From Princess to Punk: Digitisation in the Fashion Studio

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Abstract

The Zandra Rhodes Digital Study Collection project was a unique collaborative venture between staff and students at the University for the Creative Arts (UCA) and their Chancellor, the British fashion and textile designer Zandra Rhodes. Working within the designer's private studio space, this initiative has developed the first digital record of her personal collection of garments and drawings, supported and enriched with behind-the-scenes video interviews and tutorials, for worldwide educational use. This paper examines the benefits and strategies for undertaking the project in situ within the designer's private studio environment. It outlines the need for a bespoke, flexible approach to digitisation in the visual arts that respects the individuality and creativity of the artist, whilst drawing on established documentation standards and expertise from the library, archive and museum sector.

Introduction

The Zandra Rhodes Digital Study Collection[1] project (2011-2013) has researched, catalogued, digitally photographed, and provided online access to over 500 garments selected from the private archive of British fashion and textile designer Zandra Rhodes, from across her career spanning five decades. In addition, it has opened up access to over one thousand pages of the designer's fashion drawings, video interviews with the designer and video tutorials of production methods applied in her studio, for worldwide use in learning, teaching and research.

As Murphy (2011) writes, 'fashion students are encouraged to study examples of historic clothing' as an 'invaluable research resource' to inform their own designs. The re-interpretation of historical references can be seen in the work of Rhodes herself and other renowned designers, such as Vivienne Westwood and Alexander McQueen. Technical tutorials are also a key element of practice-based art and design education and as Joanna Lumley stated at the launch of the Digital Study Collection in March 2013:

> 'It's so important for students to be able to look at *how* things are done. And we all know that it's the hard graft and the late nights and the stitching and the broken nail and the two hours of sleep' and 'to see the work and the dreams behind everything' (Lumley, quoted in Wignall, 2013).

This JISC-funded project was led by the University for the Creative Arts (UCA), a specialist art and design university with campuses across Kent and Surrey. The project took place at the designer's London studio, where her extensive collection of garments are stored, and where Rhodes and her team continue to design and produce her very latest fashion collections. The designer's relationship with the University dates back to her youth in Chatham, where she studied at the nearby Medway College of Design in the 1950s, now the UCA Rochester campus. Rhodes became the University's first Chancellor in 2010.

The project was conceived and led by the University's Director of Research and Enterprise, and managed by the Visual Arts Data Service (VADS) based in the Library and Student Services Department.

This paper will examine the process of creating a digital archive from within a busy, working fashion and textile design studio, and the lessons learnt from this collaborative venture between the University's digital curation specialists and this renowned fashion house.

The Fate of Fashion Designer Archives

Desktop research into the fate of other fashion designers' archives, and the work that has been undertaken to open up access to these privately held collections, reveals a variety of approaches.

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[1] Zandra Rhodes Digital Study Collection: http://www.zandrarhodes.ucreative.ac.uk

Public Museums and Exhibitions

A number of collections have been donated to public museums for posterity or loaned for retrospective exhibitions. For example, the Jean Muir archive was donated by her widower to the National Museum of Scotland and featured in a major exhibition by the museum in 2009 (Walker, 2009). Other major exhibitions in recent years have featured the personal archives of the late Alexander McQueen (Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2011), Balenciaga (Musee Galliera, 2012), and retired designer Valentino (Somerset House, 2012). As McNally (2013) writes on the institutional acquisition of artists' archives, the majority of collections are acquired from an artist's family after his or her death and although they are primary sources, their use is never an unmediated experience, having been sensitively selected, arranged and described by the institution's archivist.

Private Museums and Exhibitions

Privately-established equivalents include a dedicated museum opened by Gucci in 2011 to house the company's archive[2], as well as the Fashion and Textile Museum[3] set up by Rhodes in London in 2003 and subsequently sold to, and now run by, Newham College. Although the designer's intellectual input may be more direct in this context compared to the posthumous exhibition or the institutionally-held archive, a key challenge is to sustain these personal endeavours on private funding (Lee, 2006). Valentino has launched an online equivalent in 2012, featuring a more comprehensive range of his garments, photographs and sketches than it is possible to show in his museum[4] in France. This virtual museum is available as a downloadable application using 3D technology and is designed to feel as if the user is walking through an exhibition. This technological approach raises its own challenges, such as that of ensuring cross-platform compatibility. Notably the 3D application used for the Valentino Virtual Museum is inaccessible from tablet and mobile devices and isolated from the social web (The Business of Fashion, 2011).

Online Databases

A number of archives have also been made available online as part of shared image databases bringing together related items from different collections. For example, the VADS national image collection[5] hosted by UCA provides searchable access to over 120,000 images from hundreds of visual arts collections across the UK, predominantly contributed from University collections. The EU-funded Europeana Fashion project[6] (2012-2015) is another major online venture aiming to bring together collections from 12 countries totalling 700,000 digitised fashion-related objects from both public and private archives, such as those of Emilio Pucci and Missoni. Common challenges cited by these large scale cultural portals include rights issues, interoperability, and the harmonisation of metadata from across multiple collections (Rendina, 2013; Robinson, 2008).

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2 Gucci Museo: http://www.gucci.com/uk/worldofgucci/mosaic/the_house_of_gucci/gucci_museo
3 Fashion and Textile Museum (FTM): http://ftmlondon.org
4 Valentino Garavani Museum: http://www.valentinogaravanimuseum.com
5 VADS: http://www.vads.ac.uk
6 Europeana Fashion: http://www.europeanafashion.eu

Damage and Destruction

Some fashion designers' archives have met quite a different fate. Garments have been reported as damaged or destroyed through accidents, such as fire and flood (Blanchard, 1995; ABC Television, 2008). More unusually, after retiring from a career in fashion to pursue fine art, the designer Helmut Lang shredded 6,000 garments from his archive and turned them into a series of stalactite-like sculptures exhibited in 2011. According to the exhibition's organiser, the work highlights 'the transience of our creative endeavours' (Wakefield quoted in Syson, 2011) and Lang described it as 'a cathartic experience' and 'rather than spending time dealing with the past, I wanted to dedicate my entire time to create something new' (Lang quoted in Browne, 2011). As Sas Mays writes, 'art's relation to archival forms is not simply positive' and there is an 'archival antipathy…which might refuse, reject or destroy archives – not necessarily in the name of mere nihilism, but in the name of futurity or in the name of difference to the past or present' (Mays, 2013).

Going Behind Closed Doors

In contrast to the archetypal white-walled museum or exhibition initiative, in which garments are far removed from their original context and creator, UCA staff and students were granted long-term access to the work rooms of Rhodes and her living space above her studio. The project has benefited from this behind-the-scenes access to the studio's contents and its staff in a number of ways, including the selection of important pieces for digitisation, the use of private records, the enhancement of metadata using first-hand knowledge, insights into the designer's creative thinking and sources of inspiration, technical demonstrations of the garments' production within a real working setting, and expertise on dressing and styling.

Selecting Important Pieces

Although the process of appraisal and selection may seem controversial, since everything has a potential research value, this has be weighed up against the cost of preserving it forever (McNally, 2013), and in the case of this project, against the finite amount of time and funding available for digitisation. The selection of 500 garments for photography out of thousands of pieces in the archive was guided by the studio's Production Manager, who has extensive first-hand experience of the collections from working with Rhodes since 1976. This selection sought to represent the designer's entire creative career from her first collection in 1969 up to the present day, with particular focus on her landmark collections of the 1970s and 1980s. These pieces range from her characteristically luxurious printed silk chiffon dresses, such as those worn by Diana, Princess of Wales (see Figures 1 and 2), through to creative departures, such as her punk-inspired garments worn by singer Debbie Harry (see Figure 4).

Utilising Private Records

Like many other private collections, the archive was completely uncatalogued and the garments were in no particular order in the trunks (McNally, 2013). However, the designs have been documented meticulously over the decades as a series of numbered, chronological sketches held privately in the studio in what have become known

internally as the 'Zandra Rhodes Style Bibles' (see Figure 2). UCA staff and students have been able to utilise these fifteen tomes in order to gather basic metadata about the garments. By visually identifying each piece from within these volumes, it has been possible to ascertain the year, season, collection name, and unique 'Style Number' assigned to the garment. The garment's 'Style Number' was also ideal for re-use by the project as a meaningful image file naming convention, to easily relate the clothing's metadata to the corresponding digital images.

Figure 1. Detail from silk chiffon dress, *India Revisited* collection, Autumn/Winter 1985[7]. This design was worn by Diana, Princess of Wales. © Zandra Rhodes 2012.
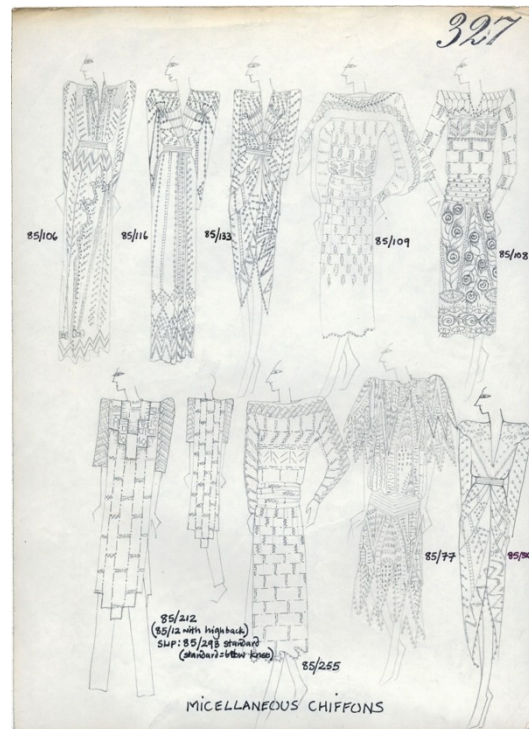
Figure 2. Page from the 'Style Bibles' showing the same design. © Zandra Rhodes 2012.

Capturing First-Hand Knowledge and Memories

The questionable provenance, authenticity and reliability of much online information is developing into an important topic as the Internet becomes increasingly ubiquitous in everyday life and with the deluge of data and social media platforms available (Breakell, 2008; Groth et al., 2012). Set against this background, the information in the 'Style Bibles', and the first-hand knowledge of the studio's Production Manager, provided valuable authoritative, attributable metadata for the garments. The Production Manager's instant recognition of many of the pieces was vital for plugging several gaps in the 'Style Bibles' where a garment was undocumented, and for enhancing some of the garment's metadata with a more detailed history, such as a jumpsuit that was worn by the character Margo in an episode of television sitcom, The Good Life.

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7   Silk chiffon dress, *India Revisited* collection, Autumn/Winter 1985: http://www.vads.ac.uk/large.php?uid=200580

Inspiration and Creative Thinking

The incorporation of 'living' knowledge was taken a step further through the development of a series of online video interviews with Rhodes[8] focusing on the inspiration behind some of her most iconic garments and collections. The decision to capture these oral histories arose from the project's user research with a number of fashion and textiles academics. Academic staff unanimously said they would like to ask Rhodes where she finds her inspiration and to support students with this 'starting point' (Robinson, 2012, December 3). This could be described as what Garrett et al. (2012) term the 'tacit' knowledge in the mind of an artist, in contrast to 'explicit' or 'factual' knowledge. Notably, McNally (2013) also observes that 'artists might do a lot of thinking about art… but rarely do they document it', and 'as a result, artists' personal papers are usually missing the very things that academics are looking for' such as 'the moment of inception.'

Technical Demonstrations

In addition to these interviews, a series of technical tutorials were filmed with the designer and her studio staff demonstrating and explaining the processes of creating a quintessentially handcrafted and screen-printed Zandra Rhodes piece (see Figure 3).
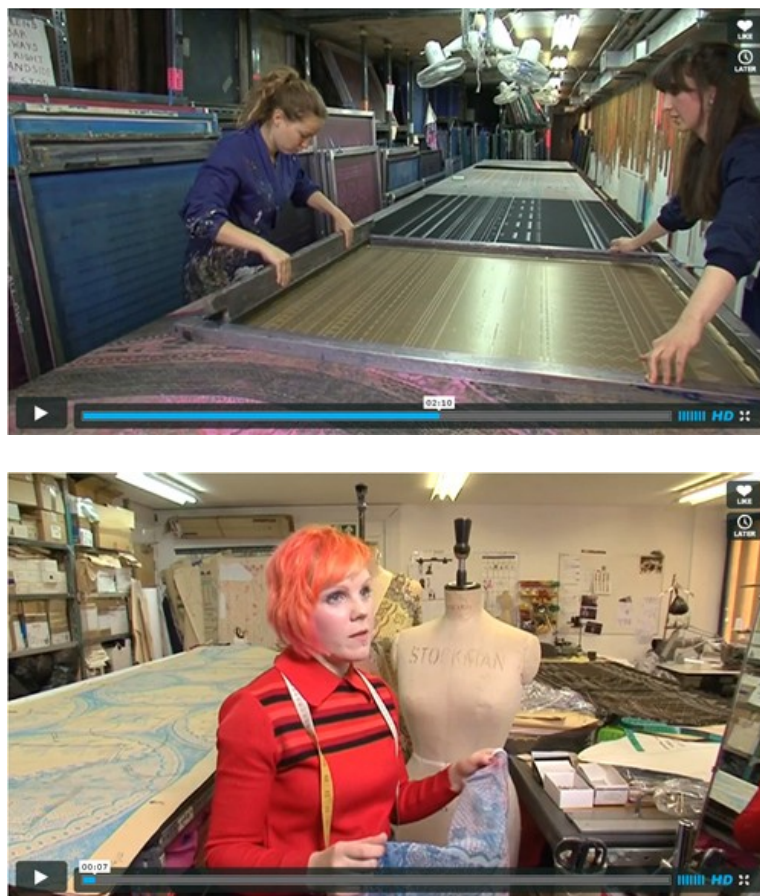

Figure 3. Video tutorials from the Zandra Rhodes Digital Study Collection.[9]

8 Video interviews from the Zandra Rhodes Digital Study Collection:
    http://www.zandrarhodes.ucreative.ac.uk/p/ask-zandra.html
9 Video tutorials from the Zandra Rhodes Digital Study Collection:

Art and design practices rely heavily on teaching through demonstration, and online technical instructional videos are already used to support teaching at a number of specialist arts universities.[10] They enable students to see the details, pause, rewind, and watch the demonstration as many times as needed, and may be particularly useful for students whose first language isn't English, or those with certain learning disabilities (Arm, 2011; Casey, 2012; Rankin, 2008). Furthermore, fashion and textiles academics consulted by the project were interested in the designer's continuing use of pre-digital production processes, and ensuring that these traditional skills aren't lost, as well as showing students that they can do fashion and textiles design together, as these are often seen as two separate disciplines (Robinson, 2012, December 3).

S. Leach (personal communication, January 3, 2014) – General Secretary, National Society for Education in Art and Design – also observes that these 'through the keyhole' videos are not only useful for University students but also enable school pupils to see 'how school-based equipment translates into professional studio practice', and that 'processes, techniques and equipment will come to life if we (both learners and teachers) see that artists, designers and makers are using these same processes to make and manufacture'.

Expertise on Dressing and Styling

By collaborating with the studio, the project team has also benefited from the guidance of the designer and her staff on how to dress and style each garment for photography. This has enabled greater accuracy and faithfulness to the original object by ensuring that particularly unusual and innovative garments were assembled correctly on the mannequin, such as her punk-inspired outfits from 1977–8, with their decorative tears and different combinations of black, red, and pink jersey pieces (see Figure 4). However, very occasionally this has also introduced an element of creativity that may seem contentious with the typically documentary approach of library, museum, and archive digitisation. This includes the digital manipulation of several garments on request from the studio, including minimising a couple of stains, and changing the colour of one headpiece from pink to black because the black version of the design couldn't be located in the archive (see Figure 4).

This request is unsurprising given the highly artistic and stylised nature of fashion photography that designers are accustomed to, and since 'the creative arts place less currency on fact and more on representation and expression' (Guy et al., 2013). Furthermore, this 'living' collection continues to grow each season with new designs and the studio occasionally recreates pieces from previous years for clients or exhibitions. During the project, the black headpiece was being considered for an exhibition by a major museum in the US, and if selected, a further search of the archive would be made. If it was still not found, the item would be reproduced. With this less fixed notion of the archive in mind, the project agreed to the amendment to more fully represent the designer's body of work.

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http://www.zandrarhodes.ucreative.ac.uk/p/tutorials.html

10 For example, see the videos by UCA Technicians at: http://vimeo.com/user4763672/videos; the Royal School of Needlework at: https://vimeo.com/album/2292448; the videos on 'process.arts', the open educational environment from the University of the Arts London at: http://process.arts.ac.uk; and the Royal College of Art's 'living legend masterclasses' at:
http://arts.brighton.ac.uk/projects/cetld/learning-through-the-design-process/living-legend-masterclasses.

Figure 4. Punk-inspired outfits by Zandra Rhodes in black and shocking pink jersey, *The Conceptual Chic Collection*, 1977-8[11]. The black dress is similar to one worn by Debbie Harry. © Zandra Rhodes 2012.

Tailoring the Process to the Studio Environment

Whilst the designer and her studio have provided unparalleled first-hand knowledge of the garments, the University has in turn contributed its expertise on digitisation and documentation best practice, and has sought to tailor this process to the designer's particular working environment. The UCA team included a Project Manager and Digital Cataloguer from VADS, the University's Learning Technologist who assisted with developing the project videos, a freelance photographer specialising in museum object photography, and the University Library's Digitisation Unit provided scanning for the flat archival documents.[12] The team has sought to adapt to the studio stetting in a number of ways, such as: the introduction of 'prep' days between each photo shoot; the use of digital image 'cut-outs' for the garment photographs; adding an initial stage of paper-based metadata capture; and taking the Digitisation Unit mobile.

Prep Days

Dedicated 'prep days' were introduced in between each photo shoot to allow time for the manoeuvring of the heavy trunks of garments stacked throughout the studio – many

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11　*The Conceptual Chic Collection*, 1977-8: http://www.vads.ac.uk/large.php?uid=200664; http://www.vads.ac.uk/large.php?uid=200665

12　For details of the project team, see: http://www.zandrarhodes.ucreative.ac.uk/p/project-team.html

accessible only by ladder or held in confined spots – and for the unpacking, packing, and meticulous task of pressing the garments after several years in storage. 'Prep days' also meant the team could access trunks stored next to the photography space, without interrupting the photography workflow.

Digital Image 'Cut-Outs'

Digital post-production was also used to mitigate the very minimal space available for photographing each of the garments in the fashion studio, which was brimming with trunks, papers, arts equipment and materials, and staff working on new designs all around (see Figure 5). Photographs of the garments were sent to an external company where a clipping path was used to add a pure white background, to give the images a clean and cohesive look (Stokes, 2012) (see Figure 6).

Paper Catalogue Forms

The project team also adapted to the studio environment by using a simple paper form to initially capture the key metadata about each garment, before transferring this to a database. This paper form was attached to the garment's hanger, in order to stay with it throughout the project workflow, from their initial identification using the 'Style Bibles', to pressing, and on to the photography and image file naming, since these activities were undertaken in different rooms of the studio, on different days and by different people. As well as its portability, a simple paper form was introduced because this was the designer's preferred method.

Figure 5. Temporary photographic space at Zandra Rhodes Studio.

Figure 6. Left: photograph before adding clipping path. Right: after adding clipping path. Embellished denim dress, *The Fantastic Flower Garden*, Spring/Summer 1988[13].© Zandra Rhodes 2012.

Mobile Digitisation Unit

In addition to photographing the garments, the 'Style Bible' drawings were recognised by the project team as a valuable primary research resource in their own right, which could be opened up for worldwide access online. As they were a unique working resource in frequent use in the studio, the Library's Digitisation Unit brought their equipment to London to scan each of the volumes onsite. This also involved careful project planning around the utilisation of space, and a separate area for scanning was arranged in the adjoining Fashion and Textile Museum.

Choosing the Right Dress Code

In addition to adapting to the studio environment, the project team has also sought to tailor the online presentation of the archive towards Rhodes, and towards art and design audiences. This included the use of established visual arts metadata standards, providing multiple image views and zoomable images, ensuring compatibility with Apple devices, designing the site to be in keeping with Rhode's distinctive artistic style, and by conducting user testing and seeking feedback on the website from fashion design students.

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13 Embellished denim dress, *The Fantastic Flower Garden*, Spring/Summer 1988: http://www.vads.ac.uk/large.php?uid=200618.

Utilising Visual Arts Metadata Standards

The project's metadata schema was informed by mapping across the headings from existing visual arts metadata standards (including the VADS headings and VRA Core 4.0[14]), as well as headings used by major museums that hold the designer's work (the V&A[15] and the Metropolitan Museum of Art[16]), as well as suggested field names from the Zandra Rhodes Studio (Gramstadt, 2012, February 7). Controlled vocabularies were also set up for five fields in order to ensure accuracy, save time when inputting data and to provide browsable terms for the end user (Gramstadt, 2012, February 16).

Multiple Image Views and Zoom

User research confirmed the importance of providing multiple image views and that textile students need to be able to zoom in and see the details of the fabrics (Robinson, 2012, December 3). High resolution, museum quality digital photographs were captured for each of the 500 selected garments, from a front, back, side and detailed view (see Figure 7) and Zoomify[17] functionality was used to allow detailed study of the images (see Figure 10). The size of the thumbnails on the VADS search results pages was also enlarged to ensure sufficient detail to easily tell the garments apart, and the default text below the thumbnails was also made more concise (see Figures 8 and 9). Comments from student interns working on the project about the benefits of working directly with the garments, seeing them close-up, and feeling the different fabrics used (Robinson, 2012, November 29) further emphasise the challenges of conveying the three dimensionality, flexibility, and tactility of this type of creative arts collection.

Figure 7. Four views captured per garment, from the front, back, side, and close-up. Coat from *Paris, Frills and Button Flowers*, Autumn/Winter 1971[18]. © Zandra Rhodes 2012.

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14 VRA Core – a data standard for the description of images and works of art and culture: http://www.vraweb.org/projects/vracore4

15 V&A – Zandra Rhodes: http://www.vam.ac.uk/content/articles/z/zandra-rhodes/

16 The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Search the Collections – Zandra Rhodes: http://www.metmuseum.org/collections/search-the-collections?ft=*&who=Zandra+Rhodes

17 Zoomify: http://www.zoomify.com

18 Coat from *Paris, Frills and Button Flowers*, Autumn/Winter 1971: http://vads.ac.uk/large.php?uid=200256
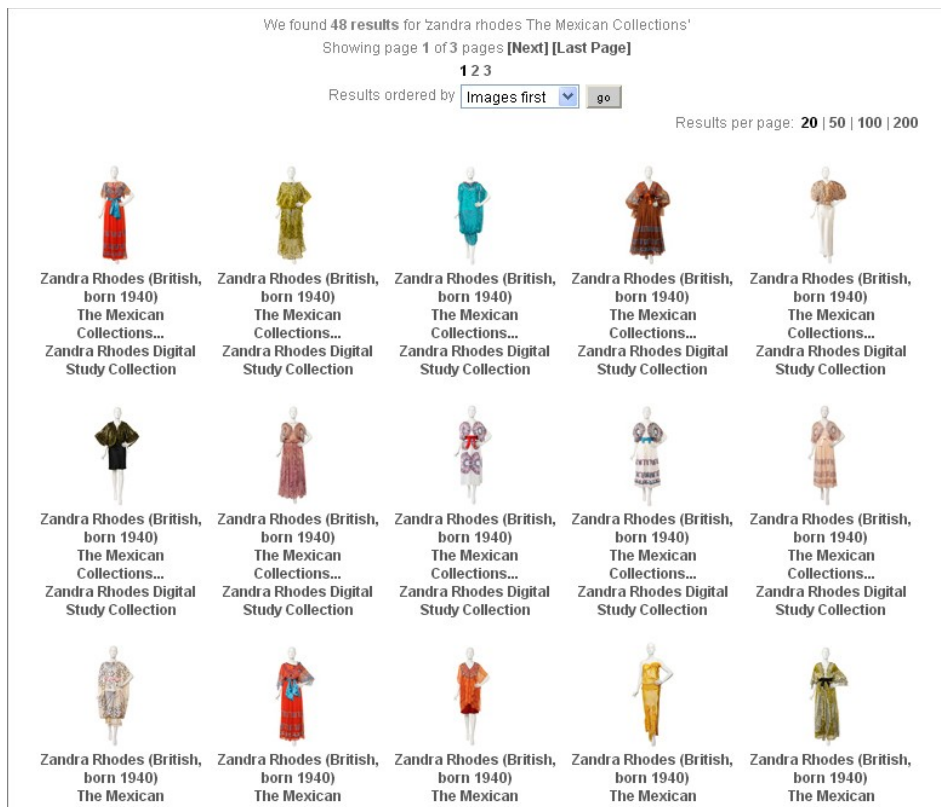
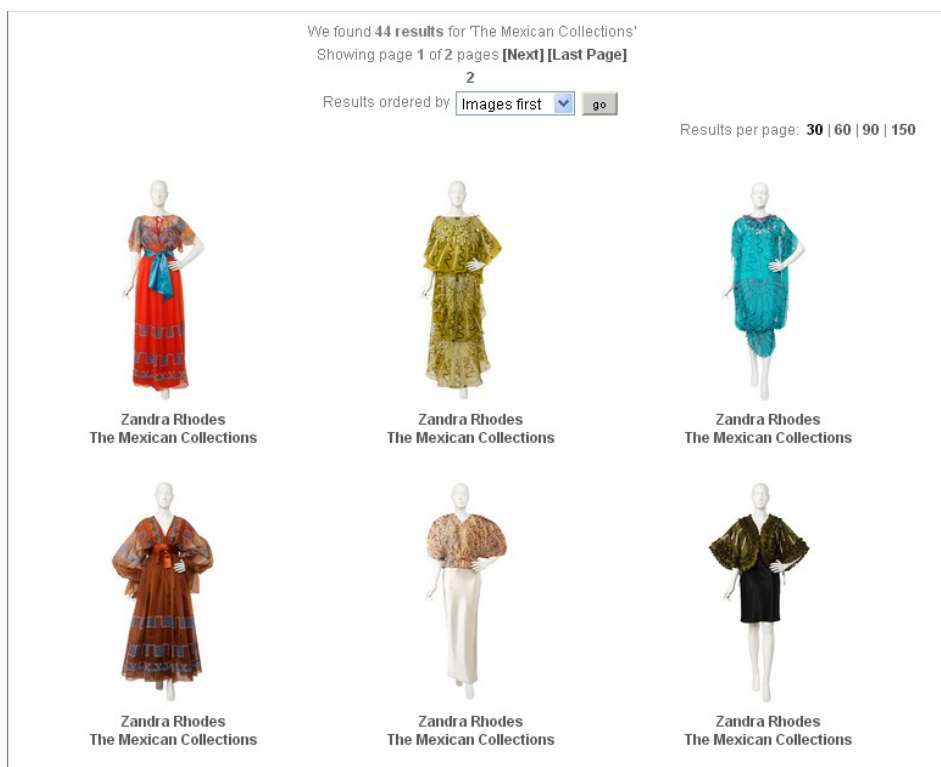**Figure 8.** Previous VADS search results pages.

Figure 9. Amended VADS search results pages.

Figure 10. Image viewed on a tablet using 'Zoomify' on the VADS website. Detail from
evening jacket, *The African Collection*, Spring/Summer 1981.[19] © Zandra Rhodes 2012.

Cross-Platform Compatibility

Since Rhodes and many arts practitioners use Apple devices (Sheppard, 2008), it was
vital for the project to ensure compatibility with these platforms. Yet much of the rich
multimedia functionality that the project sought to utilise was built in Flash or Microsoft
Silverlight, which isn't supported on these devices. The project therefore sought to
adopt HTML5 versions, which at that time proved a challenge since these were only just
beginning to be developed and released by software companies during the course of the
project. This included a new HTML5 version of 'Zoomify' (see Figure 10) and a new
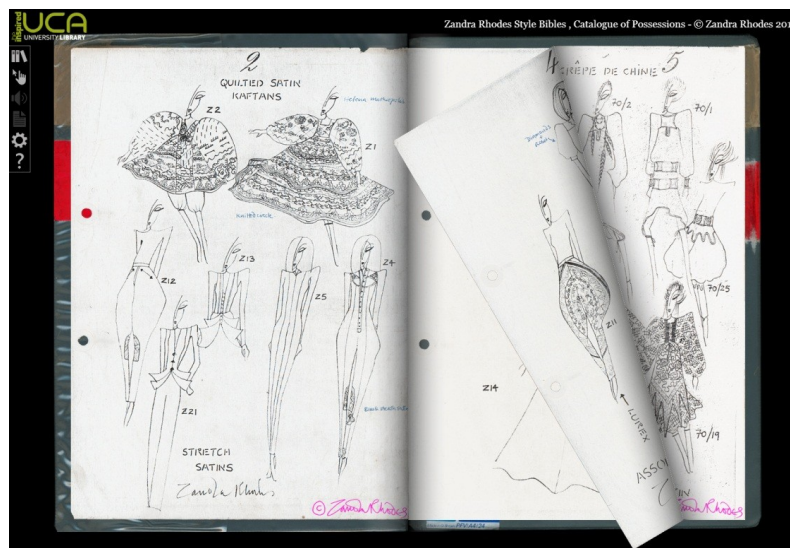HTML5 release of Turning the Pages[20] (see Figure 11).

Figure 11. Drawings from the 'Zandra Rhodes Style Bibles' © Zandra Rhodes 2012. Viewed
using 'Turning the Pages'.[21]

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19 Evening jacket, *The African Collection*, Spring/Summer 1981: http://www.vads.ac.uk/large.php?
uid=200469

20 Turning the Pages 2.0: http://www.armadillosystems.com/ttp_commercial

21 To view in more detail, see: http://www.zandrarhodes.ucreative.ac.uk/p/drawings.html

In Keeping with the Artist's Style

The project team was conscious of the importance of a visually arresting web design to arts practitioners, as highlighted by research on e-learning at UCA (Christie, 2005) and the Kultur project's research on arts institutional repositories (White and Hemmings, 2010). The project website was therefore designed to be in keeping with the vibrant look and style of the designer's own personal website[22], with bright pink fonts and hyperlinks. Students also expressed a desire for the website to be brightly coloured and personalised to Rhodes.

The designer's signature adorns a plethora of items held throughout her studio, such as packaging, clothes hangers, catwalk show invites, as well as the garments themselves (see Figure 12). As the designer stated, 'I had to explain and justify my name throughout my childhood. It was Zandra with a Z – not Sandra with an S. I used to practice writing it over and over again… no wonder it became an integral part of me (Rhodes and Knight, 1984)'. The designer's handwriting therefore seemed an apt choice for the website title banner (see Figures 13 and 15).
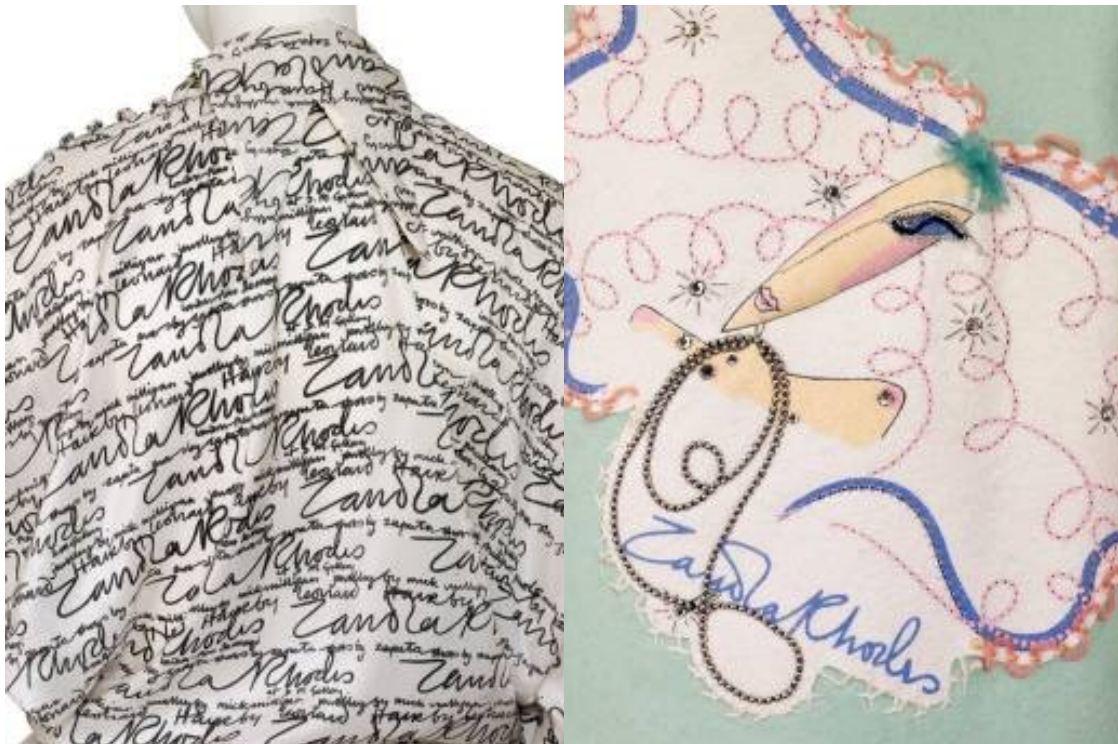

Figure 12. Garments with Rhodes' signature, including a blouse, *The Lily Collection*, Autumn/Winter 1972[23], and jacket, *The Painted Lady Collection*, Autumn/Winter 1978.[24] © Zandra Rhodes 2012.

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22 Zandra Rhodes' personal website: http://www.zandrarhodes.com
23 Blouse, *The Lily Collection*, Autumn/Winter 1972: http://www.vads.ac.uk/large.php?uid=200694
24 Jacket, *The Painted Lady Collection*, Autumn/Winter 1978: http://www.vads.ac.uk/large.php?uid=200266
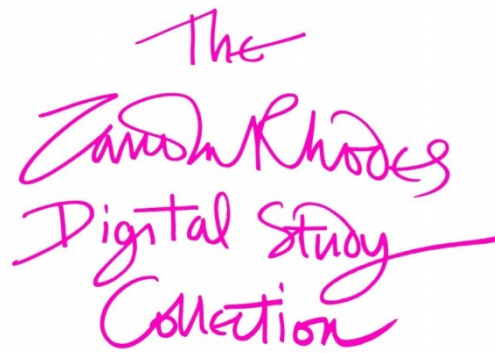
Figure 13. Website title banner using Zandra Rhodes' handwriting.

Developing Student Skills

Another distinct benefit of working so closely with the designer in her own creative environment has been the opportunity for student interns to gain work experience in an established fashion studio alongside a key industry figure and her design team. As Paola Marchionni, JISC Programme Manager, stated, 'this project has not just been about digitisation: students have played an active role gaining 'real world' work experience and skills which will be an invaluable asset to them in the future' (Marchionni quoted in JISC, 2013). The project has provided paid internships for undergraduate fashion and textile design students to assist with a variety of tasks in the studio. Furthermore, after the project's completion, the initiative has also provided a real-life case study illustrating some of the different components and challenges of digital curation, which has been utilised in a programme of research data management training for postgraduate students.

Student Internships

Work placements are a popular, well-established way to get into the arts (Arts Council England, 2011) and they already form part of the fashion syllabus at UCA. Undergraduate fashion and textile design students were offered paid internships on the project to assist with the considerable tasks of preparing, dressing, and documenting the 500 vintage pieces (see Figure 14). Students commented on the value of seeing 'industry at work', felt privileged to be working alongside Rhodes, and found that the internship built their confidence (Robinson, 2012, November 29). With these successes, the opportunity to become involved in the project was later offered to UCA students in other areas of expertise from other creative arts courses. Photography students were invited to take portraits of the designer for the project website and publicity (see Figure 15), and to assist with the post-production of the scanned images from the 'Style Bibles'. They later photographed the project launch event[25], with their pictures featuring in numerous press articles including Hello! Magazine (see Figure 16). Film Production and Journalism students also assisted with capturing the project's video tutorials and interviews.

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25 Zandra Rhodes Digital Study Collection - Press: http://www.zandrarhodes.ucreative.ac.uk/p/press.html

Figure 14. Zandra Rhodes in her studio with first year student interns, Rochelle Minors and Lauren Hunt, from BA Fashion Design.

Figure 15. Homepage of the Zandra Rhodes Digital Study Collection; photograph by BA Photography student Martin Gardner.
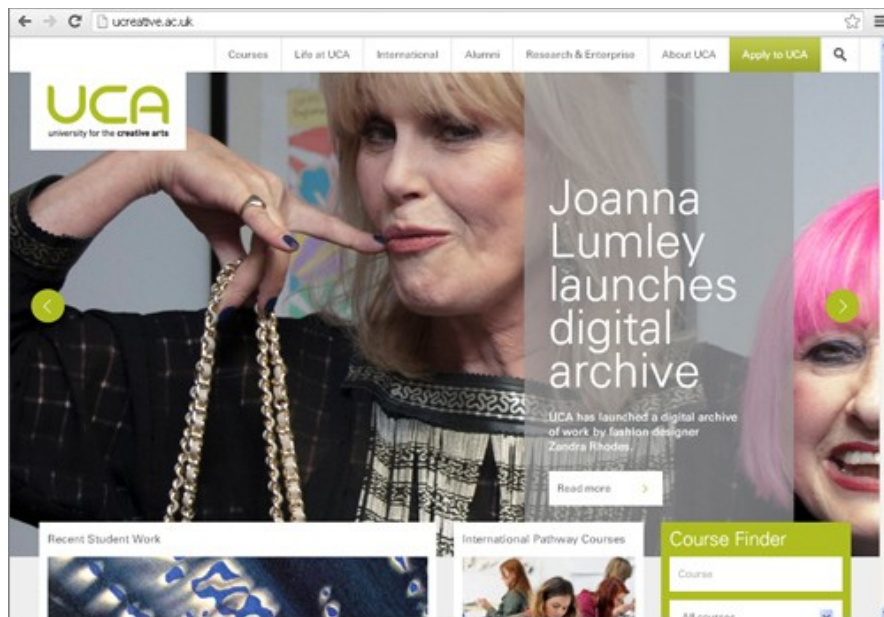
Figure 16. Homepage of the UCA website; photograph of Joanna Lumley and Zandra Rhodes by BA Photography student Hannah Kells.

Research Data Management Training

The appropriate management of research data has become an increasingly important topic for universities and researchers, with many funders now setting requirements for this data to be preserved and made available for re-use.[26] The Visual Arts Data Skills for Researchers project (VADS4R)[27] is providing a programme of workshops on the topic aimed at PhD students and early careers researchers in the visual arts. The initiative is led by VADS at UCA in collaboration with Glasgow School of Art and Falmouth University, and supported by an Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) Skills Development Award (2013-14).[28] Whilst there is a widespread understanding among scientific researchers about what is meant by 'research data', this terminology does not readily translate into a creative context (Guy et al., 2013). The work of the Zandra Rhodes Digital Study Collection project has been used as a tangible example, illustrating some of the stages and challenges of the digital curation lifecycle, and some practical solutions. This has included, for instance, how the project has navigated copyright, a key area of concern in the visual arts (Robinson, 2008; Sheppard, 2008), and how it has made use of existing tools, such as the template permission forms developed by JISC.[29] It has also looked at how the project has considered digital preservation, such as ensuring the regular transferral of images to an institutional server and using recommended file formats for long-term preservation.[30] Workshop participants have commented that this 'real-world example from a past project and getting into some practical and direct tips has been extremely useful.'

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26 RCUK Common Principles on Data Policy: http://www.rcuk.ac.uk/research/datapolicy
27 Visual Arts Data Skills for Researchers (VADS4R): http://www.vads4r.vads.ac.uk
28 AHRC Skills Development Award Holders: http://www.ahrc.ac.uk/Funding-Opportunities/Documents/AHRC-Skills-Development-Award-Holders-2011and2012.pdf
29 JISC OER IPR Support Project Templates: http://www.web2rights.com/OERIPRSupport
30 UK Data Archive: File Formats: http://www.data-archive.ac.uk/create-manage/format/formats-table

Lessons Learnt

In summary, the following lessons can be concluded from the project:

- Art and design practitioners have widely divergent perspectives on archives, ranging from those who are avidly hoarding and seeking to maintain and document their legacy, through to those who reject and destroy their past work in order to embrace the new.

- By adapting to the individual working environment of the designer, the project team has been able to capture unparalleled behind-the-scenes insights into her creative thinking, production processes, as well as authoritative historical and provenance details that have enhanced the metadata for the digitised garments.

- Another tremendous benefit of working in the designer's studio is the unique and highly prestigious work experience that it offers for students.

- The involvement of UCA and VADS has ensured that the project has used established digitisation standards, such as the use of a consistent file naming convention, suitable file formats, metadata schema and controlled vocabularies. This has subsequently provided a useful case study within research data management workshops, which is a further application of the project that hadn't been anticipated at the outset.

- This collaborative venture has occasionally raised an interesting dichotomy between creative and purely documentary approaches to digital archiving, with digital manipulations made on request from the studio to improve the condition of one or two items out of the 500 pieces and in order to represent a lost piece from the archive. However, this creative approach is perhaps less contentious in the context of a living designer's collection since the concept of the 'archive' is more fluid and still in production, with new work each season, multiple copies of a design, as well as items remade from previous seasons.

- The physical environment has a significant impact on the timing and workflow for such projects, when this work is taken outside the space and facilities of a University.

- The three dimensionality, size, details, tactility, and flexibility of fashion and textile collections raise challenges for their online presentation, and the rich multimedia functionality that is available to present such complex visual pieces can raise compatibility issues, with the proliferation of different web devices and browsers.

- It is important that the website design complements its highly visual content and students felt it should be in keeping with the artist's distinctive style.

- A wide range of opportunities were identified for students to contribute to the project from across a number of creative arts courses, in addition to the obvious choice of fashion and textiles. This wasn't anticipated and planned from the start of the project, but has proved beneficial to both the project and students alike, in completing certain tasks and developing student skills.

Acknowledgements

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31 Full credits are given at: http://www.zandrarhodes.ucreative.ac.uk/p/project-team.html

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