



Contemporary craft inspired by  
the art of the tailor

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# Block Party: Contemporary craft inspired by the art of the tailor

The process of transforming the flat pattern block into three-dimensional form is an enduring source of inspiration. The rich cultural heritage and evocative language of pattern cutting has stimulated a broad range of contemporary applications.

Internationally renowned for her unique visual art practice fusing fashion, art and architecture, curator Lucy Orta was invited by the Crafts Council to select works which engage with pattern cutting on a variety of levels.

Looking beyond the garment, Block Party showcases work by international and UK artists and makers who have embraced the interdisciplinary nature of this skill, applying the aesthetics and techniques of pattern cutting to their practice in innovative and unexpected ways.

# Block Party

Lucy Orta

When the Crafts Council approached me to develop the exhibition Block Party, I immediately jumped at the opportunity to reflect on the wide range of visual interpretations of pattern cutting. My motivations for choosing the artists are driven by a deep admiration for the tradition and craftsmanship of pattern drafting, the personal joy of employing pattern cutting in my own practice, the pleasure of communicating the research of fellow artists to new audiences and a desire to share the wonderful creative potential of this somewhat invisible subject within the expanded field of art, architecture and design.

I began my career in fashion and textiles at an early age, observing the construction of clothes and attempting to cut and assemble identical miniature items for dolls. An intuitive desire to reproduce a garment led to an embedded knowledge of the construction and shape of its separate components – sleeve, bodice, hood, trouser leg,

yoke, and so on. This inquisitiveness led me to the last bespoke tailors in activity in the city of Birmingham. Here I observed the apprentices master the time-consuming, specialised techniques of transforming the inert flat pattern block into synchronised, subtle variations of two-dimensional pattern shapes – like precision jigsaw-puzzle pieces – to be traced onto cloth, cut, assembled and stitched together into a perfectly fitted suit. A true magician's task!

After training as fashion knitwear designer and working for a number of years in the Parisian couture houses, my natural curiosity to research new languages of expression for clothing beyond the traditional sphere developed into that of a visual artist – an alchemist – someone who combines traditional elements or skills in untraditional ways to create unusual or perhaps even irrational results. During my time as Professor at London College of Fashion, University of the Arts, London, I have witnessed the academic

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research being conducted in pattern cutting methods, from the more traditional couture or bespoke, to the advanced developments in digital drafting such as Gerber and PolyNest specialist CAD/CAM computerised systems, and more recently, the virtual contour visualisations, 3D body-mapping and 3D printing. The artists I have selected cover this impressive array of pattern cutting methods and display a deep appreciation of the master craft. Whether they have had rigorous training or observed the techniques that are employed by pattern cutters and tailors, the skills and shapes passed on from generation to generation recount very personal stories. They are advocates of the craft and masters of the art of block manipulation; they are explorers who wish to experiment and invent new ways to assemble pattern shapes, not to create garments but to manipulate shape to realise new forms.

As we readily embrace the era of technological speed, mass manufacturing and distribution, with

information so easily accessible to a mass audience at the click of a mouse, it is quite natural for artists to respond with an alternative alchemic formulae. This exhibition champions the craft of pattern cutting yet it also interrogates the changing nature of this skill and craft; without time and dedicated apprenticeship it will simply disappear. Through this exhibition and the variety of artefacts presented, I hope to inspire the pattern engineers of the future.

Lucy Orta is a contemporary visual artist, curator and professor of Art, Fashion and the Environment at London College of Fashion, University of the Arts, London. Using the media of sculpture, public intervention, video, and photography to realise her works, Orta has created a unique genre that transcends denominations between fashion, architecture and traditional art practice.

Orta has exhibited her work in major contemporary art museums including the Museum of Modern Art Paris, Museum of Contemporary Art Sydney, Museum of Contemporary Art Tokyo, the London Institute of Contemporary Arts and the Victoria & Albert Museum.

# The Way We Wore, A Life in Threads (extract)

Robert Elms

Closing my eyes I see it now: petrol blue, wool and mohair, Italian cut, flat-fronted, side adjusters, zip fly, sixteen-inch bottoms, central vent on the jacket, flap pockets, ticket pocket, three button (only one done up of course), high-breaking, narrow lapels, buttonhole on the left, four buttons on the cuff – claret silk lining. On the record player in the corner, one of those beige and brown jobs with a thinmetal spindle to accommodate a stack of 45s, just one single: ‘Too Hard to Handle’ by Otis Redding.

As the soul man punched out his deep Memphis rhythms, so the boy in the suit did a slow-motion council-estate shuffle across the floral fitted carpet we’d recently bought on HP from the Co-op. The music was his soundtrack; the dance was strictly for

display. The shoes that shone out from beneath this paragon of a two-piece were Royals. I was entranced. This, as my lovably idiolectic mum said, was ‘all the go’. This was what you grew up for.

The suit didn’t come as a surprise. Barry had been waiting weeks for this moment and we’d been with him all the way, getting reports back, getting excited as the day approached. It wasn’t so much that a suit like this was worth the wait, more that the wait was worth savouring. The process itself was sumptuous, the measurements and the fittings, meetings even, the discussion of cut, cloth and linings, with a tailor somewhere off the Edgware Road. In 1965, for a sixteen-year-old boy from Burnt Oak via Notting Dale,

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to have meetings and a tailor to call his own was quite something, but then Barry was something – he was a mod. He was one.

Leave school at fifteen, save for a suit at sixteen, As I watched my eldest brother, ten years my senior, display the sweet fruits of the first year of his labours, with a shimmy and a show, parading his standing and his allegiance, his status and his taste, somehow I understood that this was a path, a lineage. My dad, a dapper man when he wasn’t wearing overalls, nodded approval. When he’d first asked my mum to jitterbug, he’d sported a chalk-stripe double-breasted at the Palais de Dance, looking natty with a Marcel Wave in his ash-blond-hair and a carnation in his lapel. He was still with her later that night,

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Modern meets traditional.  
Jimmy (played by Phil Daniels) in new suit.  
Still from the film *Quadrophenia*,  
Franc Roddam, 1979,  
UK © BFI National Archive



when Al Bowley and his orchestra struck up the last waltz, and he’d been by her side ever since. As this new dance took place in our cluttered little north London living-room, I just sat mesmerised, silently enraptured by the lure of the look. I was in thrall to threads.

Elms, Robert (2005), *The Way We Wore, A Life in Threads*, pp.1,2, Pan Macmillan, London, 2006.  
© Robert Elms, 2005.

Robert Elms is an award-winning journalist, broadcaster and author. He writes regularly for the national press and has a daily show on BBC London.

Elms has a self-confessed love of clothes and fashion. His book *The Way We Wore* charts the changing fashions of his own youth, linking them with the social history of the times.

# The Master Tailor

Alan Cannon-Jones

Behind every Master Tailor is a Master Cutter. In fact, the first person you encounter when visiting your tailor is the cutter, and in reality, the Master Cutter is in the driving seat of the operation, rather than the Master Tailor.

## The Master Cutter:

The Master Cutter starts his career by serving a five-year apprenticeship followed by at least two years as an improver. During this time he will be a trimmer, striker, undercutter and assistant cutter before reaching the position of cutter. He is usually said to have become a Master Cutter when given a position as Head Cutter. To achieve this status the cutter will have trained an apprentice and established a list of clients for whom he cuts.

The cutter takes measurements, assesses figuration, and advises on fabric choice and style before drafting the personal pattern. After marking in the suit, an undercutter or striker may cut the fabric and pass it to the trimmer who will cut the linings and canvases and add trimmings such as sewing threads and buttons before the suit is passed on to the tailor.

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## The Master Tailor:

In contrast, the Master Tailor, unless he is working alone as the proprietor, will be the manager of the workshop. His staff will include apprentices, improvers, coat makers, waistcoat makers, trouser makers, kippers (female seamstresses who work in pairs – to avoid amorous tailors) and a presser who does all the ironing.

The tailor, along with his team, thread marks the seam lines, balance points and inlays on the garment before starting the assembly process. This process includes making the canvases to interline the fronts, stitching the darts and seams, and making and inserting the pockets. Once the shell of the jacket is assembled, the first fitting takes place before the garment is finally completed.

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Blazer, navy blue serge, 100% wool  
Alan Cannon-Jones, 2007  
Photo: Alan Cannon-Jones



## The Pattern:

The pattern is rarely seen by anyone but the cutter who has drafted it. It takes great skill to draft a pattern and while there are directions and rules, each cutter modifies and establishes their own system that gives them the results they are looking for. The pattern is a number of things: a template, a file, a record, a representation of personal body measurements and as such is highly valued and cared for by the cutter.

Alan Cannon-Jones is Principal Lecturer at London College of Fashion, University of the Arts, London. His research and professional practice are concerned with the technical aspects of pattern design and garment technology. Cannon-Jones is a consultant on all aspects of fashion design technology and is author of *The Tailors' Dictionary, an A to Z of tailoring terminology* (Bespoken Magazine, Scabal).

# Tailoring and Technology

Bradley Quinn

Fashion has undergone dramatic changes in recent years, and many of the most radical innovations position pattern making at their very core. New technology, high-tech processes and advanced materials are transforming the pattern cutter's block, making it possible to reinvent fashion's sinuous shapes and sleek silhouettes. Imaging techniques can create a custom fit, or radically reinvent the symmetry of the fashioned body. Breakthroughs in fields such as nanotechnology, biochemistry and microelectronics are creating fashions formed by particles that self-assemble on the wearer, or transmit data along their fibres to communicate wirelessly with other technologically enhanced clothing. Garments made to transform into pieces of furniture or wall-mounted sculptures imbue pattern making with industrial design skills, and those encoded with biological triggers can react to body changes and seasonal shifts exactly as the human body does.

The unspoken assumption of all fashion making techniques is that they will result in a 'finished' garment.

Future fashions will continually question this principle as clothing is created with shape-shifting abilities that enable them to constantly evolve. Although future fashion promises to emerge as a mutable medium, pattern making will be considered unambiguous and fixed. With surfaces that change colourways, silhouettes that shift, and textures that constantly transform, the pattern maker's skills will provide garments with the DNA that enables them to be worn as clothing, irrespective of their interstitial state. Pattern designs will include a range of pre-programmed performances that cue the garment to refresh itself, self-repair if damaged, and even download new tailoring templates to upgrade itself to the latest style.

Like the rest of the design disciplines, pattern cutting is evolving along with new technology. The impact of body scanning will be huge; as imaging technology creates simulations of the body, traditional concepts of what tailoring can be will collapse altogether. Whereas tailors and

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dressmakers may spend hours measuring clients to create a perfect fit, a scanner can sweep over the body in seconds and quickly produce a true-to-scale, virtual 3D model. Some can create virtual representations of clothing for the 3D model to 'wear', creating the experience of what the garment will look like when worn, even before the pattern has been made.

Fashion's emerging alignment with communication technology will situate pattern making within wider systems of reference. The demand for sustainability is aligning fashion with biochemistry and biomimicry, inspiring designers and technologists to work together. They are teaming up to create garments that mimic the behaviour of living organisms, introducing new parameters for cut and construction. Three-dimensional printing techniques can fabricate garments from liquid silicone, presenting pattern makers with new challenges as they conceive of clothing formed by layers of liquid materials that harden as they dry. Such innovations challenge pattern

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makers to explore the mechanics of new materials, to determine how they pull, lift, stretch, squeeze and flatten during everyday wear.

With the advent of garments grown like plants, clothing created through body imaging techniques and fashions fabricated by 3D printing, future pattern making promises to be dramatically different from today. These innovations may radically reinvent pattern making or call for a completely new set of skills. As new approaches to pattern making unfold, with them will come the groundbreaking processes and techniques to take fashion radically forward.

Bradley Quinn is a British writer and critic who contributes to magazines and newspapers worldwide. His books include *Techno Fashion*, *The Fashion of Architecture*, *Chinese Style*, *Scandinavian Style*, *Textile Designers at the Cutting Edge* and *Textile Futures*. His forthcoming book *Fashion Futures* will be released by Merrell Publishers in autumn 2011.

# Pattern cutting as storytelling

Rohan Chhabra

Shelley Fox

Claudia Losi

Yinka Shonibare MBE

Rhian Solomon

The pattern is the shadow of our persona – a second skin. Patterns hold the memory of the body: not only the posture, but also the history and personal story of each wearer. In Block Party, pattern cutting and its rich references are appropriated by artists as a means to address issues as diverse as climate change, sustainability, values around cultural identity, production and consumption.



# Rohan Chhabra

‘Pattern cutting is a process and a medium of communication. My approach to construction is three-dimensional, involving sculpting forms and using various pattern cutting techniques. The transformation often contains the project’s narrative, which makes the construction a more complex and crafted process.’ *Rohan Chhabra*

Embodying Ethics,  
Hunter Jacket  
2010

For the *Embodying Ethics* series, pattern cutting techniques were developed that allow objects to transform, and in doing so, tell a story. In a process involving 83 zips and 60 buttons, the Hunter Jacket transforms into a wall-mounted ram’s head, posing questions about production and consumption. The work seeks to establish a critical standpoint from which to examine design’s ability to question and deal with more complex human emotions, ethics and values.

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Chhabra was born in India. He graduated in fashion design, and in 2010 completed a Masters in Industrial Design at Central Saint Martins, London.  
[www.rohanchhabra.design.officelive.com/documents/ethics.html](http://www.rohanchhabra.design.officelive.com/documents/ethics.html)



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Pattern piece for Hunter Jacket  
Embodying Ethics  
Rohan Chhabra, 2010

# Shelley Fox

‘Pattern cutting has always been integral to the design process within my own work, and although it is a highly technical procedure, it is the nature of serendipity within my design development that allows the pattern cutting boundaries to be pushed forward, and the clothing to develop with an original identity.’

*Shelley Fox*

Dress from Negative  
Collection  
2006

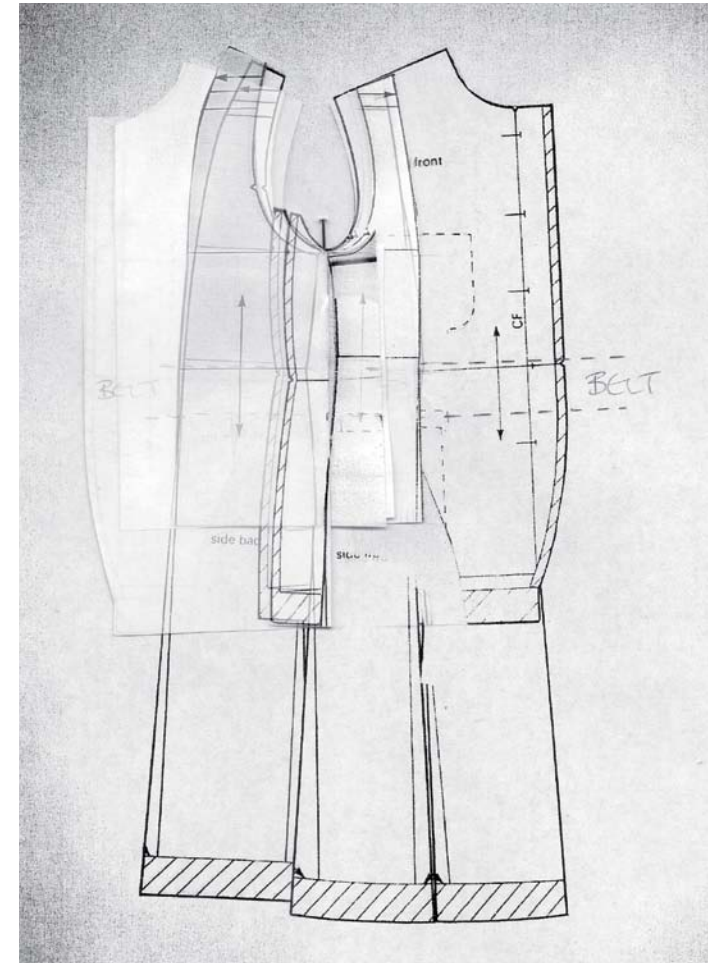
Found glass slides (negatives) sourced from eBay were the design inspiration for the new cutting technique used to create the *Negative Collection*. Within the negatives, sections of clothing are highlighted, missing or cut away, creating confusion. This led to the use of domestic patterns taken from a variety of styles, eras and sizes, bought from Ridley Road in Dalston, East London. They were layered to create new necklines; backs were used as fronts and vice versa, mirroring the experience of viewing the slides.

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Fox is a fashion designer and Donna Karan Professor of Fashion at Parsons, The New School for Design, where she directs the new MFA in Fashion Design and Society programme. [www.shelleyfox.com](http://www.shelleyfox.com)

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Sketch  
Negative Collection  
Shelley Fox, 2006



# Claudia Losi

‘For me, sewing is about putting things together to create shapes that tell their own story and serve as a springboard for distant thoughts: doing things by hand and working with others; the passing of time; incredible stories that make up our reality.’

*Claudia Losi*

Les Funerailles  
de la Baleine  
2010

*Les Funerailles de la Baleine* tells the tale of the funeral ritual that marked the final stage of artist Claudia Losi’s Balena Project. A fin whale, 24 metres long, created entirely of fine wool fabric, air pockets and padding, was transported around Italy and abroad like an old-fashioned fairground attraction. It was met at every stage with interest and curiosity, and inspired actions and ideas.

In October 2010, over the course of a 24-hour performance, the whale went through a final metamorphosis: it was dismembered and the fabric was used to make suits and jackets under the guidance of fashion designer Antonio Marras. Master tailors used the fabric to create men’s jackets lined with a material printed in the form

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of a magazine article describing the evolution of the project. Smaller whale forms were created out of the whale’s stuffing. With layers of meaning, these artefacts will carry forever a memory of the adventures and relationships they collected during the journey in their previous incarnation as a whale.

Les Funerailles de la Baleine  
iam|zam, Edition of 5  
Claudia Losi, 2010  
Photo: D. Lasagni

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Italian-born Losi has exhibited widely across Europe, including Monica De Cardenas Gallery, Milan, IKON Gallery, Birmingham, and Stenersen Museum, Oslo, Norway. [www.claudialosi.com](http://www.claudialosi.com)

# Yinka Shonibare MBE

‘The sculptural figures Yinka Shonibare creates are all clothed in exquisitely designed Victorian dress. Despite the brightly coloured Dutch wax-printed fabric, we immediately recognise the frills, bloomers and bodices, and their association with this past era. To achieve this unusual association Shonibare painstakingly researches the style of each character, using fashion illustration and pattern reference books of period dress.’ *Lucy Orta*

Girl on  
Flying Machine  
2008

Infused with symbolism, *Girl on Flying Machine* expresses the fulfilment of the immigrant dream of success. Here flying is a metaphor for reaching your highest goals, and the little girl on a flying machine represents the breaking down of all barriers, regardless of gender and ethnicity.

A Victorian dress pattern was chosen to represent colonial power, while the textile it is made of represents both a critique of and a desire for power. The brightly coloured African style fabrics (Dutch wax-printed cotton) are a key material in Shonibare’s work since 1994.



Girl on Flying Machine (detail)  
Mannequin  
Dutch wax-printed cotton,  
steel, rubber, aluminium,  
(Mannequin: Approximately  
39.4 x 23.6 x 21.7 inches  
Flying Machine:  
65 x 22 x 31.5) inches  
Yinka Shonibare, MBE 2008  
Photo: © the artist and courtesy  
of the artist and Stephen  
Friedman Gallery, London and  
James Cohan Gallery, New York

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Shonibare MBE is an Anglo-Nigerian artist based in London. Notable works include *Nelson's Ship in a Bottle*, which occupied the Fourth Plinth in Trafalgar Square and his exhibition *Double Dutch*, leading to his nomination for the Turner Prize in 2004. [www.yinkashonibaremb.com](http://www.yinkashonibaremb.com)

# Rhian Solomon

‘Can we slice the skin in the same way we cut our cloth? The fascinating relationship that exists between pattern cutting, tailoring and plastic surgery is what fuels my practice as a maker and researcher. The opening and closing of angles as a means of creating or resolving fullness and form, the aesthetic and functional consideration to outcome, the grain of both skin and of cloth...’

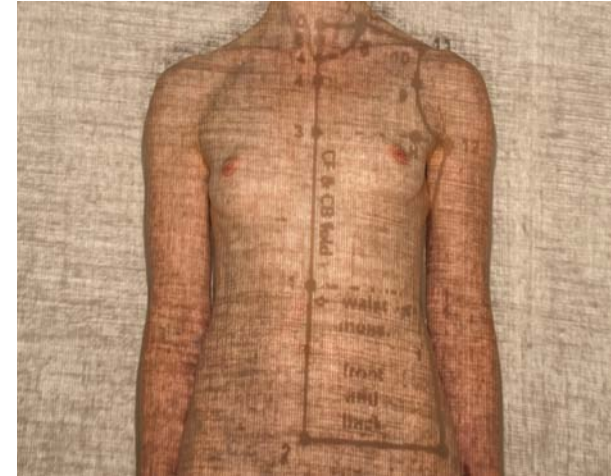
*Rhian Solomon*

Bodycloth  
Lessons on Limberg  
2010

*Bodycloth* is an exploration of the relationship between skin and cloth, highlighting the similarities that exist between the professions of plastic surgery and pattern cutting within fashion. They compare the respective tools, materials and processes of a textiles artist with that of a plastic surgeon. *Bodycloth* explores the potential for cross-disciplinary working and poses the question ‘Can we cut our cloth in the same way we cut our skin?’

Inspired by a published treatise by Russian plastic surgeon A. A. Limberg, *Lessons on Limberg* reveals how Limberg’s technique of fabricating

geometric paper models of skin flaps echoes the practices of garment construction – in creating or resolving fullness and form through the opening and closing of angles.



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Fabric as Film\_1  
Rhian Solomon, 2011  
Photo: Sharan Goel

Solomon has recently undertaken a residency at the University for the Creative Arts and a commission for the Wellcome Trust. She is conducting research into the potential for knowledge transfer between the professions of pattern cutting for fashion and plastic surgery.  
[www.rhiansolomon.co.uk](http://www.rhiansolomon.co.uk)

# Pattern cutting embraces the future

Philip Delamore

Suzanne Lee

Lucy Orta

Rubedo

Richard Sweeney

Simon Thorogood

The development of digital technologies, laser cutting, 3D printing and interactive design has opened up a myriad of experimental tools for Block Party artists. Pattern lines can be traced, layered and modified in the virtual space. The pattern block is no longer a flat fixed shape, but becomes an animated organism where complex three-dimensional forms can be programmed to grow and expand over time.

# Philip Delamore

‘The purpose of cutting a pattern is to flatten the surface of a body, or a form created around a body, from a 3D to a 2D surface. Imagine if we no longer needed to do this but could simply create around ourselves a 3D skin.’ *Philip Delamore*

Evolving Textiles:  
Digitally  
Manufactured Glove  
2008

The glove has been modelled in a 3D software programme using linked rings to build a textile surface over the scanned form of a hand. The material used is laser sintered nylon. This example shows how the future of pattern cutting may eliminate the pattern altogether, allowing seamless forms to be meshed directly onto the scanned figure. Laser sintering is an additive fabrication process, which fuses powder using a laser to create complex structures without assembly, and with minimum waste.

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Delamore is a Senior Research Fellow in Digital Technologies, and the Director of the Fashion Digital Studio at the London College of Fashion, University of the Arts, London.  
[www.arts.ac.uk/tfrg/node/3570](http://www.arts.ac.uk/tfrg/node/3570)

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Evolving Textiles  
Digitally Manufactured Glove  
Philip Delamore/Within Labs  
2008 © Within Labs



# Suzanne Lee

‘In growing my own cloth I have also discovered I can construct garments in new ways. I’ve created unique wooden forms over which to lay wet material. As the water evaporates, seams form strong bonds where edges overlap. Simultaneously I can create surface textures while sewing is unnecessary!’

*Suzanne Lee*

BioCouture  
ScarBodice  
2010

BioCouture investigates the use of microbial cellulose, grown in a laboratory, to produce clothing. Grown microbial cellulose looks uncannily like human skin, and when wet, can be formed over 3D shapes. *ScarBodice* was constructed by applying a pattern of dried beans to a wooden body form and allowing the wet cellulose material to dry down onto it. The scarification pattern was inspired by African tribal markings, the bean shape being similar to the (microscopic) bacteria that produce the cellulose.

BioCouture proposes that biotech practices can play a role in bespoke making, by designing an organism specifically to create one-off garments or products.

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Wet cellulose moulding around  
wooden dress form  
BioCouture  
Suzanne Lee, 2011  
Photo: Suzanne Lee

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Lee is Director of the BioCouture project and a Senior Research Fellow at Central Saint Martins, University of the Arts, London. [www.biocouture.co.uk](http://www.biocouture.co.uk)



# Lucy Orta

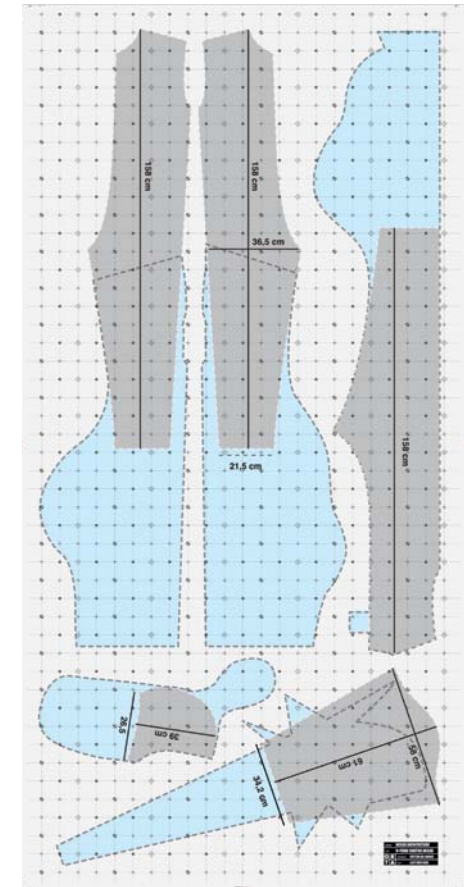
‘D-Form proposes an innovative and playful method for creating patterns that are generated through the analysis of our personal emotional qualities and the relationship between body language and posture. The interactive design process that produces the patterns demonstrates the uniqueness of our personalities and a new understanding of our body.’  
*Lucy Orta*

Emotive Nexus  
(D-Form)  
2002

*D-Form* is an online interactive design program that allows the user to modify the basic *Nexus Architecture* pattern block. Key pattern lines on the block are linked to a slide-bar tool enabling designated traces to be shortened, elongated or curved to predefined conceptual and technical parameters. The user responds to personal questions to modify the pattern block, thus creating a symbolic/emotional relationship with their garment. The new pattern lines are recorded and archived and can be printed on a desktop printer and enlarged, ready for making up into a personal Nexus suit.

Visit [www.studio-orta.com/dform\\_project](http://www.studio-orta.com/dform_project) to create your own Nexus suit.

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D-Form generated pattern  
D-Form  
Lucy Orta, 2002

Orta is a contemporary visual artist and curator, and Professor of Art, Fashion and the Environment at London College of Fashion, University of the Arts, London.  
[www.studio-orta.com/dform\\_project](http://www.studio-orta.com/dform_project)

# Rubedo

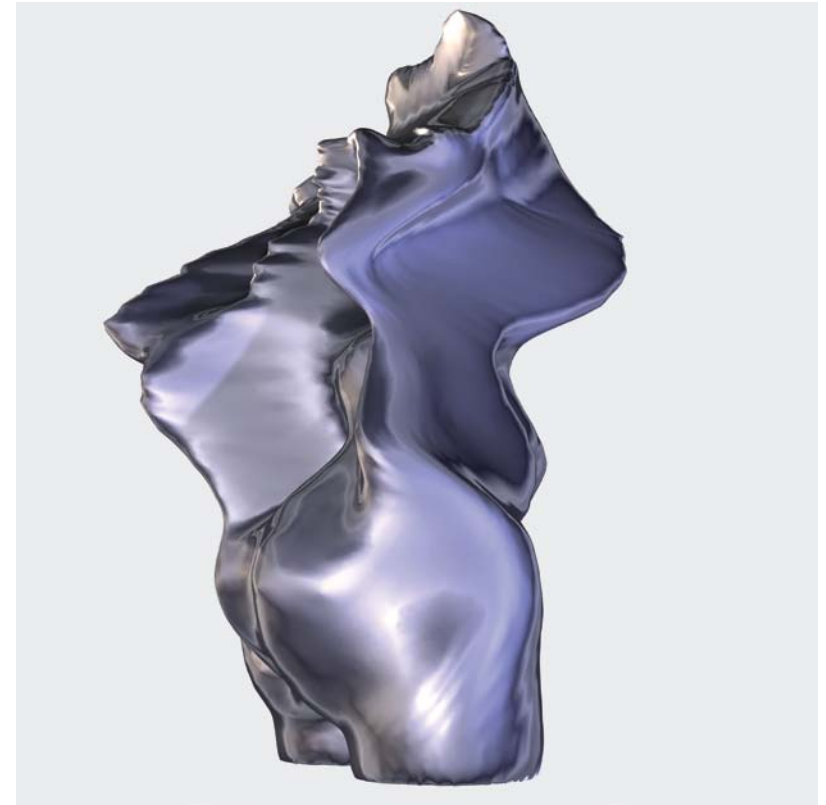
‘Rather than layering over the skin’s surface and separating the body from its environment, a garment becomes an extrusion of the body into the space that surrounds it.’ *Rubedo*

Audiomorph  
2011

*Audiomorph* explores the space of the body in relation to its environment. The process begins with a 3D scan of the artist’s body. Particle fields informed by the body’s geometry interact with the space that surrounds it. Their transformation is driven by parameters derived from a musical piece composed by Rubedo.

The visual pattern, achieved using 3D animation, is shaped by the body and slowly morphs into a crystallised sonic pattern – an alternative skin. The crystallised form becomes the mould, from which a wearable architecture is fabricated in resin.

Rubedo are a London-based art practice and think-tank founded by Laurent-Paul Robert and Dr Vesna Petresin Robert. They have exhibited, performed, lectured and published internationally. [www.rubedo.co.uk](http://www.rubedo.co.uk)



# Richard Sweeney

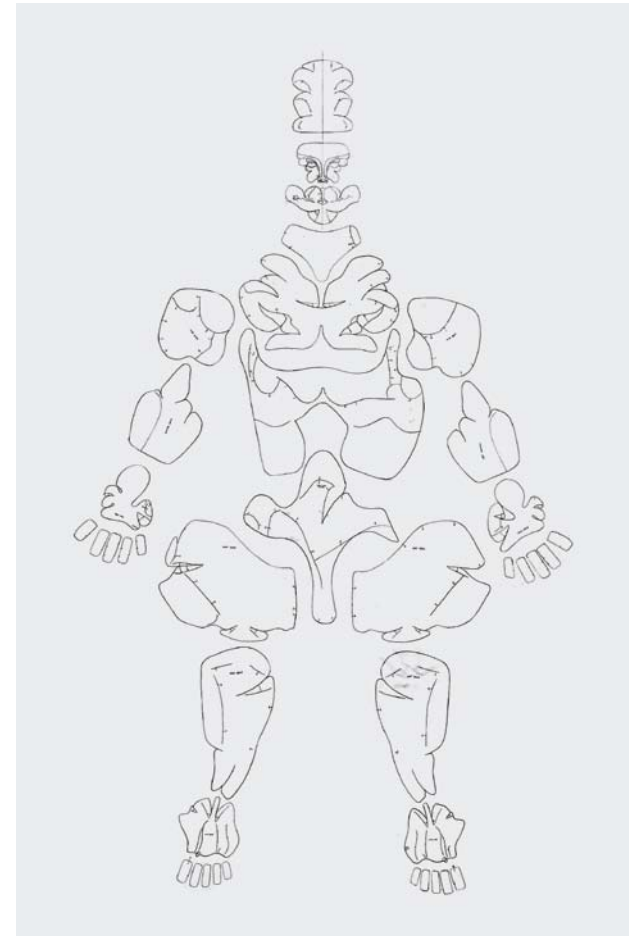
‘Pattern cutting is integral to the generation of form in my work. Firstly, a 2D pattern is drawn, then cut and folded to produce a 3D form. The shape is assessed, and annotations made directly onto the surface showing where cut lines are to be modified, or where material should be removed. The form is unfolded, then traced to form the next, more refined pattern, the process continuing until the ideal shape is reached.’ *Richard Sweeney*

Angel  
2011

Continuous line drawings of the statues adorning the neo-classical architecture in Sweeney’s hometown of Huddersfield were translated using drawing software and used to create flat pattern diagrams for *Angel*. The paper was considered a ‘skin’, employing the minimum of cutting and gluing to realise the form of the body. The cuts of the paper contribute to the flow of the piece, as well as showing how it is made.

A larger scale *Angel* was originally created for the Christmas 2010 window display for the Milan-based department store La Rinacente.

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Pattern drawing for *Angel*  
Richard Sweeney, 2011

Sweeney’s practice combines the disciplines of design, photography, craft and sculpture. He has lectured at the University of Applied Arts, Vienna, and is a regular guest lecturer at the Graphic Design Department at Sheffield Hallam University. [www.richardsweeney.co.uk](http://www.richardsweeney.co.uk)

# Simon Thorogood

‘Pattern cutting is about creating form for the body. It is a transitional process in which the ideas and themes behind a garment or collection begin to directly address the human form. It is a coming together of the abstract and the practical, and where a concept becomes alive and animate.’

*Simon Thorogood*

SoundForms  
2011

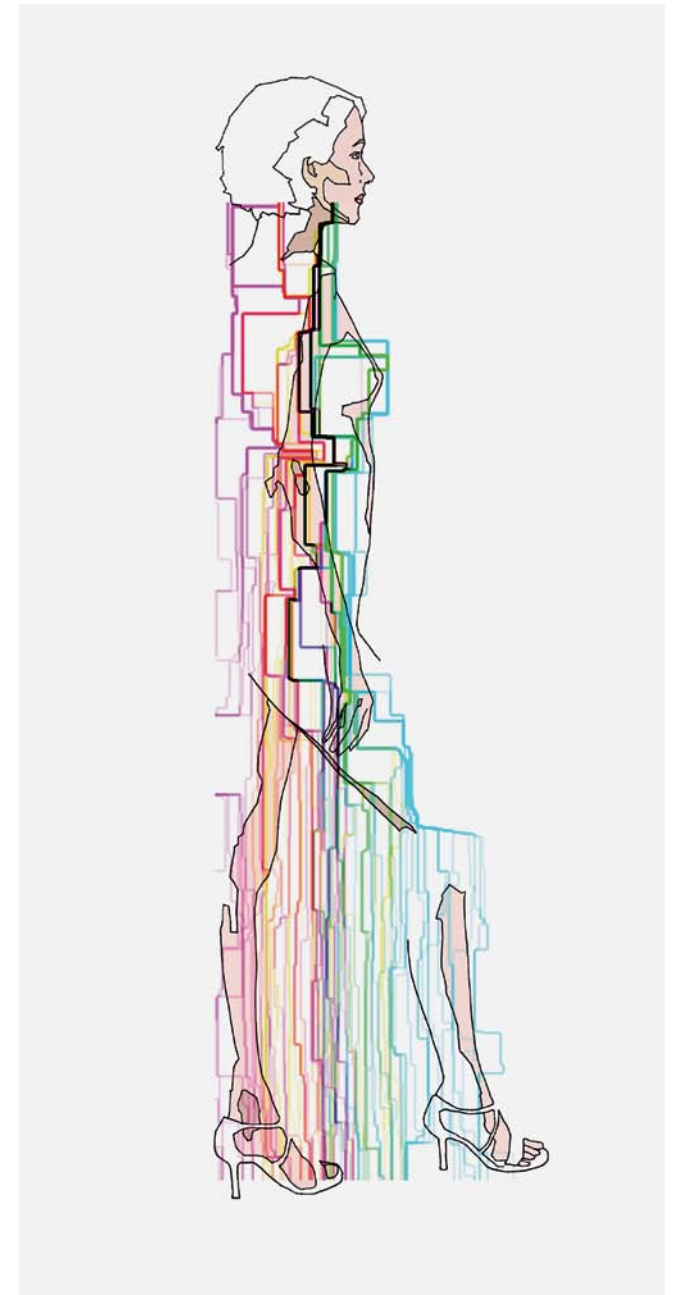
*SoundForms* is a means of finding ideas for fashion design through music. The *SoundForms* software matches the amplitude or loudness of a sequence of music to a specific icon from a catalogue of images, drawings and photographs. These motifs then become the start of garment silhouettes, colours, layering or surface decoration to be pursued and realised through a process of conventional pattern cutting.

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Thorogood has exhibited internationally and his garments are held in the collections of the Victoria & Albert Museum, London, and the Fashion Institute of Technology (FIT), New York. [www.simonthorogood.com](http://www.simonthorogood.com)

SoundWear  
Simon Thorogood &  
Stephen Wolff, 2008  
Photo: Simon Thorogood

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# Pattern cutting: motif and manipulation

Tia-Calli Borlase  
Charlotte Hodes  
Hormazd Narielwalla  
Raw-Edges  
Dai Rees

Anyone who has tried their hand at pattern cutting, or recalls family members or friends doing so, will appreciate the beauty of the paper pattern block. These flat shapes resembling puzzle pieces were traditionally assembled together to create a garment. Block Party artists use them as templates for furniture, ceramics, sculpture. Dress patterns are distorted and reassembled to create sculptural forms, pattern blocks becoming motifs and abstract patterns.

# Tia-Calli Borlase

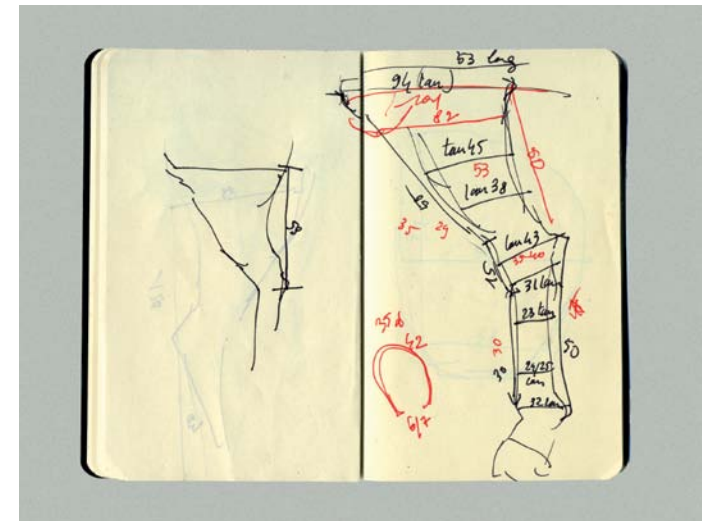
‘In the manner of a bespoke tailor who measures a gentleman for his fitted suit, Tia-Calli Borlase drafts the measurements of each animal body part as a process of drawing. These measurements generate the exact 1:1 skin or pattern shape of the leg or muscle, which she uses as a template to develop the contours or shadows of its former function.’ *Lucy Orta*

Jambe (Leg)  
2001

As in tailoring practice, measurements were taken directly from a horse's leg to create this sculpture. Constructed using couture techniques and boning and ribbons found in female underwear, its skeletal form and lightweight and flexible materials reveal a feminine aspect that is both delicate and powerful.

The *Leg* formed part of a window installation for Louis Vuitton in Paris. Using the same technique, each part of the horse was constructed and suspended to create a full representation of its body.

French artist Borlase has exhibited widely, notably in the Espace Culturel Louis Vuitton, Paris.



# Charlotte Hodes

‘The formal arrangements of the flat pattern templates in early 20<sup>th</sup>-century pattern books reference the female figure without depicting the figure itself. They suggest a dynamic tension between the flat skirt shapes and the final voluminous, animated skirt that they would become.’ *Charlotte Hodes*

Filigree, abricot  
Filigree, gold icons  
2009

The surface of the *Filigree* vessels is made up of an eclectic mix of historical and contemporary motifs and patterns. Inspired by 20<sup>th</sup>-century pattern templates held in the London College of Fashion archive library, drawings were made directly from the templates. These were used to make enamel silkscreen and digital transfers, which were applied to the ceramic surface and then fired. The drawings coexist with silhouetted female figures and other elements referencing drapery, cloth, ornament and pattern.

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London based Hodes has exhibited widely in the UK including Marlborough Gallery, The Wallace Collection, Design Museum and the Victoria & Albert Museum. She is currently Reader in Fine Art at London College of Fashion, University of the Arts, London. [www.fashion.arts.ac.uk/research/staff/a-zstaffprofiles/charlottehodesreaderinfineart/](http://www.fashion.arts.ac.uk/research/staff/a-zstaffprofiles/charlottehodesreaderinfineart/)



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Skirts, pencil and digital drawing  
Charlotte Hodes, 2008

# Hormazd Narielwalla

‘Far from being the crucial mechanical component in the bespoke production process, patterns can be viewed as unique abstractions of the human form that emerged independently of art history and significantly predate abstract art. They are divorced from their tailoring context to become rich and rewarding source materials for a contemporary art practitioner to work with.’ *Hormazd Narielwalla*

*Floating in the Lay*  
2011

*Floating in the Lay* is inspired by a tailoring concept called the lay. The skill of the bespoke cutter is to create shapes covering the human form. The lay however works with these shapes as things in themselves, devoid of their anthropomorphic origin, composing the shapes to satisfy a simple constraint to maximise the efficiency of the cloth cut. This composition is informed by less tangible constraints. Whereas the lay maximises efficiency, the artist plays with the patterns, intuitively searching for the form within the form.

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Pattern pieces for *Floating in the Lay*  
Hormazd Narielwalla, 2011  
Photo: Hormazd Narielwalla

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Narielwalla has exhibited across Europe, Australia and America. He is currently artist-in-residence at Savile Row tailors Dege & Skinner and recipient of the International Rector Scholarship from the University of the Arts, London for his PhD. [www.narielwalla.com](http://www.narielwalla.com)



# Raw-Edges

‘Looking around us, we can easily imagine how most objects can be unfolded if we picture a thin layer of skin covering them. Starting the other way around with a two-dimensional open “skin” can lead to surprising 3D shapes which can then be translated into functional objects.’ *Raw-Edges*

Tailored Wood  
2007

Usually veneer is used to cover solid wood surfaces. In *Tailored Wood* this traditional process is reversed by using the veneer to produce a flat pattern of a chair that is later filled with constructive foam. The foam unexpectedly expands within the volume and creates a unique and surprising crinkled wooden surface.

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This experimental process results in a collection of seats that are all different from one another, even within industrial production. *Tailored Wood* was seen in its early stages by leading Italian manufacturer Giulio Cappellini and is now being proudly presented as a production piece in his collection.



The making of Tailored Wood  
*Raw-Edges*, 2007  
Photo: Raw-Edges

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Raw-Edges are Yael Mer and Shay Alkalay. Born in Tel Aviv, both graduated with an MA from the Royal College of Art in 2006. They have exhibited widely and received numerous awards including the Design Miami-Basel Designer of the Future Award, 2009. [www.raw-edges.com](http://www.raw-edges.com)

# Dai Rees

‘“Tailor-sculptor” Dai Rees employs a combination of elaborate darting and seaming techniques that misplace the sleeve or distort the centre back axis. Combined with the rigidity of the leather hide a new language of pattern cutting is invented in this process.’ *Lucy Orta*

Carapace Casing 3  
2003

In the body of work *Carapace*, the 16<sup>th</sup>-century technique of marquetry has been transferred to leather. Using fragments of 1950s dress patterns, individual leather panels are cut from bodices, yokes and sleeves, and reassembled, using darting, folding and twisting to produce unpredictable body distortions in the form of sculptural silhouettes. The contrast of the carcass-like brute hide inlaid with the delicate leather floral patterns – part garment, part human, part animal – provides the emotional force and character of the work and its creator.

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Rees has been a ceramist, welder, milliner and academic and is now Course Director in MA Footwear and MA Fashion Artefact at London College of Fashion, University of the Arts, London. [www.fashion.arts.ac.uk/research/staff/a-z/professordaireesseniorresearchfellow/](http://www.fashion.arts.ac.uk/research/staff/a-z/professordaireesseniorresearchfellow/)



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Carapace Casing 3 (detail)  
Dai Rees, 2003  
Photo: Gavin Fernandes

# Film

## Negative Space: revealing the bespoke process

Negative Space:  
revealing the  
bespoke process  
Federico Urdaneta  
5'  
2011

Commissioned by the Crafts Council, *Negative Space* explores the process and tradition of bespoke tailoring. Hormazd Narielwalla, artist-in-residence at the prestigious Savile Row civil, military and sporting tailor Dege & Skinner, and pattern cutter Nina Pennington take us behind the scenes, offering a rare glimpse into the workshop and pattern archive. Both reveal their unique relationships with paper patterns.

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Still from *Negative Space*:  
revealing the bespoke process  
Federico Urdaneta, 2011  
Photo: Federico Urdaneta

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## **Acknowledgements**

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Displayways

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ADi Solutions

### **Gallery Guide**

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Fedrigoni Pergamenata Bianco 160gsm

Fedrigoni Arcoprint Milk 70gsm



Visit the website to share your pattern cutting and tailoring anecdotes, find out more about the artists featured in Block Party, and more.

[www.blockparty.org.uk](http://www.blockparty.org.uk)



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