Tailor & Cutter

THE AUTHORITY ON TRADE AND CRAFT

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EDITOR'S LETTER

We promised, we delivered, behold our new format, replete with 40% more chonk and finally co-authored. Fortune be praised.

Our move towards this more expansive model relied heavily on generous contributors, who for this issue, rekindled their relationships with the trade by studying long-departed familial ties. Among the myriad of rationales for what motivated their work, pride came across as salient. What is it that makes one today, generally speaking, more proud than just a few years ago to be associated with a trade? And how far does this pride stretch? Are occupational hierarchies being capsized?

Craft professions can broadly be categorised into those regarded as creative and those–arguably wrongly–not (e.g. construction). The latter having for the most part remained essential, are therefore less stigmatised in today's financialised Britain, than the former.

Such is that stigma, that upon announcement of any interest in the study of a creative craft, one might be subject to the same contempt that more typically accompanies the sentence: 'Mum, I want to be an artist'.

To announce one's desire to train as a tailor a century ago, was a very different ordeal compared to a few decades on from the symbolic Blairite target of 50% university enrolment being set. But a a recent spotlight on how changes to education funding and service industry shifts have indebted two generations and stagnated spending power, has transitioned the professional maverick from the historically underrepresented climbing the ladder in prestigious fields, to one who renounces the liberal dream in exchange for the pursuit of what was up until the days of Macmillan, an aspirational vocation in skilled manual labour.

HS

O N C E - O V E R

In the run up to WWI, German portraitist, August Sander, set out on an ethnophotographic mission to record every variety of individual around the area of Cologne where he was born. His work eventually amassed some 40'000 negatives, only a fraction of which survived the Third Reich. A preliminary 60 were published in *Antlitz der Zeit* (Face of Our Time, 1929) in which the opposite mistitled photograph of mine workers was included.[1]

English art critic, John Berger, wrote an essay on the portrait in 1980, in which he devoted his reflection exclusively to the wearers' suits, accusing them of being mechanisms for social stratification and sumptuary coercion.[2] Berger makes a blunder by looking on these suits as a man of the silent generation, unfamiliar with the very different technical and stylistic principles which governed working men's garments prior to his time. He writes:

'Look... at the three on the road to the dance. Their hands look too big, their bodies too thin, their legs too short. (They use their walking sticks as though they were driving cattle.) They can wear only their hats as if they suited them. Where does this lead us? Simply to the conclusion that peasants can't buy good suits and don't know how to wear them? No, what is at issue here is a graphic, if small, example (perhaps one of the most graphic which exists) of what Gramsci called class hegemony.

Essentially the suit was made for the gestures of talking and calculating abstractly. (As distinct, compared to previous upper class costumes, from the gestures of riding, hunting, dancing, duelling). It was the English gentleman, with all the apparent restraint which that new stereotype implied, who launched the suit. It was a costume which inhibited vigorous action, and which action ruffled, uncreased and spoilt.

At the same time [the working classes'] very acceptance of these standards, their very conforming to these norms which had nothing to do with either their own inheritance or their daily experience, condemned them, within the system of those standards, to being always, and recognisably to the classes above them, second-rate, clumsy, uncouth, defensive. That indeed is to succumb to a cultural hegemony.'

These suits display cues which unmistakably characterise them as workers' outfits, but to qualify such attributes as unrefined is both factually inaccurate and conceivably imprudent.

1. Sander, A. (1914) Young Farmers. [Photograph]
2. Berger, J. (1980) 'The Suit and the Photograph', in About Looking. New York: Pantheon, pp. 27–36.

Take this paragraph on working men's coats by W.D.F. Vincent in Part 2 of The Cutter's Practical Guide, 1893:

'The Sleeve should be arranged with a decided forward hanging tendency... which will allow of the arms being brought forward without any strain across the back, though it will, of course, land a little superfluous material at the top of the hind arm, when the arm rests at the side. Doubtless our readers will be able to gather the features to be noticed from these remarks.'

Note the drape of the sleeve of the central figure's coat; forward-pitched and surely dirty in the hind arm at rest, but certainly not poorly inserted. Similarly for their trousers, working men's drafts are found in the literature of this time instructing crooked seat angles and excessive underside balance. These features were not commonplace by dint of poor craftsmanship or consumer ignorance, they were deliberate and reasoned. Vincent goes on:

On the other hand, clumsiness should be carefully avoided; for it will often be found that the working man will be quite as keen a critic as many of the higher classes. Many working men can appreciate skilled workmanship, and their eye is frequently as trained, owing to their particular calling, as any artist's.

This infamous persnicketiness is corroborated by an article in The Tailoring World from June 1899:

'The tailor who fancies that any sort of clothes will do for a working man should never be persuaded to take a club contract. If he recklessly agrees to tackle such a job he will soon discover that the lower classes, in their own way, are quite as fastidious about their garments as the people who pay enormous prices for suits of the latest fashionable cut.'

Berger denounces the lounge suit as a literal and figurative restraint on the labouring class, and praises its predecessor, the Smock-Frock (an exclusively peasant garment), as respectful of the specific character of the bodies it was clothing. In doing so, he overlooks how labourers had created a class of tailoring of their own, distinguished by its technical accommodations, suitable for their quotidian functions, and crafted to standards which could rival a bourgeois benchmark (and in the provinces at least, made in houses patronised by both sides). This is not a capitulation to an imposed fashion that is poorly emulated, quite the contrary. It is indicative of the aspirational spirit of the industrial period and a boastful caution to a hegemon–facilitated by a steep reduction in the price of woollen cloth–that sartorial consumption is no longer a social entitlement.

This highlights the very post-modern nature of the assertion that suiting is elitist. Prior to 1968, tailoring functioned as a harmonising and homogenising dress. And far from accepting noble visual standards which made them appear as uncouth, the *Hoi Polloi* placed demands on the trade which developed it over the course of this time of vestiary unification, as much as any other stratum did, while creating a distinct and fetching character all of their own.

C O G I T A T I O N

On the 7th of May, the electorate's lethal blow à la Mortal Kombat mightn't have knocked the country into a different policy dimension, but may well have KO'd another incumbent and his *mandate for change*. Back when Eisenhower was first coining the phrase to build hype for his inaugural administration, economist, John Kenneth Galbraith, was engaged on the manuscript for his classic study of the 1929 crash.[1] His breakdown of that disaster written in the summer of 1954 makes for essential reading, insofar as the lessons of history have here–as ever–been unheeded and warrant recalling:

'Through 1925 the pursuit of effortless riches brought people to Florida in satisfactorily increasing numbers. More land was subdivided each week. What was loosely called sea-shore became five, 10, or 15 miles from the nearest Brine. Suburbs became an astonishing distance from town. The congestion of traffic into the state became so severe that in the autumn of 1925 the railroads were forced to proclaim an embargo on less essential freight, which included building materials for developing the subdivisions. Values rose wonderfully. However, in the spring of 1926, the supply of new buyers, so essential to the reality of increasing prices, began to fail. The Florida boom was the first indication of the mood of the 20s and the conviction that God intended the American middle-class to be rich. But that this mood survived the Florida collapse is still more remarkable.'

Housing was a canary in the coal mine in 1929 as in 2008, and it bridges today with those events, alongside a number of other bubbles. Although none currently appear to be so inflated as to self-collapse, they have evidently smooshed the trade and are continuing to bear down further on it.

The electorate's influence on recent governments' condonation of a surging property market has been potent. Sustaining the unrelenting price frenzy facilitated by wilfully low interest rates was a solid vote-winner throughout the 2010s. However, this bubble had been veiling another to the extent that discontentment caused by financialisation was, to a degree, being mitigated by a more than three times increase in house prices since the millennium.[2] UK property was for much of the populace, a consoling growing asset following six decades of disinvestment, and our trade is particularly well placed to illustrate a few of the effects these symbiotic bubbles have had on productivity, spending power and employment. Consider this NY Times article from 1971, just a year before the T&C shut its doors:[3]

1. Galbraith, J.K. (1954) The Great Crash, 1929. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.
2. Data from HM Land Registry (2026).
3.The New York Times (1971) 'Savile Row in London: Old traditions, modern prices', 11 July.

'The British Tailor and Cutter magazine—itself 105 years old—estimates London alone has about 300 custom tailoring shops where the average three-piece ensemble of jacket, waistcoat and trousers costs $72 to $84. The big market, however, belongs to chainstore tailors such as Montague Burton or Hepworths, where a custom made suit costs exactly the same as the off-the-peg stock —$38 and up. Most go for about $60.'

To contextualise these prices, we can adjust them against median income:[1] in today's money, fifty-five years ago a good handcraft measure-cut suit made in the Midlands would retail for just £544 (organised workforces in productive factories). This is now lower than emerging economies' B2B price for a similar product. Reading on:

'"We are ruthlessly critical of our own work," says Colin Hammick of H. Huntsman and Sons, tailors to royalty since 1865, where prices start at about $284.'

Huntsman prices now start at around £8000. A mark up from a hypothetical £2580, had prices remained proportional to earnings. Higher rents and rates–both indirectly impacted by rising housing prices, neglected subdivisionary practices and a significantly reduced but wealthier clientele will all play a part. Lastly:

'The craftsmanship hasn't changed in 50 years but the styles and prices have... $240 and up, a price that is really staggering by British standards.'

Permitting trade inclinations, it is hard to imagine more convincing evidence of the ravages caused by low investment in productive capital. The ramifications of our past failure to maintain, and present-day failure to enact, good industrial strategy, are unmistakable. The government's 2025 'Modern Industrial Strategy' sets out 8 sectors being backed, of which none include garment manufacture in spite of urgent calls for adequate support stretching as far back as 1975:[2]

'The Clothing Economic Development Council, following a review of prospects to 1977, concluded that increased productivity in the clothing industry is vital to enable it to become a high wage industry and to overcome increasing shortages of labour, as well as reducing costs and strengthening its competitive position. For this purpose it noted the need for a higher rate of investment than previously prevailed. The Council has developed a complex set of proposals aimed at achieving these ends. These were recently submitted to the Department of Industry and are being given detailed consideration.'

1. Exchange rate from Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis and median income from Office for National Statistics Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings: 2025.
2. House of Lords (1975) 'The Textile Industries', Hansard: House of Lords Debates, 23 April.

Jonathan Zeitlin (1988)
The Clothing Industry in Transition: International Trends and British Response, Textile History, 19:2, 211-237

GOVERNMENT POLICIES

Current trends in markets and technology create new opportunities and new dangers for each section of the British clothing industry. Small firms in inner-city areas such as London stand to benefit from increased demand for the flexible, short-run garment production in which they specialize, while computer-based technologies and management methods have reduced the cost penalties associated with frequent style changes. By taking advantage of these developments to move into higher-quality, better remunerated work, and improve the organization of production, such firms can achieve the increased profit margins needed to sustain high inner-city rents and rates, and to upgrade wages and employment practices. But inner-city firms could also lose out as large provincial manufacturers themselves become more flexible, particularly if sweatshop conditions and heavy reliance on outwork prevent them from meeting the higher quality standards increasingly demanded at every level of the market. In London, for example, there are clear signs that local firms are losing orders because of quality problems and a growing shortage of labour arising from the rundown of training programmes, and the reluctance of outworkers to re-enter the factory in the face of high off-the-book payments obtainable from unscrupulous employers evading tax and national insurance contributions.[43]

These trends also open up potential benefits for the provincial contract manufacturers which make up the core of the British clothing industry. The growing importance of fashion and variety in the market for clothing reduces the importance of sourcing from low-wage countries, and offers opportunities for domestic manufacturers to expand their order books and upgrade their product lines. For suppliers who can come up with saleable designs and adjust rapidly to changing market patterns, these developments hold out the prospect of more collaborative relationships with a wider range of retailers and improved profit margins on higher-value garments. But where managerial conservatism and lack of investment lock suppliers into overstocked markets for low-value garments, they face increasing pressure on their prices and the loss of crucial contracts with long-established customers. Nor can it be taken for granted that the current trends towards domestic sourcing will persist indefinitely. If British manufacturers fail to meet the new standards of design and productive flexibility required, domestic retailers will turn to suppliers elsewhere in Western Europe, as even Marks and Spencer now seems to be doing, while low-cost producers such as Hong Kong are themselves moving upmarket and learning to compete on the basis of design, and flexibility as well as price.[44] In this context, the surge of import penetration in 1986 may signal a renewed phase of intensified competition for British clothing manufacturers in the domestic market.

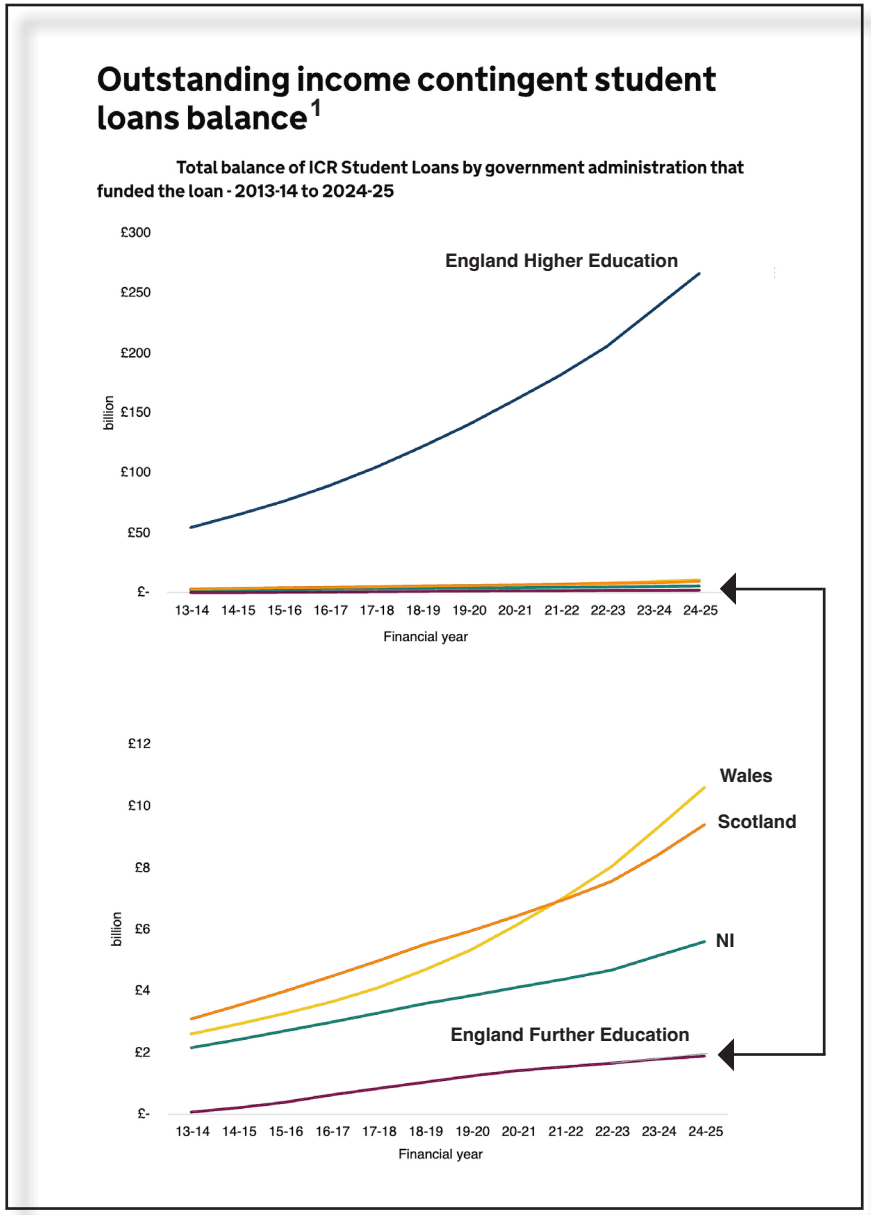
Recent developments in markets and technology create new, potentially favourable opportunities for clothing production in Britain. But neither the seizure of these opportunities nor their translation into benefits for the workforce will necessarily happen by themselves, and there are also dangers of a further rundown of employment if the underlying weaknesses of the industry are not tackled. Much therefore depends on strategic intervention by the public authorities to create a policy framework which can encourage firms to offer an innovative response to the challenges which confront the British clothing industry.

TABLE 5 UK TRADE BALANCE IN CLOTHING (SITC DIVISION 84)

(Figures in £000's)

Year	Imports	Exports	Balance
1978	920746	670004	–250742
1979	119446	751088	–443358
1980	1231122	807558	–423564
1981	N/A	N/A	N/A
1982	1500755	840351	–660404
1983	1601480	865394	–660404
1984	2013149	996392	–1016757
1985	2094680	1171923	–922757
1986	2386678	1228286	–1158392

Source: Overseas Trade Statistics of the UK (December 1986), cited in *Hollings Apparel Industry Review* (Spring 1987).
Note: 1981 figures affected by Civil Service strike.



Trade difficulties are compounded by a Higher Education bubble. Vocational career training has been neglected; the maximum government funding for a level 5 apprenticeship in bespoke cutting is capped at £17'000. In view of average undergraduate student debt upon entering repayment sitting at £53'000, it is unpardonable that tailoring course graduates should require a three-year, low-paid, in-house apprenticeship after completing a degree.[1] This confirms ongoing partiality in favour of services, the misconception that technical education is somehow less taxing, gross pedagogic inefficiencies and new class barriers for certain kinds of vocational training. The cost burden of non-academic education has been all but laid at business' doorstep and in our case, and others undoubtedly, unnecessarily augmented, for the individual and the taxpayer, by preliminary studies.

The conservative party have been loudest to sound the alarm. Badenoch prepared the following statement for her 2025 party conference speech:

'Every year, thousands of young people go off to university but leave with crippling loans and no real prospects. Nearly one in three graduates see no economic return, and every year taxpayers are writing off over £7 billion in unpaid student loans.

Wasted money, wasted talent. A rigged system propping up low-quality courses, while people can't get high-quality apprenticeships that lead to real jobs.'

To hold courses responsible for 'no real prospects' defies reason in most cases. Whether 'low-quality courses' are defined here by pedagogic or post-graduation employment metrics is irrelevant to the reality that students are graduating in subject matters, without prospects, as a consequence of there being no prospects in markets which were once bountiful. And yet these markets still shape our cultural sphere, and thereby remain attractive areas of study– and credibly fruitful ones if they'd only be recovered. Any pledge to double apprenticeship funding from £3 to £6 Billion by slashing at the £22 Billion Higher Education budget while continuing to under-invest in productive capital, would render a promise for 'real jobs' hollow.[2-3] Instead it would turn apprentices into fodder for reducing margins, and they would be susceptible to dismissal from firms after each education cycle–as was the case from the enactment of the Statute of Artificers (1562), to the Trade Boards Act (1909).[4-5]

The recent Milburn report into NEET trends (not in education, employment or training) casts a darker shadow over these matters.

1. Student Loans Company (2025) UK comparisons - to financial year 2025.
2. Institute for Fiscal Studies (2026).
3. Rajic, I. (2025) 'Non-interventionism meets oligopolies: a bad day for the UK's poorer regions', Contemporary Social Science, 20(2–3), pp. 445–469.
4. Wallis, P. (2019) 'Apprenticeship in England', in Prak, M. and Wallis, P. (eds.) Apprenticeship in Early Modern Europe. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 247–281.
5. Kershen, A.J. (1995) Uniting the Tailors: trade unionism amongst the tailoring workers of London and Leeds, 1870-1939. Ilford: Frank Cass.

After 2008, 17% of 16-24 year olds were NEETs, that figure is now back up to 13% (1 million), with an increasing number disengaging early from school or struggling with mental health.[1-2] In 2022, the Policy and Evidence Centre found 88% of young people aged 11+ report considering a creative career where they were given the opportunity to learn about them, and 93% of 16-18 year olds report that creative education positively impacts on their mental health and wellbeing.[3] Setting aside other creative industries for a moment, let's remind ourselves of the scope for rewarding education–and work–in our once cornucopian sector, as described in this Guardian piece from 1975: [4]

'In Britain, a million workers, or 12 per cent of the total employed in the manufacturing industry, are employed in the textile and clothing industries, making it the third largest production industry in the country.'

Furthermore, Miburn outlines how the housing-financialisation duopoly strikes here once more:[5]

'That link between housing and stability came up again and again. What has gone is not just the prospect of ownership but the sense that effort will lead somewhere solid. Renting felt insecure, expensive and sometimes unsafe. The interaction between the housing crisis and youth labour market access is direct. Young people who cannot afford to live independently near employment centres are constrained to their parental home and the local labour market it sits within.'

Finally, it is underestimated how many of us gravitate towards manufacturing careers out of an innate skill for making and a natural (and acceptable) unenthusiasm for doing just about anything else. Yet our secondary sector peak at 40% of employment share in 1966, slumped to a dismal 15% in 2016. This is the silent cause of unfulfilling employment inflicted on a conceivably fair chunk of the population, whose wellbeing is contingent on doing that which their constitution inherently intended for them to do: construct, produce, assemble, fabricate. Tertiary sector employment share is now at 84%.[6]

'For protecting people from the cupidity of others and their own, history is utilitarian.'

Galbraith, 1975. [6]

1. Powell, A. (2026) NEET: Young People Not in Education, Employment or Training. Research Briefing SN06705. London: House of Commons Library.
2. Cruikshanks, R. (2026) 'Five charts that explain the rise in NEET rates', Education Policy Institute.
3. Williams, J., Pollard, E., Cook, J., Byford, M. (2022) Enhancing Creative Education. Multiple: Creative Industries Policy and Evidence Centre and the Institute for Employment Studies.
4. Woodcock, C. (1975) 'The trouble with a 20p shirt', The Guardian, 17 January.
5. Milburn, A. (2026) Young people and work: interim report. para 102 & box between paras 281-282.
6. Office for National Statistics (2019) Long-term trends in UK employment: 1861 to 2018.

(UN)SUITING THEMSELVES

Increasing heatwaves are a hotbed for a new kind of habit in Britain. This nonnative mode is often associated with wanton values for which there is no precedent here. And so, no amount of our musing on the topic will convince you, clothiers, of our competence to comment on this climate-enforced subjugation to drape. Therefore, we leave it to our Mediterranean forebears to expound on the alien consequences of this most unwelcome incursion of weather:

Juvenal (100-112 CE), Satire II.

While Laronia was uttering these plain truths, the would-be Stoics made off in confusion: for what word of untruth had she spoken? Yet what will not other men do when you, Creticus, dress yourself in garments of gauze, and while everyone is marvelling at your attire, launch out against the Proculae and the Pollittae? Fabulla is an adulteress; condemn Carfinia of the same crime if you please; but however guilty, they would never wear such a gown as yours. "O but," you say, "these July days are so sweltering!" Then why not plead without clothes? Such madness would be less disgraceful. A pretty garb yours in which to propose or expound laws to our countrymen flushed with victory, and with their wounds yet unhealed; and to those mountain rustics who had laid down their ploughs to listen to you? What would you not exclaim if you saw a judge dressed like that? Would a robe of gauze sit becomingly on a witness? You, Creticus, you, the keen, unbending champion of human liberty, to be clothed in a transparency! This plague has come upon us by infection, and it will spread still further, just as in the fields the scab of one sheep, or the mange of one pig, destroys an entire herd; just as one bunch of grapes takes on its sickly colour from the aspect of its neighbour.

Propertius (29BCE), Elegies, Book I, Poem II.

What boots it, light of my life, to go forth with locks adorned, and to rustle in slender folds of Coan silk? Or avails it aught to steep thy tresses in the myrrh of Orontes, to parade thyself in the gifts that aliens bring, to spoil the grace of nature by the charms that gold can buy nor allow thy limbs to shine in the glory that is their own? Believe me, thou hast no art can make thy form more fair; Love himself goes naked and hates those that make a craft of beauty.

Ovid (c. 25-16 BCE), Amores, Book I, Elegy V.

Translated by Christopher Marlowe c. 1580.

In summer's heat, and mid-time of the day,
To rest my limbs upon a bed I lay;
One window shut, the other open stood,
Which gave such light as twinkles in a wood,
Like twilight glimpse at setting of the sun,
Or night being past, and yet not day begun.
Such light to shamefaced maidens must be shown,
Where they may sport, and seem to be unknown.
Then came Corinna in a long loose gown,
Her white neck hid with tresses hanging down,
Resembling fair Semiramis going to bed
Or Lais of a thousand wooers sped.
I snatched her gown: being thin, the harm was small,
Yet strived she to be covered there withal.
And striving thus, as one that would be cast,
Betrayed herself, and yielded at the last.
Stark naked as she stood before mine eye,
Not one wen in her body could I spy.
What arms and shoulders did I touch and see!
How apt her breasts were to be pressed by me!
How smooth a belly under her waist saw I,
How large a leg, and what a lusty thigh!
To leave the rest, all liked me passing well,
I clinged her naked body, down she fell:
Judge you the rest; being tired she bade me kiss;
Jove send me more such afternoons as this!

Sappho (630-570 BCE), Fragment 102.

Sweet mother, I can no longer work the loom, for I am undone by my love for a …

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Making the lay and cutting the material.

PHILLIP DELLAFERA

by Richard Holton

‘As a draughtsman he was an artist, and he used chalk and square with a speed and dexterity the present writer has never seen equalled.’ The writer was A.A. Whife, and the subject of his praise was Philip Dellafera—or Filippo della Fera, as he was baptised, or Della, as he was known in the world of tailoring. He will be familiar to readers as the author of three classic, and much cited, tailoring volumes, and perhaps for some of his very many articles. By the time of his death in 1951 he was Principal of the Tailor and Cutter Academy, having worked there since 1907, training thousands of students who passed through. Whife wrote of his ‘infinite enthusiasm for, and versatility in, the various branches of his craft’. He had been trained both as tailor and as cutter, for menswear and women’s, and he taught everything. His craft was unapologetically hand tailoring, at a time when it was increasingly under attack. ‘Truth to tell, the potent needle has fallen on bleak days’ he wrote. ‘Wonderfully designed machinery has almost driven it from the field of garment making, without ever capturing its witchery. Yet it may safely be said that its power will never wholly disappear, nor that the work of the hand ever be entirely superseded.’ Phillip’s life’s mission was to maintain the witchery.

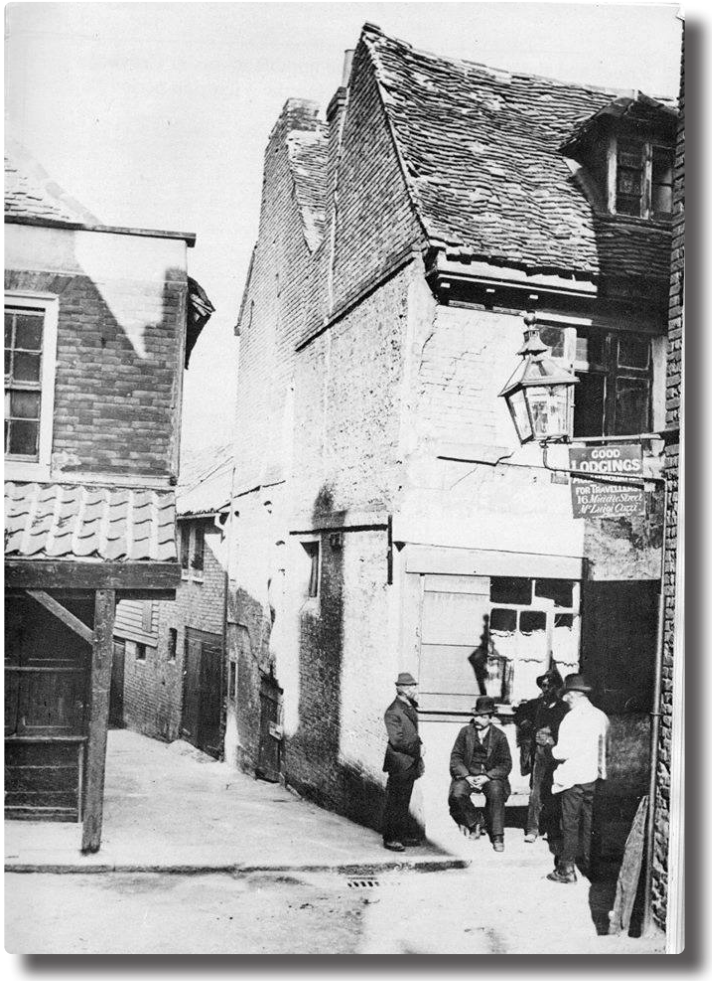
Phillip was born in Croydon into an Italian family: ‘There was about his temperamental make-up very much of the Italian vivacity’ said Whife. His father, Francesco della Fera, was from Calabritto, a village high in the mountains east of Naples. Orphaned at the age of thirteen, he had come to London, to work as a street musician. He was one of those many Italian children whose incessant playing of the barrel organ did so much to annoy middle class London. He lived in the crowded and often squalid conditions of ‘Little Italy’, in a courtyard off Eyre Hill in Clerkenwell—the subject of numerous alarmed government reports. From there he moved to Croydon, where he met and married Teresa Trimarco, another teenaged street musician, from Senerchia, a village in Italy a few miles from his own. She signed the marriage certificate with a cross. Together they took over the management of a common lodging house. A photograph from the early 1890s shows him in three piece suit with bowler hat and watch chain, sitting before the decrepit lodging house, which was about to be demolished in an early attempt at slum clearance. Here Filippo, the first of their four sons, was born in 1889.

The family moved to Basingstoke in 1894 to take over a somewhat better lodging house from another Italian. Filippo, or Phillip, as he soon became, was educated at the local school until he was 12. He could have started working for the family business, but Phillip was a slight boy (unlike one of his brothers, who became a local boxing champion) and was not obviously suited to the rough life of the lodging house. The family was clearly interested in clothes—a picture from 1900 shows an immaculately dressed group, the boys in Norfolk jackets and matching knickerbockers, with only Teresa's headscarf and Phillip's discreet gold earrings providing a touch of exoticism—and the decision was made instead to apprentice him to a local Polish-Jewish tailor, Reuben Polka.

Polka had been living and working in Whitechapel, in Dunk Street, a street almost entirely populated by tailors like himself. He had moved with his family and widowed mother to start a business in Basingstoke. It must have been a cultural shock after Whitechapel; he had to start his own synagogue. The business had a show room and fitting room in the centre of town, but the workshop (and the venue for the synagogue) was in the family's large and splendid house, formerly used as a school, just down the road from the Dellafera's lodging house. Polka's mother, wife, and seven daughters all worked there.

It was here that Phillip served his apprenticeship. It was of its time. 'One day I was cutting stitches when the scissors slipped and I cut a hole in the cloth' Phillip later recalled. 'When I showed it to the governor, he took a wet rag and hit me across the face'. But it doesn't seem to have been overly-regulated. In a case that reached the magistrates court, one of the apprentices was summonsed for failing to attend. She claimed that Philip had pricked her with a needle; he claimed that she had called him 'a dirty Italian'. Dismissively ordering her back to work, the magistrate told Polka to keep better control.

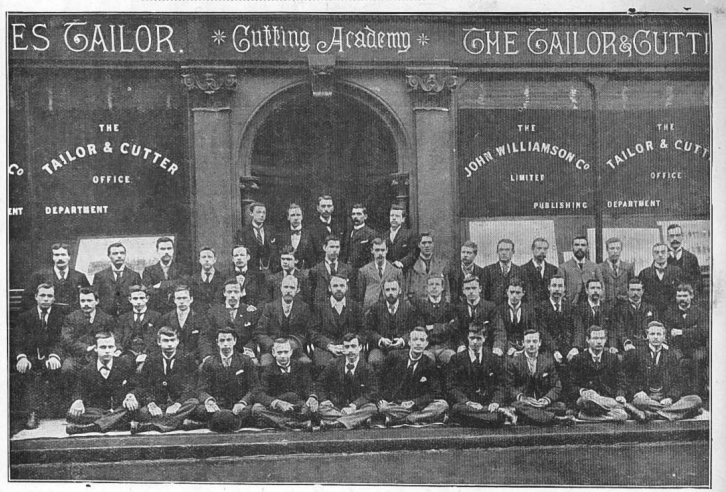
By now the Dellaferas were doing very well; in addition to the lodging house, they were running a rag and bone business, and buying local property to rent out. The move from squalor to prosperity had been remarkably quick: in ten years, Francesco had gone from street musician to landlord. He was later to buy Polka's substantial house as the family home. They had money to spare, and so when Phillip completed his apprenticeship it was decided to send him to London to the Tailor and Cutter Academy. The full six month course (including special instruction in Practical Tailoring) was £20, quite an investment.



Francesco outside his Croydon Lodging.

The Dellafera family, Phillip far left, 1900.

The "Tailor & Cutter" Cutting Academy.



GROUP OF STUDENTS AT OUR ACADEMY.

TERMS OF TUITION

1 Month	£5 0s. 0d.	3 Months	£12 10s. 0d.
2 Months	£10 0s. 0d.	6 Months (This includes lessons in practical tailoring)	£20 0s 0d

UNSOLICITED TESTIMONIALS.

Memorandum.

From WILLIAM LOVATT, TAILOR & CLOTHIER, 10, St. John's Square, BURSLEM.

To The John Williamson Co. Ltd.

Dear Sirs

Possibly you may have forgotten me by now, but I was one of the students about two years ago & I want to thank you for the instruction & kindness you showed to me personally & to me I always look back with pleasure on the time which I spent with you. I have been very successful with your system, it has worked splendidly

Memorandum.

From A & W TEMPLETON, Cutters and Clothiers, 82 VIRGINIA STREET GLASGOW

To Messrs The John Williamson Co. 93 & 94 Drury Lane London WC

16th March 1897

Sirs

Your Diploma of merit duly received. I have already cut a number of garments by your admirable system, & they have given the best satisfaction.

I desire to thank you for the great patience which the teachers showed to me during my course of tuition. The patience on their part greatly helped me in gaining my diploma which I prize highly. I remain

Yours very sincerely

Walter B. Templeton

The John Williamson Company, Limited, 93 and 94, Drury Lane, London, W.C.

The Tailor & Cutter Cutting Academy advertisement, 1897.

The staff and students of the Tailor and Cutter Academy on Gerrard Street. Phillip second row far right, 1909.

The Tailor and Cutter Academy was an offshoot of The Tailor and Cutter magazine. John Williamson, the founder, had started as a tailor's apprentice in Kirkcaldy in Fife. Moving to Glasgow in 1864, he was shocked at the state of the tailors' working conditions, and wrote a pamphlet on the issue that gained wide circulation. This was the start of an influential campaign for better conditions, but Williamson's approach was more Victorian self-help than proto-socialism, and he was much influenced by his ardent Presbyterianism. After moving to London he founded The Tailor in 1866, a magazine with a similar focus.

A year later, realizing that the viability of the magazine required some diversification, he changed the name to The Tailor and Cutter, and started publishing technical articles on tailoring. Next came the production of patterns. With a move to larger premises in Drury Lane, the Academy started in earnest in 1883 with the appointment of new staff who could do the teaching. By the time Phillip arrived, in 1905, Williamson had retired, and the business, now a limited company employing forty people, had moved to a larger building at 42 Gerrard Street, closer to the centre of West End tailoring.

The Dellafera family in the garden of the lodging house, surrounded by cabbages. Phillip far right with his wife Ethel and two children, 1913.

The Academy was never supposed to provide a training ab initio. 'Our most successful students are those who have worked in first-class shops in London, or elsewhere, having a thorough practical knowledge of their trade, with a good notion of how a garment ought to look when finished' wrote Williamson. Phillip had had two years apprenticeship in Basingstoke, but he clearly did exceptionally well, since within eighteen months of leaving the Academy he was back, now aged 17, as a member of staff. (He was still helping his parents back in Basingstoke at weekends though; in 1907 he was summonsed for leaving the horse and cart of the rag and bone business unattended and unbridled. He had gone home to get a bridle.)

In 1909, aged 19 he got married—in a move that shocked the family, it was to an English girl, Ethel Granger, a year older than him, who lived round the corner from his lodgings in Battersea. She was not even a Catholic. The ceremony was in the local Anglican church. The best man was not one of his brothers, but a friend from tailoring, Albert Middleweek, who had won the Silver Medal for his frock coat in the 1907 Tailor and Cutter competition. But the rupture with the family was not complete, and reconciliation was helped by the rapid arrival of two children. Phillip, thriving at the Academy, was promoted to be the ladies pattern cutter.

Then came the First World War. Phillip escaped the first round of conscription, but by May 1916 the call was extended to married men under forty, and so in November he was called up. He joined the Royal Flying Corps, and in February 1917 was deployed to France, to the 35th Kite Balloon Section, working as a rigger. Service in the RFC was popular. For those employed as ground crew it was considerably less dangerous than the infantry: the stationary observation balloons of Phillip's section were stationed about three miles back from the front lines. But exactly because of that, such posts were hard to get, and the RFC only wanted skilled staff, especially engineers and mechanics. How would Phillip have qualified?

The answer is obvious from the construction of the kite balloons. The main body was made from two plies of rubberised Egyptian cotton, set at 45 degrees to each other to reduce stretch, and bonded together with another layer of rubber; the suspension band was canvas duck; the ropes (of which there were many) were Italian hemp. All of these were cemented and sewn together. At 92 feet long, the balloon was an enormous piece of tailoring, one that needed constant repair. In addition the observers were equipped with Japanese silk parachutes that also needed regular maintenance. Small wonder that Phillip was chosen for the team. (Another tailor who joined an RFC balloon unit in this role was Jack Cohen, who went on to found Tescos.)

Kite Balloon ground crew with Lewis Guns, Western Front.
Phillip second from right, 1918.

Phillip spent eighteen months in France. His unit was attached to the Third Army, and saw considerable action. He was sent home just before the end of the war with problems with his eyes. After that the authorities made use of another of his skills, having him teach at the 2nd Balloon Training Wing at Lydd on Romney Marsh. He was demobilized in August 1919, and went straight back to the Tailor and Cutter Academy, where he was rapidly promoted to Head Cutter.

During the 1920s he started to author articles on tailoring, initially for the magazine. Then in 1928 The Modern Tailor, Outfitter and Clothier was published in three volumes under the editorship of A.S. Bridgland.

There had been nothing of its scope before. It was very much a Tailor and Cutter production, and Phillip was asked to contribute eight chapters, covering both men's and women's garments.

The following year Phillip published the first edition of The Art of Garment Making. It was, said Whife, 'one of the most comprehensive works of practical tailoring ever offered to the trade'. There followed a stable but productive period, teaching, writing articles, and lecturing to cutters' societies around the country. His daughter's wedding in 1934 provided a showcase for his skills: he dressed bride, groom, bridesmaid and flower girl, as well as his wife and himself.

Wedding of Phyllis Dellafera. Phillip far right, 1934.

By the second world war he was too old for conscription, but the pressures on the company meant that he took over the editing of the technical side of The Tailor and Cutter, as well as continuing with his teaching. In 1946 Percival Thickett, the Principal of the Academy, died, and Phillip was chosen to replace him. It was the beginning of a golden period. A First Course in Ladies' Garment Cutting appeared in 1947. In 1949 there was a second, revised, edition of The Art of Garment Making. There was work on the revised version of The Modern Tailor, Outfitter and Clothier now edited by Whife. Finally in 1951 appeared Defects and Remedies in Tailor Made Garments. This was a revision of Percival Thickett's 1924 volume The Cutter's Practical Guide to the causes of and remedies for defects in Fit and Style; which was in turn a revision and expansion of W.D.F. Vincent's 1900 work, The Cutter's Practical Guide to the Remedy of Defects In the Fit and Style of Gent's Bodycoats, Lounges, Chesterfields, &c. Philip did not just improve the title. His book was a major revision, very much in his own voice. It remains the standard volume on the subject today.

In a profile of the Academy published in John Bull magazine in 1949, it was Della, 'a diminutive but assertive disciplinarian', who was the star, and it was his opinions that were reported—on the importance of balance in a coat; on the disappointing conservatism of the Duke of Edinburgh's clothes; on the superiority of foreign students to British ones.

But the golden period was not to last. Phillip died in 1951, after a long illness. He was 62. 'No name in the annals of ancient Sparta could have been more honoured than that of Phillip Dellafera in the history of the tailoring trade' wrote Whife in full flight. 'His passing leaves a place in the trade that it may take many years to fill'.

Note on the author

The author is Phillip Dellafera's great nephew. Phillip's youngest brother Antonio, the author's grandfather, also took the rash decision to marry an English girl. The Dellafera family threatened to disrupt the ceremony; it looked as though the marriage wouldn't go ahead. It was Phillip who organized a ceremony, privately, in London, and so enabled the author to come, eventually, into being. The author is very grateful.

Tailor and Cutter Academy's Mr. Della shows a Sikh pupil how to fit a suit. It's the balance that matters

John Bull magazine. Phillip left, 1949.

LADIES' GARMENTS COAT CUTTING

By PHILLIP DELLAFERA
(Principal of the "Tailor and Cutter" Academy)

THE BASIC PATTERN

Diagrams 14 and 15

Scale is ½ Bust for sizes below 36" and ⅓ Bust plus 6" for other sizes—18".

INSTRUCTIONS FOR DRAFTING

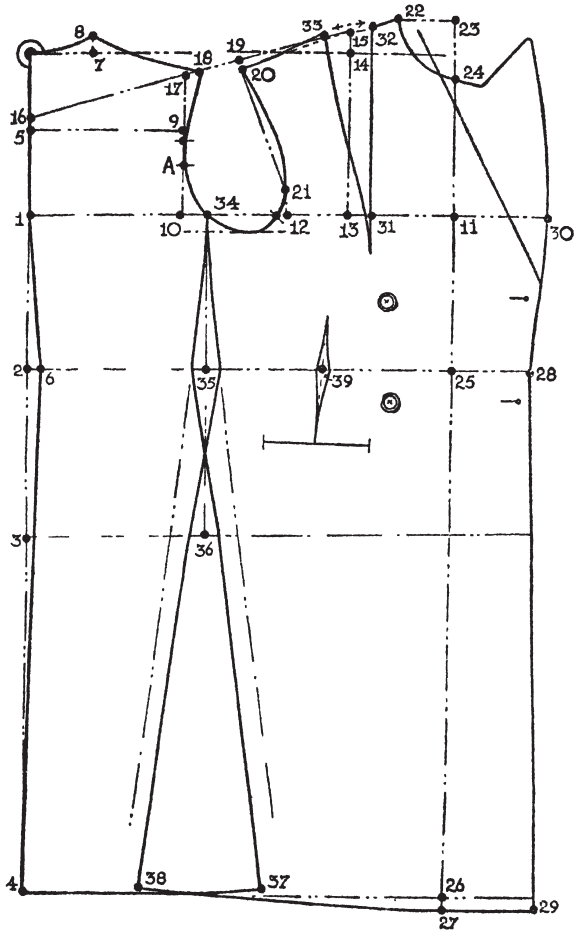


DIAGRAM 14.

TECHNICAL

Investigating alternating bust scales in Phillip Dellafera's ladies' drafting systems

This study was expeditiously undertaken over a few days by the following second-year students and staff on BA Costume for Theatre & Screen, at Wimbledon College of Arts:

Flora Atherton, Emma Baker, Grace Bird, Adam Bull, Luca Bussetil, Miranda Cameron, Angelina Cavaliere, Huilin Chen, Missy Cranham, Ruari Fenten-Gort, Tullia Golding, Shihan He, Rebeca Ilie, Francesca Johns, Greta Kahlhamer, Abby Lu, Simone Manners-Lolley, Maisy Mitchell, Lara Nanan, Lola Noel, Rebecka Norby, Emma Reidlinger, Sean Robbins, Lara Tobin, Ella Tunon-Gonzalez, Alita Velasco, Claudia Walker and Joshua Dobrik.

When Dellafera wrote his women's overcoat drafts for the 1949 edition of the MTOC, he included two scales: 1/2 Bust below 36", and 1/3 Bust + 6" above 36". It was customary for men's systems by this time to use a chest scale and a working scale across the size spectrum, in a single draft, for varying rules. However, it wasn't so usual to interchange between scales above and below a given size.

Prior to writing *A First Course in Ladies' Garment Cutting* in 1947, Dellafera is inconsistent with his use of scales in womenswear, with some of his work in the T&C still featuring single-scale systems. After 1947, he appears more or less resolute in his adoption of this aforementioned interchange, in defiance of Whife himself, who continued to vacillate in his 1965 edition of *Designing and cutting ladies' garments.* The crux at the heart of these different approaches, was bust variance.

In womenswear, chest measure systems had for a time been ruled out by some, for reasons which W.D.F. Vincent elucidates:

'We will not occupy space with arguments on the merits or demerits of the various modes of cutting, such as by breast measure or direct measure; as, to our mind, the variation in the development of the bust alone is quite sufficient to put the breast measure method entirely out of the sphere of practicability for ladies' garments, and when we know the variation in form met with at different ages, this is still further pronounced. Hence the only method in the adoption of which we can see a fair prospect of success, is by the aid of some system of shoulder or direct measures, using the measures taken on each customer to draft her pattern by.'

Whife offers the classic counterpoint:

'The tape is not always an infallible assistant! Direct measures, however carefully taken, will not be sufficient in themselves to produce the ideal pattern.'

And so, this gave us reason to interrogate how one might get past the issues posed by bust variance in chest measure systems, to avoid over-reliance on the tape. Our hypothesis is the following:

Chest measure systems are more effective in men, as the chest, compared to the bust, provides a better prediction of neck size, scye depth and scye width, in light of its closer relationship to general frame size. We posit that the underbust may be a better predictor of these three variables, insofar as it too might be more closely related to general frame size.

The underbust could therefore replace a bust scale in rules that predict the aforementioned variables, similarly to how working scales do in some men's drafts.

Rather than rely on a traditional and lengthy observational block development to test this theory, we undertook an anthropometric study. To conduct the experiment, a linear regression approach was used to identify which variable–the bust or the underbust–had the most significant prediction of neck width, scye depth and scye width (although Dellafera circumvents scye width by finding it subtractively, we have included it given its otherwise conventional use). Bust girth and underbust girth were set as independent variables, all other upper body dimensions were set as dependent variables. The prediction effect of independent variables on each dependent variable was evaluated by comparing R^2, the coefficient of determination: a statistical measure that indicates the percentage of the variance in a dependent variable that is explained by an independent variable. Measures were taken by the same individual, using the same tape measure, in front of a mirror, with participants in the anatomical position (figure 1, table 1):

1.The bust was measured around the widest circumference of the chest, ensuring the tape remained horizontal.

2.The underbust was taken horizontally at the highest measurable circumference under the bust.

Figure 1.

Table 1.

	N	SD	SW	UB	B
1	14.5	5.75	6.25	32	37.5
2	13.75	5.625	4.5	30.5	36
3	13.25	6	4.25	29.5	34
4	13.625	6	5.625	33.5	36
5	14	6.75	5.125	34.25	36.5
6	13.625	5.75	4.625	31.25	34.5
7	12.625	5.5	4.125	27.5	33
8	12.375	6.75	5.5	31	33.75
9	14	7	6	31.5	38.5
10	13	5.75	4.75	29.5	33.75
11	14.5	6.5	5	36	40.5
12	14.75	6.375	6.125	37	40.375
13	13.5	6.75	4.5	33.5	40
14	13	5.875	4	30.375	34.5
15	13.5	5.5	4	28	32.25

Table 2.

	B	UB	N	SD	SW
Valid	15	15	15	15	15
Mean	36.08	31.69	13.60	6.125	4.958
Std. Deviation	2.748	2.733	0.687	0.513	0.779
Shapiro–Wilk	0.918	0.966	0.973	0.895	0.919
P–value of Shapiro–Wilk	.180	.794	.898	.079	.189
Minimum	32.25	27.50	12.38	5.500	4.000
Maximum	40.50	37.00	14.75	7.000	6.250

Table 3.

R^2, *coefficient of determination*

	Underbust	Bust	R^2 difference
Neck	0.526 (p = .002)	**0.585** (p < .001)	5.9%
Scye Depth	0.364 (p = .017)	**0.373** (p = .016)	0.9%
Scye Width	**0.365** (p = .017)	0.314 (p = .030)	5.1%

Table 4.

Coefficients

Model		(b)Unstandardized	Standard Error	Standardized	t	p
M_0	(Intercept)	31.692	0.706		44.907	< .001
M_1	(Intercept)	0.635	4.996		0.127	.901
	B	0.861	0.138	0.866	6.234	< .001

Figure 2.

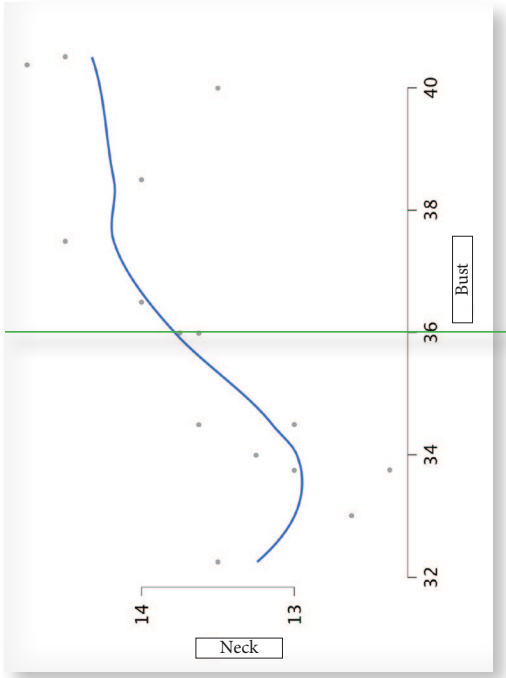
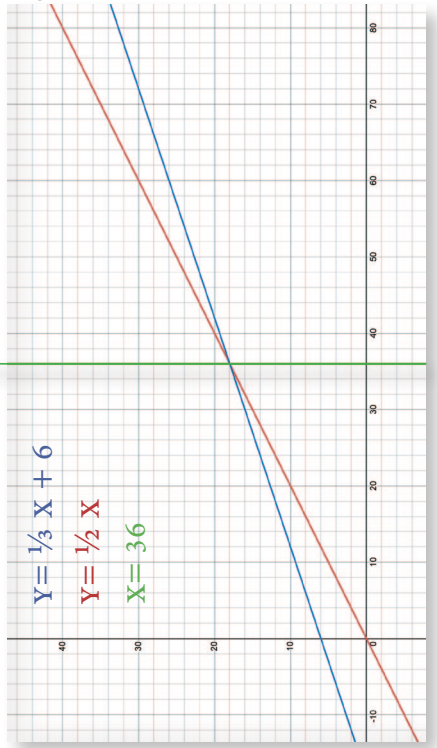


Figure 3.



3. The neck was measured just above the nape, in a cross-sectional plane perpendicular to its axis.

4.Scye width was assessed using two set squares, creating a bracket placed under the arm to measure the distance separating the tangents at front and back scye, perpendicular to the chest line (corresponding to the distance separating points 10 and 12 in Dellafera's MTOC *Basic Pattern* draft).

5. Scye depth was taken using the same bracket, resting on the shoulder point and up against the musculotendinous structures of the underarm, thereby removing the impact of slope as when taken down from the nape.

Selected participants (N=15) were cisgender women, aged between 18-21, and of a similar stature. Shapiro-Wilk tests were performed for all anthropometric measurements to confirm the normal distribution of the measurement differences within the cohort (table 2). All statistical tests were performed in JASP version 0.95.4.

Results were statistically significant, and showed that the bust provides a moderate prediction of neck size, R^2=0.585, and the underbust a slightly weaker one by 5.9%. Both bust and underbust provide an equally fairly weak prediction of scye depth, respectively R^2=0.373 and R^2=0.364. Finally, the underbust provides a slightly better–but nevertheless weak–prediction of scye width, compared to the bust, respectively R^2=0.365 and R^2=0.314 (table 3).

The relatively close prediction potentials of the bust and underbust could be explained by the strong unstandardised coefficient for underbust size based on bust size, b=0.861 (table 4). That is to say for every 1" increase in bust size, the underbust is predicted to increase by 7/8". The fluctuation of adipose tissue across women's upper torsos may therefore happen too concurrently with the bust, for the underbust to be a better gauge for frame size. While this discredits our hypothesis, the study did provide insight into Dellafera's use of scales for women after 1947.

A locally estimated scatterplot smoothing curve (figure 2) fitted to a graph comparing the bust with any of the dependent variables, shows a damped growth occurring after 36". When considered against the scale functions in Dellafera's drafts (figure 3), one can observe a possible logic in the alternation of two scales, crossing at 36", with an initially steeper and later more gentle rate of change.

Bastes were constructed from Dellafera's MTOC *Basic Pattern* draft, to evaluate this approach in practice (figure 4). Two women who deviated from anthropometric standards were selected (table 5). Both had outlier bust to underbust differences ($2^{1/2}$"& $10^{1/4}$"), and bust measures 3" either side of the 36" scale divide.

Figure 4.

Table 5.

	Participant 1	Participant 2
Bust	$32^{1/2}$	39
Underbust	30	$28^{3/4}$
Waist	27	$28^{1/2}$
Seat	$38^{1/2}$	40

In both bastes, scye depths sat within our subjective thresholds of acceptance for a first fitting (we note our choice of pad as having been small by a few ply for this draft, no indications were provided in the instructions, although we may well have made better assumptions based on pattern slope and the era when it was written). However, both back necks were leaning small; acceptably so for participant 2, less so for participant 1.

Further anthropometric and observational block development studies on larger cohorts would be necessary to confirm the efficacy of alternating scale systems, and to validate the particular gradients of these scales and their accompanying rules. But initial tests suggest the possible validity of this approach.

We would like to acknowledge the students at WCA who kindly gave their time to be measured and fitted.

A brief inquiry within the trade, an analysis of popular drafts in colleges/universities and a literature review of practices across the wider garment industry indicate that neither working scales, nor alternating scales across a size range, have remained established conventions. Dissatisfaction in clothing fit amongst women has been well-studied over the past few decades, with innumerable papers pointing to grading practices that aren't founded on anthropometric data–but rather convention and proportional scaling–as the source of so much trouble.

C U T

Professor Rachel Garfield is the Research Lead for the School of Arts & Humanities at the Royal College of Arts. As an artist and writer, her work is engaged with the role of lived relations in the formation and intersections of subjectivities.

Rachel's most recent work, CUT, is a 20-minute long film about our craft, for which she generously agreed to be interviewed.

T&C: Rachel, why did you decide to make a film about the trade?

RG: There are many reasons, but I suppose the biggest reason was that my grandfather, Alfred, who died long before I was born, was a tailor. His wife, my grandmother, Betty, who I did know, was a milliner. Growing up I was told he had a shop in Old Street, and that he was adept at lay planning, often managing to squeeze a pair of knickerbockers for my father out of a client's suit length. My father was proud of him and so I have this inherited memory of a trade which prior to making this film, I knew little about. My son has since followed in his footsteps and is working for a Parisian house.

What themes did you decide to centre on for the piece?

All my films start with interviews and those conversations dictate where I go. I spoke to cutters, makers and consumers, and they raised what it is about the craft that matters to them. The aim was not to create a coherent story, but rather a meaningful one that reflects the different ways in which different people reflect about the trade.

You devote much of your practice now to experimental film, why does non-coherence align particularly with this medium?

I come from painting, where there are many ways one can enjoy colour and form, but you always remain with one image. With film, you have a multitude of images collected over time. I'm interested in how people navigate through their lives, which you need time to express and that can only be done through writing, or sound and moving image.

What I also like about the way film works is that you can juxtapose interviews with images and that superimposition creates different meanings, new associations. I'm equally interested in what is beyond the individual. Although I interview individuals, they are providing an impression of a whole if you like. In the film, tailors and cutters are a microcosm of a wider kind of society, they're reflecting broader things. A non-narrative approach helps to communicate this.

I'd also add that I'm not trying to prove something, which is what narrative documentaries like ones shown on TV and in

cinemas often do. For me, it's just a matter of listening to people and trying to be respectful of their positions and representing them as honestly as I can.

You were closely associated with, and have written extensively on, avant-grade filmmaker Stephen Dwoskin. Do any of the processes you mention emerge from that bond?

Steve Dwoskin was an important Brooklyn-born filmmaker and graphic designer. He was a polio survivor and hence, very interested in the body. As an aside, his father was a presser and it was only through his garment union insurance that he managed to get healthcare as a child. He'd often mention his father's bowed legs from long, hot days standing at a board with a heavy iron.

Anyway, one thing he taught me was to balance having an idea with allowing the material to speak itself. My films therefore don't necessarily end up where I initially intended, but they can grow in a sort of rhythmic way through the interviews.

I'm not sure if there's an exact equivalent in tailoring, but the film has a sequence in it where a cutter speaks to the visual appeal of the lines of a coat all converging towards the button position. I suppose that's analogous if in the cutting room you're–consciously or not– thinking about where the observer's eye is being guided and you're making stylistic alterations to the coat that are led by the customer's body.

That was a slight revelation to me. There are often divisions made between art and craft, and one important thing I learned from making the film were the similarities that exist between the two, how a craftsperson is at once artisan and artist. Although they are working towards a more particular brief, there is still a lot of room for them to foster a creative spirit with cloth, there's lots of freedom within tailoring's strictures. And what an artist often does is the opposite, they start with freedom and they build strictures for themselves in order to be creative within these parameters. So in a way, craftspersons and artists are moving towards each other.

Exploring with tailors their artistry has transformed what I was led to believe about clothes. Being open to reconsidering mores is something I possibly got from Steve, he was interested in iconoclasm. Creating visually layered pieces, certainly in his later years, was a part of that.

Another one of your fields of study is feminist punk audiovisual culture. In light of the increasing parallels between the climate of the seventies and today, would you say that your films are sharing more thematically and/or stylistically with this period's canon?

I've been rereading a book called fragments of modernity. One of the thinkers in it is Siegfried Kracauer. Returning to his writing has reminded me of the idea that so much of what has formed us as people over the last hundred years or so, has been this notion of a once coherent society not having that coherence anymore. Our sense of the world and our sense of self is quite fragmented.

Teenage Alfred Garfield, circa 1915.

Alfred and wife, Betty, early 1920s.

Alfred, Betty and son Terence, 1928.

A still from *Cut*.

My films are obviously quite fragmented, and I suppose that ties into Punk's competence in acknowledging that fragmentation.

I was recently interviewed by a fashion journalist about Punk, and speaking to her raised the way in which people at this time would put things together which clashed. You could be wearing your dad's shirt and stilettos; or a 1940s crepe dress and clunky shoes. The idea of combining colours, materials and shapes which didn't go together is quite important to the movement and that speaks to the notion of a fragmented world where everything is breaking apart, where coherence is out the window.

The other parallel between now and the late 70s is the economic slump. Although times are currently difficult, the country was substantially poorer then; even housing–in spite of what's believed about squats and co-ops–could be relatively difficult to access.

The way people dealt with that was to adopt a DIY approach to everything. That's when young people got into second-hand clothes and jumble sales, things which had previously been about poverty and shame were turned into something exalted and trendy. I can see that happening in a really different way now, of course every moment is different. People are turning away from the corporate world and big labels, opting instead for homemade and handcrafted. That is the result of this new moment of scarcity; the love of the mechanised we had so much of in the 20th century seems to be dissolving today.

Rachel far right, 1986.

Last question in relation to your work. You've given much time to the examination of subjectivities; in a world where people have more things to feel proud about than ever before, do you think there's a place or need for a levelling and uniforming garment such as the lounge suit?

Some people have a need to announce their differences to the world and others don't. I don't believe that there is one answer for all. As workplaces require less formalwear, I think people now yearn for that outside of work. I also think that there's a place for uniform in the sense that if you have a set of clothes that you always wear, then you don't have to worry about what you're going to wear. I think there's a time in your life where clothes are really important because they define you, and that importance decreases as you get older, as you begin to define yourself in different ways. That doesn't mean to say they don't remain important. In that sense, I'd say the question doesn't relate so much to this particular cultural epoch, but rather about the time in a person's life.

However, the main problem we face is that men are looking like schlumps. I really wish men would take a bit more interest in what they wear. When they look nice, it makes such a difference.

Could there be a case made for male schlumps being chauvinists, depriving women from their own opportunities to sexualise?

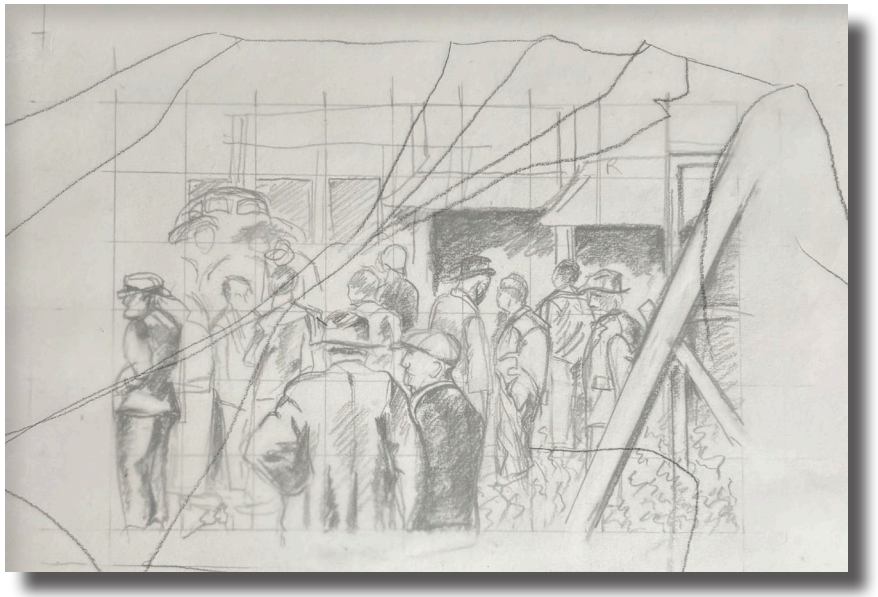
Speaking in a huge sweeping statement, I think too many men believe they will be attractive to women however they dress. Part of this has been instigated by streetwear, it encourages to some degree not caring about how one looks. I'm not against streetwear, but I'd definitely call it out for being too easy. Although this isn't universally true, some people take great care with making it look good.

Could we theorise on the consequences of that?

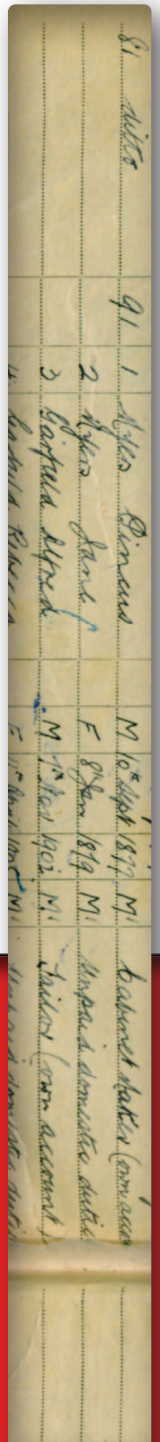
It boils down to either covering our asses with cheap shit we can buy from round the corner or making considered decisions about how we look. Those decisions can affect to a great extent our sense of pride and sense of self, and that can bear huge consequences on our behaviour.

As an academic and a Punk, does the looming doom of bad times make you think: 'fuck, where am I going to get any future funding from' or, 'finally, perfect conditions for shouty artistic success'?

Having been a Punk. I've never relied on funding to make work. Case in point, this film was completely unfunded. People have always made art regardless of their circumstances, in the same way that people have always made clothes.



Overlaid drawing of the tailors' *Chazer's Market,* for the '26 Backyard Biennal.



You just cut your cloth (pardon the pun). If I'm able to support myself, I'll find a way to make work.

Punk is so often associated with negativity, with nihilism and chaos. Angry men singing 'no future', however there were a lot of positive life-enhancing things that came out of it and DIY culture is one of them.

Circling back to the experimental film scene of this era. Pieces were often shown at parties and in nightclubs to groups of friends and peers, whereas your film will soon feature in an exhibition at an illustrious gallery. Could you tell us more about that and how you feel about its audiences?

The film and some drawings I've made to accompany it, are going to be shown at the Whitechapel Art Gallery in a free exhibition called Backyard Biennal, running from July to September. It's a celebration of the East End and pays tribute to its communities and histories. The film is also being shown on the independent festival circuit and has already won a few awards.

As for audiences, I'd like to think anyone can see my work. I'd certainly like my friends and my communities to see the work, and I'd unquestionably like tailors to come and see the film. I'd be interested to see if they'd respond to it–even if they knew nothing about art or were not interested in art–that there would be something for them in the film as well.

SUPREMACY DIFFUSED

The Tailor & Cutter, Vol.105, No.5410,
7 August, 1970.

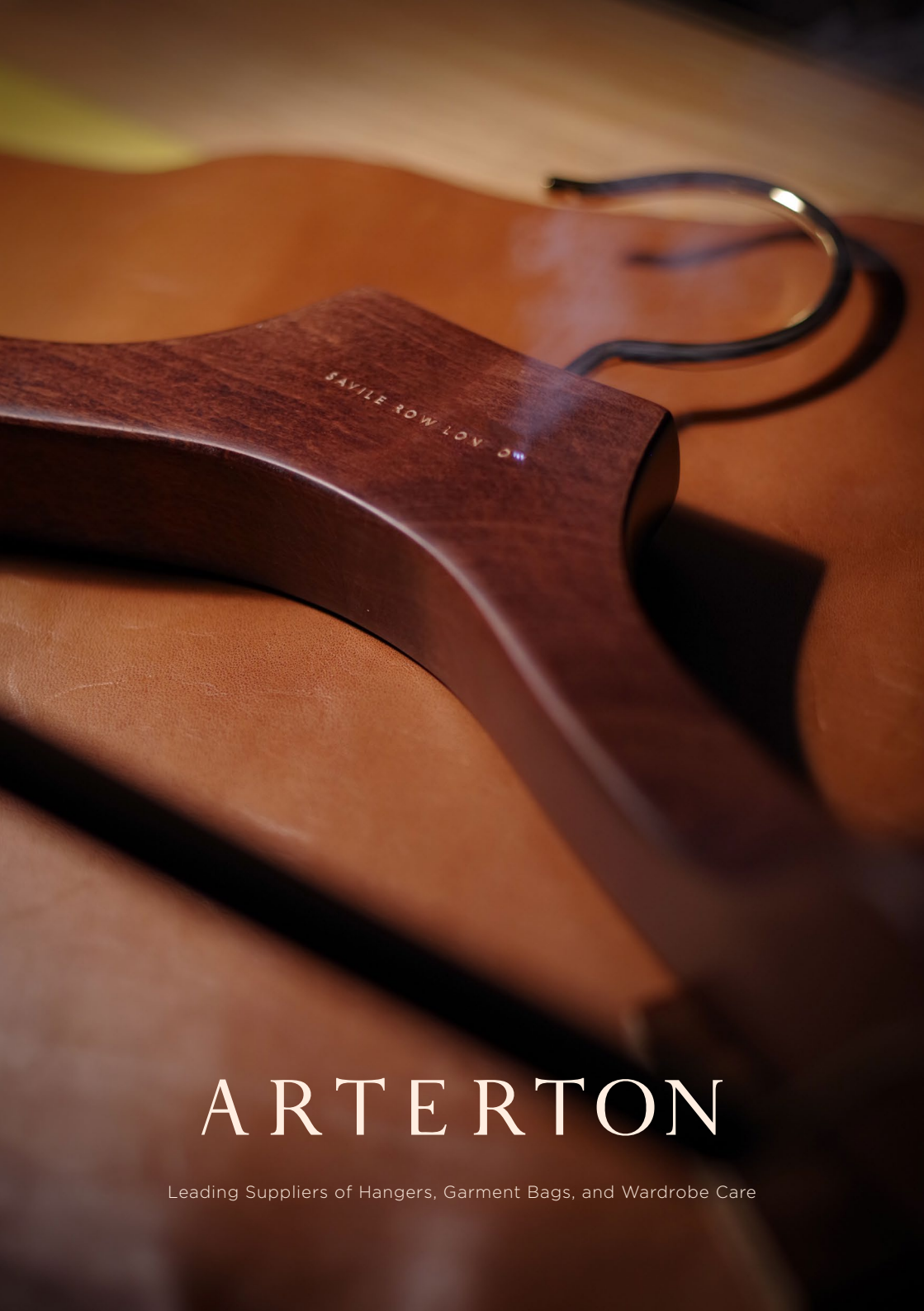
WE TAKE the liberty (given by virtue of our office) of breaking up an established absolute, as may be gathered from our heading on this occasion. The point we want to make is that many of the things that have long been regarded as sartorial facts stand in need of revision. Ideas we have cherished may not now be completely tenable.

Paris as the supreme voice in feminine fashion, London as the sole arbiter of masculine style and Britain the leader in the manufacture of the fabrics used for outer clothing. These are some of the facts (or so regarded) that have held sway for a number of years. What of their impact today?

That Paris still has a voice in the sphere of its adoption, and that its imprint is important, will not be denied; that London holds a top-rank place in the styling of men's clothes and that Britain's woollen and worsted cloths have a high reputation, nobody with any claim to serious thought will dispute. But there are other places in other countries now whose clothing and textile products are of a standard which represents a challenge to what has been accepted as supreme for so long a time.

With probable–almost certain–entry into the European Market, our own producers of cloth and clothes must recognise the extent of competition they will have to meet. At the same time, they will have to consider very seriously how to preserve their home market in the face of similar competition from the other countries of Europe. And not only Europe, it appears, for we learned only this week that the manufacture of woollen textiles in India has made remarkable progress over the last five or six years.

In brief, the situation now is that which is cryptically stated in our heading. There is no longer a select group of places in which claims of unassailable supremacy can be truthfully made. The matter is well worth thinking about–and acting upon.



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