

INTERNATIONAL SPECIALISED SKILLS  
FELLOWSHIP REPORT

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# INTRODUCTION

## THE FOOTWEAR INDUSTRY

Over the past two hundred years Australia has possessed its own footwear industry. From the dusty ground of the first cobbler's workrooms to the vast and sophisticated factory floors that exist today the Australian footwear industry has undergone many changes.

Throughout these years the Australian footwear industry has flourished with the support of the local market and to some extent has enjoyed a healthy monopoly made possible by our isolation from the rest of the world and regular Government assistance.

In more recent times the industry has found itself placed within a global arena. The ground it once occupied alone is now shared with a myriad of competitors. In the main, the industry has not only taken up the challenge for the local market dollar alongside its new global rival but it is also vying for a slice of the larger global market dollar.

With an awareness of the need to develop a strong competitive edge, the Australian footwear industry has identified many of its strengths and worked skilfully towards affirming its position amid the international competition. However an area of weakness that has long been overlooked is serving to relegate the Australian industry to a secondary place. This is the area of footwear design. The industry's lack of confidence in its own ability to create original design ideas reflects a wider cultural perception.

Within the Australian marketplace there exists a perception that the European styled footwear is superior to the locally made product. This perception is reflected in the price the consumer is prepared to pay for the European product and in the ever growing demand for the overseas product, particularly at the prestige end of the market.

## INTERNATIONAL SPECIALISED SKILLS

International Specialised Skills (ISS) has targeted the footwear industry as one of Australia's staple industries that has a proven local market and a willingness to evolve to meet the needs of a changing international marketplace. In August 1993 ISS released a report on the Australian footwear industry to representatives from Australian Footwear Manufacturing, Education, and Government. The objective of the report was to help strengthen the Australian footwear industry by identifying existing weaknesses and nominating areas of possible improvement.

*"It is apparent that it is necessary to produce footwear with an Australian design aesthetic, particularly if Australia is to enter the export market and address import replacement."*<sup>1</sup>

Design is considered to be a key component of the manufacturing process that has long been neglected within much of the industry and has received little attention within the areas of footwear education and training. This is not to say that design concepts and practices are not employed within industry, they clearly are in some instances.

However the public perception of the Australian product and the lack of available training in the areas of footwear design does not reflect this.

The Victorian Textiles, Clothing and Footwear (TCF) Industry Training Board confirmed the findings of the ISS Report in its 1993 Strategic Industry Training Plan and supported the recommendations made therein.

In October 1994 the TCF Future Strategies Committee Australia released a report which reflected the findings of the ISS Report. *"Very few companies demonstrate an exclusive originality in product design. Creativity is mainly a result of collecting information in the European and American fashion centres. However, the Australian mix of cultures and exotic appeal offers good opportunities as a source for original and creative designing."*<sup>2</sup>

The December 1994 Future Strategies for the TCF industries Report also addressed the issue of training. *"An important element of securing the commercial future of the downstream industry is integrating better design into products. Despite a surfeit of vocational design courses, there appears to be a shortage of effective, commercially oriented skilled personnel. The committee also notes that the technology of design is changing rapidly, with improved computer aided design tools emerging, and recommends that sufficient funding be allocated to ensure that training and re-training can be provided on state of the art equipment."*<sup>3</sup>

# THE FELLOWSHIP

## THE SKILLS GAPS

At the time that the ISS report was released there existed a serious lack of footwear design skills training available within Australia, both at the pre-trade and post-trade levels. Discussions were held with representatives from manufacturing, retail, Government, education and training. Areas of study related to footwear design were identified. Those areas that were identified and found to be not currently available in Australia were termed *Skills Gaps*.

*"With increasing importance being placed on exports and the need for industry to develop a strong competitive edge over the imported "highly priced" shoes, skills gaps are evident and impact on the viability of the Australian Footwear Industry."*<sup>4</sup>

The following areas of study were available within the United Kingdom and Italy and were identified as ways of addressing the Skills Gaps:

- Footwear design skills-drawing/sketching/illustrating
- Anatomy-the relationship between the foot and shoe
- Analysis of footwear trends-historic and contemporary
- Analysis of relationship between clothing and footwear
- Research on the sources of fashion tendencies
- Fashion sociology
- Footwear range building and marketing
- Study, development and realisation of fantasy models
- Design and planning of models on Computer Aided Design(CAD)
- Impact of CAD on the buyer/designer relationship
- Visual awareness, product presentation and packaging

## THE STRATEGY

One of the recommendations made in the International Specialised Skills Report was that a fellowship be granted to fund a practicing Australian designer/manufacturer of footwear to travel to Europe to conduct research and gain training through various footwear design/manufacture institutes. This recommendation received enthusiastic support from key representatives of Government, education and training bodies and from within the footwear manufacturing sector.

The Melbourne College of Textile acknowledged the findings of the report and demonstrated a commitment to advancing the level of training in Australia by co-sponsoring the fellowship. In October 1993 an ISS fellowship was granted.

The purpose of the fellowship was twofold:

- To gain skills and knowledge from recognised centres of excellence for footwear design in Europe in order to improve the level of training for the Australian Footwear Industry.
- To do a comparative analysis of what the footwear institutions in Europe offer which may be able to further address skills gaps in the Australian Footwear Industry.

Designers, manufacturers, retailers, craftsmen, researchers, forecasters, historians, educators and consumers were consulted to provide a holistic view of the causes and effects of footwear design.



# THE PROGRAM

## AGENDA

The Fellowship program began on 24th January 1995 and concluded on 5th March 1995. The agenda was as follows:

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Located in the East End of London, Cordwainers College offers courses in all aspects of footwear, fashion accessories and leathercrafts. Director of Studies, John Fleming, introduced the staff, workshops, resources and facilities. This was followed by individual discussions with members of the staff: Morris Green (Marketing), Daphne (Design Development), Jenny Shellard (Visual Awareness and Research), Michelle Frost (CAD), David Kirkland (CAD/CAM) and Angela Pattison (Fashion Trends, Presentation and Range Building).

David Kirkland discussed the use of computer aided design and had found that CAD was not used very extensively in industry and that the computer was used mainly to assist administration and the manufacturing processes and rarely used as a design tool. Many possible reasons for the underutilisation of the system within industry were raised, although no one conclusive factor was identified.

Angela Pattison discussed the processes of sourcing information on future trends, identifying the market, researching customer buying habits, range building and verbal and visual presentation skills. Students are encouraged to utilise fashion forecasting services, museums, art galleries, libraries and retailers to develop their design skills.

John Fleming made the observation that the Australian footwear industry appeared to be in a situation that mirrored the U.K. footwear industry some years earlier. In response to a similar range of training issues that effect the Australian industry, Cordwainers College had extended its focus from being a manufacturing based training school to a centre of excellence where design was considered to be an essential part of the student's training.

Situated in the centre of London, the Victoria and Albert Museum houses one of the largest collections of historic and contemporary clothing and footwear. Cathy Dingwell from the Textiles and Dress Department presented the exhibitions "Four Hundred Years of Fashion" and "Street Style" and then conducted a tour of the extensive reserve collection of footwear that was housed within the archives of the Museum.

Cathy Dingwell explained how the Museum was well utilised by designers from many areas, particularly from the fashion field. Students were very conscious of the need to appreciate the contribution that previous generations have made to current fashion scene and have recognised the Museum as a source of inspiration for future designs.

Far from being a mere archive for historical monuments the Museum actively maintains and collects examples of significant and innovative designs that reflect the culture of the day. Museums such as the Victoria and Albert Museum therefore play an active role in the preservation, promotion and development of important contemporary design.

## LONDON RETAILERS

26th January 1995

A range of large and small footwear retailers were visited to gain an understanding of the role that footwear design plays at the market level. The high profile European footwear design houses like Maud Frizon, Robert Clergerie and Stephane Kelian were represented by their own stores in prominent locations. Almost by contrast, well known British designers such as Manolo Blahnik and Patrick Cox were represented by stores tucked away in less prominent niches.

Patrick Cox's Shoes and Antiques store exhibited a range of shoes with three quite disparate themes - a novelty when compared to the singularity of theme produced seasonally by most designers.

The Red or Dead shop housed one of the most expansive ranges of alternative designs in London. Sold under a range of labels the shoes expressed a sense of adventure and a willingness to experiment with materials and design that is too rarely seen.

## LONDON DESIGNERS

27th January 1995

Several leading footwear designers/manufacturers were approached throughout London. They ranged from the very exclusive bespoke shoemakers of St. James to the avant-garde fashion designers of Kensington, Knightsbridge and Chelsea. Among those places visited were Lobbs, James Taylor, Red or Dead, Patrick Cox, Emma Hope, Johnny Moke and Manolo Blahnik.

Footwear designer and manufacturer, Johnny Moke explained that a number of footwear designers were not formally trained in footwear design or manufacture. He believed that designers have either "got it" or not and that training cannot make a designer. Many, including himself, had approached the footwear area having initially worked in other areas and had gained their footwear design skills informally through self employment or through direct involvement with industry. Vivienne Westwood made her mark initially as a clothing designer, Manolo Blahnik was a theatrical illustrator.

Johnny Moke also made the observation that, whether formally or informally trained, many British footwear designers went on to play significant roles in European design studios. Partly due to a lack of available positions for designers in Britain many turned to Europe, and European design studios eagerly sought the British talent. In fact, Italian designers regularly came to Britain to absorb the range of creative ideas that were expressed through the British designed product.

In contrast designers and footwear companies alike turned to Italy to have their product manufactured.. This was largely due to the fact that Italian manufacturers were able to provide a faster and more reliable delivery of a quality product. He added that he, along with other designers, such as Manolo Blahnik, Patrick Cox and Emma Hope now have their ranges mass produced in Italy.

Located in Kettering, SATRA is an international membership organisation which is actively involved with the footwear industry in the U.K. and abroad. It offers members access to research and testing, fashion reports, technical publications and a range of other services. Members of the staff who were consulted were SATRA's Fashion Technologist Trevor Hamilton, Jill Tillar (Information), Chris Bisson (Subscriptions), Malcom Peat (Comfort), Mike Wison (Biomechanics), Steve Rose,(Testing), Mark Farndon (Fitting, Anatomy) and Lisa Glass (Fashion Editing).

SATRA release a number of industry specific publications covering the entire range of activities related to the footwear industry, including materials evaluation, market information, management consultancy and fashion technology. Trevor Hamilton described how the designer develops a range by first receiving input from sales people and retailers, by looking at the sales from the previous season and then interpreting the information. The mix of designs that make up the companies shoe range will partly be determined by the previous season's successes. The most popular designs from the previous season may make up, for example, eighty percent of the new season's range with a further twenty percent consisting of new designs. This results in an evolution of style and colour, rather than a major change in styling every year. The designer will research current trends, identify key influences on footwear, clothing and accessories fashion and assimilate this information into a new season's range.

Mr Hamilton commented on the impact CAD has had on the footwear industry. The industry on the whole was resistant to utilising the new technology and CAD was not used for the purpose for which it was originally conceived. He also noted that many British footwear companies were now manufacturing offshore and that local manufacturing was in decline.

Located in the heart of Northampton, the Central Museum houses perhaps the world's largest collections of footwear specialising in footwear and ephemera from the early sixteenth century to the early twentieth century. The Keeper of the Boot and Shoe Collection, Victoria Wood discussed the collection, footwear influences, trends and the psychology of footwear.

Victoria Wood spoke of the influences that impact of footwear design.

Communication is a factor in speeding up fashion cycles. The communications explosion of the late twentieth century has seen fashion cycles emerging several times within a person's lifetime. Modern communication impacts on the variety of styles available to the consumer, reflecting current thinking with regard to gender roles, travel, holidays, etc.

Economic and political factors also play a part in influencing footwear design. They cannot be divorced from the design process. The range of available styles indicate that we are a more democratic society. Footwear reflects society.

The average consumer is not searching for intrinsic quality but is responding to social forces, eg. looking good as defined by significant others. Quality may be an issue but not as much as style. Women tend to forego comfort more than men which reflects the power relationship. Furthermore, some form of restriction is generally considered beautiful. A priority has been placed on creating different shapes for the body. For example, the 1920's flat figure tube dress and the 1950's sweater both reflect a desire to alter the natural shape of the human body.

Located in Leicester, De Montfort University offers a general design course with the option of a specialisation in footwear design. The Footwear Design module leader in the School of Design and Manufacture, Steve Weston, discussed the issue of design training and its impact on the footwear industry.

Steve Weston explained how the role of design has changed from being a process intertwined with pattern cutting and manufacturing to become a stand alone skill. Design is on the increase and manufacturing is on the decrease. For manufacturers the areas of strength are in the custom made, niche market and fast fashion areas. Local manufacturers are finding it increasingly difficult to compete with the cheaply produced offshore product for a slice of the mainstream market.

With regard to training needs, the larger companies required more flexible students who have a broader understanding of design issues. Smaller companies needed students who undertake more footwear specific studies. He also suggested that CAD training was perhaps unnecessary. The systems were too complicated to use easily and the operators would need to sit at the terminal all day, every day to become proficient. Within industry CAD was used chiefly for 2D pattern engineering or grading and rarely for design purposes.

At the retail level fashion no longer has four clearly defined seasons. Fashion now dictates that change must occur more often and therefore the nature of the designer must also change. This allows the designers more scope and can allow them to move from operating as glorified pattern cutters to become design innovators. Mr. Weston has recognised a significant shift in the way footwear design is conceived by consumers with the consumer often choosing to purchase their new season shoes first and to buy the garments and other accessories second.



Located in Leicester, Southfields College covers many aspects of footwear design and manufacture. Mike Wallace who taught Footwear Technology and CAD detailed some of the colleges experience with the new technology and footwear technician David presented the workshops and facilities of the Footwear department.

The student's folios demonstrated how they researched themes, selected and tested materials and developed their ideas to produce footwear designs and fully manufactured prototypes.

Mike Wallace discussed how CAD has impacted on the U.K. footwear industry. CAD was used mainly for pattern production and had proved to be a great advantage in the grading area. Large companies such as Clarks make great use of the technology but have found it could not be used to its greater potential. Clarks designers have ceased working on paper and are currently working directly on the computer. They had hoped that buyers would buy direct from the screen or print out, however they find buyers want to handle the finished product.

Mr. Wallace believed that the CAD operator needs to keep on the system all day to become effective. He also noted that over the years there has been a dramatic reduction in the number of apprenticeship positions, that most jobs in the footwear trade are in technical areas and that a great number of students are attracted to the design area.

Respected as an authority on many issues relating to footwear, June Swann was curator of the Northampton Central Museum for over forty years and is now actively involved in the area of footwear as an historian and consultant. Miss Swann discussed the areas of footwear and fashion trends throughout history and the current footwear designers role in relation to them.

The designer needs to be aware of fashion history and the state of the arts and design. They must read widely and be aware of what is on the streets and whether or how people are changing. The designer must develop analytical skills and think about the personality of nations and be alert to the influence of other cultures. Drawing skills are essential as shoe design is about line.

Miss Swann stressed the need for training colleges to recruit relevant industry people into the colleges to keep the level of training up to, or above, that required by industry. A policy should be adopted by the colleges to employ new staff from within industry every five years to ensure that skills and training are relevant to industry needs. She recommended that the colleges provide shorter courses as a way of maintaining student interest in the trade. The industry could also improve the level of interest for potential employees by providing more interesting work on the factory floor, by creating a safer environment and by focusing on quality and not just quantity.

During her visit to Australia in 1992, where she consulted with galleries, museums and training colleges, Miss Swann found that apart from finding that Australians had little faith in their own national identity, there was no reason why Australia could not emerge as a significant contributor of original footwear design internationally.

A privately funded organisation situated within a fashion publishing house in Milan, ARS Sutoria offers a three month intensive course in design and pattern cutting. Managing Director, Dr Mario Sancini and Advertising Director, Mr Alberto Clima discussed the activities of the company.

Mr Clima provided some background on the Italian footwear industry. The industry is made up of about ten large manufacturers and many more smaller companies. In the past Italy only exported footwear. Now it also imports footwear from countries such as Britain and America, as Italy is considered internationally as a window to world fashion. Many Italian companies now have shoes manufactured overseas in Mexico, Korea and Portugal. There is also a trend for Italian footwear companies to focus on the design area and have production made in Asia.

Dr Sancini spoke about the training offered by the school and stressed that ARS Sutoria was *"a private school situated within a fashion publishing house, in Milan, in Italy."* In his view these factors were significant and essential to the success of the school. He believed that because the school is privately funded, the commitment by the students is greater than it would be for those attending a public school. He pointed out that the working environment within the fashion publishing house was highly conducive to creative studies. And more importantly that while attending the school students would be exposed to the rich culture of Milan, and more broadly Italy. The Modelist-Stylist course runs for three consecutive months and is therefore well suited to international students. The course is almost entirely devoted to drawing shoes and pattern cutting with optional studies in CAD/CAM.

Located in Milan, Domus Academy is a post-graduate school, publishing and research centre which offers a Master in General Design in which one can specialise in footwear design. The Fashion Design Master Tutor, Barbara Brocchi, other members of the staff and students provided a picture of the Academy's activities and objectives

Barbara Brocchi explained that the activities of the 12 month Advanced Master and the six month Basic Master programs. The Advanced Master concentrates on design research methodology, the interpretation of major emerging themes and the development of an individual design project. For the Basic Master the student takes part in the educational and design activities of the first semester of the Advanced Master but does not continue on to the individual design project. Both the Basic and Advanced versions of the program are divided into three subject areas: Industrial Design, Fashion Design and Design Direction. The student begins to specialise in either of these areas after the third month. Seminars are delivered by visiting lecturers who are leading figures in their respective fields. For example, design psychologists, architects, accessory designers, shoe designers, textile designers and editorial writers for magazines. The seminars are followed by tutorials for the purpose of problem solving and discussion.

Ms. Brocchi stressed that the designer needs to have an awareness of the whole environment. It is virtually impossible to be a designer independent of external factors, such as culture. The shoe designer, for instance, cannot ignore apparel and must be aware of the current fashion trends. She had found that the best designers have either developed through having a broad experience of different trade areas or they have come up through the ranks of a company and have a clear understanding of the company's activities.

Situated in the heart of Milan, the Marangoni Institute is a privately funded fashion design school which offers a component in footwear design. The Director, Luisa Villani, the specialist teacher in fashion accessories, Simona Schiappucci and Tiziana Lancellotti discussed the training delivered by the Institute.

Simona Schiappucci outlined the activities of the accessories course and explained how the students learn to develop research, illustration and presentation skills. Early lessons are spent copying illustrations from texts to understand proportion and to identify the various techniques used in illustration. The students would research a particular fashion house or company and learn to understand that company by looking at the retail level and identifying the characteristics of the product, the style, the form, the cost, and the materials used. They would need to identify the market and understand the buying characteristics of the target customer. This would be followed by research into current fashion trends. By sourcing information from a variety of fashion forecasting magazines the students look broadly to identify emerging trends, not only in the accessories area but also in the larger fashion and lifestyle areas. Research is a vital element in the process of design and range building. Marangoni fosters a working environment that resembles industry with students utilising the same research sources and working in a parallel time frame to that of industry.

In Italy, fashion clothing designers are often women, while pattern cutters are usually men. However the opposite exists in the Italian footwear industry where most of the designers are men. Simona Schiappucci is one of the few exceptions. Together with her work at the Marangoni Institute, she also designs footwear, furs and accessories from a design studio she operates with partner Adriano Corrarati.

Funded by footwear manufacturers within the Veneto region, ACRIB is an organisation which offers members access to its design/manufacture training college, research and testing facilities, consultative services and information on fashion and market trends. The Director, Mr Tescaro and Secretary, Mr Crosato described the activities of the school.

Mr Tescaro presented the training areas and explained how the students studied to become footwear designers. The designers course runs for three years part-time with studies in drawing, illustration, range building, marketing, sociology and the semiotics of fashion. The first two years comprise the training required to qualify as a modelist or pattern cutter. The third year leads to a qualification as a footwear designer.

During the first year, students choose to study either mens or womens footwear and learn to master the basic models by following "tried and tested" patterns until they can reproduce the designs automatically. By the second year the students continue with either mens or womens footwear or can elect to specialise in sports footwear. The second year is spent producing variations of the basic models by applying different features to the models and thereby developing a repertoire of component features.

During the third year the students initiate and develop new designs. Prototypes are constructed by technicians at the school or by the design students when they return to the factory. Eighty percent of the students are employed within the industry and the teachers are practicing designers and manufacturers who work in the region. The objective of the course is to train designers who will not only have the practical skills required to design ranges but who will also have an appreciation of the market and fashion trends and an understanding of the structure of the companies that produce the collections.



Corrarati and Schiappucci is a design studio, located just out of Milan, which specialises in footwear and accessories design for manufacturers. Simona Schiappucci and Adriano Corrarati described how the designer works within the footwear industry.

Ms. Schiappucci related how the designer's role had changed from several years ago. The free-lance designer used to sell only the designs and was not responsible for the selection of lasts and components that would be required for the manufacture of the designs. Some designers still work this way. Many freelance designers sell the designs through an agency, particularly when selling designs to overseas companies. The local manufacturers, however, generally prefer to be involved in the development of the ranges from the very beginning. For this reason Corrarati and Schiappucci work very closely with a small number of manufacturers to produce ranges that are specific to each firm. They will develop a range of designs through initial consultation with the firm and then maintain an active role in the development of each design through the manufacturing process. The designer and the manufacturer are in continuous communication throughout this process to resolve any technical or design problems encountered with the new designs. At any stage in the process the manufacturer may change its mind about the designs selected or wish to make changes to the designs. It is therefore an advantage for the designer to have a knowledge of the technical aspects of the manufacturing processes in order to help solve technical problems.

In most cases the designer and pattern cutter are the same person, however Corrarati and Schiappucci have created a firm whereby they bring together the two disciplines. As well as developing ranges for the factories' own labels, Corrarati and Schiappucci also freelance designs for other design houses that have ranges manufactured through those same factories.

Located in San Mauro Pascoli, CERCAL is an organisation funded primarily by members of the footwear industry within the Emiliano Romagnolo region and offers members access to its design and manufacturing training facilities, consultative services, information on fashion, market trends and new technologies. The Director, Vittorio Casanova, the Vice Director, Anna Grazia Egidi and members of the staff demonstrated the activities of CERCAL.

The training courses delivered by CERCAL cover a range of activities experienced in the footwear industry: practical footwear design and manufacturing techniques for the manufacturer, technical and marketing skills for the sales representative, and specific knowledge of footwear construction, materials and merchandising for the retailer.

Through its publications and services, CERCAL also provides design and fashion information relating to emerging footwear trends. Mr. Casanova explained that most Italian companies have their own designers. In fact the designer is often a central figure or a shareholder in the company. However few factories have either the resources or the expertise to collate and analyse the data used to indicate future fashion trends.

Each season CERCAL hosts a meeting of over a hundred representatives from the Italian and International footwear industries to accumulate and disseminate information about fashion trends and innovations for the footwear industry. Mr. Casanova made the point that in order for the industry to remain profitable it must work to gain the most up to date information available and must encourage and promote a design culture throughout the community.



## ITALIAN MANUFACTURERS

### MARIO GIORDANO

14th February 1995

Situated in the Parabiago region of Milan, Mario Giordano is a footwear manufacturing company that specialises in high quality footwear. As well as selling under its own label, Mario Giordano manufactures for other labels including Bruno Magli and Ungaro. During a visit to the factory Simona Schiappucci explained how the current range was developed.

### GIGLIOLI

15th February 1995

Situated in the San Mauro Pascoli region, Giglioli is a manufacturer of footwear components, including soles and heel units. CERCAL Director, Mr. Casanova introduced the manager Giovanni Tognacci who described Giglioli's operations during a tour through the factory. The factory utilises state of the art technologies and is one of the leading footwear component manufacturers. CAD/CAM is central to the factory's operations and is considered vital to the companies quick response capabilities.

### CATIA TALACCI

16th February 1995

Situated in the San Mauro Pascoli region, Catia Talacci is a manufacturer which specialises in middle to high quality footwear. CERCAL Director, Mr. Casanova introduced the manager of the firm who outlined the company's activities during a tour of the factory. Catia Talacci is currently exporting to Australia and is looking to expand it's manufacturing base outside Italy.

## ITALIAN RETAILERS

6th Feb to 4th March 1995

Footwear retail stores were visited throughout northern Italy to gain an understanding of the role that footwear design plays at the market level. Both large and small retailers were approached in Milan, Bologna, Florence, Venice and Rome.

One retailer explained that the Italian consumer expects to see only the latest styles in the store and feels that older styles need to be superseded. The focus for the consumer is clearly on wearing the latest fashion. The retailer responds to this need and skilfully encourages the behaviour by quickly eliminating old stock.

The mix of styles and colours of footwear in the Milan stores tended to be very similar to Australia, however there was a predominance of higher priced product on the shelves in Milan. Amid the sea of shops offering mostly black or brown footwear the Andrea Pfister store vibrated with displays of brightly coloured samples. Throughout the north of Italy the quality, style and presentation of the footwear was exceptional. Whereas London boasted a lively range of alternative shoe stores which experimented with the medium, cities such as Milan, Bologna and Rome were brim full of well presented shoe shops all sporting a similar product. The Italian shops tended to be smaller and more intimate and displayed fewer shoes on the shelves.

Held annually in Bologna, the MICAM International Footwear Exhibition offers a complete panorama of the footwear market. With 26,000 visitors the exhibition acts as a catalyst for distribution and retail activity, through extensive footwear displays and fashion shows.

Shoe and leather fairs play an important role in the activities of the international footwear industry. The Micam footwear exhibition is one of the largest footwear fairs in the world and attracts international attention. The purpose of the fair is promote the products of the participant companies to potential buyers and the media. The majority of the companies are Italian, with about ten or so visiting international designers displaying their latest collections. Manufacturers, designers and agents make up the range of companies that participate in the exhibition. Visitors to the exhibition include retail and wholesale buyers, the media and designers and manufactures. The exhibition is for the trade only and admittance is by registration form.

The MICAM fair is a prime source of information for representatives of international companies coming to Italy to copy ideas from the exhibitors. For this reason the individual exhibitors seal off their displays to protect the styles from being copied by other designers/manufacturers. The exhibitors are extremely conscious of the presence of competitors trying to see their products so admittance to many displays is restricted to buyers.

# SUMMARY

## THE SKILLS GAPS

The development of *Footwear Design Skills* such as of drawing, sketching and illustrating was considered rudimentary by the training institutions. The level of training varied from one school to another. In general the schools in the U.K. tended to foster an attitude in the students whereby the primary purpose of drawing and sketching was to express the creativity of the idea through the medium. The Italian schools by contrast tended to encourage a methodical and disciplined approach to the activity. In some Italian schools the students begin their studies by copying other designers' work with the expectation that they will develop their own style.

*The Relationship Between The Foot And Shoe* formed a part of the ongoing research conducted by organisations such as SATRA. *Foot Anatomy* was studied at some, but not all, of the institutes visited. Most of the schools that delivered specialised footwear design training considered that an understanding of the physiology of the foot was necessary. However the level of training varied greatly with some schools passing on information informally through the pattern cutting classes and other schools employing medical professionals to deliver a more comprehensive level of training.

The study of *Footwear Trends* forms a necessary component of the curriculum in the training colleges. Fashion forecasting services and publications are used in both the U.K. and Italian schools with some of the Italian schools, such as ARS Sutoria and CERCAL, issuing their own publications. Students are directed to resources outside the colleges, such as exhibitions and fashion parades, that can be exploited to gain an understanding of the emerging trends. Museums and galleries provide a unique opportunity for students and designers to access evidence of *Historic And Contemporary Footwear Trends*. Museums, such as the Victoria and Albert Museum

and the Central Museum, play an active role in the preservation, promotion and development of important historical and contemporary design. Curators and historians, such as June Swann, have an invaluable wealth of knowledge about historical and contemporary fashion trends.

*The Relationship Between Clothing And Footwear* is explored through many of the schools. Some of the schools, such as Marangoni Institute and De Montfort University, conduct specialist courses in clothing design/manufacture and are ideally suited to explore and analyse the range of issues relating to the two areas. An awareness of the relationship between clothing and footwear is essential for any footwear designer as the two products are inextricably linked. Footwear is no longer perceived as a mere accessory following in the steps of a previous clothing trend. Footwear and clothing designers look to the same sources of inspiration and present their products simultaneously to an increasingly aware consumer.

*Research On The Sources Of Fashion Tendencies* is carried out by students at a number of schools, including Domus Academy and De Montfort University. By using fashion forecasting services and publications students become familiar with the range of influences and events that contribute to new fashion trends. They are encouraged to actively seek out relevant events or trends that may effect a change in fashion. SATRA, CERCAL and ACRIB are all involved in sourcing fashion information and providing intelligence to the footwear industry on emerging trends. Publications are a primary source of fashion information for manufacturers together with consultative services provided by fashion forecasting companies.

*Fashion Sociology* deals with the interpretation of fashion and shows how the society expresses itself through dress. Marangoni Institute delivers fashion sociology classes in one of its Master's courses. The area is addressed informally in other schools through their fashion studies however is not delivered as an independent class.

Discussions with museum staff provided an insight in the motives and attitudes of consumers from both an historic and contemporary perspective.

*Footwear Range Building* is central to the training of footwear designers in most of the schools visited. Ranges building skills are developed through the previous researching, designing and pattern cutting processes. Students learn to research emerging trends, interpret the information and create themes before they proceed to design a coherent range of footwear. Simona Schiappucci remarked that if the research was well done the range building comes "naturally". An awareness of *Marketing* is an asset for the footwear designer. Skills in marketing are developed in a number of ways and vary from school to school. For instance at Cordwainers College, Morris Green delivers as part of the marketing classes economics, social science, pricing strategy, law and corporate planning.

The *Study, Development And Realisation Of Fantasy Models* refers to the creation of innovative designs. The term *Fantasy Models* was used by one of the schools to describe designs that were not based on basic standards. The Italian schools tended to focus the training on the production of tested, sellable designs, whereas the U.K. schools encouraged more experimentation with the designs.

*Design And Planning Of Models On Computer Aided Design(CAD)* is taught at most of the schools and is considered by some to be essential to the footwear industry's quick response capabilities. Factories such as Giglioli have embraced CAD/CAM and have established the new technology at the centre of the factory's operations. Schools, such as Southfields College and Cordwainers College have large CAD studios and are actively promoting the use of the systems. There is a mixture of views as to the long term future of the CAD and its relationship to the footwear industry. Some educators question the effectiveness of delivering training on the system, given the fact that an operator would need to spend regular long hours at a terminal in order to become

proficient. Many companies find that the cost of the technology is prohibitive. Then there are others who believe that CAD will be invaluable in its contribution to the design and manufacturing industries.

With regard to the *Impact Of CAD On The Buyer/Designer Relationship*, Steve Weston of De Montfort University spoke of how reluctant many are to replace existing practices with new ones. He recalled an example of when representatives from a large manufacturer wanted to have buyers place orders for new products from visual samples printed out on the CAD system. This would eliminate the need for the manufacturer to make up samples for buyers. They found that buyers were uncomfortable with the arrangement and needed to be able to handle the finished samples before they would place an order. Mr Casanova at CERCAL made the point that designers and manufacturers would only take up the new technology if it increased their profit margin.

*Visual Awareness* skills are developed in a myriad of different ways. Developing an appreciation of design elements and principles is a significant part of any design course. Within a footwear design course some of the key elements that need to be appreciated are the fluidity of the lines on the last, the texture and tonality of the materials, the balance of the component parts that make up the shoe and the *Presentation* of the final product. *Product Presentation* is an essential aspect of the work of the designer or student. This can involve the *Packaging* and merchandising of the final designs. The final presentation of students work in Italy tended to be more refined and better presented than the students in the U.K. however the work in the U.K. showed more innovation and adventure.



The common threads drawn from the fellowship study indicate that the success of the footwear industries in the United Kingdom and Italy depend on many key ingredients.

Some of these ingredients are:

- Effective footwear design training
- Up-to-date fashion forecasting information
- Access to skilled staff
- Access to new technologies
- Reliable support networks
- Information on export markets
- Promotional opportunities
- Effective management



# RECOMMENDATIONS

The long term success of the Australian footwear industry rests on it's ability to produce a well designed quality product. Australian companies are in an ideal position to be able to tap into the rich mix of cultures that make up Australia and thereby draw upon a wealth of original and creative design. By integrating better design into the products and attracting new people into the trade the footwear industry can build on strengths that it already has. Training institutes, manufacturers and retailers can take steps to secure the commercial future of the industry by:

- integrating better design into products.
- attracting new people into the industry.
- accessing current fashion forecasting information.
- contributing to the development of quality training strategies.
- accessing training from overseas institutes.
- bringing experts out to Australia to transfer skills.
- generating and promoting a design culture within the industry.
- developing a design awareness within the community.
- establishing support networks that will assist the industry.
- utilising the resources of training institution, galleries, museums.
- linking with the textiles, clothing and accessories industries.
- accessing state of the art technology.
- creating pathways for staff to gain access to retraining.
- by establishing a teacher or student exchange program.

# APPENDICES

## FOOTNOTES

1. International Specialised Skills  
Australian Footwear Industry Report  
August 1993
2. Textiles Clothing and Footwear  
Future Strategies Committee Australia Report  
October 1994
3. Future Strategies Committee for the  
Textiles Clothing and Footwear Report  
December 1994
4. International Specialised Skills  
Australian Footwear Industry Report  
August 1993

## ISS TRAINING PROGRAMS

Possibilities for training programs may include:

- A seminar targeted at practicing designers/pattern cutters from industry. Possibly incorporate presentations by textiles and fashion lecturers from institutes such as RMIT and National Gallery of Victoria.
- An in house training session for practicing designers/pattern cutters.
- Lecture to school leavers interested in entering the industry. Gauge potential for creating a footwear design competition linked up with industry.
- Conference for industry people to establish future strategies for the implementation of improved design training and practice within the footwear industry.

