Mobilising Fashion/Art Archive
Journeys into the archive
Experiments in Fashion: Material, Form, Function

Fashion Student

Helen at Kingston Polytechnic, aged 19 or 20

1980
A fascination with waste materials begins

*Dress used found material and discarded scraps from other wedding dresses from the cutting room floor*
The Kingston Wedding Dress returns home

Photographed at Kingston University by Ezzidin Alwan, 2014 as part of an archiving project
Illustrations from Helens training with luxury Italian fashion design houses Lancetti, 1982 (L) and Valentino, 1981 (R)
Helen returns to London, 1982
Illustrations for ‘Society’ designer Bellville Sassoon
Reproduced from Helen Storey’s biography, Fighting Fashion 1996
Fighting Fashion?
1982-1995

Finding a different creativity
Design experiments for fashion and beyond

Industrial Rose, Spring Summer collection 1984/5. Illustration (L); Photograph (R) from Helen’s first own label fashion collection for Amalgamated Talent.
‘Life is the material’
Helen’s early fascination with ballet expressed in fashion designs for Nijinsky: Autumn/Winter 1987
Experimentation on the Catwalk: reiterations of design concepts

Model in Beads wearing Helen’s own vintage waistcoat Rage collection 1990 (L)
Gold beaded skirt and jacket, Elle magazine 1987 (R)
Working with materials differently

Present Times Collection Catwalk images – spread in Collezione magazine Autumn/Winter 1991
Culture / Nature
creativity, fashion and the natural world
Present Times Autumn/Winter 1991
Bin Bag Ball Dress

“plastic is precious”

First experiments with re-purposing/upcycling using council bin bags

Present Times, Autumn/Winter 1991
Women in Love Spring/Summer collection 1994
(L) waste fabric boa; (R) Waste fabric ball skirt.
Catwalk farewell 1995, shown in tunnel at Science Museum
Dresses were to be repurposed and shown later, used in fashion/science projects
Fashion / science
Embryo dress and T-shirt – an early fascination with our biological human origins, from Rage Collection, 1990
Helen Storey, fashion business closed in 1995.

Wrote book, *Fighting Fashion*

Watershed in her practice

(L) Front cover of *Fighting Fashion*, Model Suzie Bick (courtesy of Storm Model Agency, wearing a coat with lavender sleeves)

(R) Helen with her parents, 1959
This was one of the very first art/science collaborations, and was a 27 piece collection created by Helen working with her sister Kate, a human biologist.

The collection tells the story of the first 1,000 hours of human life (about 40 days) through fashion and dress.

Image shows the Sperm Cage, the second design in the series.

Image by Justine
Primitive Streak 1997  Illustrations by Helen
Double DNA dress, day 2 to 4  (L) and Limb Bud Dress, day 26  (R)
Primitive Streak
Anaphase dress, day 10 (L) and Primitive Streak itself, day 12 (R)
Images by Justine
Primitive Steak is still touring today and has been seen by 3 million people in 8 countries

Heart Tube Hat designed with Philip Treacy (L) around day 20 and Spinal Column Dress, around day 40 (L).

Images Justine
Mental 2001

Helens next project, Mental was five different works in various art forms exploring her mind and the creative process

Working with biologist Dr John McLachlan

Image shows Helen in the student Wedding Dress, which was used to create an image and film for Whisper, one of the 5 works

Image created with Malcolm Garrett
Mental - Whisper 2001
An interactive game asking asking ‘Who am I?’

Research images (above and top right)
In the finished object (below right) interactive thoughts appear through honey
Mental: Amygdala
The place in the brain which moderates our emotions, this was an interactive giant book which was filled with visitor’s inner thoughts…

Helen’s sketch (L) and the finished book (R)
Mental: Death Dresses
Exploring endings, change, exploration, reinvention
Helen’s Illustrations - interpreting memory (L) and femaleness (R)
Mental: BZ REACTION
A live science experiment

A chemical reaction that is never the same twice - Helen’s interest in chemistry began here.

Image shows a series of evolving, changing BZ reactions

This experiment was set up as a laboratory in art gallery.

Staged at the ICA, London visitors conducted the experiment in lab coats and goggles.
Mental: BZ REACTION
A live science experiment
Institute of Contemporary Arts
2000
**Eye & I: 2005 to present**

*A work in progress*

How do we feel and react when we communicate only using eye contact?

Helen collaborated with neuroscientist Dr. Jim Coan to explore this question, creating a room within a room where only eye contact is allowed...

(L) small boy showing angry eyes
(R) girl interacts with the work

Photos by Pinny Grylls
Eye & I
Manchester Arndale Centre 2013

Eye & I is ‘utterly mesmerising’

Audiences in Manchester communicate whilst staring at real eyes and writing about it.

(L) Visitors queue to only make contact through eyes.

Images: Chris Foster
**Wonderland** 2005 onwards

*Helen explores different solutions for packaging with scientist Tony Ryan*

She creates some Disappearing Dresses to show Plastic is Precious

These are placed in a shopping centre where consumers watch them dissolve over 28 days...

(L) Detail on ‘Kingfisher’ fabric from Wonderland; (R) Dissolving Dress on display at London College of Fashion

Images: Alex McGuire
Wonderland – Opera Coat (L) & Suit (R)

Photographs by Nick Knight: Show Studio
Illustrations for Disappearing Dresses by Helen Storey
Catalytic Clothing

Begun in 2008 investigates how your clothing could purify air

Helen and scientist Tony Ryan worked with existing technology and nanotechnology to create a catalyst that can be used when you wash your clothes.

Helen and Tony with *Herself*, the world’s first air purifying dress
L: Red Planet Dress, treated with Catalytic Clothing chemicals

R: Helen and Trish Belford work on Herself
Catalytic Clothing

Field of Jeans

Many jeans clean air at Chelsea School of Art, London

Image by Nik Daughtry
Dress of Glass and Flame 2013

A dress that beautifully shows the chemistry of glass and flame

Helen's first work in glass was made in an ancient foundry in Italy. The hem is 1,500 pieces of discarded shards from the foundry floor.
Life on the Outskirts 2014

Helen selected her most significant objects over her creative life so far

Part of an archive project with Kingston University

Sperm Coat, Primitive Streak 1997

Image: Ezzidin Alwan
Life on the Outskirts 2014

Wedding Dress hem detail: 1981

Image: Ezzidin Alwan
Life on the Outskirts 2014

Herself, hem detail
Catalytic Clothing 2011

Image: Ezzidin Alwan
Crin Dress
Rage fashion collection
1990

Image: Ezzidin Alwan
Life on the Outskirts 2014

Red Fur Neuralation Dress
Primitive Streak
1997

Image: Ezzidin Alwan
Life on the Outskirts 2014

Fake Fox Tail Sequin Dress
Edith's Sisters
Last catwalk collection
1995

Image: Ezzidin Alwan
Dress for our time 2015

A dress that once housed refugees

A dress that tells the human story of Climate Change using data

A poetic and arresting image to incite debate and opinion
Dress for our Time
Data Projection animation by Holition
Dress for our Time
Data Projection animation by Holition
Dress for our Time 2015

Images: Gretel Ensignia
The work continues…
Thank you.

Presentation prepared by

**Caroline Coates** – Helen Storey Foundation co-founder and Production Director, who has worked with Helen since 1983

**Rob Knifton** – Researcher, Kingston University, who is working with Helen Storey Foundation on an archival investigation

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