On the Market: The Rise of Artisanal Fashion

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Abstract
The recognition that small-scale entrepreneurs have emerged, survived and even thrived within the current global creative economy[1] has seen growth in artisanally produced products including craft beer, wood-fired bread and custom made clothing. The rise of artisanal fashion forms a part of this current trend and can be attributed to several effects of the globalised creative economy. These include opportunities and challenges in the small-scale fashion business sector through the development of communication technology as well as changed consumer preferences. The motivations of practitioners themselves have also fuelled this trend, revealing fashion designers' interest in seeking autonomy and flexibility as well as a more creatively fulfilling career. The use of the term artisanal has been associated with a move away from automated manufacture and towards products that are hand-crafted and somehow imbued with care. The purpose of this study is to gain an understanding of what defines artisanal fashion, how the contemporary artisanal studio has emerged, and if this is a subset of small-scale fashion design that represents innovation in fashion design entrepreneurship. This study introduces the practices of four small-scale fashion designers working locally in Brisbane, Australia. The investigation is based on journalists' reports and the social media blogs of the designers and others. The aim of the study is to uncover activities and strategies that differ from mainstream processes, to determine how both designers and intermediaries (bloggers) define artisanal fashion. While these small-scale fashion designers have opportunities and challenges in common, an understanding of the combination of process, entrepreneurship, philosophy and aesthetics appears to differentiate artisanal fashion from other independent fashion design. This study suggests that 'artisanal fashion' can indeed be defined as a subset of small-scale fashion design and entrepreneurship and therefore, represents a new fashion category in the current creative economy.

Key Words: Artisanal fashion practice, craft, maker movement, slow movement, creative life, niche markets, Indie culture, creator/consumer relationship.

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1. Introduction

In the last decade, the number of people engaged in arts, crafts and making artisanal objects in Australia has grown enormously. Two million Australians are active makers and according to the arts and cultural advocate Marcus Westbury,[2] many millions more are buying and appreciating what they make. Changes in technology have given artisans and entrepreneurs access to global communities and

international markets that were not accessible ten years ago.[3] Meanwhile, consumers are increasingly rejecting mass-produced products and seeking out the handcrafted and the unique.[4] The result is an explosion in the growth of the hand-made, the bespoke and niche production.[5] In the fashion context, this sees artisanal fashion designers manufacturing locally from small-scale studios yet selling globally on sites such as Etsy – a relatively new phenomenon enabled by Web 2.0 technologies.[6] The rise of these micro enterprises has in part occurred in the wake of manufacturing moving off-shore,[7] whereby designers have sought alternative means of income while maintaining creative careers.[8] The creation of a small business may have been an economic choice for some designers, however humble, but it is emerging as a positive and long-term 'work-style'[9] for many.

The small-scale, low-key enterprise has not generally been a career aspiration for designers.[10] Instead, a common understanding of fashion success is that it is largely gained by working for a big name brand or high-profile independent label.[11] This study is motivated by the desire to challenge this assumption in light of the rise of small-scale artisanal fashion. At the same time, the output from small-scale practitioners is significant, if not surpassing mainstream fashion in quality, innovation and creativity.[12]

The idea to test the assumption that fashion career credibility can only be gained from high-profile labels also emerges from my recent role as a fashion educator. My observations of the current cohort of students enrolled in fashion design courses are that persistent, unrealistic expectations exist regarding careers in the fashion industry. Students are assuming that creative jobs with high-profile firms will remain part of the future of work in the industry. Additionally, Frances Corner, Head of the London College of Fashion, claims that fashion schools are educating an oversupply of designers who will never find work.[13] Admittedly, the hand-craft-based, 'cottage industry' model of the artisanal studio is perhaps a less glamourous career option for the millennial student[14] than the 'fame-and-fortune' version that is often proliferated in the fashion media.[15]

While the artisanal working environment is small-scale and low-key, I also argue that it represents a new form of entrepreneurship. My view on this evolving fashion business model has been influenced by my own entrepreneurial activities.[16] As a fifth-generation fashion business owner, I have been immersed in a family history that values the virtues of working with cloth. From taking responsibility for my own income, to providing a specialist skill for a local market (today seen as ethical and sustainable), these principles have led me through two decades of managing my own couture studio, expressing my creativity and facilitating the individuality of my clientele. The family background may attest to my 'creative DNA',[17] however, the journey has been both glamorous and tumultuous. Although at times financially precarious, a studio career has provided me with the success that comes from working in a creative environment, substantial work satisfaction and a sustained livelihood. Unlike the studies conducted by the sociologists Angela McRobbie[18] and

Wendy Malem,[19] I examine the designers and their studios from the perspective of a creative-business-owner and with this prior experience, begin to identify artisanal Australian fashion design in the context of the current globalised creative economy.

2. Background

The aim of this research is to gain an understanding of artisanal fashion. This firstly requires an examination of the concept of the artisan. The *Oxford English Dictionary* (*OED*) offers the following definition/s:

> Artisan: A worker in a skilled trade, especially one that involves making things by hand. *And [as modifier]* (Of food or drink) made in a traditional or non-mechanized way using high-quality ingredients. The word originates from mid-16th century French and from Italian *artigiano*, based on the Latin *artitus*, past participle of *artire* "instruct in the arts", and from *ars, art-* "art."[20]

A quick Google search will also reveal more diverse interpretations of the term, including several links to third-world folk art sources, spanning the globe from Africa to Mexico.

The term was revived as a marketing buzzword since the early 2000s, beginning in the gastronomic milieu,[21] denoting anything from word-fired bread to raw chocolate chews to craft brewed beer. Its use has been effective in building niche markets and has spread rapidly. Like the Renaissance interpretation, it alludes to high-quality hand-made goods, produced in small batches.[22] Although its designation is hotly debated in food circles today, the term has come to suggest a product that is imbued with authenticity and care, and therefore also justifies its higher price point. This successful marketing strategy has since been appropriated for various products, including non-food artefacts like homewares, jewelry, textiles and clothing.[23] That the marketing of sausage making, bread, or beer production is readily appropriated by fashion designers raises some questions. How can we understand the term within the fashion industry and within the current creative economy? Are there other parameters that define artisanal practice, or more particularly, artisanal fashion practice?

According to the *OED*, the term artisan refers not only to a skilled craftsperson but one who is also an independent entrepreneur.[24] It states that the expression typified a social class distinction in the past, between property-owners and wage labourers. Thus, the title provides an elevation for the craftsperson.[25] In her study for 'British Fashion Design: Rag Trade of Image Industry?', McRobbie found that the status accompanying the position of business-owner was sometimes an important consolation for the often overwrought fashion designers in her study.[26] Artisanal designers in the current creative economy have also embraced business ownership

and might, therefore, be defined as highly skilled producers, with an independent business practice.

An artisan is both creator and marketer of the product, according to the management and fashion studies scholar Robert Ott, in his thesis 'Artisanal Fashion Design: Entrepreneurs on Thinking, Process, and Decision Making.'[27] Ott states that fashion design industry can be broken down into artistic, commercial, and artisanal sectors, and that the artisanal designer combines both entrepreneurial and creative skills. By contrast, in her paper 'Understanding ICT Adoption from the SME User-Centred Perspective', Youngmi Choi identified differences among independent or 'boutique' fashion designers by classifying them as either design oriented, business-oriented or a combination of the two.[28] Referring to the design-oriented group as 'artisan designers', she describes them as 'artists, rather than business owners. They believe their work to be an artistic process and their final products, designed garments, the result of their artistic creativity.'[29] In contrast to Choi, and in line with Ott, I would argue that the artisanal fashion practitioner in the current creative economy operates independently, producing original output, and combines creative thinking with marketing and business roles.

Meanwhile, the modern consumer is also aware that the term 'artisanal' will denote a high-value purchase. Studies have demonstrated that the customer willingly accepts the higher price tag as a signifier of their niche taste.[30] The products are more expensive, and yet are not considered luxury brands. As put by the author and literary editor Anthony Gardner in his article 'Artisan This, Artisan That', '[o]n the one hand it [the term artisan] is reassuringly down-to-earth; on the other, aspirationally luxurious.'[31] The nuanced distinction between craft and luxury will be discussed later in this study. The current creative economy may therefore have provided the contemporary artisan with a viable budget. Whether this means that the designer can indulge their somewhat time-consuming skills with less constraint than in preceding decades will also form part of this investigation and will help define the modern artisanal practitioner.

The Florentine atelier evokes images of patron and *artigiano*, working towards a common goal of skilled mastery, symbolising the benefactor's status.[32] The one-on-one relationship that is established between creator and consumer has not escaped contemporary artisanal exchange. Ott found that design emotion transfers from the designer to the artefact and to the wearer and that this relationship is mutually beneficial to both designer and consumer.[33] In their study on consumers, the textile and interior design scholars Joy Kozar and Kim Hiller Connell found that the preference currently for both makers and consumers is the desire for emotional connection through empathy and friendships.[34] This study will seek to trace out some of the complex connections between the fashion designer as the 'artefact' maker and the customer as cultural consumer. It will investigate how the preference for this exchange has affected the growth of niche markets and the rise of artisanal fashion practice.

According to the historian Kolleen M. Guy,[35] the application of the term 'artisanal' in more recent times continues to be linked to a modern offering based on the values and virtues of traditional craftsmanship. However, it may also refer to a combination of other factors made possible in the current creative economy.

3. Review of the Literature

Defining artisanal fashion design requires an examination, not just of practice, but also of current fashion business models. Fashion businesses can be divided into various types based on their size (employees and turnover), processes, aesthetics and market appeal.[36] These models can be simplified into three main categories commonly understood within the fashion industry as fast fashion, mainstream and slow fashion (or niche). Several subsets exist for each category and within slow fashion, for instance, these include (amongst others) independent fashion, sustainable fashion, bespoke tailoring, luxury fashion and couture.[37] These are subsets that closely align with artisanal fashion, particularly regarding scale and process, but diverge mainly in philosophy or aesthetics. Little literature is available on artisanal fashion, however, placing this subset alongside independent, and the other 'slow' fashion businesses, allow insights from several studies internationally, and can help contextualise the rise of the current artisanal phenomenon.

The following literature review is based on key themes relevant to the rise of artisanal fashion: small scale fashion business, its opportunities and challenges; the globalised creative economy and the effects of communication technology; fashion designers' motivations and pursuit of a creative lifestyle and the new consumer's influence on the growth of niche markets.

4. Small-Scale Fashion Design: Challenges and Opportunities

McRobbie's study of small-scale businesses in Britain from the mid-1980s to the mid-1990s provides insight into the growth of the independent fashion label.[38] Drawing largely on the work of the philosopher Pierre Bourdieu as a theoretical framework, McRobbie surveys the emerging careers of young fashion designers trained in the British art school system. McRobbie's survey of the work patterns of the graduates reveals the precarious existence of fashion designers through a series of attempts to set up their own labels, the key aspiration of the fashion students. Frequently forced into 'self-exploitation', working long hours with little pay, most accumulated huge debts and several even suffered bankruptcy. McRobbie provides explanations for the predominant failure of these small enterprises. She points to the conscious ignorance of manufacturing and production processes, underlined by their art school education, as a major downfall for many of these designers, trained to value art over craft. McRobbie suggested that designers should consider the value of work processes at the expense of ivory-tower art school thinking, as a means to a sustainable livelihood.[39]

McRobbie probes deeper in her study and also finds that although a small hand-to-mouth existence may have been garnered from their work, designers were unable to survive financially long-term through, for example, any time off due to illness, vacations or the demands of raising a family, not to mention retirement.[40] Suitable approaches to business and entrepreneurship are vital to successful operations, whether large or small. Lack of business knowledge is perhaps one of the contrasts that can be drawn with McRobbie's subjects of the mid-1990s British fashion industry and the small-scale designer operating in today's market.

Malem's 2008 study, 'Fashion Designers as a Business', extends McRobbie's work by providing insights into the survival strategies of independent fashion designers in London.[41] The independent fashion designer's experience of career success is often judged by financial gain.[42] However, the creative industries are plagued with precarious economies that have been the subject of many studies.[43] Incomes in the independent fashion industry are arguably amongst the most fickle, largely due to a chronic lack of business understanding.[44] Malem's research suggests that 'designers need to be quick to understand the business and wider environment in which they are operating.'[45] Malem and McRobbie's studies provide a comparison to today's designers. This investigation asks to what extent today's designers have adjusted to their market, especially in the context of the globalised creative economy.

Although McRobbie[46] and Malem[47] give insights into the independent designer starting their own label, the practitioners in these studies were not definitively categorised as artisanal designers. Indeed, the term was perhaps not *au courant* at the time. Factors that may help distinguish the artisanal studio designer from other independent fashion business models may be found in a study by the sociologist Wendy Larner and the women's studies scholar Maureen Molloy, who discussed the break from the core capitalist philosophy of growth, through a commitment to remain small-scale.[48] Larner and Molloy have studied the phenomenon of the globalised market for fashion design in New Zealand and describe the dynamics of independent fashion and how women in developed nations are carving out new careers as entrepreneurial designers.[49] In contrast to large fashion houses, owned by luxury conglomerates, New Zealand designer fashion firms are intensely local in set-up and in the vast majority of cases, are owned solely by the principal designer.[50] Even the 'stars' of New Zealand fashion run their labels as family businesses and champion a 'hands–on' approach in which creative and personal identities are inextricably linked. These fashion designers do not aspire to leave and join international fashion houses; rather, they express their ambitions to be New Zealand-based niche players, at the cutting edge of global fashion trends.[51] Larner and Molloy argue that the New Zealand designer fashion industry not only embodies new ways of working but that its very success is underpinned by these changes. They also go on to discuss the turn towards culture and creativity as privileged modes of being.[52] These shifts in culture and work philosophy on the part of small-scale designers begin to form the identity of the artisanal designer.

Small fashion firms producing innovative seasonal collections for local as well as export markets are not unique to New Zealand. Hong Kong and Australia, for example, also host burgeoning new designer fashion industries.[53] In her article 'Dreams of Small Nations in a Polycentric World', the cultural sociologist Lise Skov has made this observation amongst various small cities internationally, whereby designers remain small, producing goods locally. Skov argues that there has been a change in the organisation of fashion 'place' – comparing large fashion centres (London, Paris, New York, etc.) and smaller 'second tier' cities.[54] Skov discusses the place-making ability of fashion designers to fill a cosmopolitan form with local content, with a heightened sense of the here and now.[55] This concept is significant to this study because it sheds light on the impact of small-scale enterprises existing in 'low-profile' cities, providing yet another layer with which to characterise the artisanal fashion business, demonstrating its importance in cultural contribution to the local community.

5. Fashion Designers' Motivations and the Pursuit of a Creative Lifestyle

Sound business principles may be one developing characteristic of the new small-scale designer, however, the desire for a creative work life is emerging as a strong career motivator.[56] Philosophical movements (slow, maker and craft), notions of creative fulfillment, self-expression and a distancing from technology are arising as alternative career goals for the independent fashion designer and the artisanal studio appears well placed to provide these settings.

The well-being gained from making things by hand has become an important factor in the work choices of many artisanal designers, abandoning the high-tech disconnect found in mainstream fashion design work. The sociologist Richard Sennett discusses the connection of handwork and well-being in his seminal work, 'The Craftsman',[57] reminding readers of what is to be learnt in life when hand and mind work together. According to Sennett, good craftsmanship provides measurable personal development, particularly in relation to building hand-work skills and knowledge over time. 'Making is thinking',[58] according to Sennett. He describes case after case, showing 'how the work of the hand can inform the work of the mind.'[59] Sennett goes so far as to suggest that 'learning to work well enables people to govern themselves and so become good citizens.'[60] Good citizenship and good entrepreneurship are closely aligned; thus, it could be argued, a good craftsperson could also have a successful career.

According to the cultural studies scholar Susan Luckman, discussing the newfound importance of the handmade in her recent work, 'a making renaissance is underway.'[61] Luckman discusses how once 'nana' style crafting activities (in particular referring to those involving yarn, like knitting and crocheting) have evolved more recently to a newly 'sexy' occupation, pursued by a younger generation of cool hipsters.[62] Luckman's study suggests that crafting is gaining

popularity not only out of the sometimes economic necessity of generating income, but for the sheer joy and creative expression that this activity affords.[63]

Sennett's philosophy on leading a craftsperson's life aligns with the cultural shift known as the 'slow movement.'[64] The journalist Carl Honoré's 2004 book, *In Praise of Slowness* explored how the Slow philosophy might be applied in every field of human endeavour.[65] Honoré describes Slow as a cultural revolution against the notion that faster is always better.[66] By 2007, the researcher, author, consultant and design activist Kate Fletcher had coined the phrase 'slow fashion' and with this generated a consciousness of how we wear clothes.[67] Slow fashion can now be related to various forms of production from recycling to upcycling to fair-work[68] and the artisanal designer is once again well placed to embrace these ways of working.

The 'Maker Movement' provides another cultural perspective on the development of a creative life and workstyle. This cultural trend advocates commitment to the ideal of being an artist/crafter/designer.[69] Although this phenomenon grew out of groups of technology tinkerers, preferring to make rather than buy their own computers, the ideologies have taken hold and spread easily to all that involved learning-by-doing or just making things by hand. The Maker Movement, according to the science journalist Noelle Swan, is a reaction to the de-valuing of physical exploration and the growing sense of disconnection with the physical world in modern cities. It could also be seen as an anti-response to disposables, globalised mass production, the power of chain stores, multinationals and consumerism.[70]

The Maker Movement, Slow Fashion, the Crafting Renaissance and the desire for a creative lifestyle have emerged as cultural movements and together suggest a value-based shift in the creative economy. The recognition of potential and adaptation to this environment may be what Malem suggested as survival strategies for designers in her study. Tailors, couturiers and independent designers may share some of these philosophies but none encompass these cultural movements as holistically as does the artisanal designer.[71]

6. The Globalised Creative Economy: Communication Technology and the New Consumer

Marketing through global communication systems in industries such as design has allowed new industries and consumers to emerge.[72] Global networking has afforded new opportunities to millions of crafters, most notably through the online selling platform Etsy, which has provided makers worldwide with a Web 2.0 application specifically aimed at hand-made products.[73] Although some designers are resistant to embrace the use of technology,[74] information and communication technologies (ICT) have accelerated the growth of the global creative economy. According to the media and communications scholar Terry Flew, international trade in cultural goods and services has been growing at a faster rate than overall international trade, and digital technologies and the Internet are important drivers of

this growth.[75] Flew is probably referring to the expansive dissemination of music and film. However, the impact of digital technologies and the Internet on markets for the artisanal fashion studio may be significant in stabilising its economic fragility.

Luckman, Ott and the Director of the UNESCO Institute for Statistics Hendrik Van der Pol all observe that consumer behavior has changed, increasingly demanding customisation, closer and more accountable relationships and individualised shopping experiences.[76] Whereas new technologies have expanded the market for the maker, the new consumer wants to feel 'special', seeking out personal relationships and individual attention.[77] The preference of both makers and consumers is the desire for emotional connections through empathy and friendships.[78] The inclination for individual relationships has perhaps also been a reaction to the distance caused by the very technologies modern consumers embrace.[79]

Paradoxically, in 'A Study on How Small and Medium-Sized Enterprise Tailors Utilize e-Commerce, Social Media, and New 3D Technological Practices', the fashion management scholar Frances Ross[80] describes how global connectivity and the marketing opportunities it provides also appear to present a contrast to the intimacy of customer relationships achievable in the small-scale studio. Ross describes how the 'New Tailor',[81] as exemplified by Oswald Boateng, uses these platforms to great (economic) advantage. Luckmann agrees that the contemporary artisan has the distinct advantage of working locally while able to distribute globally.[82] Artisanal designers are finding a balance between the personal relationships demanded by the new customer, and the many advantages of connectivity provided by communication technology.

This literature review has identified areas of focus in examining the small-scale fashion enterprise. The independent fashion designer's experience of financial struggle as described by Malem[83] and McRobbie,[84] appears to be mitigated by recent disruptions in the global creative economy, which amongst other effects, provide an increased awareness of business principles that benefit the small-scale enterprise, as shown by Van der Pol[85] and Flew.[86] According to Ott and Luckman, shifts in current consumer preferences have created niche markets for the small-scale entrepreneurial fashion designer while the desire for a more creatively fulfilling and sustainable work life, according to Larner and Molloy, has changed the independent designers' markers of career success. Finally, place, cultural contribution and identity, as discussed by Larner, Molloy[87] and Skov,[88] provide another perspective, defining the values of the small-scale independent designer.

7. Discussion

This study is concerned with the characteristics identifying artisanal fashion practice. The methods used for this investigation combine qualitative observation of

the designers' 'bricks and mortar' environments and content analysis of their online presence (compiled from weblogs, social media platforms and websites). The four fashion designers introduced in this study originate from diverse backgrounds, have varied experience and represent different market segments within the city. While micro-businesses in the European Economic Community (EEC) by comparison are those that have fewer than fifty employees, in Australia a micro-business is defined according to a comprehensive Textile Clothing and Footwear (TCF) report as comprising zero to four employees.[89] Consequently, the designers have been selected based on their location, their small-scale operation, their local production and their relative anonymity.

The creative output of the designers can be described as follows: The label Gail Sorronda[90] produces high-end fashion and sells from a retail space in an upmarket fashion precinct in the inner city; former architect and House of Ezis[91] designer Andrej Pytel integrates cross-disciplinary skills to produce a line of contemporary day and semi-formal wear, and retails from an inner city outlet as well as offering a bespoke on-line service; market stall and Etsy seller Alice Nightingale[92] adds value by creating her own prints on fabrics which are sewn into garments in two rooms of her rented suburban home; Suzii K,[93] the youngest and least experienced of the designers at nineteen, produces in her parents' home (in suburban Brisbane) and has found a large following through social networking activity.

The study revealed several identifiers of the small-scale entrepreneur. However, this examination is concerned with distinguishing artisanal fashion enterprises from other small-scale fashion businesses. The three aspects which I would argue distinguish practitioners as artisanal fashion designers centre on: work/lifestyle choices, economic choices and cultural preferences. These identifiers were consistent in only one of the practices.

8. Work/Lifestyle Choices

The locality of Brisbane is renowned for its lifestyle culture, where making sometimes unconventional personal work choices is accepted and even supported by the community.[94] The four designers in the study chose to start their own label, predominantly motivated by life- or workstyle preferences, rather than classic business oriented goals (leveraging profits). House of Ezis designer Pytel feels the nature of work in the independent studio with its more hands-on approach leads to the benefits of self-actualisation, flexibility and self-determination.[95] As a former architect, Pytel decided to leave the familiarity of his chosen field to pursue a solo career in fashion when he felt the graphic, experimental and creative nature of his work could be better adapted into textile print design which is then applied to fashion design.[96] Creative self-expression and the preference of medium were essential in Pytel's workstyle decision.

Like its traditional counterpart, the contemporary artisanal studio is often the site of high quality production. Molloy and Larner's social study of the unprecedented

success of the small-scale New Zealand fashion industry, and its contribution to the creative economy, notes that the size of the operations was important in maintaining their high quality output.[97] The standard of Sorronda's fashion shows that 'artisanal' or 'hand-made' does not necessarily equate to 'home-made.' Standards and techniques obtained globally are integrated into their modern studio to great effect. Initially crafted in the workrooms of Italy, Sorronda's output attests to the label's world-class level through its dissemination in several major fashion cities internationally.[98] After three years in Paris, the label's founder returned to Brisbane, bringing 'European chic' to her sunny home and continues to produce high quality garments at more attainable price points than imported luxury brands. In a similar vein, the House of Ezis, having achieved international recognition at the 2012 Venice International Biennale (Australian Formation with Marissa Lindquist), has also continued with cutting edge design in the context of its Brisbane studio.[99] Therefore, although these two enterprises are small, their creative contribution is significant.

9. Economic Choices

Opening a design studio is an achievable process for beginners and provides an alternative method of employment without much capital outlay.[100] Occasionally the start-up business can be subsidised by social benefits, a benevolent parent or crowd funding in the current economy. Additionally, the artisanal practitioner does not aspire to the 'fame and fortune' sought by some independent designers. The artisanal designer is content with less glamorous premises, remaining small-scale, relying on gratuitous support networks and utilising direct marketing strategies, thereby keeping costs low.[101]

The choice of premises location is often a defining factor in the success of the artisanal studio. The urban studies theorist Richard Florida has discussed the benefits of enticing practitioners to settle in large creative hubs, for the benefit of the city,[102] however prohibitive rents can often jeopardise the financial health of these micro-enterprises. Whereas McRobbie's respondents appeared to have had a limited array of workroom and showroom opportunities in the mid-1990s, city developers today are conscious of smaller, commercial budgets and are providing innovative spaces, even if temporary. These include pop-up shops, shared workspaces and 'hot desks.'[103] 'Renew Newcastle' is an exemplary initiative in regenerating abandoned inner-city spaces and providing the starting point for a vibrant rebirth of arts and crafts enterprises in a once-depressed city centre.[104] The Melbourne Laneway regeneration also captured international attention with its mix of cafes, art and culture.[105] These spaces are often un-renovated and not glamorous. However, this provides their very attraction. These initiatives benefit both the makers and the consumers, while implying a sense of belonging to a counter-commercial culture.[106]

House of Ezis' choice of premises perhaps most closely exemplifies the expression of this real estate rebel.[107] Sitting on Anne Street, a city thoroughfare in

'The Valley' (Fortitude Valley), an area better known for its grungy, seedy side, the boutique is one of a frugally renovated strip of mid-century brick shops, which are more grotty than charming. The area is however well patronised by alternative shoppers and the adjoining laneways have recently been further populated by designers and makers, adding to the sub-culture image of the precinct. In contrast, Sorronda has settled into the chic pedestrian quarter of James Street, not far from Ezis. This choice of location aligns the label with luxury, high-end brands and clearly speaks of its aspirations in a more glamorous world.[108] Thus, although small and unique, Sorronda may perhaps not easily be aligned with other artisanal enterprises. Nightingale has opted to remain in 'the suburbs' as a way of curbing the excessive cost of city leases[109] and although this might not necessarily align with an ideal creative environment as described by modern urban theorists like Florida, it is partially an economic choice.[110] However, working out of the city presents disadvantages, when trying to market and sell products. Countering this drawback, Nightingale relies on information communication and technology to boost awareness and sales. The label is also mobile, presenting dresses at curated markets, which is another location choice of artisanal enterprises.[111] Suzii K works from her parents' home and also bridges the brand awareness gap with her online presence. Additionally the product is placed on consignment in boutiques that have been selected for their mainstream appeal. Although Suzii K is produced at home and on a small-scale, the aspirations for the brand's image are to appear more glamour and 'fame and fortune'-oriented when examining the social media output.[112] Therefore this label may be better categorised as an emerging independent label, rather than artisanal.

The choice of location for the artisanal enterprise is important both in conveying image and philosophy, however as decisions are made based on minimum costs, the reach and effectiveness of these locations is also minimised.[113] Information communication technology has given the isolated or off-site practitioner an affordable platform for increasing reach, raising awareness and improving sales. This is particularly valuable in comparatively sparsely populated centres like Brisbane, affording the artisanal designer the global reach for their product.

Web 2.0 technologies have significantly changed the landscape for local designers and provided opportunities for international revenue and recognition.[114] The online selling platform Etsy, one of several similar providers, has presented artisans worldwide with a selling market that has seen a turnover of more than $1.8 billion for the company in 2015. CEO Chad Dickerson professes that the personal relationship that can be delivered compared to 'big-box' retail is one of the secrets of the organisation's success.[115] Nightingale has found the Etsy platform advantageous in representing her brand's ethos and hand-made aesthetic while affording a sense of community to the label.[116] The Etsy platform and other similar websites are specifically curated for the art and craft community. Of the four

designers, Nightingale is the only Etsy seller and therefore represents a key trait of artisanal fashion entrepreneurship.

Marketing costs can be further minimised through collaborative projects and social media activity. Suzii K's marketing costs are minimised by TFP (time for portfolio) collaborations. The youngest of the designers in age and most recently established, Suzii K has grown her reputation through actively networking and drawing attention to her self-perpetuating success. On closer examination the success is largely media driven and although Suzii K also measures her achievement through the distinctly digital metrics of 'likes',[117] the conversion of these leads remains a challenge.

Marketing choices distinguish designers and help their placement into categories. The pursuit of glamour marketing includes presentation at fashion festivals and representation in high-profile magazine editions. Sorronda matches seasonal changes in the production of her collection, often showing at fashion festivals like MBFF (Mercedes Benz Fashion Festival) in Sydney.[118] This is an essential part of her business schedule and for this reason falls into the category of independent rather than artisanal designer. Suzii K also aspires to follow mainstream fashion calendar promotions and has presented work at these events regularly since her launch in 2014, thereby also aiming for independent designer status rather than an artisanal designer position.[119] House of Ezis is more dependent on the preferences of individual clients, thereby following a structure led by consumers. Nightingale works on a constant output that is presented online and at markets when the product is complete. In this way, Nightingale represents the least structured workflow, and thereby demonstrates the most artisanal style of practice, one that is most closely aligned with professional crafters or artists, creating objects of their own choice rather than following a seasonal trend.[120]

The contemporary fashion shopper has played a significant role in the emergence of the artisanal studio. The new consumer is paradoxically both impulsive and ethically conscious[121] and contemporary niche markets would not have grown without the distinctive purchasing modes of the new consumer. In a study on purchasing decision processes conducted by retail and consumer scientists Liz Barnes, Gaynor Lea-Greenwood, Maegan Watson and Ruoh-Han Yan,[122] the impulsive shopper is contrasted with the slow fashion consumer. They identified recurrent themes including instant satisfaction coupled with buyers' remorse amongst fast fashion consumers, compared to continued satisfaction from more considered purchases or custom orders from individual designers. Sorronda and House of Ezis operate through small local retail outlets, which means in both cases that the designer is often present and can engage the customer through discussing the creation of the garments. This leads to a more considered and mindful purchase.

The new consumer is making conscious choices that have led away from careless fast fashion consumption[123] and towards the growth of customer groups, eager to express their individuality, their commitment to ethical and sustainable choices and

their desire for authentic experiences. Nightingale sells her garments at market stalls such as Finders Keepers, which has a mission to provide sustainable and ethical fashion to the consumer.[124] As the consumer is growing in consciousness about the products he or she chooses to purchase, including awareness of the standards under which they were produced, the carbon footprint or waste that was involved as well as showing appreciation for its making, he/she is also tiring of anonymous mass production.[125]

An extension of this considered shopping style involves learning and cultural exchange. Borrowing from the hospitality industry, the trend for consumers to see, feel, touch and taste has been evidenced in the growing number of cafes and restaurants that display the kitchen, the roasting of coffee beans or the curing of small-goods on site and in plain view.[126] The artisanal studio potentially provides this experience for the customer by breaking down the walls between production and purchase. In Nightingale's studio, the customer can see a work in progress, learn about its foundations and consequently becomes all the more appreciative of the product. This is a trend concurrent with luxury leather good companies like Gucci, Chanel and Ferragamo for example, promoting their products with in-house videos showing the painstaking steps of crafting a leather handbag.[127] This form of marketing is designed to engage the customer, build value in the brand and inform.

The client is looking for an enriched experience that will also justify her/his high value purchase.[128] Having an item custom made is an ideal of luxury consumption[129] that aligns with the consumer's desire to know (and tell) 'who made my clothes.'[130] Pytel agrees that the design process as outlined by Cross[131] seeks to capture empathy, creativity and rationality by understanding the client's needs and wants, showing that the interaction between designer and consumer, particularly in the artisanal studio setting, has less to do with selling and more to do with building emotional support.[132] Ott's study goes on to confirm the importance of design emotion, whereby sentiment transfers from designer to the artefact; from artefact to wearer; and from wearer to designer, and changes the relationships between them.[133] According to Ott's research, artisanal designers are genuinely concerned about the impact of their creations on the wearer and the love the customer develops toward the artefact.

10. Cultural Choices

New aesthetics and ideals surround artisan designers in the current market that could be aligned with 'indie culture.' Along with the crafted, 'hand-made' touch, this design influence is perhaps the most recognisable marker of artisanal fashion design. Indie culture originated in the media of music and film and grew out of the desire of practitioners to create works that were not subject to mainstream tastes and commercial styles.[134] The artists working within this genre were quickly recognised by fashion observers for their somewhat quirky clothing style, and dissemination through blogs and magazines soon followed, thus commencing a trend and ultimately a new fashion look. The indie musician gave rise to the figure of the

hipster in the late 1990s, an individual who consumed the style of the indie artist. The hipster aesthetic is described as kitschy and ironical with a soft colour palette, at the same time accentuating the handcrafted or nostalgic, underscoring values of individuality and ethical production, sometimes including recycled and vintage elements, and a notably anti-glamour attitude.[135] While hipster chic leans toward the ironic, showing a characteristic veneration of bad taste and the obscure,[136] contemporary design craft weighs in with a significant neo-Nordic aesthetic.[137] Meanwhile, female hipsters show a fascination with dresses of their mothers or grandmothers from the 1960s,[138] which is the inspiration behind the Alice Nightingale label.[139]

Alignment with this cultural aesthetic is fundamental in discerning artisanal fashion from other small-scale fashion design production, and of the four designers, Alice Nightingale is the only label that exhibits this design direction. The label's colour palette presents muted hues and natural fibres. The self-designed fabric prints show repeated animal patterns, beloved of the indie/hipster style.[140] Motifs from children's book fables, featuring squirrels, foxes, hares, owls and ducks decorate the 'alice-blue-gown' style dress cuts. The analogue and the unique characteristic of the hipster culture identifies itself not as a counter-culture but a conserver-culture.[141] The sociologist Bjørn Schiermer describes the hipster phenomenon as an 'extreme instance of the tense dynamic of individualisation and imitation to redeem cultural heritage from oblivion.'[142]

11. Conclusion

This chapter has shown that the rise of artisanal fashion can be attributed to several elements of the globalised creative economy and the choices that designers have made within that economy. These include life- and workstyle preferences, alternative economic measures as well as cultural and philosophical changes. The creative economy has seen the emergence of alternative commercial spaces and different forms of marketing as well as designers embracing the Slow, Ethical and Maker Movements. The use of the term artisanal has been associated with a move away from automated manufacture and towards products that are generally hand crafted and somehow imbued with care. Consumer preferences have changed accordingly, moving towards more considered and mindful consumption. Production is primarily hands-on which allows the practitioner to indulge in handcraft and repeatedly experience the benefits of well-being. Non-automated methods curb large capital investment costs and satisfies the clientele, eager for a more ethical choice. However marketing is likely to evolve deeper into the realm of technology, seeing collaborations with tech-savvy applications developers, creating meaningful and productive online experiences for both designers and their clientele. The aesthetic of artisanal fashion combines the hand-crafted irregularities with a design direction associated with indie culture. The artisanal practitioner is a small, self-employed operator networking and marketing simultaneously within a local and

global community of like-minded idealists. Thus, artisanal fashion can be defined as a small-scale, independent fashion category that has grown through various trends and technologies made available in the global creative economy, thereby representing innovation in fashion design entrepreneurship. Global networking has created niche markets for these designers to connect with consumers who value the stories behind their products. The question of whether these enterprises are remaining viable and if so how, provides a context to the doctoral research project in development. This emerging style of fashion practice and entrepreneurship could provide an alternative option for long-term creative careers of the future and warrants further investigation.

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