

ACCESSORY DESIGN AND MANUFACTURE



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Executive Summary

The Australian Fashion Accessories Industry is relatively small and has been hit hard over the past decade by the movement of production offshore, mass production and the growth of generically designed products. Nevertheless, as mass-produced fashion has become more commonplace, Australian consumers have begun increasingly to look for well-made, design-led accessories with the added value of being locally produced. There is a growing desire for true Australian fashion products rather than inexpensive, imported and disposable seasonal items.

However, if Australia is to compete more effectively with fashion centres such as Italy, we need to create accessories that are of an extremely high standard that combine original design, innovative materials and high quality finish.

The absence of recognised and accredited training in handbag and accessories manufacture and design in Australia has resulted in people endeavouring to get into the industry without the necessary experience and skills required to produce design-led work that delivers high quality product.

Research identified the following skill and knowledge deficiencies in the Australian accessories industry:

- Under-utilisation of new and improved textile technologies;
- Applications of non-traditional materials (eg plastics, metal, wood) in experimental ways;
- Lack of knowledge in – and access to – high-end construction processes and equipment used specifically for accessory manufacture; and
- Using modern design processes to create ‘fashion forward’ accessories.

The Fellowship enabled these skill and knowledge deficiencies to be addressed by visits to internationally recognised fashion and accessories design houses, educational institutions and research facilities in Europe.

The Fellowship facilitated access to a wide range of skilled professionals in design, implementation, production and machinery use for commercial production of accessories.

Visits were made to:

- A textile research facility: Matech, Padova, Italy
- Educational institutions:
 - Scuola Italiana Design, Padova, Italy
 - Scuola D’Arte e Mestieri di Vicenza, Vicenza, Italy
 - London College of Fashion, London, UK
- A producer of accessories hardware: MCM Crestanello, Vicenza, Italy
- Manufacturers and designers:
 - Coccinelle S.p.A., Sala Baganza, Italy
 - Gabs Bags, Florence, Italy
 - Ghibli, Florence, Italy
 - Miles by Gianni Serena, Vicenza, Italy
 - Sargi, Vicenza, Italy
 - Rabens Saloner, Copenhagen, Denmark
- A commercial showroom: Coccinelle S.p.A., Milan, Italy

Executive Summary

Knowledge and fresh insights on skills and innovations were gained in:

- Machinery and tools
- Threads
- Hand stitching techniques
- Turning a bag
- The *Intrecciato* technique
- Factory and studio environment
- Pattern making and cutting processes

As well as identifying new and exciting materials used in accessories manufacture, by far the greatest numbers of handbags designed in Italy were a combination of leather with metal accessories. There has been little technological development in the processing of leather. Rather it is in the design and fitting of hardware that designers have started to embrace new technologies.

In Italy the sampling process is seen as a very important part of the design process. Even companies that produce the bulk or all of their handbags offshore still sample all designs in their on-site workrooms using highly trained artisans.

The dissemination of the Fellow's findings will add value to the Australian Accessories Industry as well as provide an ongoing education and networking resource for local designers and artisans.