, and uses the process as a method to critically explore contemporary fashion concerns.

OFFICE

- ① Chorus in collaboration with Maria Montes
FOMO
2017
Residency
 - ② Laura Gardner and Žiga Testen
High Risk Dressing / Critical Fashion Newsletter
2017
Limited edition publication
 - ③ Interview with Michael Trudgeon and WOWOWA Architecture.
Produced by RMIT Design Hub.
Filming and editing: Marc Morel.
- BAR
- ④ Annie Wu (Articles of Clothing)
Article N°132-136 (132 Sleeve protectors, 133 Apron, 134 Smock, 135 Lab coat, 136 Tool belt)
2017
Cotton drill
 - ⑤ S!X
Le Tapis Noir (The Black Carpet)
2017
Film, performance
 - ⑥ Interview with Kate Durham and Matthew Bird.
Produced by RMIT Design Hub.
Filming and editing: Marc Morel.

SHOP

- ⑦ D&K
All or Nothing
2017
Performance, Thursday 16 March
- ⑧ Winnie Ha Mitford
Being at the after party without an invitation
2017
Audio
- ⑨ PAGEANT SIGNALS
2017
HD video
- ⑩ Adele Varcoe
FASHRAP
2017
Performance, video
- ⑪ Martha Poggioli
A Modular Program
2017
Fabric, varying compositions: cotton, hemp, linen & wool/polyester blend; thread; buttons, 3D printed PLA (cornstarch, algae)
- ⑫ Interview with Alasdair MacKinnon and Sibling Architecture.
Produced by RMIT Design Hub.
Filming and editing: Marc Morel

ARCHIVE

- ⑬ Matthew Linde (Centre for Style)
Dress Rehearsal again and again
2017
HD Video
- ⑭ DIS/OWNED
DIS/OWNED in the studio
2017
Video
- ⑮ S!X
Le tapis noir - le rue des archives (The black carpet - the street of archives)
2017
Carpet sponsor: Feltex Commercial
- Chaussers de tapis
Shoes, foil, paper, paint
- Le Tapis Noir
Carpet
- Le Robe de Lumières
Cotton, foil, plastic, polyester, silk
- Galerie de Miroirs
Mirrored perspex
- Sac de soiree re coupe
Sequins, cotton, chain
- A bas de femme
Polyester, foil, paint
- ⑯ Fashion Design Council moving image showreel 1:
Ready to Wear ... A Film About Fashion 83
Produced by Simon Burton and Bob Buckingham, 1983
- Heroic Fashion - Fashion 84 (Countdown special)
Produced by Simon Burton & Mark Davis in association with the FDC, 1984
- The Fashion Design Council Presents Video Fashion Friday 24th May 1985
Produced by Simon Burton and Bob Buckingham, 1985
- Footage from "Style: Edge of the Wedge, ABC TV." Reporter: Virginia Moncrieff, 1986. Interviews with Sara Thorn, Victoria Triantafyllou, Peter Morrisey, Robert Buckingham, Leona Edminston, Fiona Scanlan, Bruce Slorach.

Fashion 85 Revolt Into Style
Produced by Simon Burton and Bob Buckingham, 1986

Test footage from Fashion 85 - Revolt Into Style
Produced by Simon Burton and Bob Buckingham, 1986"

I Spy: The Video
Produced by Simon Burton, 1986

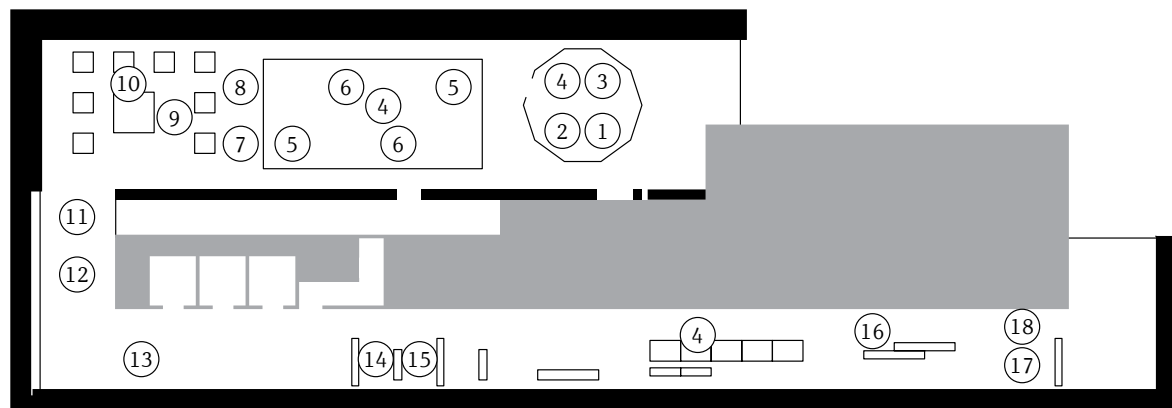
⑰ Fashion Design Council moving image showreel 2

Revolt Into Style
Directed and edited by Simon Burton and Mark Worth
Produced by Michael Butler, 1995

⑱ Interview with Ziga Testen and Robert Buckingham.
Produced by RMIT Design Hub.
Filming and editing: Marc Morel.

The Fashion Design Council-related artefacts displayed in Project Room 2 were all donated to the RMIT Design Archives by Robert Buckingham in 1998. On display are films, flyers, newsletters, photographs, posters, slides, letterhead, business cards, questionnaires, scrap books of news clippings, invitations, catalogues and design mock-ups, produced between 1983-1993.

High Risk Dressing / Critical Fashion is an opportunity to learn more about the changing display of materials on show and to add to the existing records on the artefacts through a process of live daily cataloguing. RMIT Design Hub and the Design Archives are keen to hear from members of the public who may be copyright holders or who have information about the materials on display that could assist with research and attribution.



ADELE VARCOE

Adele Varcoe is a fashion activist who creates fashion experiences that explore the social affects of fashion, dress and clothes. She brings people together to construct participatory performances that explore the elusive nature of fashion. Working with actors, models and the public Adele investigates how fashion affects the social relations between us. She is interested in the behaviour that fashion provokes and the role social interaction plays in shaping our perception of dress.

Adele has presented her work worldwide. Some highlights include The Future of Fashion is Now at Museum Boijmans van Beuningen, Rotterdam and Melbourne Now at the National Gallery of Victoria.

adelevarcoe.com

ANNIE WU

Annie Wu is a Chinese Australian fashion designer with a background in fine art. She was born in Shanghai and moved to Melbourne when she was seven years old. Annie studied, lived and worked in the field of art and design in the Netherlands 2008–2012 before returning to Australia to start her fashion project, Articles of Clothing, which looks at the serial nature of the design process and the singular garment. Her work forms geometric parameters often re-visiting the value of basic everyday clothing and its afterthoughts on the idea of work, labour and studio-based fashion practices.

She also works closely with individual clients to achieve custom designs and orders. Her work is stocked in Monk House Design, Shifting Worlds and Kinobi. Annie is currently undertaking a practice-based PhD in the School of Fashion and Textiles at RMIT University.

articlesofclothing.com.au

DIS/OWNED

Alexandra Deam is a graduate designer from RMIT University's Master of Fashion (Design). She is a designer for social enterprise The Fabric Social, and founder of independent label DIS/OWNED. Throughout her Masters, Alexandra's research focused on the use of garments as both subject and material for design, with an interest in sustainable consumption.

DIS/OWNED explores the materiality and value of consumer byproducts, reintroducing undesirable materials into the fashion system alongside a humorous and playful social critique. DIS/OWNED's first full series is a study of lingerie, exploring feminine rites of passage and the social reservations towards undergarments.

CHORUS

Chorus is the collaboration of long-term friends Cassandra Wheat and Louise Pannell. Established in 2012, the pair design and make bold, luxurious women's clothing working within the typologies of the classic wardrobe with a focus on the interpretation of shirts, pants and jackets. Cassandra and Louise love unusual combinations of colour and texture and eschew fashion trends. Releasing one outfit per month – The Monthly Edition – each piece is expertly made-to-order in Melbourne individually for the customer.

Often designed in collaboration with talented friends, the versatile pieces can be worn in many contexts, each having an intense attention to detail, a unique approach to cut and are made from specialist textiles.

thisischorus.com.au

D&K

D&K is a collaborative project between artist and lecturer Ricarda Bigolin and curator Nella Themelios. D&K is a critical fashion practice; operating primarily as practice-based research exploring key political, social and cultural concerns that affect fashion. The project considers all of the constituent parts of a fashion brand, focusing on unraveling the tropes, clichés and gestures that underlie these elements. Using strategies of institutional critique, D&K plays with the elusive quality of high and luxury fashion, as well as exploring the other end of this spectrum – the diffused and mass-produced product.

D&K is based in Melbourne and has exhibited in Australia and internationally. In 2014 D&K was the recipient of the Han Nefkens Fashion on the Edge Award and

featured in the group exhibition The Future of Fashion is Now (2014), curated by Jose Teunissen at the Museum Boijmans van Beuningen, Rotterdam.

Other recent projects include: Fashion & Performance: Materiality, Meaning, Media (2015), curated by Jessica Bugg and Anna-Nicole Ziesche; CFS USA Tour: LA (2015), curated by Centre for Style at Chin's Push, Los Angeles; MCA Artbar, Twentieth Edition (2014), curated by Chicks on Speed; Lifestyle Concept, Daine Singer Gallery (2014), curated by Daine Singer; #thatautecouturefeeling (2013), solo exhibition at Bus Projects; and Brand Delusions (2012), solo exhibition at Bus Projects.

dolciandkabana.com

LAURA GARDNER

Laura Gardner is a writer and editor pursuing a PhD in the School of Fashion and Textiles at RMIT University. Laura's research addresses the performative space of experimental publishing practice in fashion.

Laura has worked on titles for art publishers in London and Melbourne, as online editor for the journal Vestoj, and as a freelance writer for art and fashion publications. She writes about fashion in an expanded framework, attempting to shed the conventions of commercial fashion media to explore diverse and critical narratives of this genre. Laura is also the editor of publication Mode and Mode, collaborating with Karina Soraya on a periodical zine that explores printed matter and fashion practice.

lauragardner.co

MARTHA POGGIOLI

Martha Poggioli is an artist, designer and founder of Inside Outside. Her practice generates from and reflects upon industries of production and cultures of consumption, speculating upon process, ethics and value systems. Inside Outside serves to create garments and document rituals of use; clothing intended as utopian uniforms, transforming concepts of living into realities of living.

MATTHEW LINDE

Matthew Linde is the founder of Centre for Style, a store and exhibition space for exploratory fashion practice. Commenced in 2013 in Melbourne, the store is relocating to New York City in 2017. Orchestrating performances, readings, publications, exhibitions and runways, the project has

developed into an expanded retail-gallery framework, examining the experiential possibilities of fashion events.

It has showcased both the work of graduate and established designers locally and across the world.

centreforstyle.org

PAGEANT

Having previously worked for iconic labels such as Christopher Shannon, Perks and Mini (P.A.M.) and Christopher Kane, Amanda Cumming and Kate Reynolds established their independent fashion label PAGEANT in 2010. Drawing inspiration from diverse realms and praised for their innovation and ingenuity, PAGEANT collections advocate an alternate vision of femininity that is fresh, fierce and current. Their garments are forged from technically sophisticated fabrics, with aesthetic odes to sportswear.

PAGEANT were finalists in the BT Emerging Designer Awards 2015 and 2016, winners of the prestigious Tiffany & Co National Designer Award 2015 and enjoy an established cult following and growing buzz in Australia.

wearepageant.com

S!X

S!X is a Melbourne-based fashion practice founded by Denise Sprynskyj and Peter Boyd, established in 1994 after they graduated with a Bachelor of Fashion from RMIT University. Their design practice revolves around the deconstruction and excavation of found garments and the incorporation of surface embellishment in women's and men's wear. S!X regularly shows on the catwalk and in exhibition at Virgin Australia Melbourne Fashion Festival (VAMFF) and have shown in Tokyo, Paris, Athens and Oaxaca.

S!X has garments in the permanent collection of the National Gallery of Victoria, National Gallery of Australia and the Powerhouse Museum. S!X has won a Victorian Premier's Design Award, the VAMFF National Designer Award (1997) and the Hobart Art Prize (2000). Denise and Peter are interested in practice-based research, each completing their PhD in 2016, and both teach in the Honours program at RMIT University in the School of Fashion and Textiles.

SIBLING ARCHITECTURE

Sibling Architecture is a practice that works at the intersection of design, urbanism, cultural analysis and communication to produce new and unexpected architectural outcomes, whether it be a building, installation, event or urban strategy. Sibling has residential, cultural, retail and hospitality projects underway in Melbourne, Sydney, Bali and Kuala Lumpur. Its expanded architecture practice has seen Sibling exhibit at the National Gallery of Victoria, Istanbul Design Biennial, Gyeonggi Museum of Modern Art, RMIT Design Hub and Gertrude Contemporary, and provide foresight for leading cultural institutions and organisations.

Sibling has received a range of accolades over recent years within architecture and interior design awards programs, including being announced as one of seven innovative design practices to watch in 2016 by Metropolis Magazine.

siblingnation.net

STUDIOBIRD

Since 2008 architect Matthew Bird has developed an interdisciplinary spatial practice in the mediums of sculpture, installation, scenography, photography, interior design, architecture and site-specific intervention. Matthew's interdisciplinary atelier Studiobird is an armature for his academic tenure at Monash University where he introduces students to speculative design practices, engages with industry-led partnerships and realises a strong and distinct research portfolio. Matthew has exhibited commissioned works at the National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne Festival, MONA and most recently at the 15th Venice Architecture Biennale.

Between 2009-12, Matthew completed a practice-based PhD by invitation at RMIT University that advanced his practice by examining his tools, methodologies and motivations. His practice is recognised with numerous honours including a Green Room Award, Australian Interior Design Award and an Australian Institute of Architects VIC Award. Matthew collaborated with designer and architect Caitlyn Parry on the immersive projected light in the Bar space in High Risk Dressing/Critical Fashion.

studiobird.com.au

WINNIE HA MITFORD

Winnie Ha Mitford is an independent practitioner based in Melbourne. She understands fashion via the poetics of

bodily, dress and aesthetic experience. Winnie uses language, sound and live performance to test how fashion can be presented beyond the operations of clothing and read as an aesthetic phenomenon. Past projects have explored embodied sensation of dress through sound and movement; the imagination of the visual through the verbal; and the idea of fashion as a dynamic and 'how to write it'. These projects were tested in the form of live performance, public readings and voice recordings.

In 2015 she completed her PhD by project in the School of Fashion and Textiles at RMIT University, which offered a new approach to writing as fashion practice. Winnie's practice continues to peel away the tangible aspects of fashion, to question and subvert it. She is currently curious about fashion and self-mythology.

WOWOWA ARCHITECTURE

Monique and Scott Woodward of WOWOWA Architecture and Andre Bonnice unite to celebrate Australian culture, the kitsch and a love of daffy colloquialisms translated into architectural ambition. Their collective work advocates for architecture itself with an interest in how alternative methods of procurement can lead to the formation of unexpected relationships with a wider community.

Lecturing at Monash University and RMIT enables them to inspire others to see that architecture should have a sense of humour and the potential to shape cities. All of their projects champion context and demand that architecture have big ideas, which may be deeply personal, but are always cultural.

wowowa.com.au

ŽIGA TESTEN

Žiga Testen is a Slovenian graphic designer living in Melbourne, whose activities include graphic design, editing, curatorial projects and collaborations with artists, curators, activists and theoreticians. His work relies heavily on language and typography with a specific interest in the relationship of aesthetics and politics.

LOCATION

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designhub.rmit.edu.au

OPENING HOURS

Tuesday - Friday, 11 - 6pm
Saturday, 12 - 5pm
Closed Sunday, Monday and Public Holidays
Admission is free

RMIT DESIGN ARCHIVES

By appointment
The RMIT Design Archives is located on the western side of the forecourt. Contact the Archives to make an appointment to view the collection: rmitdesignarchives@rmit.edu.au

DISCLAIMER

RMIT Design Hub has endeavoured to contact the copyright holder of all materials. In the event you are the copyright holder of material contained within this exhibition, RMIT is seeking to hear from you. Please contact RMIT immediately to discuss permission release and consent.

CONTACT

copyright@rmit.edu.au

YOU ARE INVITED TO A FANCY DRESS PARTY ...

- A. YOU MAKE A SMALL CONCESSION TO WEAR A BADGE, OR HAT OR SOMETHING ...
- B. YOU MOAN AND RESENT THE IMPOSITION ...
- C. YOU GO ALL OUT TO MAKE THE CHALLENGE DRAMATIC AND ORIGINAL ...
- D. YOU REFUSE THE INVITATION ...

YOU VISIT A NEW HAIRDRESSER ON THE RECOMMENDATION OF A FRIEND. THE HAIRDRESSER GIVES YOU A HAIRSTYLE SOMEWHAT DIFFERENT TO WHICH YOU ARE ACCUSTOMED. DO YOU ...

- A. WEAR A HAT UNTIL YOU ADJUST?
- B. HIDE OUT FOR 3 DAYS?
- C. SIMPLY FORGET ABOUT IT ... WHAT CAN YOU DO?
- D. TAKE COMFORT IN REMEMBERING THAT THERE'S "ONLY A WEEK IN BETWEEN A GOOD AND BAD HAIRCUT"?

YOU MUST ATTEND FOUR ENTIRELY DIFFERENT GATHERINGS OVER ONE EVENING - A WORK PARTY, COCKTAILS WITH VIP'S, DINNER WITH FRIENDS, A GIG. LATER ON ... DO YOU ...

- A. CHANGE BETWEEN EACH EVENT, DRESSING APPROPRIATELY?
- B. CHANGE FOR, PERHAPS, ONE ONLY?
- C. REMAIN IN THE SAME CLOTHES THROUGHOUT?
- D. THIS NEVER HAPPENS ...

CATS? THE FELINE A LA MODE (AT THE MOMENT) WOULD BE ...

- A. THE PERSIAN
- B. THE SIAMESE/BURMESE
- C. THE ALLEY CAT
- D. THE TORTOISESHELL