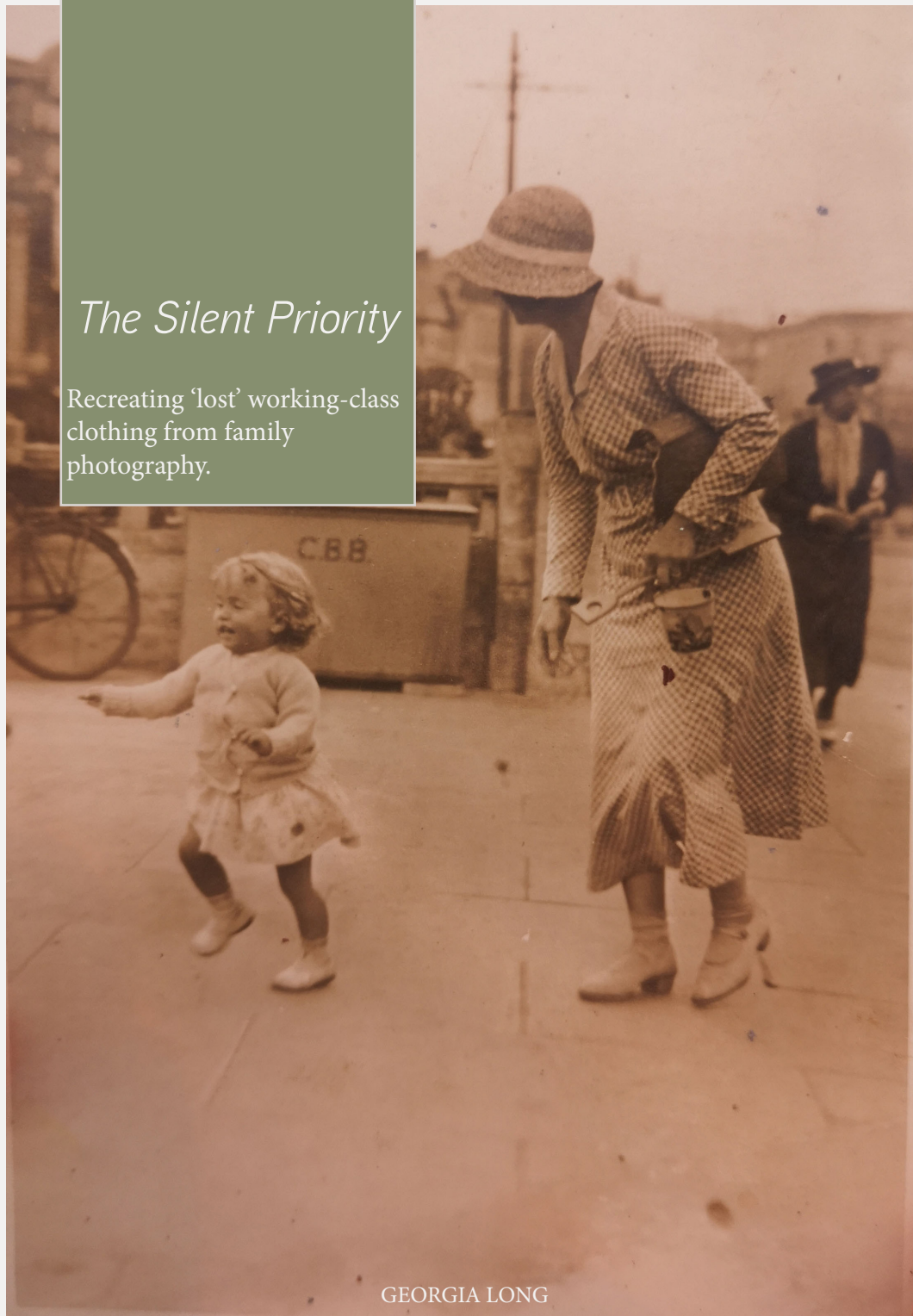


The Silent Priority

Recreating 'lost' working-class clothing from family photography.



GEORGIA LONG

Introduction

An overview of the project and exhibition, exploring each of the five recreations.

Photographs and Dress History



An interrogation into the photograph and its applications for fashion research. I consider major schools of thought within the disciplines of dress history and photography to determine the worth of the family photograph.

Recreations for Museums



I study the breadth of the issue with working-class dress preservation and the benefits and limitations of recreations to the museum industry.

Reading the Photograph



A thorough breakdown of my methods when analysing the photograph for garment recreation. I outline the key components for interpreting dress within a two-dimensional format.

Making and Historical Justification



A thorough analysis of my approach to recreation, and how I, as an individual, have overcome the limitations and issues faced by the discipline of embodied history.

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MA Historical Costume

2021



Introduction

An overview of the Silent Priority Project

Working-class garments woefully rare within museum collections, conservatories, exhibitions and archives.

This project has sought to rediscover the missing pieces of working-class garments that have been lost to time and decay. By using photographic resources as references for historically accurate recreations, we can bolster our understanding of working-class dress history.

The clothes in the Silent Priority online exhibition are representations of those once belonging to five individuals: Rhoda, Ena, Denis, Stella and Cecil. Their clothes reflected the lives they led and were shaped by the times, yet now the originals no longer remain. Our only record of them is in the family photo albums that they, and their descendants, have treasured over the years.



Top: A close up of Ena's dress, recreation, showing the embroidered floral details.
Bottom: Detail of the lapel on Denis' jacket, recreation.

"Whenever I think of Nanny it's always being at the sewing machine together, a little Singer that I've still got."

(20:25)

Rhoda was a keen seamstress and made many of her own clothes, a skill that she passed down to her descendants. She made clothes for her children from hand-me-downs given to her by her employers and could turn her hand to many a task. The suit was likely made from cotton gingham, which I recreated in green as it was one of her favourite colours.

I made the recreation on Rhoda's sewing machine, mentioned above. It was a wonderful embodied experience, with the wooden wheel under one hand and the gentle clacking of the mechanism. With a little experimentation and much reference to Ruth Countryman's work *Women's Wear of the 1930's*, the suit was simple to assemble with period details such as shoulder pin tucks and a beautiful vintage mother of pearl buckle.

Rhoda's granddaughter wore the recreation piece for the photo shoot. She was delighted by the outcome of the garment, paired with a straw hat and vintage knot work bag, and mused on how similar she looked to her grandmother, as well as how happy Rhoda would have been with the project.





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"I think that's probably why my Gran would have made clothes for me [...] Because we wouldn't ever have bought much if we could afford it."

(24:50)

Ena remembers a rural upbringing in the English countryside, when her Grandmother made most of her clothes, likely including the knitted dress pictured here. Knitting patterns often came with magazines and newspapers as well as dedicated pamphlets. The floral embroidery on Ena's dress is an addition to the pattern, one that makes the design all the more pretty and elegant. The knitter is encouraged to use scrap wool for the contrasting colour, as craft materials were in short supply.

Out of the recreations, this was definitely the most straight-forward as I used a pattern identical to Ena's dress from the 1930s. As these items are often kept until they are needed and passed around friends, I believe it was the very same pattern that Ena's Grandmother used. To complete the dress, I used a wool and silk blended yarn to produce a soft and supple dress. The finish on the yarn is wonderful, in a lovely sage green with cream contrast.

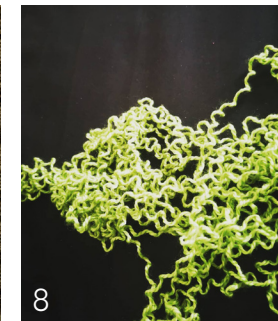
As straight-forward as the recreation was to make, I did not manage it without any mistakes. The recreation was unravelled several times throughout the process, making me wonder if Ena's Gran faced similar problems, and if she was as frustrated with them as I was!



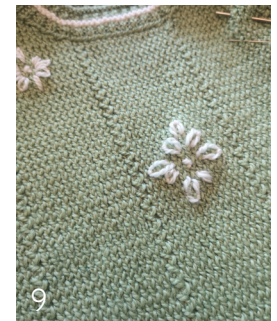
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"It was during the War, you see, so there was very little clothes about for people of our standing."

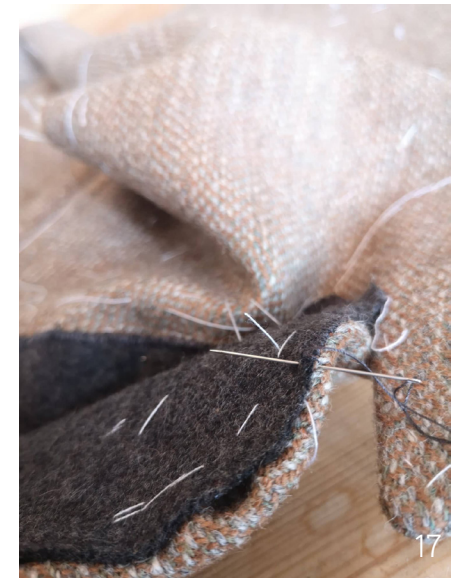
(11:00)

Denis, a child during the war, wore this suit around the age of eight, c. 1947. He remembers his mother buying his clothes from men's clothing shops in the nearest town, which were made in the style of popular menswear during this time. Given the weight of the fabric, it was most likely made from a wool tweed or herringbone. The matching shorts were an obvious choice, as boys did not wear trousers even in the depths of winter.

As the last garment I made during my research, this recreation came under harsher scrutiny than the others, resulting in a very successful representation of the original garment. Made in English 100% wool herringbone tweed, it has a distinctly forties feel to it. As my first piece of tailoring, it presented many challenges, especially during the pattern drafting stage. Using original 1940s tailoring books for reference, it took a total of three mock ups before I was happy with the design!



12



"I did needlework at college, so I still made more clothes, and it wasn't until I started earning that I bought my own clothes."

(25:49)

Stella bought her coat from C&A in 1953, around the age of eighteen. The coat embodies all of the drama of Dior's New Look; the wide, oversized collar, nipped in waist and long, flowing skirt. It is practical for a working young woman, made in heavy wool that kept Stella warm whilst riding on her scooter to work, and featuring a double welt pocket on either side. Large cuffs balance the design elegantly. The dark, charcoal grey that Stella remembers is delightfully moody in the photographs.

This recreation posed an interesting challenge for me as an individual as it was my first time making outerwear. For this garment more than any of the others, the stitch ripper was my closest ally, and I even had to replace the entirety of the waistband. On the other hand, the experience I had making this coat was an absolute joy and a treasure trove of embodied learning.

The cherry on the cake was having a photo shoot with Stella's granddaughter Emmi, wearing the coat in a location identical to one of the original photographs. The lines of history were bridged and the recreated coat came alive in the sea breeze.



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23

"This is a bit of fun, this outfit, and you know he could be quite flamboyant in his choice of clothes."

(07:46)

Cecil was on holiday in Spain when this photograph was taken in 1953. This Hawaiian beach suit represent a very popular style of the time, as travel was accessible again after the end of the war almost a decade earlier. Made from a cotton fabric, the print was likely screen printed, and sewn as a polo shirt for both comfort and the avoidance of expensive pattern matching across seamlines and button bands.

For this recreation, I enhanced the image as best I could to gain an idea of the pattern. Using popular motifs in extant Hawaiian clothing as reference, I used computer design software to rebuild the pattern and digitally print it onto cotton fabric. Although the scale of the pattern is too large in the recreation, this was the most effective way of representing the original design.

Either way, I believe that Cecil would have been delighted with his Hawaiian set remake.



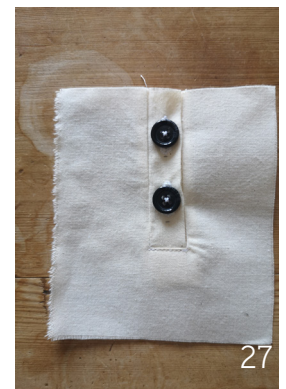
24



25



26



27



List of Figures:

- Figure 1: Wright, H. (1930s). Rhoda and Hazel. [Scan]. In possession of: H. Wright.
- Figure 2: Long, G. (2021). Model wearing Rhoda recreation with rose held to face. [Photograph]. In possession of: the author.
- Figure 3: Long, G. (2021). Model looking at orange blossom bush, wearing Rhoda recreation. [Photograph]. In possession of: the author.
- Figure 4: Long, G. (2021). Close up of mother of pearl buckle. [Photograph]. In possession of: the author.
- Figure 5: Long, G. (2021). Pin tucks on the shoulder. [Photograph]. In possession of: the author.
- Figure 6: Young, E. (c. 1944-6). Ena’s dress. [Photograph]. In possession of: E. Young.
- Figure 7: Long, G. (2021). A white toile of the knitted dress. [Photograph]. In possession of: the author.
- Figure 8: Long, G. (2021). Unravelled wool. [Photograph]. In possession of: the author.
- Figure 9: Long, G. (2021). Lazy daisy embroidery on the bodice front. [Photograph]. In possession of: the author.
- Figure 10: Long, G. (2021). Front of Ena’s dress, recreation. [Photograph]. In possession of: the author.
- Figure 11: Long, G. (2021). Back of Ena’s dress, recreation. [Photograph]. In possession of: the author.
- Figure 12: Young, D. (ca. 1947), Denis’ suit. [Photograph]. In possession of: D. Young.
- Figure 13: Long, G. (2021). Front of Denis’ jacket, recreation. [Photograph]. In possession of: the author.
- Figure 14: Long, G. (2021). Padstitch inside the recreation jacket. [Photograph]. In possession of: the author.
- Figure 15: Long, G. (2021). Turning out the lapels. [Photograph]. In possession of: the author.
- Figure 16: Long, G. (2021). Lining for the recreation jacket. [Photograph]. In possession of: the author.
- Figure 17: Long, G. (2021). Fixing the top collar. [Photograph]. In possession of: the author.
- Figure 18: Platt, S. (1953). Stella’s coat. [Photograph]. In possession of: S. Platt.
- Figure 19: Long, G. (2021). Fixing the waistband reinforcement on the recreation coat. [Photograph]. In possession of: the author.
- Figure 20: Long, G. (2021). Choosing buttons for the recreation coat. [Photograph]. In possession of: the author.
- Figure 21: Long, G. (2021). Inner workings of the recreation coat. [Photograph]. In possession of: the author.
- Figure 22: Long, S. (1953). Stella at the beach. [Photograph]. In possession of: S. Long.
- Figure 23: Long, G. (2021). Model wearing the recreation coat on location at the beach. [Photograph]. In possession of: the author.
- Figure 24: Long, S. (1957-9). Cecil’s Holiday Set. [Photograph]. In possession of: S. Long.
- Figure 25: Long, G. (2021). Recreation Hawaiian print fabric straight from the printing press. [Photograph]. In possession of: the author.
- Figure 26: Long, G. (2021). Pinning the hem in place on the recreation shirt. [Photograph]. In possession of: the author.
- Figure 27: Long, G. (2021). A sample showing a polo neck opening. [Photograph]. In possession of: the author.
- Figure 28: Long, G. (2021). Front of Cecil’s set, recreation. [Photograph]. In possession of: the author.
- Figure 29: Long, G. (2021). Back of Cecil’s set, recreation. [Photograph]. In possession of: the author.

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Photographs and Dress History

How can photography inform discussions of fashion in the working class?

The photograph: an object that is kept and treasured, to represent a moment remembered, or shared with those who were not there. The significance of keeping photographs of important places and people often overshadows the act of keeping images of loved ones, that have no material worth as objects and yet a wealth of emotional value. The act of saving these in family photo albums provides an insider view into the histories of ordinary people, and allows us, as researchers, the opportunity to form records of these discarded happenings overlooked by many historians. Mette Sandbye (2014), photographic theorist, discusses the family photo album as academic resource in detail. I shall explore how her affirmations of verisimilitude in this format are echoed in the thoughts of Barthes (2006) and Sontag (2014).

The field of photography in dress history has much room for exploration at present (Taylor, 2002, p. 169), which has been taken for granted or considered too modern for discussion. I shall consider how photographic analysis can inspire research paths, supporting my own analysis of the subject with the words of Hilary Davidson (2019), Alexandra Kim and Ingrid Mida (2015), and Alison Gernsheim (1963).



Another issue faced by my project is the digitisation of photographs and how this affects the interpretation of the image as a photograph. I shall be comparing the thoughts of Joanna Sassoon (2004), Susan Sontag (2014) and John Berger (1972) with analysis of the viability of technology in my own project.

Finally, I shall discuss the undying nature of photography, considering the implications of 'living history' and the longevity of the photograph.

Photography in dress history has been widely overlooked as an object-based research methodology, due to its relatively recent invention and the existence of extant garments. The objects themselves are preferable for studying, understanding and observing. However, in cases such as those of the working class, where examples of physical garments are notoriously difficult to find (Kim and Mida, 2015, p120), photography can offer a highly valuable cache of information concerning not only what the clothes looked like, but how they were worn and the effect they had on the people who wore them, as Alison Gernsheim describes:

Old photographs illustrate not only the clothes people wore, but also reveal their attitudes, their way of sitting or standing, how they draped a shawl, held a sunshade or muff, or took off a top hat.

Gernsheim, 1963, p.21

In her eyes, the photograph captures much more than the simple aesthetics of the garment. We may be lucky to read the shape of seams, or the weight and print of the fabric from photographs, but we can often see why dress mattered to the wearer; if it was comfortable, if they felt stylish, handsome or beautiful. The photographs might answer other questions as well, such as why the subjects chose the clothes that became fashion or why they wore them even though they were unfashionable. This is an aspect missing and therefore highly sought-after in object-based research of extant garments, for which Prown recommends 'Deduction', where 'the analyst contemplates what it would be like to use or interact with the object.' (1982, p. 8). Kim and Mida expand this with 'Reflection', suggesting the researcher considers 'other contextual material [...], such as photographs, illustrations, paintings, and textual sources.' (2015, p.63). In a similar fashion, the limitations of photographs as a resource for re-creation can be mitigated with complementary research methods, such as oral history interviews and digital photographic editing techniques.

One of these key limitations is the two-dimensional nature of the photograph. Davidson implies that 'fudging the back,' is possible in a 'visual depiction,' given the limited information that we have on the garment (2019, p.14). Even when appearing multiple times within an album, there is no guarantee that every part of the garment has been captured. This sentiment is briefly mentioned by Kawamura in her analysis of online research and ethnographies: 'there may be some parts or angles that cannot be observed online' (2020, p.107). Nonetheless, with complementary research we can create an informed 'fudging' (Davidson, 2019, p.14).

We may not know exactly how the suit that Rhoda wears was made, but from information gathered in oral history interviews I can say with some confidence that it was handmade by the wearer and possibly even on the same Singer sewing machine that has been passed down through my family for almost a century. On its own, the machine is simply an archaic tool or family heirloom yet combined with the photograph it becomes evidence. From here, we can glean information such as stitch sizes or thread types which would have likely been used in the production of the garment. We can continue our search in archives - a more traditional form of research - for fabric swatches that bear a similar appearance, and for garments or paper patterns that share the cut, and many other research methods. The photograph is a springboard for further knowledge.

On the other hand, and like many devices in modern times, the camera has advanced at whiplash-inducing speed. This means that photos taken a mere century ago are of a staggeringly low quality compared to those we see today. From the time period I am studying (1930 to 1959), they are generally black and white or coloured by hand, a process usually conducted in the photography studio (National Science and Media Museum, 2009). The loss of this contextual knowledge fundamentally limits re-creations. We, as researchers, must rely on the memory of living contemporaries and those complimentary research methods aforementioned to come to



2



This shirt collar seems to be a separate layer to the jacket, gapping away at the collar of the latter.



Described by the participant as a two piece, there is no sign of the bottom of the top, however we can see where the front pieces cross over. It is worn tucked into the skirt.



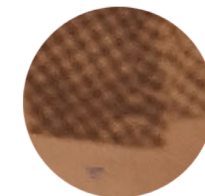
A light coloured slider belt buckle, possibly bakelite, mother or pearl or pearlloid. An abundance of similar buckles can be found on online auction sites such as Etsy and eBay.



Here, we can see how the gingham pattern is disrupted, the squares coming closer together. This could be distortion of the fabric, however at this point it is being stretched over the leg and is clearly not folding. Therefore, a seam is the cause, suggesting the front of the skirt it made in at least three pieces.



The sleeve hems have been turned inwards and probably hand finished. Given the slight crease in the arm, about two inches up, I would suggest this is the depth of the hem.



The depth of the hem allowance is visible here, silhouetted by the lighting. If I can determine the probable scale of the gingham, I can use this to estimate the measurements for every aspect of this garment.

3

informed decisions on the matter.

As for contextual knowledge, photography also captures the 'real' – whether we like it or not. How we wear styles that are fashionable but do not suit us or are uncomfortable. The ill-fit of hand-me-downs and the repairs that were made. The lack of gloves, removed by Rhoda to avoid damaging them during a trip to the seaside (Wright, 2021, 02:19). Barthes sees this reality but also counters it: 'I constitute myself in the process of "posing," I instantaneously make another body for myself, I transform myself in advance into an image.' (2006, p.10): The subject moulds themselves to the lens of the camera. Loose ends may be tied up, unsightly seams tucked away for studio shoots, a jacket discarded in cold weather to capture the garment beneath instead. This preparation is less evident in family photography, with its potential for 'candid', in-the-moment snapshots, which avoids Barthes' key concern: 'I feel that the Photograph creates my body or mortifies it, according to its caprice' (ibid, p.11).

Barthes speaks of the 'Photographer' almost as a separate entity. They are 'The Operator' (ibid., p.9), whose 'organ is not his eye (which terrifies me) but his finger' (ibid., p.15), successfully painting him as strange and other. In family photography, this effect must be somewhat subdued, as the photographer is often not a stranger but a loved one. The other becomes known and is therefore stripped of the mysticism that Barthes describes, and the subject feels less 'at their mercy, at their disposal, classified in a file' (ibid, p. 14). Chris Killip considers a similar curiosity of the perception of the photographer in his interview with Aperture journal in 2012.

It's very ironic that Strand would make something like his Mexican Portfolio [published 1940] which seems patronizing as it's so much about the beauty of poverty.

Killip et al Aperture, 2012, p. 58

Photographing the poor has been an activity of the rich since the dawn of the camera (Sontag, 2014, p.54). It is easy to be sucked into implications of the exotic. Strand, who had Communist affiliations, provides an excellent example of Marxist romanticism of class and poverty (Worth, 2020, p.13). Evidence from these sources should be taken with a pinch of salt, given that those inclined to romanticism often see what they want in a scene, posing subjects for greater effect as Thomas Annan (1829-1887) allegedly did in his photographs of Glasgow slums (National Science and Media Museum, 2017).

Alternatively, Killip describes his own methodology as a personal reflection of the people he knew. 'You could get under the skin of a place and do something different, because you were then photographing from the inside.' (2012, p.59). This is family photography in its essence. It is not trying to capture the lives of the working class for consumption in a gallery, to display and analyse, or for entertainment. It is documenting the memories of the family

unit, sometimes showing them as glamorous and happy, sometimes distracted or in humour.

Sandbye's case studies of family photo albums often depict the subject as the focal point of positive emotion and the chosen memory (2014, p.14). The subjects in these albums are often frozen in moments of happiness, even when posing for a static image. They represent family life and structure. Sandbye reflects on the family photo album as 'social and emotional communication' (ibid., p.1). Each album is curated with the things the maker holds dear and important. As items of personal expression, they are perhaps the most candid of sources for a similar act of expression – fashion. In recording the lives and experiences of our loved ones, we inadvertently record the choices we have made concerning dress. This statement, again, must be taken in consideration as the photographs in family albums do not always represent the everyday.

Professional portraiture still makes up a fair proportion of early collections, as the camera remained an unwieldy and unpredictable piece of equipment (Barthes, 1980, p. 9). For these studio sessions, the working class would often dress up (Young, 2021, 04:46), and 'managed to find some way to put on a semblance of a 'Sunday best' appearance' (Taylor, 2002, p. 171). This might skew the perception of the family album as a record of daily occurrences; however, these images still show working-class clothing, albeit at its best. The semiotics of studio photographs include pride, and represent that which the family wants remembered most. From their composition to their costume, each element has been carefully chosen to this end.

Figure one, on the other hand, bears no resemblance to staged studio shots. The photograph is in motion and on location, representing an ordinary trip to the seaside near their home in the 1930s. This example is far from Barthes' description of the careful manipulation of his body and features (2006, p11).

Similarly Barthes' fear of being 'inauthentic' (ibid, p. 13) seems almost mocked by the entertainment Cecil takes in finding a striking pose, inviting the spectator. A seasoned photographer might comment on the angles and the composition in the photograph -such as the use of triangular structure and converging lines - if not carefully thought out then desired to add interest to the image. This relaxed and happy energy not only tells us about Cecil as a person, but also provides insight to how he feels in his clothes. They give him confidence; he is not afraid of voyeurism and instead welcomes it. He feels handsome, maybe even dapper and fashionable. They are comfortable and easy to stretch out in. The fabric seems lightweight, informed from the folds that form where the material pulls. Where Barthes sought self-advertisement as a subdued and respectable member of society (ibid.), Cecil puts forward a sense of ease and leisure.



Ever since the development of photography in the 19th Century, one argument has dominated its critical theory: is the photograph the object or the image? Traditional lines of thought follow Barthes in 'two leaves cannot be separated without destroying them both' (Barthes, 2006, p. 6), a theme echoed by Joan M. Schwartz, who states when discussing the daguerreotype, 'its visuality [...] was inextricably bound up in its physicality' (Schwartz in Edwards et al, 2004, p. 23).

With the contradiction of image and paper irrevocably linked, how do we, as researchers, justify the copying and digitisation of photographs? Much of my research consists of studying scans, zooming in on fabrics to determine construction methods, removing lens flare and correcting the effects of fading to better view the subject matter. Similarly, digital advancements such as three-dimensional scanning are discussed by Hilary Davidson regarding dress history, in recognition of the observational benefits as well as the preservation of the original object (Davidson, 2019, p. 22). Surely, isolating the image in this way destroys the idea of the 'photograph', yet it can vastly improve the viewing experience.

Joanna Sassoon studies this conundrum in depth, asking how far digitising photographs destroys their material meaning, and whether this loss is balanced by increased accessibility and flexibility of use (in Edwards et al, 2004). Whilst she recognises that digital photographs 'can be seen in one context as a truer version of photography' (p.196), she is also concerned about the focus being the content of the image, and how the loss of the paper medium 'obscures the subtleties of visual clues that originate from the materiality of the photograph' (p. 201):

This leads to an assumption that it is necessarily the image content that is of prime importance. In itself this raises important questions about what happens to photographs that are not aesthetically pleasing but are intellectually important, such as family photographs and snapshots, or research where the aesthetics or image content are not the primary evidence. Thus it can be argued that digitisation is limiting understandings of photographs to their being an aesthetic medium rather than a document of evidence.

Sassoon in Edwards et al., 2004, p.201.

My research is focused on content, reading in it the fashions of the time, the way working class people procured and wore their clothing. The content is the essential factor for a valuable research outcome in the form of accurate garment recreations. The very family photographs Sassoon describes are in fact central in my research because of their content, as previously discussed. The material condition of the photographs is an important descriptor of how they have been kept and treasured, but ultimately the image content holds the information that I, and other researchers of similar methodologies, are seeking (Davidson, 2019, p. 13; Kawamura, 2020, p. 123). The concept of the photograph as an 'aesthetic medium' and in particular one that ensnares truth in image (Sassoon, 2004, p. 199; Schwartz, p. 18; Sontag, 2014, p. 85; Barthes, 2006, p. 5) is what makes the photograph a 'document of evidence' outside the realm of photography. This is what makes photography multifaceted, in that it consists of so much more than light captured on paper, 'an aesthetic medium', and is the concern of many more disciplines than photography alone. Figures one and two are important in this sense as they contain information that has (so far) been overlooked by collectors of history; yet they have been saved in a family photo album despite their lack of material worth and for not being 'aesthetically pleasing', because of their emotional value to the individual.

Saying that digitisation limits the understanding of the photograph as a 'document of evidence' also ignores the technologies that allow us to look deeper into those images. It belies the digital capabilities of metadata and alt text connected to digital images, which 'reveal additional information that needs to be read in association with the image content', a practice that Sassoon claims is reserved for the backs of material photographs and generally lost in digitisation (2004, p. 200).

The copying of photographs, digital or otherwise, also has its uses to the researcher. Sontag claims that through 'image-duplicating machines, we can acquire something as information (rather than experience)' (2014, p. 155). This is what enables us to see past the materiality of the photograph and focus on analysis that provides meaning to the research question. This might include the physical condition of the photograph – we can connote that the old, yet well-preserved photograph has been carefully kept, or treasured; the dog-eared, handled and loved. Primarily, though, my focus is on the image content and the clothes therein. In this case, we might consider Berger's words: 'The meaning of the original work no longer lies in what it uniquely says but in what it uniquely is.' (1972, p. 21). In particular, by copying the family photographs we can become entangled in the mysticism of that – the Family Photograph – and miss the importance of the photograph's story. The clothes I analyse become 'working-class' over 'personal belongings' and 'treasured memories.' Taken out of context, they lose their original meaning and become lesser. Sontag recognises this as a common line of thought in photography, and challenges art in 'museum display, where it too has been wrenched from its original context' (2014, p. 140). In essence, the copies of photographs should carry the same weight, and certainly the same information, that the originals hold.

Overall, I recognise copying and digitisation of photographs as a necessary step for an in-depth analysis of working-class fashion in the mid-twentieth century.

Photographs have been seen through the ages, and many cultural lenses, as a symbol of death (Barthes, 2006, p. 14; Sontag, 2014, p. 70; Sandbye, 2014, p. 3). However, with a simple change of perspective the opposite can be said. Photographs may be locked in an unchanging state, but so were the mummies of Egypt, a material representation of their beliefs of immortality (Clay, 2018/19, p. 11). In the same way that we have learnt much of the lives of ancient humans from these remains, much can be learnt from the immortal, frozen state of the photograph. Barthes discusses the differences he learns in a photograph of his mother, taken before his birth:

I could read my non-existence in the clothes my mother had worn before I can remember her. There is a kind of stupefaction in seeing a familiar dressed *differently*.

Barthes, 2006, p. 64.

A version of the mother that no longer exists, defined here by the clothes she wore, is captured for future generations to observe and read change. Returning now, not merely as a spectator but also a researcher, photographs have an uncanny ability to mirror a past and record change. The researcher looks at the image content to see what is different and what can be learnt. With complimentary research, we can identify what was fashionable by how it was worn, and how often. From these methods, I predict I will be able to re-create the garments to a high degree of accuracy. In a second lease of life, they will be transformed twice: from their original form, working-class and base, to artefacts; and from ethereal light on paper to three-dimensional object. Both encourage spectators and researchers alike to reconnect with the past. A revitalised, tangible and living window into history.



The capabilities of the family photograph when used in dress history research and enhanced with digital techniques can greatly improve our understanding of historical fashion and its development through time. By capturing the everyday in perspectives from all walks of life, including the working class, family albums represent a great wealth of largely untapped evidence. They have an ability to communicate how we wore the clothes described in historical records and immortalise them on paper and screen.

For the latter, this transformation from material to ethereal can play a vital part in our analysis of the past. It is true that we lose the material object in the digitisation of photographs, however the technological capabilities that allow us to clarify images, crop and zoom in and possibly even re-colour, expand possibilities for further research into the image content. I believe the materiality of the photograph a reasonable sacrifice for this cause.

The process also extends the lifespan of the material photograph, as through copying we preserve the original image, protecting it from gradual wear and tear throughout the research process. This is particularly important in family photos belonging to living relatives, that hold sentimental value. The re-creation of the garments therein can help modern audiences connect with the past, inspiring interest and promoting the preservation of dress from all walks of life.

List of Figures:

Figure 1: Long, S. (1953). Cecil and National Service RAF colleagues. [Photograph]. In possession of: S. Long.

Figure 2: Wright, H. (1933 to 34). Rhoda and Hazel. [Scan]. In possession of: the author.

Figure 3: Long, S. (1957-1959). Cecil on holiday in Spain, 1957-59. [Scan]. In possession of: the author.

Figure 4: Long, G. (2021). Before and after: Edited in Photoshop with the functions 'autotone', 'autocontrast' and 'spot healing'. [Image]. In possession of: the author.

Figure 5: Long, G. (2021). The hem allowance visible by cropping and zooming. [Image]. In possession of: the author.

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Recreations for Museums

How embodied research can bolster collections of working-class garments.

Working-class items are missing from museum collections. It has created a gap in information available to the public, and one that many of us have a direct or ancestral connection to. The majority of these fashions have been lost to time, the clothes worn until they could not be worn any more, reused, re-purposed and refashioned until they no longer resembled the items they once were. My research has considered the possibility of recreating these clothes from surviving artefacts: pictures that, contrary to daily clothes, have been treasured and preserved in family photo albums in even the poorest of homes.

Firstly, I shall discuss the lack of working-class items within museum collections, defining the gap in further detail. This is particularly evident in the Metropolitan Museum of Art's Costume Institute, where the emphasis is on collecting items that wow and amaze over recording public history. This museum and many others share the ethos of the Designmuseum Danmark, who

will collect an item 'which in one way or another belongs to the avant-garde.' (Toftegaard in Melchior et al, 2014, p. 147). A lack of surviving examples due to endless wear and re-purposing could also contribute to this void of representation.

Secondly, I shall consider the myriad benefits that recreations can offer museums, drawing evidence from projects that have already utilised them. I shall discuss how interacting with garments through touch can engage visitors, a practice rightfully frowned upon regards to delicate extant artefacts that is reconsidered due to the recreation, which is new and robust. I shall also consider the issues with using these recreated items within exhibitions, including communication and future research.

National museums, with their extensive resources for acquiring artefacts of excellence, have very few items regarded as working-class. These museums cater to a wide audience who themselves are often seeking beauty and opulence not associated with menial, every-day wear, despite these items representing a vast and highly relatable part of our history. This seems a missed opportunity when various times throughout history have seen more working-class people than any other, such as Robert's description of a working-class that 'was reaching its zenith in the 1950s', directly in line with my research period (2020).

Whilst a few confirmed working-class artefacts exist within the searchable collection at the Metropolitan Museum of Art's Costume Institute I have found that they are far from accessible, with the term 'working-class' only finding twenty-four results, the majority of which are from such famous houses of design as Chanel and Worth. To this end, I set out to form a glossary of searchable terms, though soon found that no synonyms were any more successful.

Searching the term 'crafts', as we can see from table 1, found many more results, many of which seem to be traditional garments from Romania and Eastern Europe. These items, though they have a high possibility of belonging to working-class families, regrettably held little to no information within the online catalogue. Description sections that had so often been filled with cultural significance even when information regarding the individual item is missing were left frustratingly bare.

Terms	Count	Unique results	Unique confirmed working-class	Accession number(s)	Unique possible working-class items	Accession number(s)
Working-class (working class)	24	N/A	2	2009.300.2759a-g 2009.300.3164	1	2009.300.2926
Rural	5	3	1	C.I.52.39	0	N/A
Crafts	115	Many	0	N/A	10	2009.300.1774 2009.300.2732 1971.121.5 1975.179.4 2009.300.1707 1975.179.5 C.I.X.51.10 39.13.227 C.I.41.145.6 C.I.44.80.6
Handmade	98	Many	0	N/A	1	1973.248.2
Local craft	0	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

Table 1: An analysis of searchable terms for working-class artefacts in the Costume Institute's searchable collection.

My research uncovered three possibilities:

Firstly, that surviving working-class items with cultural significance, value and providence are rare and difficult to acquire. This is supported by my previous research into working-class garments, as many of the items were made from poorer quality materials that decayed faster than the silks and jewels of royalty or were worn and re-purposed until nothing remained (Worth, 2020, p. 3).

Secondly, that there is a lack of public interest in these items, dissuading museums from collecting them as they pose no future

worth, and also causing a deficit in the number of items exhibited. It could be said that many working-class artefacts do not have the 'compelling creative distinction or virtuosity [required] to astonish and amaze' (Koda et al. in Melchior et al., 2014, p. 44). This could also suggest why items that could possibly be working-class have little to no information attached, as they would have forfeited the careful interrogation that exhibition pieces require for display.

Finally, working-class items, certainly from the last century, might not be considered valuable by museums as there is a bustling trade in vintage garments from private sellers. A multitude of websites accessible to the public, including Etsy, eBay and Facebook Marketplace, have many examples of vintage clothing from my research period (1930 to 1959) available to buy at auction. These items have not yet gained value through age and remain a commodity and, even, are worn daily by enthusiasts. However, the further back in history one seeks, the more this availability wanes. When researching extant garments to support my case studies, I found plenty of examples of 1950s coats, many inspired by the same Dior collection of my example. As for the 1930s two-piece suit, there were very few garments available through auction and none that were too similar to my own.

This trend continues with the collections of smaller institutions. My research has discovered that working-class clothing, if present at all within collections, is extremely rare. As I initially thought the opposite more likely, this stresses the core components of the issue: that working-class garments have not been preserved as they were not valued by the times that bore them, that many of these items were worn and reused until they no longer resembled what they once were and that a lot of working-class garments have joined public circulation in the vintage clothing market.

A questionnaire I put to establishments within Dorset only confirmed these points further.

Duncan Walker, curator at the Russell-Cotes Art Gallery and Museum, found no working-class garments within their collection whatsoever. The value of such items is usually impacted by the rare status of the artefacts, the significance that individuals place in their clothing, and by the descendants of individuals who might look back upon their ancestors' lives and find information scarce. Where working-class garments are preserved, they are often the uniforms of the house employees rather than every-day wear. In other cases, the clothes are those handed down by wealthy employers, adding to the ambiguity of the term 'working-class dress'.

Walker concludes with the thought of 'how they were probably worn to destruction and that such things tend not to be preserved in favour of more high status material within families.' (2021).

Many examples that can be found on the aforementioned public

selling platforms are also in various states of preservation and disrepair. Closer inspection upon a 1930s evening dress of burgundy silk, sourced for *The Ballad of the Cosmo Café*, revealed multiple alterations to the sleeves, hem, and the removal of a zip. As costumiers, we altered it even further to suit the purpose of the role (Howard and Pride, 2021), a practice that eats into the supply of working-class clothing even further.

Sandy Powell notes this supply of vintage wear to the film industry and its degenerative nature (2020). Extant garments gradually become too fragile to wear on busy film sets and could very well be destroyed in the process. After their usefulness has run out, these items are either too damaged or bound by the semblance of worthlessness to be elevated to the status of 'artefact'.

Recreations can fill this gap, providing a three-dimensional visual and tactile resource that can be used as an educational tool as well as a display element. They can be used in a traditional sense, in displays and exhibitions, to show the general public what working-class fashions might have looked like for their great grandmothers, and even before. They would provide an exhibition that speaks to the ordinary spectator in a way that the riches of kingly residences cannot.

Hilary Davidson discusses a common museum practice, wherein extant garments that are too fragile to be displayed or missing items necessary for display are recreated to complete the image and successfully communicate dress history (2019, p.6). This enables museums to share fashions that would otherwise be lost in a similar way to working-class garments: through overuse and misappropriation. The practice of recreation can be much more successful with a surviving garment for the recreator to examine, however these recreations are just as limited by available materials as those interpreted from photographs. These benefit my research as they prove that recreations are already used successfully throughout exhibitions.

Recreations can also be used as an educational tool to offer viewers an in depth look into the construction of the garments that might not otherwise be possible. They would be able to handle the garments, as there is a much lower risk of damage compared to surviving examples. They are robust enough that they can be frequently moved, to be taken on touring exhibitions with low risk of

damage and taken into schools for educational talks. They have not succumbed to the diseases of time that we so often associate with fragility. With recreations, a complete reversal of the 'do not touch' policy can be observed. This means that viewers can have a hands on, tactile and highly valuable experience to remember. They can feel the weight of the clothing and the quality of the fabric, exploring the way these clothes have been put together.

Probably the greatest benefit of using recreations in the museum is their ability to offer interactivity and boost engagement. Visitors can even try them on and experience first-hand what it might have felt like to wear such items, as an example of living history. Katy England of Salisbury Museum found this approach particularly useful when engaging with young people. Her initiative, Look Again, asked visitors to examine artefacts much more closely, and contained a section where they were invited to try on reproductions of historical fashions for themselves, (England, 2021). England spoke of how this experience boosted visitor numbers and highlighted an interest in interactivity, especially with younger visitors.

The recreations are not without their limitations, however. First and foremost, it must be made clear to the audience that the garments are not genuine artefacts from the time period. This can be a difficult task, often limited itself by the bounds of an exhibition. Ideally, the photographic source material would be included along with a description of why the research has taken place, although this is not always possible or, indeed, helpful. England faced similar difficulties when naming the collection at Salisbury. Previously known under the term 'costume', commonly used within the dress history sector but differently understood outside of this discipline, guests were confused as to whether the artefacts they were viewing were examples of historical dress or theatrical re-imaginings for stage (ibid.). For recreations, every effort should be made to communicate the status of the items on display.

Additionally, recreations must be properly catalogued within collections to avoid future confusion. As the result of cumulative research undertaken on garments that only exist within a two-dimensional and often monochromatic photograph, they should not be used in place of primary sources for historical research. They are valuable as tools of display and education but cannot be interpreted as accurate, as previously discussed.

Even so, recreations are absolutely necessary to museum collections. Without extant garments of working-class origins, this sector is almost entirely forgotten and lost, and will be again if we continue forward in the manner of only collecting items for their material value.

The recreations represent an area of our history that is woefully understudied, and they could spark interest from future generations to rectify this problem. They provide a platform for future researchers to study the specialism in depth. With a whole new methodology on the horizon, recreations can be used to research objects that no longer exist and were thought lost for generations.

Additionally, recreations can be highly beneficial for heightening public engagement, drawing in the demographic of working-class and working-class descendants with new representation within the collections.

To conclude, there is both interest and opportunity for recreations within museum collections, as Walker declares in his questionnaire. Definitively, he states: 'the idea of turning to photographic sources etc and creating accurate replicas is possibly the only option.' (2021).

List of Figures:

Table 1. Long, G. An analysis of searchable terms for working-class artefacts in the Costume Institute's searchable collection. [Table]. In possession of: the author.

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As we have seen, photography can capture a moment in time and hold it in place for future generations to enjoy, examine and learn from. They can offer an unbiased window into everyday life, and with proper preparation we can elevate their contents from the two-dimensional to the three-dimensional with artefact recreation. There are several exercises we can undertake to look deeper and interpret the information contained within. The first method I employed to was memory. By conducting oral interviews with the subjects of the photographs and their descendants, I gathered contextual information to support my own analyses. With details, however, memory can be fickle. My subjects were much more likely to remember the circumstance of their clothing than the intricacies of design, colour, and fabric. Further methods are therefore required to interrogate the photograph as an original source, to learn as much as we possibly can from this untapped resource.

At the forefront of design stands colour. It is essential, directing mood and emotion, guiding the intentions of the wearer. However, I have seen in my own research that coloured photographs in working class family photographs are very rare until the end of the 1950s. To recreate the garments as they were, we must distinguish the colour as best as possible. I found the question ambiguous in my oral history interviews, as an aspect of memory too often forgot. Contextual historical research into trends can be used to guide decisions, especially regarding uniforms and patterns of specific colour-ways such as tartans. Despite this, there is so much variance within personal taste that it is almost impossible to narrow down the choices through contextual research alone.

A new method of distinguishing colour, unrefined for the most part although thoroughly tested, is digital recolouring. A software learns how to read colours in black and white images through a sample size and applies this to new examples. One of the most accomplished of these systems is available through MyHeritage (myheritage.com/incolor). Despite the glowing reviews my own experiences with InColor have been mixed. In trying to decipher colour in this image of Cecil, the programme read a beautiful blue sky, a sandy beach, and a tan befitting of a trip to Spain. However, Cecil's presumably bright and colourful Hawaiian print remains woefully grey, with mere tinges of blues and reds; an example of how light can distort colours in black and white photography, perhaps, or a gap of knowledge in the system. This issue is a recurring one, with the vast majority of clothes interpreted in shades of grey or brown, with the occasional purple or bluish tones. In this situation, I used the overall blue tinge suggested by InColor with research of extant 1950s Hawaiian shirts to develop a colour scheme.



Distinguishing form in the photograph can sometimes be the easiest step, and sometimes the most challenging. As a maker with pattern drafting experience, my method usually begins with a basic block. Through my research, I discovered that blocks drafted using contemporary systems give the most accurate form (Whife, 1952; Hulme, 1945).

With an analysis of seam placement, to be discussed in a later paragraph, I arrange the pattern pieces upon the block, often in quarter or half-scale to begin with. This minimises wastage of both time and materials. Once the toile is constructed and placed on an appropriate dress form, I directly analyse correctness of form between photograph and scale model.



Reading scale and form in a photograph can employ similar techniques. Scale accounts for the size of an element in relation to another. In historic dress recreation we must pay close attention to scale in the reproduction of patterns, the size and placement of notions and decoration such as embroidery and appliqué. Scale is most easily readable in a grid, as an overlay of equally sized squares can give us a numerical value to refer to when making. It is especially useful in pattern drafting, which is usually built upon a system of interconnected numerical values (measurements).

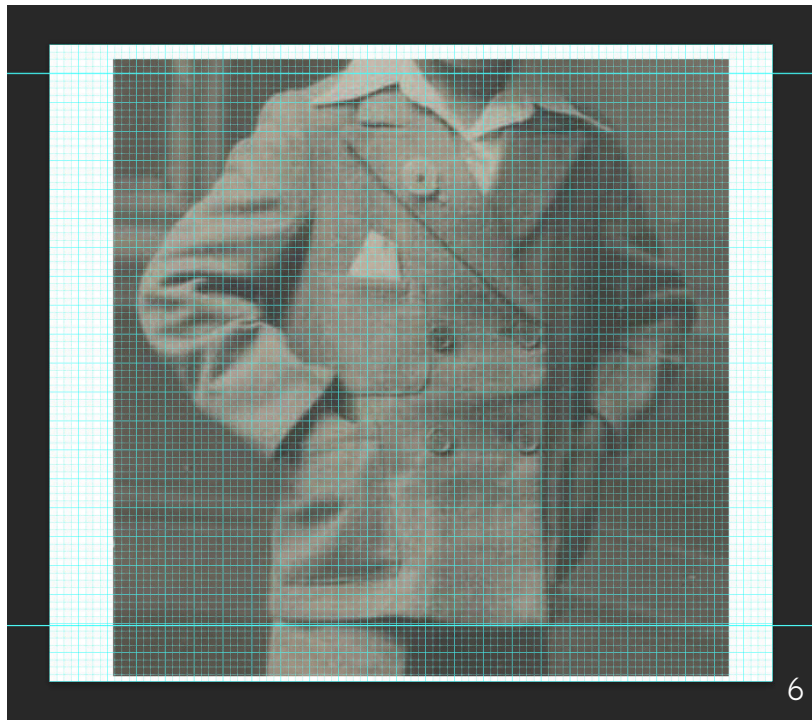
This can be achieved in analogue, by printing on acetate, or in many digital programmes. Grids are particularly useful when calculating the position of components, for example pockets, buttons, and surface decoration. In Photoshop (Adobe, 2021), a grid can be placed on a layer and 'warped' using the 'transform' tool to accurately gauge distances on curved lines.

For figure three, I set up the grid to mark one-inch squares with four subdivisions. Having used contemporary sizing charts to draft my basic block (Hulme, 1945, p.40), I measured the front of the jacket and scaled the original photograph to match. Although the measurements should never be relied upon as a true and correct value, they can supply a guide to be applied to the pattern, to ensure the final project is a visual copy of the original. The flat grid method I used is excellent for surface details but falls short when measuring lines along a curve. I had particular difficulty finding the correct position and shape for the lapel, which I eventually tackled through further research of contemporary sources.



5

Every garment is built and given shape with seams. They are what transforms a flat piece of fabric into such a complete shape as to fit the organic form of the human body. They are almost invisible to the unwatchful eye when skilfully sewn. Furthermore, in photographs they are often lost to the qualities of light and blur. There remains, however, some clues to interpret them.



6



7

In this photograph, we can identify the seam placement through the pattern of the fabric. Although beautifully matched for a bias-cut gingham, there are enough instances where squares clash that we can identify common garment pattern cutting styles in the photograph. With further research we can see how these seams may have continued down the skirt to achieve the desired shape (Countryman, 2001). As previously discussed in chapter one, digitisation can aid this process greatly, allowing us to zoom into the image and identify the imperfect squares of gingham.

Possibly the most illusive information to be gleaned from the photograph, identifying fabrics requires a working knowledge of fabrics, and their common uses as a base line. This, combined with ever-invaluable contextual research, can be used to justify a decision on possible fabrics, given what would have been suitable for each garment in a given era.

Some fabrics can be identified by their pattern, such as the gingham above (figure 7), which often narrows down the possible fibre content – it is unusual to find a gingham made from wool, whilst crisp summer fabrics of cotton, linen and silk are readily available. Equally, tartans are rarely to be found made from anything apart from wool.

In higher-quality images it is also possible to zoom in, as I did with the photograph of Rhoda, and study the surface of the fabric. All too often the camera quality, light and motion blur obscure the fabric weave too much to be read.

Light, however, can also be a guide. Perhaps the most accurate means of identifying fabrics is through their reflective qualities. These can be affected by different weaves as well as fibres, and are often distinctive in photographs. Wool, for example, absorbs light in its rough surface, though a spun and woven fibre will photograph differently to a felt or boiled wool, which has a hazy glow. A fabric with particularly distinctive reflective qualities is silk taffeta, which is easily identifiable with its sharp contrast and crisp shine. Identification through light is also the easiest method to test, by photographing viable fabric choices in similar lighting conditions and comparing directly with the original. In figure 8, the cotton fabric is distinguishable from the knitted wool cardigan as it reflects more light, creases easily and folds in crisp edges. The wool absorbs light with little contrast in the shadows and curves

smoothly around creases at the elbow.



With each of these steps combined, we can tap into the largely underused resource of photography for garment recreation. In conjunction with proper research and skilled preparation, and using digital resources alongside the original source material, the photograph can bolster industry research practice to improve worldwide understanding of working-class dress. A close study of colour prediction (in black and white photography), form, and scale can be fused with the garment-specific analysis of seamlines and fabric identification to achieve this goal to a high standard. Alongside oral history interviews, this analysis can enable us to bring three-dimensional body and life to the two-dimensional image. All that remains is to make the garments whole again through recreations.

List of Figures:

Figure 1. Long, G. MyHeritage. (2021). Cecil's Hawaiian set, recoloured with digital technology. [Digitally enhanced photograph]. In possession of: the author.

Figure 2. Long, G. MyHeritage. (2021). A recoloured page from the Young's album. [Digitally enhanced photograph]. In possession of: the author.

Figure 3. Long, G. MyHeritage. (2021). A recoloured page from H. Wright's album of show dancers in full costume. [Digitally enhanced photograph]. In possession of: the author.

Figure 4. Long, G. (2021). A half-scale version of Stella's coat next to the original for comparison. [Image collage]. In possession of: the author.

Figure 5. Long, G. (2021). Photographs showing the importance of scale in Cecil's Hawaiian set. [Image collage]. In possession of: the author.

Figure 6. Long, G. (2021). A grid overlay to determine scale. [Screenshot]. In possession of: the author.

Figure 7. Long, G. (2021). A seam can be determined in the uneven pattern and apparent change of direction. . [Digitally enhanced photograph]. In possession of: the author.

Figure 8. Young, D. Young, E. (Ca. 1959). Cropped from the Young's album. [Photograph]. In possession of: D. Young and E. Young.

Figure 9. Fabric choice for Stella's recreation. [Image collage]. In possession of: the author.

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The historical recreation is not an object of history but a window into what might have been. Far from a new phenomenon, artists and creators have been recreating the art of their forebears for millennia.

Gombrich remarks:

The [Greek] sculptures in our museums are, for the most part, only secondhand copies made in Roman times for travellers and collectors as souvenirs, and as decorations for gardens or public baths.

(Gombrich, 1984, p.53).

Historians look back on these objects with fascination and frustration in equal measure. In many instances, they are all that remains of the original artworks, as is the case with my research. We can never be sure of their accuracy or the faithfulness of the creator. Each artist lays down brush strokes differently to the next, and each recreation will bear the unintended marks of its maker. For my recreations, designed to represent lost originals in an academic setting, it is of utmost importance that each process of the making journey is recorded religiously, documenting every technique, material and, vitally, every substitution for future generations to critique. These must come under academic scrutiny to ensure the finished piece is the best possible solution to the problem

of recreation. As substitutes for garments that once existed, I feel a deep responsibility to recreate the clothes as authentically as I possibly can within the environment of the present.

To achieve these goals, I split my practice diary into two parts.

Firstly, a Making Diary to record my daily embodied experiences, of learning historic techniques, working with unfamiliar processes and the impact of my personal bias and experience on the project as a research exercise.

Secondly, a Justification journal to interrogate my choices every step of the way, from pattern drafting systems to the accuracy of fabrics to the correct placement of specialised seams. I found this process gave me an academic framework to promote authenticity in my work, as far as it can be achieved (Davidson, 2019, p.16). In this Justification, I recognise that my recreations are not perfect replicas of the originals, nor can they ever be. They can, however, serve as educational tools to document the daily lives of the British working class and raise awareness for the preservation of these items in future requisitions.

Central to my process is the Making Diary in which I record every step for production, research source and key pieces of information. The making process itself begins with historical research. Wherever possible, contemporary sources must be used to distinguish even the most basic techniques. Home sewing guides (e.g. Howard, 1952) can be an excellent resource as they discuss skills from the bottom up, whereas many vintage specialist books - such as those concerned with tailoring (Hulme, 1945 and 1946) - assume the student has a basic working knowledge. Information can also be gathered by studying extant garments. As these techniques often vary between makers, let alone decades of development, it is essential to start at the very beginning. By keeping a list of techniques, alongside the method, samples, uses and source, I create an easy-to-use guide for sewing my historic recreation.

With this resource I can easily look up accurate techniques with a direct record of where I sourced the information and its reliability. They may also be recorded in the diary, which should be updated after every making session with the tasks completed, any issues that arose, substitutions and other topics flagged for further justification. This part of the diary is an excellent means of recording the embodied experience, as described by Davidson (2019) and Prown (1982). It can be used to record further research questions, identify solutions to existing questions and provide evidence for the practice of embodied learning. It can also be used to organise time and task flow and ensure that good practice is being maintained.

Herringbone



1. Working from left to right (or top to bottom), bring the thread through the fold in the fabric and tie off.
2. Moving down 5mm, catch a thread on the face fabric (right to left). Bring the needle across and down to catch a thread on the fold.
3. Pull through and repeat.

Context: Used for hemming or catching seam allowances and inner panels. Used in my 1940s example to hold shoulder pads in place.

(Magill, 2017, p.20; Phipps, 2019, p.85).

Difficulty
● ● ○ ○ ○ ○
Notes
Definitely the least tidy of the techniques from the inside. This stitch is best used where a lot of support is needed to allow for movement and stretching. Time to complete: 5:24

Figure 11 - Herringbone

Date 21.03.21

Task Making coat

What went well

Coat went together very easily over the weekend with few hiccups. Fit is good on the mannequin and on the human body. Overall the finish is nice and the fabric gives the correct aesthetic.

What could be better

Unfortunately, I could not effectively ease the sleeves in between the side and side back seams due to where the side back panel inserted into the arm hole. In the future, I shall measure where the back seam sits in the armhole on the toile.

Notes for next session

The gathering is a detailed issue which I shall explore further in justification. Next steps are to reinforce the waistband and add period accurate shoulder pads. I am currently awaiting delivery on the lining fabric.

12

Date 01.05.21

Task Coat structuring

What went well

Canvas in collar gives it good structure and helps it keep its shape. Also makes the CF panel sit better on the body. Breast felt gives the coat a good weight as well.

What could be better

Reinforced waistband but it is collapsing from own weight. Will stab stitch in place for additional support, however I might replace it with a lighter interfacing.

Notes for next session

Sew lining together and decide how to finish edges.

13

2

Limitations

As exact as recording the making process might be, there are still some unavoidable limitations to recreating historic garments. No product made in the present day can be an exact copy of a garment of the past, regardless of whether the historian is working with a photograph, an extant garment or a full manufacturer's method. The world we live in is simply not the same. The factors which limit the accuracy of historical recreations are so varied and prolific that it is beyond the bounds of this essay to list them all. I shall therefore discuss those which I have found the most provoking through my own experience.

First, and foremost, matching the fabric of a reproduction to the original is the most challenging task in historical recreation. Besides any pattern, fibre content, and weave construction, the machinery and methods used today differ for the most part from those used in the past. Fabric manufacturing has grown more and more efficient over time, with finer, stronger and smoother threads that prevent breakages, and the rise of automated machinery. There are still manufacturers who produce fabric using historical techniques precisely for re-enactments (for example, The Historical Fabric Store), however when searching for something specific these collections are often lacking. Without becoming a master at every stage of manufacture and undertaking the work first-hand, compromise must be made.

Even if one was to spin the fibre and weave the fabric to the exact specifications for recreation, the fibres themselves must be scrutinised. Davidson describes how 'our particular moment in history cannot essentially replicate the conditions of other points in history' (Davidson, 2019, p.17). Chemical formulae for manufactured fibres are continuously updating and improving,

and even natural fibres are not a guaranteed match. Two prime examples are Rayon and wool. The formula and process for Rayon has changed several times over since it's initial invention in the mid-1880s (Britannica, 2016) for improvements in efficiency, safety and sustainability. Selective breeding has ensured that even wool fibres from the same breeds are different now than they would have been fifty years ago.

In a perfect world, all these elements could be recreated without a single divergence from the original, and it still would not be enough to recreate the garment 'accurately'. As an individual, my skills do not compare to those of the craftspeople who made the original garments. My experience of the world is different, and I found hand-sewn techniques a lengthy process compared to their modern mechanical counterparts.

These discrepancies required a justification system, to catalogue compromise and analyse the problem in order to find an effective solution.

I developed a process to justify historical inaccuracies within my work and record them for future critique. This sits alongside the Making Diary and offers historical and contextual support for substitutions and decision making where evidence cannot be gathered from the original source. One of these instances was in deciding on a lining for Stella's 1953 coat.

After identifying the issue (the coat lining was not visible in the original photograph, and therefore could not be visually identified), I opened an entry in my Justification Diary. The entry examined alternative extant garments and contemporary records for examples of lining fabrics and construction (Vogue, 1952, p. 131). Using the information gathered in the 'evidence' section, I concluded that a rayon lining would have been a common choice and that a light grey to compliment the charcoal wool was a popular colour scheme. However, upon sourcing this fabric I found that there were no readily available options matching that description available today.



I turned back to my Justification enquiry to find alternatives, examining viscose as an alternative to rayon. As rayon producers started using the term 'viscose' in the early twentieth century, the fibre would still be appropriate (Kehoe et al, 2013). Under this fibre, I managed to find a pale grey in a satin weave, appropriate for linings if less commonly used.

There are six key steps to my Justification method. The first step is to catalogue the issue with a **date** and **subject** title, so it can easily be found and related to the Making Diary and to the final garment. The second is to **describe** the issue in detail, including its impact on the project as a whole. Thirdly, I will suggest the steps

I might take to **mitigate** the issue, such as finding a historically accurate alternative, studying extant examples for validation, or conducting specific research into the issue. The fourth step is to gather **evidence**, which may be textual or visual, that I can use to support my final decision. **Analysis** occurs in step five to test the suitability of the solution. Finally, I shall resolve an **outcome** with an explanation of the next steps in the making process. These are usually specifics regarding fabric and component choice, an adjustment that needs to be made to the pattern or an alternative technique for production.

I kept the steps simple, each one with a specific focus in order to efficiently dissolve blocks in the process and maintain integrity when deciding on compromises. The evidence provides an academic backbone for each choice, preserving the value of the garment as an object of historic study. After Justification is complete, the issue should be solved and work on the recreation able to continue once more.

Justification	
Date	18.03.21
Subject	Wool fabric for Stella's coat
Description	
The grey is darker in person than it appeared on screen. Had the shops been open (COVID closures) this issue would have been avoidable. However, this was still the closest grey in 100% natural wool fibres that I could find. Other than the colour, the fabric is a good weight. The surface is scratchy, however a coat affordable to the working class in the 1950s would not have been made from the finest, softest wool.	
Mitigating steps	
Ensure that the fabric is a close enough match when photographed in black and white, with similar lighting to the originals. Consider returning and replacing the fabric: the timeplan will have to be re-organised to allow for additional delivery times.	

Georgia Long, Masters 1: Exploration	
Evidence	
<div></div> <div></div>	
Figure 3 - Right: photograph taken by author of recreation fabric. Left: photograph taken in 1953 of Stella on her scooter.	
Figure 4 - See figure 3	
Analysis	
Having taken the photographs, I believe this to be the correct colour for the coat, even though it is darker than I had imagined. Stella described it as 'dark grey' and the photographs show that the shade can be very different according to the light source.	
Outcome	
I shall use this fabric for my recreation as I believe it to be an accurate representation of the original.	

Both the Making Diary and Justification are vitally important steps in my own historical recreation practice. They cement my work within academic boundaries and provide clarity and reliability in an iron structure. The Making Diary records my daily experience to allow other practitioners to look back on my work and critique it fairly within an academic setting. The Justification form challenges choices head on to find valuable and historically accurate compromises that do not damage the purpose of the garments as an academic tool. It is these documents that elevate my work beyond simple reproduction of aesthetic trends into the realm of embodied historic research, enabling them to enter the flow of history without disturbing it. The recreations, supported by the Making and Justification Diary, are elegant representations of garments lost to time which will provide interaction, information and inspiration to historic collections.

List of Figures:

Figure 1: Long, G. (2021). A ‘samples’ page showing the method and contextual information for herringbone stitch. [Document]. In possession of: the author.

Figure 2: Long, G. (2021). Two typical ‘Making Diary’ pages. [Document]. In possession of: the author.

Figure 3: Long, G. (2021). A completed Justification of the coat fabric choices. [Document]. In possession of: the author.

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v

