

Design in Motion: The Everyday Object and the Global Division of Design Labour

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Abstract

The practice of design has become obscured by global networks of production, circulation, and consumption. Traditional design studies tend to focus on high-profile products, presenting heroic designers as the primary authors of works of design. This approach is inadequate for understanding design in the late-twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. Contemporary design is better understood as an iterative and distributed process of give-and-take among actors, human and non-human, including people, tools, places, and ideas. It is a process that is influenced by conditions along the commodity chain that fall outside of the designer's traditionally recognized sphere. This research demonstrates that commonly held conceptions of designers as 'sole-authors' and of design work as a largely intellectual, creative activity distanced from manufacturing, misrepresent the real practices and relations of design labour in the current global economy.

Two 'object ethnographies' follow the production, circulation, and consumption of everyday, mass-produced goods: the Vanessa steel-toe boot by Mellow Walk and the Non Stop flatware by Gourmet Settings. These case studies map networks of design labour across continents, countries, cities, and generations. Primary research includes 18 interviews, observations of environments and practices, and the analysis of material evidence. This process reveals actors whose contributions have typically been omitted from design history, and describes practices of design that contest traditional depictions of designers, design work, and evidence thereof. This research contributes a fuller and more accurate understanding of the range of creative labour and labourers involved in the design and development of goods for global markets while challenging the view of these goods as placeless and culture-free. I respond to the call by design historians to extend the scope of design's histories beyond the West, and I build on the work of design and creativity scholars who identify 'design thinking' outside of recognized design roles. My work challenges established hierarchies of design, including who is 'permitted' to design, which countries are perceived as superior sources of design and manufacturing expertise, and the hand-head dichotomy that underwrites how we think about design and that has been entrenched in traditional conceptions of manufacturing and the global division of labour. Understanding how the work of design is distributed and how it has changed in response to globalization gives insight into the politics of production and consumption.

Acknowledgments

This project is object-focused, but it was the people who make, sell, and use the case study products, and the opportunity to witness their creative processes, that most inspired me. Research participants represented factory and retail workers, designers, managers, sales people, manufacturing agents, and consumers from Toronto, New York, and Vietnam. Most had never met me before, but they gave me their time and I am grateful for their insight. Thank you especially to Nelson Silva and Andrew Violi who opened the doors to Mellow Walk and allowed me to spend many hours documenting the design office and factory floor. Nothing was better than a last-minute email from Nelson that the boots were about to start first trials and accompanying him to the factory the next morning. Helen Kerr and Hildy Abrams have been equally generous with their time, connections, and access to Gourmet Settings resources. It was clear from our first meeting that the two share an incredible bond, and that their sense of partnership extends to those they work with and to the company ethos. In both cases, I benefited from designers who are invested in a collaborative approach and who are sensitive to my interest in distributed authorship. I hope that I have done their stories justice.

I am grateful to my committee for their ongoing guidance, support, and patience. Their input, starting with the comprehensive exams, influenced my thinking immensely. The work of my supervisor, Dr. Jan Hadlaw, encompasses both the practice and study of design, and I learned much from her critical and careful approach to writing design history. She has been thoughtful and involved, and has challenged my writing in ways that brought clarity and criticality to my work. Dr. Michael Prokopow's mentorship has been instrumental in my academic progress. I have relied on his encouragement and breadth of knowledge across material culture, design history, and cultural studies. He is an inspiration to his students and I am fortunate to have had this opportunity to work with him. Dr. Colin Mooers brought a political economy perspective to my project, something that I was searching for and which led me to the Communication and Culture program in the first place. This, coupled with his appreciation of the visual arts and design, helped me to contextualize and validate my project by looking beyond the field of design history. In the end, this was an interdisciplinary project, and I was lucky to have a defense committee that represented design history in the work of Dr. Michael Windover and the qualitative study of consumption in the work of Dr. Russell Belk. It was a pleasure to receive feedback from Dr. Steve Bailey and to work with him and the staff in Communication and Culture.

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© Gourmet Settings Inc. Use of this material is by permission of the copyright holder.
- 97 Bed Bath & Beyond, New York City, photographed October 17, 2013. Bed Bath & Beyond is the only retailer to show flatware in its "natural environment" by removing it from its packaging. Here, Non Stop is displayed with other flatware in the same price range. The red Gourmet Settings boxes are seen stacked on the shelves below. The original packaging still stands out in comparison to the competition. 333
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Chapter 1: Introduction

Two objects star in this project: the Vanessa steel-toe footwear by Mellow Walk and the Non Stop flatware by Gourmet Settings. Each product represents a different model of global design and production. Mellow Walk is one of the last fully integrated factories in Ontario, Canada, and employs an in-house designer, while Gourmet Settings has located its head office in Richmond Hill, Ontario, and manufactures offshore, dividing design work between in-house and local contractors. Close to 100,000 pairs of shoes and boots are made each year at Mellow Walk, sold at specialty and large retailers like Mark's (formerly Mark's Work Wearhouse) primarily in North America. The flatware, by contrast, is produced in the millions in factories in several Asian countries and is distributed on almost every continent in boutiques and big box stores like Costco.

These mass-produced, ubiquitous goods represent the material flows of billions of objects that circulate the world, which are barely given a second thought despite their presence in almost every aspect of daily life. Where these objects come from, who designs them, how they are made, and what cultural significance they hold are questions that receive little attention from consumers or the field of design history. Yet it is in the everyday, mundane, and utilitarian objects that the “less self-conscious, and therefore potentially more truthful” side of society—and in this case, design—is uncovered.¹ The design of everyday things, the “building blocks of popular culture,” may have more to say about society than the high design that is owned by so few.² Tangible and observable at the micro-scale, objects like the Vanessa boots and Non Stop flatware can be used to question macro-concepts that are often imposed without concrete evidence.³ They are significant as direct links between locations, institutions, producers, retailers, and consumers, among many others. The products constitute physical evidence of interconnected, global systems of trade and the international division of design labour.

The practice of design has become obscured by global networks of production and distribution. In popular culture, design media, and even fields of design studies, the work of

¹ Jules David Prown, “Mind in Matter: An Introduction to Material Culture and Method,” *Winterthur Portfolio* 17, no. 1 (Spring 1982): 4.

² Regina Lee Blaszczyk, *Imagining Consumers: Design and Innovation from Wedgwood to Corning* (Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000), 273.

³ Fernand Braudel, *Civilization and Capitalism, 15th-eighteenth Century. Structures of Everyday Life: The Limits of the Possible* (London: Collins, 1981); Bruno Latour, *Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-Network-Theory* (USA: Oxford University Press, 2007).

design is fetishized as an intellectual activity divorced from the materiality of manufacturing, and the design profession is equally fetishized via commonly-held perceptions of the 'heroic' designer as 'sole author.' The design product is the reification of the designer's labour as well as many invisible actors that contribute to design throughout manufacturing, distribution, and use.⁴ Anthropologist Arjun Appadurai's concept of "production fetishism" frames this discussion in terms of whose contributions are overlooked or undervalued, and which locations and forms of design activity are ignored or misrepresented.⁵ Appadurai moves beyond commodity fetishism and producer-consumer relations to the concealment of complex global relations of production. With production fetishism, products, designers, and places take on mythical status, while entire networks of producers are erased in narratives of creativity and design. The design process itself is distorted by 'magic:' innovative solutions are arrived at through "flashes of genius" (the 'Eureka' moment) in which design breakthroughs are achieved; and the design process is rendered invisible in depictions of objects leaping from sketch to screen to store shelves.⁶ The "fetishism of the consumer" is also tied to global production, giving customers new agency through user-centred practice and the democratization of design. Complicit in production fetishism is the "spectacle of the local," whether a nearby factory, known designer, or national brand, which distracts from the maze of commodity chains, offshore factories, global management, and money flows behind manufactured goods.⁷ 'Made in' labels help to reify locations of production but they conflate and reduce the complex forces that result in the making of things. Such labels, useful in national narratives and the validation of prideful notions of labour do not, in any way, give an adequate picture of the origins of consumer products.

With this dissertation, I question who is recognized as a designer and how the work of design is divided throughout the global production, circulation, and consumption of mass-produced goods in the early twenty-first century. I argue that design is an iterative and distributed process of give-and-take among many actors, human and non-human, including people, tools, places, and ideas. It is a process affected by conditions along the commodity chain that fall outside of the designer's traditionally-recognized sphere. Using the Vanessa

⁴ Guy Julier, *The Culture of Design* (London: Sage Publications Ltd, 2008), 48.

⁵ Arjun Appadurai, *Modernity At Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization*, First edition (Minneapolis, Minn: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), 41–42.

⁶ Bryan Lawson, *How Designers Think: The Design Process Demystified*, First published 1980 (Burlington, MA: Architectural Press, 2006), 133.

⁷ Arjun Appadurai, ed., "Introduction: Commodities and the Politics of Value," in *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective* (Cambridge [Cambridgeshire]: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 41–42.

boots and Non Stop flatware as case studies, I demonstrate that commonly-held conceptions of designers as primary authors, and of design work as a creative activity separate from manufacturing, misrepresent the real practices and relations of design labour in the current global economy. I argue that a model of distributed authorship is a more accurate way to represent contemporary design practice and the influences, sources of creativity, and expertise that come together in the design of everyday consumer products.

Using Actor Network Theory (ANT) as the organizing principle behind my field research, I developed 'object ethnographies' to follow the Vanessa boots and Non Stop flatware from conception through design, manufacturing, distribution, and use. This involved observing the products in their 'natural habitats' and mapping their networks of design across continents, countries, cities, and generations. In the process, I identified actors whose contributions have typically been omitted from design history, and described practices of design that contest traditional depictions of designers, design work, and evidence thereof. I documented the hierarchies implicit in making and consuming, drilling down to the level of factory floor workers, freelance and in-house designers, material suppliers, travelling technicians, retail buyers, and individual consumers. These accounts show how ordinary products, along with their representations and related practices, function to connect, conceal, and reveal acts of design. Under close interrogation, these objects have much to reveal—to say—about the global division of labour, and the places, relationships, and identities tied to what operates as design.

My research contributes a fuller, granular, and more accurate understanding of the range of creative labour and labourers involved in the design and development of goods for global markets while challenging the view of these goods as placeless and culture-free. In tracking the diverse global actors involved in contemporary design practices, I respond to the call by design historians to extend the scope of design's histories beyond the West, and I build on the work of design and creativity scholars who identify 'design thinking' outside of recognized design roles. My work challenges established hierarchies of design, including who is 'permitted' to design, which countries are perceived as superior sources of design and manufacturing expertise, and the hand-head dichotomy that underwrites how we think about design and that has been entrenched in traditional conceptions of manufacturing and the global division of labour. While global production has become fact in popular consciousness, trade economists note that its complexity and scale continue to evolve, and we are only just at the beginning of

this trajectory.⁸ Understanding how the work of design is distributed and how it has changed in response to globalization gives insight into the politics of production and consumption.

Defining Design

In common language, the word ‘design’ is used indiscriminately to refer to various states of a design, from the original napkin sketch through to technical drawings, prototypes, and the completed product. In everyday use, ‘the design’ refers both to the end product and the underlying concept, which could be expressed as the big idea, the process by which it was developed, its appearance or materials, how it functions and is experienced, or an image or other representation. Design is understood to be symbolically and functionally meaningful; it is a signifier of values, tastes, practices, and historical periods, but it also has use value – designed objects perform functions and allow users to do something they might not otherwise be able to do. Design has exchange value too – products recognized as ‘designed’ are perceived as more monetarily and culturally valuable based on form, function, or association with a specific designer or brand. As a process, design is often characterized as creative problem-solving and as intentional: it involves developing plans, arranging elements, and creating order. Innovation and the personal, artistic expression of the designer are equally important characteristics.

In consequence of there being many different and invisible contributors to design activity, the actors in the two case studies may not at first appear to be directly related to traditional understandings of design. Designers are often categorized in two extremes: anyone who undertakes open-ended problem solving and implementation of a solution (daily practice for almost everyone), or professional designers who usually have design training and specialist knowledge. A more nuanced perspective evolved over the course of my research, leading me to propose ‘degrees’ of design activity. Sociologist Bruno Latour’s definition of an actor – someone or something that contributes to changing an outcome – offered a way to broaden my search for those who have an impact on design while paying particular attention to the nature of their actions.⁹ Here, the ‘outcome’ is defined as any physical, representational, or conceptual iteration of the ‘design’ of the case study objects. This includes everything from the initial problem or opportunity, to the solution, form, function, fabrication, meaning, sale, use, and representation in images, advertisements, packaging, and more.

⁸ Michael Gasiorsek and Javier Lopez-Gonzalez, “China-EU Global Value Chains: Who Creates Value, How and Where? Growing Linkages and Opportunities” (European Commission’s Directorate-General for Trade, December 2013), 8–9, http://trade.ec.europa.eu/doclib/docs/2014/january/tradoc_152123.pdf.

⁹ Latour, *Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-Network-Theory*, 71.

In this project, design is continually evolving—‘*the design*’ as a single, static object or concept (as often presented in museums and design history) does not exist in the case studies. Latour and architectural theorist Albena Yaneva refer to this as “design in flight.”¹⁰ Final products shipped out to buyers are as meaningful as other variations of design, like initial ideas, sketches, components yet to be assembled, or prototypes. This can be extended to depictions of objects and to new contexts of interpretation like retail displays and sites of consumption. The concept of ‘iteration’ extends even further when thinking about products that are slowly improved over decades, or new versions that build on existing models within the company or by competitors. The idea of design in motion also reflects the movement of design actors, and of centres of design expertise. With the global fragmentation of production, sources of design labour and knowledge are migrating and dissolving the core-periphery model of international trade. This extended life of ‘the design’ means that there are more opportunities to contribute to design and greater networks of actors involved. Where *the design* starts and finishes is ambiguous.

Following the Object

This dissertation is grounded in the idea that materiality and place are important in understanding global practices of design. Scientist and policy analyst Vaclav Smil describes the paradox that in ‘post-industrial’ societies, it is services, consumption, and the “new, immaterial e-universe” that are celebrated while the manufacturing and conversion of raw materials required for those activities seem “passé compared to modern virtual realities.”¹¹ In this sense, my project is a reaction to the perceived dematerialization and de-territorialization of advanced capitalism, a discourse noted by theorist Frederic Jameson, when production is moved offshore for cheaper labour and better terms, and capital is no longer tied to goods or place.¹² As Appadurai’s notion of ‘production fetishism’ suggests, production is seemingly erased as attention shifts from industrial to financial capitalism, and from manufacturing to technology.¹³ From a global perspective, however, it is impossible to ignore the scale and increasing sophistication of manufacturing industries. Trade economists report that in 2008 alone, “42 million jobs [in global value chains in manufacturing] in China were added, 20 million in India, 6

¹⁰ Bruno Latour and Albena Yaneva, “Give Me a Gun and I Will Make All Buildings Move: An ANT’s View of Architecture,” in *Explorations in Architecture: Teaching, Design, Research*, ed. Reto Geiser (Basel: Birkhäuser, 2008), 80–81.

¹¹ Vaclav Smil, *Made in the USA: The Rise and Retreat of American Manufacturing*. (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 2013), xi–xii.

¹² Frederic Jameson, “Notes on Globalization as a Philosophical Issue,” in *The Cultures of Globalization*, ed. Frederic Jameson and Masao Miyoshi (Durham: Duke University Press, 1998), 54–77.

¹³ Jameson.

million in Brazil, and 2 million in Mexico.”¹⁴ This growth in manufacturing implies a corresponding growth in design work as well.

The impression that design in advanced economies has become more digital (processes of design, making, shopping, and communicating), that designers are now more mobile and their work is less tied to place, or that designers in the ‘knowledge economy’ are more focused on the ephemeral work of strategy, overlooks the physical and cultural infrastructure rooted in specific locations required in the production of three-dimensional objects. Historians John Brewer and Frank Trentmann argue against this perceived distancing: “Consumer goods and services are not the product of immaculate conception. Thinking about the connections between different sites of consumption and between production and consumption requires attention to physical, material places as well as to virtual ones.”¹⁵

Both design and craft historians note a lack of research in the areas of production and processes of making.¹⁶ Instead, focus has been on either end of the production-circulation-consumption process. On one side, as Grace Lees-Maffei observes, more attention is given to the pre-production phases of design. There exists “a tendency” as Lees-Maffei notes, “to privilege the acts of ideation and design, rather than the processes of manufacturing, mediation and consumption, in determining provenance for goods [...], even in the light of widespread recognition of the global nature of contemporary design.”¹⁷ On the other side, Glenn Adamson, among others, proposes that a renewed look at production and labour is needed, as design history has let this area of research lapse in favour of consumer studies.¹⁸

My project reflects interest among both academic and popular audiences in how and where things are made. Art writer Kirstie Beavan suggests that the public has become so accustomed to seeing well-designed and manufactured objects, that the completed products no longer hold any wonder. Rather it is understanding the labour, skills, techniques, and experimentation that go into their making that most amazes people.¹⁹ This curiosity points to a

¹⁴ Marcel P. Timmer et al., “Slicing Up Global Value Chains,” *Journal of Economic Perspectives* 28, no. 2 (Spring 2014): 112.

¹⁵ John Brewer and Frank Trentmann, *Consuming Cultures, Global Perspectives: Historical Trajectories, Transnational Exchanges* (New York: Berg, 2006), 3.

¹⁶ Ann-Sophie Lehmann, “Showing Making: On Visual Documentation and Creative Practice,” *Journal of Modern Craft* 5, no. 1 (March 2012): 20, <https://doi.org/10.2752/174967812X13287914145398>.

¹⁷ Grace Lees-Maffei quoted in Kjetil Fallan and Grace Lees-Maffei, “Introduction: National Design Histories in an Age of Globalization,” in *Designing Worlds: National Design Histories in an Age of Globalization* (Berghahn Books, 2016), 10.

¹⁸ Glenn Adamson, Edward Cooke, and Tanya Harrod, “Editorial Introduction,” *The Journal of Modern Craft* 1, no. 1 (March 2008): 8.

¹⁹ Kirstie Beavan, “Manufacture 2/Power of Making,” *The Journal of Modern Craft* 6, no. 1 (March 1, 2013): 98–99, <https://doi.org/10.2752/174967813X13535106841241>.

separation between consumers and producers, and is reflected in initiatives like the *How It's Made* show by the Science Channel, or designer Thomas Thwaites' *The Toaster Project*, in which he reverse engineers a \$6 toaster before making a new one, ostensibly, from scratch.²⁰ The difficulties he encounters while seeking out all the raw materials, tools, and knowledge locally, point to the near impossibility of manufacturing such a product in Great Britain in the twenty-first century. The fascination with globalization is reflected in the many projects 'dissecting' food and consumer goods, especially electronics and fashion, to show what percentage of content comes from different countries. The web site, *Follow The Things*, offers an extensive list of documentaries, books, art projects, and other resources dedicated to figuring out who makes commodities, as they "seem to be untouched by human hands."²¹ These projects are often ethically and politically motivated to inspire boycotts and improvements to working and environmental conditions. This interest in the origins of consumer products is also motivated by the 'threat' of cheaply made imports and the loss of domestic manufacturing. Numerous books, blogs, and TV shows have taken on the challenge of living without foreign-made products, turning dependence into stories of Western ingenuity in the face of "invasion."²² These accounts show how national stereotypes and globalization play out in consumption and material culture at the level of the home.²³

Production-circulation-consumption

Throughout this dissertation, I refer to 'production,' 'circulation,' and 'consumption' to capture the full picture of the case study objects' lives. The relationship between these three phases, first described by Marx, has been theorized in models developed in cultural studies (the "circuit of culture" by du Gay et al.), economics ("system of provision" by Fine), design studies ("domains of design culture" by Julier), and science and technology studies (a "cyclical model of

²⁰ Science Channel, "How It's Made," Science Channel, accessed January 27, 2019, <https://www.sciencechannel.com/tv-shows/how-its-made/>; Thomas Thwaites, *The Toaster Project: Or a Heroic Attempt to Build a Simple Electric Appliance from Scratch*, First edition (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2011).

²¹ Ian Cook, "Follow the Things," accessed October 26, 2017, <http://www.followthethings.com/>.

²² See for example the Made in America challenge by ABC News covering a variety of types of consumer products such as: from ABC News, *Made in America: What's In Your Home?*, vol. 72, ABC World News Tonight with David Muir, 2011, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=38MfZ17nT50&feature=youtu.be>.

²³ In 2007, American journalist Sara Bongiorni embarked on a twelve-month boycott of products labeled "Made in China." In her words, the experiment was "about taking the abstract idea of a rising China and translating it into the small, real connections between China and one family." Her self-described "perverse glee in tracking the downfall of the American empire by way of those little tags" is bolstered by judgments about China as the author of everyday goods by friends, family, and retailers. Sara Bongiorni, *A Year Without "Made in China": One Family's True Life Adventure in the Global Economy* (Hoboken, N.J: Wiley, 2007), 2, 8.

designing and consuming” by Ingram et al.).²⁴ Each introduces broader contexts that shape design, like company structures, economy, culture, and the movement of ideas and objects across territories and space. They demonstrate that the design of consumer products is continually evolving as meanings and practices change and are fed back into the cycle. Overlaying the circuits of capital and culture serves to illuminate production, circulation, and consumption as a continuous process in product design, a dynamic that is evident in the case studies.²⁵

Structure

This dissertation is organized in ten chapters. In Chapters 2 to 4, I look at how designers and design labour have been presented in three bodies of literature: the history of design in Western industry from the eighteenth century to the present; studies of design in the global economy in the twenty-first century; and studies that consider design in relation to processes of making (craft) and thinking. In these three chapters, I outline concepts that are useful in identifying design work in my two case studies, and I also draw attention to the flaws in these existing models. In Chapter 5, I describe the research methods I use to obtain a fuller picture of design in the case studies presented in Chapters 6 and 7. In Chapters 8 and 9, I analyze the case studies from two perspectives: how the work of design is actually divided across production, circulation, and consumption at the level of individual actors, and how global design is spatially distributed among real and ‘myth-places’ with consequences for the design process.

The Study and Representation of Design Practice and the Division of Labour

The first two chapters outline a Western trajectory from industrial to post-industrial capitalism, with a corresponding path for design as increasingly dematerialized and de-territorialized – the practice of design in the West is seen as progressively more digital and distanced from mass production, with designers and their work moving freely across borders, appealing to consumers everywhere. Chapter 2 begins with an overview of the history of design labour in relation to industry and manufacturing, starting with eighteenth century definitions emerging from the first industrial revolution in Britain (known as the ‘workshop of the world’) and

²⁴ Paul Du Gay et al., *Doing Cultural Studies: The Story of the Sony Walkman* (London: Sage, in association with The Open University, 1997); Dick Hebdige, “Object as Image: The Italian Scooter Cycle,” in *The Consumer Society Reader*, ed. Martyn J. Lee (Massachusetts: Blackwell, 2000), 125–61; Ben Fine, *The World of Consumption: The Material and Cultural Revisited*, 2nd ed. (London: Routledge, 2002); Julier, *The Culture of Design*; Jack Ingram, Elizabeth Shove, and Matthew Watson, “Products and Practices: Selected Concepts from Science and Technology Studies and from Social Theories of Consumption and Practice,” *Design Issues* 23, no. 2 (Spring 2007): 3–16.

²⁵ Du Gay et al., *Doing Cultural Studies*; Fine, *The World of Consumption: The Material and Cultural Revisited*.

finishing with the 'global workshop' of today. This illustrates how the designer's role has been defined in relation to the work of others in the manufacturing process and in response to conditions of production. I then argue that the significance of certain characteristics of design work, while based in reality, has been distorted in the service of capitalism, oversimplifying the design process and limiting whose labour is recognized in the design of consumer products. In Chapter 3, I examine the spatial distribution of design work in the global economy. The tension implicit in 'global design' between goods that are culture-free and placeless, and those described as vernacular and tied to specific locations, generates questions about authorship and provenance. Drawing on design history and design for development literature, I demonstrate that there exists an international hierarchy of place and division of labour in which certain nations are recognized as originators of design while others are perceived as manufacturers only. At the same time, global commodity studies offer a means to capture more nuanced understandings of the fragmentation of supply chains and sources of innovation, revealing that the traditional 'core-periphery' model is dissolving and design work can be found in 'developing' economies.

In Chapter 4, I demonstrate that the conceptual division of labour into 'thinking' and 'making' roles is fundamental to how design practice is understood. In the current 'knowledge economy,' design is valued as an activity that is intellectual, creative, and strategic. This is demonstrated in the commoditization of the 'design thinking' process and the growing number of jobs for designers as strategists and researchers. Distinctions established in the eighteenth century between head and hand, and design and craft, continue to support this conceptualization of design. However, I bring together sources showing that both cognitive and manual labour exist in the designer's work and in roles outside of the designer. Theories of craft from the nineteenth century to the present argue for the inseparability of cognitive and manual work in manufacturing and validate the repetitive skilled labour found on both the assembly line and in the designer's studio. Studies of design thinking from the mid-twentieth century on (both the academic analysis of how designers work and the codification of the design process for use in other disciplines) largely ignore making, but they expand the definition of design to include non-designers, as seen in fields as varied as psychology and business strategy. Furthermore, the creative process, a defining attribute of design, has been broadly applied by these scholars to find value both in factory work and in consumption. These debates about the relationship of craft, design, and creativity have provided my study with the criteria to identify design labour outside of the work of the designer, and to question if the designer is working beyond conventional definitions of their own role. Nevertheless, the representations of design work in

the literature are abstracted and simplified, and therefore cannot reflect the messy realities of design as they appear in the case studies.

Methodology

The challenge for this dissertation is the identification of design activity that might confirm or contest traditional models of design history, the division of design labour, and the conceptualization of designers and their work. In Chapter 5, I outline the research methods I employ to develop a more accurate account of design as practiced in the case studies. Actor Network Theory is the primary organizing method I used to map design activity and to extend the definition of ethnography - the study of humans in their natural habitat - to consider objects in their natural habitats as well. As such, I present a type of 'object ethnography,' a model for design study that follows the development of an object in its many iterations. The object is the thread that ties together the phases and actors of production, circulation, and consumption.

I use ethnographic methods to capture in detail the processes, relationships, contexts, and views of design. In-person and on-line observation recorded through video, photography, and notes, allowed me to capture micro-scale interactions and actors that interviewees may have thought insignificant in factories, management offices, design studios, retail environments, and more. Eighteen interviews with people in Toronto, New York, Vietnam, and Taiwan, allowed me to solicit information in a more direct way, and provided participants the opportunity to reflect on their own practices and opinions of the case study objects and global production. I also assessed physical evidence and communication materials, ranging from advertising and packaging, to in-store displays and work environments.

In order to demonstrate the phases of the objects' lives and the wide array of actors contributing to their design at various moments and from various locations, I charted the results of my observations in a timeline of the different versions of the objects from concept to development, manufacturing, distribution, purchase, and use. I then overlaid a network diagram tracing relationships between actors. This allowed me to look for change over time, and to identify multiple sources of authorship, creative contributions, influences on design, and collaborations between actors. Linking the global and local revealed areas of concentrated activity and movement between locations. Organizing the data in this way also helped me to visualize relationships and to analyze meaning, identity, and understandings of globalization and communities, which otherwise would have been based only on interviews and official messaging about the products.

Case Studies

The case study objects were selected because they represent everyday, mass-produced goods and they offered unique opportunities to conduct research. I had professional connections to the designers and I am grateful for their support and the access that they and the manufacturers granted me. I was able to observe and interview people at multiple points in production, circulation, and consumption, and to gather a wealth of secondary material. Both case studies resulted in the documentation of the many actors involved in the objects' evolution. For Mellow Walk, I was able to spend time on the factory floor watching a new product in development. With Gourmet Settings, I could not visit the factories, but I was able to gain an understanding of the global process through the interviews, including communication with two agents in Vietnam and Taiwan, plus videos of the manufacturing processes by Gourmet Setting and others.

The first case study object is the Vanessa line of steel-toe footwear, designed in 2013-14. The Vanessa was a departure from the more conservative designs offered by Mellow Walk and its competitors. It was developed as a motorcycle style boot, lace-up boot, and slip-on shoe, all targeted at young women who need to wear safety boots only occasionally, or who want safety boots versatile enough to wear to the office, to job sites, and socially. The Vanessa was an ideal case study because it was a clear demonstration, from beginning to end, of the entire production-circulation-consumption process. I was able to observe important production milestones from concept to design, safety testing, trials, production, marketing and distribution, sale and use. The case study illustrates the product's many iterations and the influence of different actors on design.

Mellow Walk boasts that it is "the last shoe factory in Ontario."²⁶ Its brand is focused on national identity, but the company's manufacturing and distribution system relies heavily on global actors. Ironically, Mellow Walk attaches a leather maple leaf to its products as a symbol of national origin and reminder of the quality of the leather, but the leather is not Canadian. Like most of the components in Mellow Walk shoes, and much of the equipment used to make them, the leather is sourced internationally. The Mellow Walk case study highlights one of the main challenges in the designer's work: creating original products in a market flooded with similar looking styles, and using components that are in many ways pre-determined by suppliers around the globe. This study shows how global relationships and centres of expertise are changing in the global shoe supply chain, with Italy, Mexico, and China exerting considerable influence in Mellow Walk's network.

²⁶ Mellow Walk, "About Our Team," Mellow Walk, February 5, 2014, <http://www.mellowwalk.com/about/>.

The second case study object, Non Stop, is one of Gourmet Settings' longest and best-selling flatware patterns. First created in 1999, Non Stop was one of six original patterns designed for sale in Target and it continues to be sold at Bed Bath & Beyond, Costco, and other retailers in boxes that resemble the original, award-winning packaging. The packaging, and how the cutlery "lives in the store," take on special significance in this case study, becoming just as important as the design of the flatware itself (Kerr). Non Stop is still in production in Asia, giving insight into offshore manufacturing and the invisible design work that reaches into the homes of consumers the world over. Rather than following the object as it was created, this case study covers nearly two decades of product development. It highlights Gourmet Settings' emphasis on design; the role of iteration and continual refinement of a single design under the same name; issues of intellectual property and the impact of copying; and questions of distributed authorship when so many designers and offshore producers are involved.

Gourmet Settings was founded in 1994 as a small firm dedicated to importing cutlery from Asia, repackaged for North American consumers. The owner saw a gap in the market for inexpensive, high quality flatware with a more modern aesthetic, and now manufactures its own stainless steel cutlery, ceramic dishware, glasses, and packaging. The Gourmet Settings case study sheds light on the role of global intermediaries, global processes, and the distribution of manufacturing knowledge. However, one of the most important aspects of this case study is the role of the retailers: how they perceive customer needs and pricing; how much influence they have on the design of the cutlery, packaging, and in-store displays; and how the retailers decide what to order.

The two companies offer a rich source of comparison because they chose very different paths for design and manufacturing. While Mellow Walk reinvigorated a traditional model of manufacturing with everything from management to sales to design and fabrication under one roof, there was no question for Gourmet Settings that they would outsource production to Asia. Mellow Walk started with small, local retailers and has gradually expanded its national and international distribution, while Gourmet Settings confronted their biggest competitors on an international stage, obtaining their first orders from the giants of mass-market retail. As a result, the companies also differ based on the scale, structure, and distances that define the relationships between management, design, production, and consumption. At the same time, there are a number of revealing similarities, such as the influence of retailers on product design; how manufacturers and consumers relate to one another; international flows of knowledge and shifts in design and manufacturing expertise; the design process and the value placed on craft;

and the extended life cycle and continual evolution of product design both within a company and in the context of competitors.

The case studies are each presented in four parts, starting with an introduction to the subject matter, including how I identified the companies and objects, my research process, and notable themes that emerged. The Corporate Narrative includes historical context for the two manufacturers and assesses how they brand themselves and position their products, employees, and processes, particularly in relation to local and global factors. The Actors section groups the many people, places, ideas, and objects that have a role in design, and documents how those actors influence systems of production, circulation, and consumption across scales and locations. Finally, the Object Ethnographies follow iterations of the Vanessa footwear line and Non Stop flatware, outlining a trajectory from precedent objects to the case study objects in their many forms.

Analysis

In the final two chapters, I analyze the case studies using the literature and methods outlined in Chapters 2 to 5. In Chapter 8, I problematize existing understandings of process and relations of power in design by contesting views of the designer as the creator of plans for others to execute. Again, I employ Actor Network Theory, and concepts of creativity and design thinking, to identify varying degrees of design activity among actors. I present different approaches to assessing whether human and non-human actors are in fact contributing to design. My own observation through site visits and interviews, and the detailed analysis of digital and material evidence, are in contrast to the official narratives of the manufacturers and the unspoken hierarchies among interviewees, which limit recognition of creativity among certain actors. Retailers emerge as expert ‘assemblers,’ superseding the manufacturers’ messaging and design intentions by giving objects new meanings and perpetuating practices of consumption that influence design. Consumers too are surprising in their ability to go beyond acts of signification to creating new uses, forms, and design opportunities to which the manufacturers react. In Chapter 8, I also examine a fundamental characteristic of the division of labour in manufacturing, the separation of head and hand, and design and craft, to show that craft continues to hold a valued position both in the factory and in the designer’s studio. This further illustrates the existence of cognitive, creative labour among non-designers.

In Chapter 9, I expand views of global design beyond the production of universal goods for international markets to more nuanced views of local production and expert knowledge. I examine intersecting scales of design, from factories, stores, and homes, to cities, nations, and

international commodity chains, to understand how design and production are conceived in relation to place. Identities emerge that reflect real conditions of production as well as “myth-places” to form hierarchies of locations based on their value as sources of design and manufacturing.²⁷ These perceptions influence how actors relate to one another within global production, circulation, and consumption. This analysis of the case studies contributes to conversations about the global fragmentation of production and industrial upgrading, with clear examples of shifting regions of design and new roles for former ‘core’ and ‘periphery’ nations. I conclude the analysis by arguing that the Vanessa boots and Non Stop flatware are both examples of ‘vernacular’ mass production, influenced by local conditions, as well as examples of a global, homogenous language of design.

Design historians recognize the value of more comprehensive investigations into the work of design beyond individual creativity and design processes.²⁸ In 1995, Victor Margolin observed that, “Design history...has not had much success in engaging with current practice,” while Guy Julier maintains that design historians have helped to fetishize design by contributing to an “account of design [that] has been progressively separated from the reality of its practice.”²⁹ Similarly, Lucy Kimbell points to the value of studying design as it is actually practiced, “the situated, embodied work of design thinking in practice,” rather than relying on abstracted models of design processes.³⁰ However, Kjetil Fallan explains that there are barriers to a more accurate study of design: “Meticulous and conscientious attention to the real multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary and collaborative nature of most, if not all design work in full detail is, if at all possible, a massive challenge to design history.”³¹ Observing contemporary practice is time consuming and gaining access can be difficult, while archives that document historical relationships of production may not exist.³² My dissertation—a detailed ethnographic study of two everyday products ‘in motion’ and the actors that contribute to their design—is a contribution towards that goal. These examples of globally circulating objects and their networks—shoes and sets of flatware—might otherwise be overlooked in design history. However, as artifacts and evidence they can be analysed to gain valuable insights into the global practices of design and to suggest critical lines and trajectories of inquiry for future design studies.

²⁷ S Reimer and D Leslie, “Design, National Imaginaries, and the Home Furnishings Commodity Chain,” *Growth and Change* 39 (2008): 144–71.

²⁸ Kjetil Fallan, *Design History: Understanding Theory and Method*. (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2010), 18, 24.

²⁹ Margolin quoted in Julier, *The Culture of Design*, 46, 49.

³⁰ Lucy Kimbell, “Rethinking Design Thinking: Part I,” *Design and Culture* 3, no. 3 (November 1, 2011): 289, <https://doi.org/10.2752/175470811X13071166525216>.

³¹ Fallan, *Design History: Understanding Theory and Method*, xii.

³² Fallan and Lees-Maffei, “Introduction: National Design Histories in an Age of Globalization,” 16.

Chapter 2: History and Representation of Design Practice in Industry

In Chapter 2, I establish how design labour is perceived based on design history and studies of contemporary design practice in the West. Design work has been presented as increasingly intellectual (related to strategy, creativity, and research), immaterial (a practice that relies heavily on digital tools and is separated from manufacturing), and de-territorialized (global and fluid with little connection to place), yet still very much based on understandings of the designer's role and the division of labour established in the mid-eighteenth to early twentieth centuries. This view continues to influence how we see design today, both reflecting and concealing conditions that shape design practice.

I begin with an overview of the history of design labour in relation to industry and manufacturing in order to establish context for the design work observed in the case studies. I look at how the designer's role was conceived for mass production in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, how industrial design emerged as a profession in conjunction with Fordism in the early twentieth century, and how design's role evolved during war-time production and the consumer boom following World War II. I conclude with the neoliberal, post-industrial conditions that characterize design labour in the West in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, such as the shift from manufacturing to a service economy, the precarity of labour and outsourcing in the creative economy, and trends such as more rapid product development cycles, mass-customization, and the democratization of design and production through the 'hardware revolution.'

In the second part of this chapter, I argue that design studies have contributed to the fetishization of design through certain representations of designers, design practices, and products, which support capitalist motives. The influence of art history, for example, has resulted in designers being depicted as sole authors and creative geniuses, and in the focus on 'high design,' style, and aesthetics rather than the economic contexts of design. Similarly, relationships of design to manufacturing have been downplayed in favour of a focus on visualization and front-end design work. Specific types of evidence are used to signify designers and their work, including widely accepted criteria of a designer's status and value in the creative economy, and the use of drawings and technology to illustrate higher-level thinking and mastery of form and process. Perceptions of design as 'magic' are encouraged in the focus on two extremes: the conceptual, pre-production work of design and the final object, ignoring the many steps and contributors in between. As design has become more interdisciplinary and production

more fragmented, collaboration and distributed authorship are increasingly acknowledged, but many actors continue to be overlooked.

In this chapter, I use the term 'design studies' to encompass any scholarly writing on design including design histories and studies of design practice. While these sources are largely Western focused, Chapter 3 recognizes calls in design studies for more globalized accounts.

1. History of Design Practice

Outside of an economic framework, it is difficult to understand the reasons behind the division of design labour, or the financially motivated relationships that drive networks of production, circulation, and consumption. Design is an economic activity just as much as it is artistic or social, but the relationship between design and economy is often not discussed in design studies. Design historian Penny Sparke is one of the few who makes the connection clear: "Designing, more than any other creative activity depends, in spite of the efforts of idealistic individuals to alter the fact, on industry for its *raison d'être* and it is no coincidence, therefore, that the story of the evolution of the design profession [...] echoes the story of the evolution of capitalism in this century."³³ The select histories that deal with this subject illustrate how the designer's role has changed in response to the needs of industry, and inform the following account of design work from early manufacturing to the organization of design work today.³⁴

The emergence of the designer as a recognized professional is usually traced to mid-eighteenth century Britain, to the early days of the Industrial Revolution. Josiah Wedgwood, founder of Wedgwood pottery in 1759 in Staffordshire (UK), was not the first to separate design tasks from those of making, but he may have been the first to prioritize the role of the profession.³⁵ He outsourced design and hired modellers to create forms for others to copy in his factory. To increase control over production and reduce variation, he divided tasks and developed instructions for employees, striving to "make machines of men."³⁶ The creation of a group or class of workers who develop drawings, models, and guidelines for other workers to carry out was the beginning of a conception of design that it is still relevant today.

³³ Penny Sparke, *Consultant Design: The History and Practice of the Designer in Industry* (London: Pembrige Press, 1983), 88.

³⁴ Sparke, *Consultant Design*; Julier, *The Culture of Design*; John Heskett, *Design and the Creation of Value*, ed. Clive Dilnot and Suzan Boztepe (London ; New York, NY: Bloomsbury Academic, an imprint of Bloomsbury Publishing Plc, 2017).

³⁵ Chapter 2, Adrian Forty, *Objects of Desire: Design and Society Since 1750*, 1st edition 1986 (New York, N.Y: Thames & Hudson, 2005); Błaszczuk, *Imagining Consumers*.

³⁶ Forty, Adrien. *Objects of Desire: Design and Society since 1750*. First published 1986. London: Thames and Hudson Ltd., 1992.

The invention of the designer's role is linked to the division of the craftsman's labour, a topic I return to in Chapter 4. Sparke describes the contrast in positions: the craftsman "always makes his product as well as, or even simultaneously with, planning it, whereas the designer is, by definition, part of a divided labour system and, therefore, does not, and indeed usually cannot, make the product himself."³⁷ This separation of craft from design coincided with the mechanization of production and profit demanded by capitalism—standardization and the division of labour were considered necessary for mass production and consumption.³⁸ Dividing conceptual and manual labour, the head and the hand, is part of that logic, which attaches the designer to the intellectual and managerial skills of planning, while relieving them of the ability to make. According to this model, the designer requires a system of divided labour because they are reliant on others to see their vision through.

The division of labour led to increasing specialization and hierarchies in professions based on skill, training, and the separation of processes of conception and execution, but the transition away from traditional ways of making was more gradual and less clear cut than histories of the Industrial Revolution might imply. There was variation in how professions were affected, in how the designer was recognized, and in how other actors influenced product design. For example, the textiles industry was easily automated in large-scale factories while shoemaking was more challenging to mechanize.³⁹ In the nineteenth century, the designer was still relatively anonymous within the factory, "interchangeable with, in turns, the fine artist, the craftsman, the architect, or the engineer."⁴⁰ Sparke provides an example from the late nineteenth century of the overlap of professions in the early days of car manufacturing: it was the craftsman who carried forward the profession of carriage builder and joined forces with the engineer before there was ever a designated career in automobile design.⁴¹ Historian Regina Lee Blaszczyk's study of manufacturers and retailers from 1865 – 1945 opens up the product development process to show that non-designers played an integral role in how things looked. Her research demonstrates that intermediaries between industry and consumers influenced design, including shopkeepers, retail buyers, salesmen, advertisers, home economists, and

³⁷ Sparke, *Consultant Design*, 1.

³⁸ Sparke, 1.

³⁹ David O. Whitten and Bessie E. Whitten, eds., *Handbook of American Business History* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1990), 220.

⁴⁰ Sparke, *Consultant Design*, 19.

⁴¹ Penny Sparke, *An Introduction to Design and Culture: 1900 to the Present*, 3 edition (London ; New York: Routledge, 2013), 48.

market researchers.⁴² These different areas of expertise are still evident today among actors who interpret consumer needs and identify new product opportunities for manufacturers.

It was not until the first half of the twentieth century, that 'industrial designer' was solidified as a profession, recognized by the American Patent Office as early as 1913 and more generally by the public in the 1920s.⁴³ The title originated in other professional terminology, like 'decorative artists' and 'industrial manufacture' (related to the nineteenth century label of the Industrial Revolution), and corresponded to the adoption of another twentieth century term, 'mass production,' in the United States.⁴⁴ In the 1920s, two parallel models of design work emerged, as described by Sparke. In Britain, in-house designers were more common and were still seen as part of the trades, paid less than other skilled labour in the factory such as machinists.⁴⁵ In the US, trends emerged that would shape how design is conceived of today: a more economically motivated design response to a growing consumer market (as opposed to the more ideological and artistic approach in Europe), the development by engineers and inventors of technical products for mass production with little to no emphasis on ornament (as opposed to design weighed down by the European tradition of decorative arts), and the designer as consultant.⁴⁶ The latter had roots in the advertising industry—talented illustrators of consumer goods left ad agencies to form their own studios in response to client requests for updated product designs, demonstrating the value of design drawings as a visual sales tool and symbol of design work.⁴⁷ Forty points out that these so-called "new" American designers, who were given so much attention in the 1930s and 40s (e.g. Raymond Loewy and Walter Dorwin Teague), were essentially repeating what Wedgwood's modelers had done in the eighteenth

⁴² Blaszczyk, *Imagining Consumers*, 13.

⁴³ Industrial Designers Society of America, "History of IDSA," Industrial Designers Society of America - IDSA, December 3, 2014, <http://www.idsa.org/history-idsa>.

⁴⁴ Sparke identifies the first instance of professional industrial design in Europe in 1907 with the formation of the Deutscher Werkbund, an association that strategically brought together art, craft, engineering, and industry. Leaders of the Deutscher Werkbund were caught in a debate about the value of design that illustrates the tension between industry and art, a debate that still resonates today: should design be in the service of mass production, or should the designer's artistic freedom and individuality be encouraged to improve the aesthetics of mass-produced goods? Sparke, *Consultant Design*, 20; Jonathan Woodham, *Twentieth-Century Design*, First edition (Oxford ; New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 20–21; Historian David Hounshell explains that "Fordism" and the "American system of manufactures" preceded the widely-used term "mass production," which received its label in an article ghost written for Henry Ford at the invitation of the Encyclopedia Britannica in 1925. David Hounshell, *From the American System to Mass Production, 1800-1932: The Development of Manufacturing Technology in the United States* (JHU Press, 1985), 1.

⁴⁵ Sparke, *Consultant Design*, 53.

⁴⁶ Sparke, 18–25.

⁴⁷ Sparke, 23–25.

century, but for new product types, such as cars and radios.⁴⁸ The number of consultancies dropped during the Depression of the 1930s and again after World War II, when big companies found it less expensive to hire in-house designers.⁴⁹ The British model was tied to the longer tradition of the designer immersed in industry, in which the designer was equal to other positions in manufacturing, usually anonymous and overshadowed by the company brand. The American model was motivated more by design as a tool for sales and differentiation, and paved the way for the celebration of individual designers.

The two world wars led to structural changes in industry and new roles for designers. Governments and manufacturers engaged designers in the application of new materials and technologies to support war efforts like new infrastructure, transportation, and temporary housing. Following the Second World War, the substantial investment in war-time manufacturing and organization of production was redirected to fuel the 'post war economic miracle,' a period of intense building, expansive suburbs, and mass consumption.⁵⁰ The scale of manufacturing and opportunities for industrial designers in North America during this period was unprecedented, including in Canadian-owned factories and the American branch plant economy. The economic recovery of West Germany, Italy, and Japan in particular, illustrated how design could help to rebuild industry and national identity, as seen in the scale of those countries' exports (rising 247, 249, and 378 percent respectively), and identifiable national strengths and styles.⁵¹ Design historian Jonathan Woodham highlights the importance of American management techniques in influencing production in Europe, and the rise of international brands and corporate identities (e.g. Coca-Cola, McDonald's, Sony, IBM), along with big-name designers in the sale of consumer goods in the decades immediately following the war.⁵² While manufacturing jobs continued to grow into the 1970s in the United States, reaching 19.5 million jobs in 1979, the recession of the early 1980s saw those numbers decline permanently.⁵³ This was compounded by many other concurrent factors, not least of which were Chinese economic reforms and neoliberal trade policies that facilitated offshore manufacturing.⁵⁴

⁴⁸ Forty, *Objects of Desire*, 41.

⁴⁹ Sparke, *Consultant Design*, 35–37.

⁵⁰ Donald Albrecht, ed., *World War II and the American Dream: How Wartime Building Changed a Nation* (Washington, D.C. : Cambridge, Mass: The MIT Press, 1995), xvi.

⁵¹ Woodham, *Twentieth-Century Design*, 121.

⁵² Woodham, 141–163.

⁵³ Smil, *Made in the USA: The Rise and Retreat of American Manufacturing.*, x.

⁵⁴ Smil, 110.

Beginning as early as the 1960s, imports to North America of clothing, footwear, toys, and cars precipitated de-industrialization.⁵⁵ In North America and Europe, the design sector started to shift its focus from the shrinking manufacturing industry to the growing service economy, with increasing jobs in government and finance. In the process, many designers repositioned themselves as business consultants. Tim Brown, president of the design firm IDEO, explains that design used to be “tactical:” it was applied at the end of the product development cycle to make an object attractive to consumers. By the mid- to late-twentieth century, industries such as electronics and automotive started to integrate design earlier in the manufacturing process, and this more “strategic” use of design is now common. For the designer, this meant thinking beyond the product to the entire system within which a product functions, including the planning of processes, systems of delivery, experiences, services, and communications.⁵⁶ This was seen in the increased demand for packaging and retail design as retail chains became the norm and offshore production flooded the market with products that needed differentiation (in 2003, retail became the second largest sector of employment in the United States, below government and above manufacturing).⁵⁷ Industrial designers in particular have been able to adapt their skills to this kind of work, even while product design work itself has diminished.⁵⁸ This shift from design for manufacturing to design for ‘business,’ has helped to reposition the designer as a strategist, a systems thinker functioning at a higher, more intellectual level.

The proliferation of design fields and specialization of designers is an indicator of the “exponential rise” of design that began in the 1980s, which Julier connects to four phases of neoliberalisation: deregulation, the New Economy, financialisation, and austerity.⁵⁹ Taken together, these resulted in new markets for design, new digital technologies that allowed for design work and its communication to take place more quickly, new territories and conditions that allowed for design products to be produced more cheaply, and the positioning of design as a creator of value, and a marker and facilitator of financialisation.⁶⁰ One of the most visible results was that design responded more quickly and with more variety to cycles of fashion, distribution and consumption.⁶¹ The increased demand for design, particularly in areas like

⁵⁵ Smil, 106, 124.

⁵⁶ Brown, Tim. “Design Thinking.” *Harvard Business Review*. June 2008, Vol. 86, 6: 84-92.

⁵⁷ Smil, *Made in the USA: The Rise and Retreat of American Manufacturing*, 132; Julier, *The Culture of Design*, 27.

⁵⁸ Julier, *The Culture of Design*, 26.

⁵⁹ Guy Julier, *Economies of Design* (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications Ltd, 2017), 9–10.

⁶⁰ Julier, 9–10.

⁶¹ Julier, 38.

services, interiors, and retail, led to changes in the speed and organization of the design sector, including terminology and workflows reflective of industry and manufacturing. Julier describes the “neo-Fordist design consultancy” of the 1980s consisting of large design firms structured around the more efficient division of labour and specialized positions.⁶² At the same time, reflective of periods of economic growth, companies invested heavily in in-house design departments. For example, the Sony products planning centre in Tokyo employed 100 people, half of them designers.⁶³ The recession of the early 1990s led to the “post-Fordist design consultancy,” where companies outsourced design services and large design firms were forced to downsize, while flexible specialization in design—the market of small sub-contractors, entrepreneurs and cottage industries – grew, facilitated by more accessible software.⁶⁴

Today, post-Fordist strategies continue to be seen in “concurrent” and “just-in-time” design, involving multiple design teams working on different aspects of a project, possibly in different locations. This is facilitated by shared digital design files, and characterized by a faster reaction to consumer needs and a more integrated use of design throughout the product development process.⁶⁵ Manufacturers are moving away from a Fordist, one-size-fits all approach that requires substantial up-front investment in tooling and production. Rather than pre-determining design solutions and market reception ahead of time, design teams are using more ‘agile’ models, a term borrowed from software development that refers to working over shorter periods to ‘iterate’ and test ideas. In product design, new technologies like 3d printing allow designers to generate prototypes and obtain feedback from users more quickly. ‘Fail faster’ is a motto of this approach, which emphasizes flexibility, iteration, and the ability to adapt quickly. The agile model supports collaboration across teams in which design, engineering, manufacturing, and marketing work together, leading them to understand problems in more depth and more quickly.⁶⁶ These trends point to the interdisciplinarity of design work but also to the desire to design more rapidly and with less financial risk, a significant change for product design and mass production. More time dedicated to prototyping and testing also means changing relationships between designers, makers, and consumers because the user is more consulted and involved throughout the process. This is reflected in the current emphasis on ‘user-centred’ design, design research, and usability testing, which place more emphasis on the

⁶² Julier, *The Culture of Design*, 28–29.

⁶³ Sparke, *Consultant Design*, 50.

⁶⁴ Julier, *The Culture of Design*, 29–30.

⁶⁵ Julier, 33.

⁶⁶ Joris Peels, “Why Agile Engineering Is the Future of Product Design,” accessed July 22, 2017, <https://formlabs.com/blog/agile-engineering-product-development/>.

opinions and behaviours of users, rather than a top-down approach by the designer or manufacturer.

Post-Fordism is evident in the precarity and outsourcing of design work, facilitated by digital communication and leading to new forms of anonymity and invisibility of design labour. Julier explains that design, like other creative industries, has embraced flexible accumulation. It is built around a casualised system of project work with little guarantee of security or protections, but is portrayed as a creative, flexible lifestyle to which young designers should aspire.⁶⁷ This is seen in the dissolution of large design firms, and in the networks of sub-contractors quickly assembled on a project-by-project basis. 'Platform capitalism' has enabled online communities like cadcrowd.com or 99designs.com to connect clients with design labour anywhere and without any regulation – there is no guarantee of design training, professional standards, protection of intellectual property, or even interaction between client and designer.⁶⁸ Reducing barriers to the freelance design workforce, along with cheaper and sometimes unpaid design services, are unpopular notions among more established design communities. However, the success of these web sites illustrates that there are many designers eager to enter the design market, and that customers are willing to outsource design services to the cheapest vendor with little concern for where the designer lives and if they have any connection to or understanding of the target audience. This shows that it is not only the 'unthinking' manual labour that can be sent offshore, but also that some of the most highly regarded, intellectual and creative work of branding and visual identity can be outsourced and, in the case of the examples cited above, devalued as well. This raises questions about who is considered qualified to do design work, what kind of design work is suitable for outsourcing, and what impact this will have on how design work is carried out in the future.

New, more accessible supply chains and technologies have had an impact on the product designer's role, erasing the distances between some makers and consumers, and even questioning the manufacturer's and designer's expertise as offshore factories take over design work and entrepreneurs and consumers take on design and small-scale manufacturing with digital fabrication tools. Improved communication and organization with manufacturers overseas

⁶⁷ Julier, *Economies of Design*, 52.

⁶⁸ In these online platforms, clients pay as little as \$300USD to host a logo competition (or other amounts for other design contests), yielding 30 proposals from designers anywhere in the world. The client can choose to buy one of the submissions, while the rest of the designers go unpaid. The quality of work is vetted to a certain degree through the web site owner, who facilitates transactions and keeps a commission. Cad Crowd, "Hire a Freelancer 3D Modeling, 3D Design, CAD Drafting, Product Design & Interior Design Freelancers | Cad Crowd," accessed September 2, 2017, <https://www.cadcrowd.com/>; 99designs, "99designs," 99designs, accessed September 2, 2017, <https://99designs.com/designers>.

mean that designers and untrained makers can more easily send digital files for production. New software, hardware (smaller, portable, and a fraction of the investment required for factory-level production), and distribution systems, have empowered young designers and small teams to engage in product development on their own terms by cutting out the manufacturer and retailer and localizing production. The so-called hardware revolution has allowed prototyping and batch production using technologies previously available only to large manufacturers and those who could invest in tooling and equipment. A new wave of 'cottage industries' has emerged, organized through local maker spaces and prototyping businesses, and through on-line communities of "virtual guilds" and distribution systems like Etsy.⁶⁹ Crowdfunding sites like Kickstarter provide a new venue for designer-makers to raise their own capital prior to production, removing the need for upfront investment from big manufacturers and retailers. In many cases, the designer's role has become secondary in this latest version of 'as-seen-on-TV' product development. Almost anyone can propose a new product idea, and consumers are often invited to contribute design ideas and financial support, allowing the market to validate products before manufacturing. Inventors bypass designers by taking concepts to local prototypers or sending sketches to offshore factories where their ideas are refined, transformed into technical drawings, and put into production. Whereas the 'democratization' of design in the 1990s referred to the application of design to everyday, affordable products, it is the design process itself that is now made more accessible, though the scale of manufacturing undertaken with these new tools is still just a fraction of what is created through mass production.

Today, product design work varies greatly in scale and control over production and distribution, ranging from nineteenth and twentieth century modes of mass production to the recent revival of something closer to craft. Industrial designers and professors, Roger Ball and Heidi Overhill, summarize four ways that products come into existence today: mass production with mass marketing (e.g. megabrands like Coke and Ford); mass production with niche marketing (e.g. niche brands like Gucci market specific products to narrower audiences); mass customization (products that are individually adjusted to suit everyone in the mass market, made possible by digital technologies and cheaper manufacturing in Asia); and small-scale production and niche marketing (small production runs of specialty goods for tiny markets, made

⁶⁹ Leonardo Bonanni and Amanda Parkes, "Virtual Guilds: Collective Intelligence and the Future of Craft," *The Journal of Modern Craft* 3, no. 2 (July 2010): 179–90.

possible by low capital production and online sales which allows the designer to sell directly to the consumer).⁷⁰

Each of these deploy the services of designers in different ways, from the more traditional role within mass production developing concepts for others to execute in great quantities, to more recent models in which the designer owns the means of production and distribution, and has a direct relationship with the end-user. Both of these models co-exist, requiring different types of design labour and different interactions with actors throughout production, circulation, and consumption. This complicates easy definitions of design and opens the way for non-designers to participate in the design economy.

2. The Fetishism of Designers, Design Processes and Products

Traits of Western design practice in the twenty-first century, such as specialization, digitization, and sub-contracting, are logical developments according to the history of the division of labour as outlined above. As a profession, design is continually changing in response to the economy and new demands by clients and technologies. It is therefore no surprise that the design profession has developed in a similar fashion to other creative industries and is highly valued in the current ‘knowledge economy.’⁷¹ However, representations of design work have exaggerated certain qualities of design practice, emphasizing intellectual and innovative aspects, and portraying design as an activity that is democratized, de-materialized, and de-territorialized. This adds value to designers and their work but misrepresents who and what are involved in the production, circulation, and consumption of contemporary design.

In the following section, I demonstrate that designers, design practice, and products have been fetishized in a variety of ways, helping to promote the consumption of design. Sparke describes the “cult” and “magic” of design embodied in objects and images that make entire processes and sources of labour invisible.⁷² The lingering bias of art history prioritizes the aesthetics of design, removing it from the economic contexts in which it operates. Certain types of evidence, particularly drawings, now stand in for the entire design process and the designer’s ability to visualize and delegate instruction. Designers are celebrated for individuality, thought leadership, and creative problem solving without considering the many others who contribute to their work, or the unoriginal, monotonous aspects of design labour. Similarly, depictions of collaboration in design fetishize the studio and select encounters with end-users and clients, truncating the design process and limiting the breadth of actors involved beyond design

⁷⁰ Roger Ball and Heidi Overhill, *DesignDirect - How to Start Your Own Micro Brand* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong Polytechnic School of Design, 2012), 161.

⁷¹ Julier, *Economies of Design*, 45.

⁷² Sparke, *Consultant Design*.

conception.⁷³ While distributed authorship and interdisciplinarity are lauded in design studies, accounts of non-designers and processes that do not fit conventional relationships are rare.

2.1 Design as Art, Separated from Economy and Manufacturing

Design history reflects its origins in art history, which have contributed to a focus on aesthetics, 'high design,' and the designer as artist. The work of art historian Nikolaus Pevsner, *Pioneers of the Modern Movement* (first published in 1936), helped to establish a canon of design history, tracing a line from the nineteenth century Arts and Crafts Movement, to Art Nouveau, to the Bauhaus in 1914, which he considered the true modern style, representative of the twentieth century zeitgeist, and which he framed within art and architectural history.⁷⁴ Design history emerged as a field in its own right in the 1970s in Britain, still closely linked to art history, and surveys of design history published today continue to build on the categories established by Pevsner, reflecting the same iconic people and objects.⁷⁵

The influence of art history has helped to steer the conversation away from the economic and ideological contexts within which design actually functions, as noted by architecture and design historian Adrian Forty:

Particularly in Britain, the study of design and its history has suffered from a form of cultural lobotomy which has left design connected only to the eye, and severed its connections to the brain and to the pocket. It is commonly assumed that design would somehow be soiled if it were associated too closely with commerce, a misconceived attempt at intellectual hygiene that has done no good at all. It has obscured the fact that design came into being at a particular stage in the history of capitalism and played a vital part in the creation of industrial wealth. Limiting it to a purely artistic activity has made it seem trivial and relegated it to the status of a mere cultural appendix.⁷⁶

While framing design as art makes it seem to exist outside of the economy, it also serves to increase its financial value – art objects can be sold for higher prices than as consumer products.

⁷³ For example, images of designers working together in 'creative environments,' usually brightly lit, somewhat messy with work in progress; design histories that focus on celebrated design collaborators like Charles and Ray Eames; studios that sell creative process like IDEO; or the more secretive in-house design departments of major brands like Apple, Nike, and Phillips.

⁷⁴ Nikolaus Pevsner and Richard Weston, *Pioneers of Modern Design*, Fourth Edition (Bath, UK: Yale University Press by Palazzo Editions, 2005).

⁷⁵ Fallan, *Design History: Understanding Theory and Method.*, 2.

⁷⁶ Forty, *Objects of Desire*, 6.

Nevertheless, the separation of design from economy in design studies is peculiar given that design has been an acknowledged part of government and industry strategies to improve economic competitiveness since at least the early nineteenth century. Among design historians, the criteria of 'good design' are debated, but financial success as a measure is rarely discussed. Products noted for form, function, and social good are celebrated, but with little regard for their success in the market. This is at odds with the manufacturer's perspective that 'design for profit' is a key consideration and design consultancies sell their services in terms of business strategy. 'Value-added' and 'design thinking' are more recent terms in the business of design, but the underlying message remains that design builds financial value. It is an investment for manufacturers, and business decisions influence design work down to the smallest details.

There is a similar gap in writing about design and its relationship to production: attention given to manufacturing diminishes as offshore production grows. Design historians have clearly established design's connection to manufacturing in the contexts of the Industrial Revolution, division of labour, and design reform debates of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Design's economic value was tied to industrialization and automation from the start: "the great advantage of machinery was its potential to manufacture a single design endlessly; the successful design became a very much more valuable possession, for it was what released the machine's capacity to make a profit."⁷⁷ In Forty's account of eighteenth century design and manufacturing, he concludes that design's strength was its ability to create for mass production while satisfying customer taste.⁷⁸ Design has been positioned as a link between industrial production and mass-consumption, connected to the rise of the middle-class consumer from the nineteenth to mid-twentieth century.

However, little attention is given to manufacturing in design histories that cover the second half of the twentieth century to the present. Rather, the focus has shifted to the work of design consultancies and movements, and design's relationship to business instead of fabrication. The rise of consumer society in the 1980s marked a further shift in design history from production to consumption studies.⁷⁹ As an area of study, mass production became increasingly difficult to study as manufacturing moved offshore. As the scale of global

⁷⁷ Forty, 58.

⁷⁸ Forty, *Objects of Desire*, Chapter 2.

⁷⁹ Adamson, Cooke, and Harrod, "Editorial Introduction," 8.

production grew throughout the twentieth century, mass-produced goods lost some of their novelty. Their connection to design became more tenuous as imported objects were noted for being copied and made cheaply in Japan and later Korea, Taiwan, and China. Much of Western design is now so physically and conceptually distanced from production that portrayals of the design process ending with conception and instruction go unquestioned – the design story concludes when sketches and technical drawings are emailed to the other side of the world for execution. The absence of manufacturing and mass production in accounts of current design practice reinforces the international separation of head and hand between nations and ignores the growth of mass production globally.

It is an interesting paradox that a large number of design history books, magazines, and museums continue to focus on Western product design, yet the amount of product design work in Europe (and likely in North America) is quite small in comparison to architecture, graphic, and interior design.⁸⁰ Globally, the growth of mass-produced consumer goods implies related growth in product design. Design studies professor Guy Julier reports that in 2005, “a new product was reportedly launched every three-and-a-half minutes in the world,” including “68,000 non-food products.”⁸¹ Somewhere, someone is designing all of these ‘things,’ yet the design that is celebrated and studied generally consists of Western designers and companies, which actually produce only a small fraction of those products. Though there is increasing representation of East Asian designers and companies in international design awards and exhibitions, a vast number of unacknowledged actors remain.

2.2 Drawing, Technology, and the Magic of Design

Design work has been reified in a limited selection of objects that emphasize either the designer’s hand as a tool for visualization and planning (similar to the artist’s hand, a direct translation from artistic vision to paper), or the completed product as the embodiment of the designer’s vision. Drawings, models, and prototypes are the most prominently used signifiers of design process, but when they are the only evidence of design labour, they reproduce the ‘magic’ of design. It appears as though one automatically leads to the other, from idea to paper to product, with no trace of how the thing is actually made, its intended meanings, or other steps and points of negotiation in fabrication. The rise of draftsmanship in particular has been used to demonstrate the evolution of designers’ skills and status. The processes of abstraction involved in drawing and visualizing have come to represent a higher level of thinking and planning.⁸²

⁸⁰ Sparke, *Consultant Design*, 66.

⁸¹ Julier, *The Culture of Design*, 36.

⁸² Julier, 41.

Adamson describes drawing as a tool that allows for “systems of distributed agency,” providing the mechanism for the designer to control making, visualize the entire process, and communicate the work required of others.⁸³ The importance of drawing is underlined in the Industrial Designers Society of America’s 32-step design process, where half of the steps describe sketches, illustrations, technical drawings, and renderings.⁸⁴ The variety of drawings points to specialization and training, including the use of sophisticated software. They also correspond to a hierarchy of skills—the hand-drawn sketch or colour rendering is the most highly regarded for its artistry, while the labour-intensive technical drawings are most likely produced by so-called ‘CAD monkeys’ in junior positions.⁸⁵ The fetish of the drawing is reinforced in the museum and art world, where drawings often stand in for ‘the design’ (in lieu of the final object or other materials). Once removed from the realm of its original function—signed, framed, displayed, published—the drawing is no longer a communication tool to convey information to others in production, but is reified as an expression of the designer’s creative genius and control over systems of making. The sketch is elevated and treated as art in its own right, divorced from production processes and the final object, often with a high financial value attached.⁸⁶

Machinery and technology also play signifying roles in the division of labour. They substitute human action by storing ‘dead labour,’ replacing human labour on the assembly line or rendering workers as machine operators.⁸⁷ However, the designer’s relationship to technology is perceived differently. Though most workers can be seen as servants to the machine, designers maintain the image of masters of technology who control production. Designers are perceived to be using software and tools to their advantage, marshaling resources, unlocking the machine’s potential, and maximizing equipment and human capacity on the factory floor. This perception diminishes the agency and autonomy of others working in

⁸³ Glenn Adamson, *The Invention of Craft* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2013), 17.

⁸⁴ Mark Evans, Loughborough Design School, and Industrial Designers Society of America, “What Is Industrial Design?,” Industrial Designers Society of America - IDSA, 2015, <http://www.idsa.org/education/what-is-industrial-design>.

⁸⁵ The derogatory term ‘CAD monkey’ refers to computer aided design and reflects a further division of labour among those who can draw as well as the labour intensive process involved in technical renderings.

⁸⁶ In the case of well-known designers, sketches can be worth a significant amount at auction. For example, Daniel Liebeskind’s napkin sketch of the Royal Ontario Museum was valued at \$25,000 (2004) and Raymond Loewy’s sketch of a train sold for over \$4,000 (2001). Christies, “A Sketch of the Locomotive S1, Raymond Loewy for the Pennsylvania Railroad, circa 1937,” accessed July 18, 2017, http://www.christies.com/lotfinder/lot_details.aspx?intObjectID=2050722&from=searchresults&intObjectID=2050722&sid=67ce8cf7-ee3a-4763-8150-2a3d197fede4.

⁸⁷ Harry Braverman, *Labor and Monopoly Capital: The Degradation of Work in the Twentieth Century*, Any edition (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1974), 195–202.

production, and suggests a unidirectional relationship where, as with machinery, their labour is brought to life by the designers' instructions.

The 'magic' of design is seen in the designer's proficiency in digital product design, which appears to condense time and space in the digitization of design processes and tools (e.g. softwares, computer assisted drawing, drawing tablets and styluses, scanning and prototyping technologies), as well as the design of digital products (e.g. websites, mobile applications, social media). Julier comments on the nature of "software-related fields:" "the design work is as close to the finished article as one might get, with the possible exception of traditional craft practice. In other words, there are few or no intermediary elements of production involved. What the designer sees on screen is what the end-user will see."⁸⁸ This is not a description of physical product design per se, but the idea of design moving seamlessly from the designer's screen to the consumer contributes to the perception of contemporary design processes as instantaneous. Digitally rendered and 3-d printed prototypes allow for the simulacra of a finished product, ready for delivery to the consumer's door, but physical product design is not a direct translation from screen to object. Rather it is a concept transformed by real materials, machinery, labour, and other conditions of production. Global networks are engaged in production, along with sub-industries of mediating companies that bridge design and manufacturing. Sales narratives highlight the front-end of product development but reveal little about the months and often years of work to bring products to fruition in factories overseas.

2.3 The Heroic Designer

The practice and figure of the designer have been fetishized in design studies and popular culture, presenting the image of 'heroic designer' to drive consumption of design services and products. Manufacturers and media promote designers as sole authors of unique products,⁸⁹ while designers themselves have been blamed for starting cycles of self-promotion encouraged by the media and museums keen to celebrate "pioneers."⁹⁰ Forty links this practice to fine art and the portrayal of designers as artists in industry:

⁸⁸ Julier, *The Culture of Design*, 34.

⁸⁹ Julier, 45.

⁹⁰ Woodham, *Twentieth-Century Design*, 68–69; As far back as 1940, industrial designer Harold Van Doren raised concerns about exaggerating their importance as individual creators, encouraging them to be team players instead of "prima donna[s]." Harold Van Doren, "The Designer's Place in Industry," in *The Industrial Design Reader*, ed. Carma Gorman, Originally published in Harold van Doren, *Industrial Design: A Practical Guide*, 1940 (New York: Allworth Press, 2003), 142–44.

Whatever degree of artistic imagination is lavished upon the design of objects, it is done not to give expression to the designer's creativity and imagination, but to make the products saleable and profitable. Calling industrial design 'art' suggests that designers occupy the principal role in production, a misconception which effectively severs most of the connections between design and the processes of society.⁹¹

Design history is complicit in the valorization of designers as artists and independent creators, celebrating select 'stars' and narratives of individual creativity, innovation, and 'the new.'⁹² The result, according to Julier, is that design historians have been responsible for an "account of design [that] has been progressively separated from the reality of its practice."⁹³ Similarly, Sparke writes that the "cult of design has raised the status of the designer from a member of the production team to a kind of magician," alluding to a profession seemingly able to generate ingenious solutions and manipulate resources to create beautiful things⁹⁴ or transform "worthless products into valuable ones."⁹⁵ In her opinion, this "increases the mystique attached to the designer's function and removes him even further from the real world of manufacture and consumption."⁹⁶ Reifying designers in this way has made their names and images commodities in themselves, interchangeable with the iconic objects for which they receive credit.⁹⁷

The 'magic' of design is heightened with the promise of even greater financial returns when the designer is positioned at the top of the 'creative class.' Professions at the highest level of this hierarchy are expected to not only improve the value of goods and services, but to usher in a more prosperous economy overall. In the so-called 'creative economy,' as defined by urbanist Richard Florida, levels of creativity at work equate to levels of economic class and thus to the division and valuation of labour. In his contentious book, *The Rise of the Creative Class*, Florida describes the "super creative core" at the top, a group "whose economic function is to create new ideas, new technology and/or new creative content" that can be widely applied. This group includes knowledge workers, professional and technical workers, as well as "symbolic analysts" and those who "create meaningful forms" (e.g. designers, scientists, engineers, artists, musicians). This is followed by "creative professionals," whose jobs require less creativity and who support the creative core (e.g. business, law, health, technology). Below these are the

⁹¹ Forty, *Objects of Desire*, 7.

⁹² Fallan, *Design History: Understanding Theory and Method.*, 9–10, 13.

⁹³ Julier, *The Culture of Design*, 46.

⁹⁴ Sparke, *Consultant Design*, 45.

⁹⁵ Sparke, 2.

⁹⁶ Sparke, 2.

⁹⁷ Sparke, 45.

working and service classes, paid to carry out the ideas of the creative class or take on tasks the creative class does not have time for or want to do. Creativity, autonomy, flexibility, and pay all decrease as one moves down Florida's scale.⁹⁸ This construct makes clear the designer's status in the division of labour, but this 'hero' of the post-industrial economy is a model that applies to few people. Many designers are closer to the economic status of the working and service classes than Florida's super creative core, a reminder that 'designer' is not a one-size-fits-all title but represents a diversity of positions, creativity, and power.

There exists nevertheless a widely held ideal of the archetypal designer who has become recognizable using certain criteria, even if the image and lifestyle do not apply to most. Julier labels this "designeriness," the idea that there is a designerly quality and aspect of performativity to the role.⁹⁹ Clients and the media expect designers to demonstrate design ability through creativity, ingenuity, and style, and through certain behaviours like visualization or unconventional thinking. The stereotype of the designer is identifiable based on cultural capital (having the right design education, being connected to networks of other creatives, 'curating' a work environment that looks like the design studios seen in magazines, or dressing a certain way – e.g. in black with appropriately interesting eye glasses and footwear).¹⁰⁰ Designeriness can be measured in awards, professional designations, media coverage, inclusion in museum collections, and speaking engagements. These systems of recognition elevate certain star designers like Jonathan Ives, Karim Rashid, or Philippe Starck, who embody the image of design as creative, prosperous, and glamorous, but they represent a fraction of the profession.

⁹⁸ Richard Florida, *The Rise of the Creative Class: And How It's Transforming Work, Leisure, Community, and Everyday Life* (Basic Books, 2003), 8.

⁹⁹ Julier, *The Culture of Design*, 40; Julier, *Economies of Design*, 38.

¹⁰⁰ Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste*, trans. R. Nice (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1984).

2.4 Collaboration and Distributed Authorship

Despite the emphasis on the individual, collaboration is celebrated in portrayals of design work, and the discourse of design as interdisciplinary and consultative has appeared throughout design history in accounts of iconic design groups, agencies, and socially minded projects.¹⁰¹ However, these depictions tend to fetishize the front-end, pre-production work that takes place in design studios or onsite with clients or end-users. Collaborators are rarely explicitly acknowledged, while designers are presented as the creative leaders, facilitating creativity and transforming others' ideas through words and visualizations. Contemporary design agencies capitalize on the rhetoric and imagery of collaboration, using signifiers like open workspaces, white boards, and sticky notes, or group-brainstorming sessions led by creative thinkers. Design firm IDEO has modeled the way in making interdisciplinary teamwork a key part of its process and corporate identity. The IDEO design process, as explained in the *Harvard Business Review*, emphasizes consultation and the involvement of non-designers in the research, ideation, prototyping, and marketing of a product, but the extensive collaboration required to transform the prototype into the final consumer product is rarely shown.¹⁰² Community-based, participatory, and user-centred design are other approaches to collaboration in which design practitioners aim to level out power imbalances in the design process by de-centering designers and valuing the input of other stakeholders, especially end-users. In this scenario, design is a process that intentionally reaches far beyond the specific knowledge of the designer and encourages multiple sources of authorship and authority. In accounts of this type of work, it is the citizens and clients who have traditionally been acknowledged as having more say. While this model may potentially threaten the role of the designer, the story is still told in terms of design-led collaboration.

Prioritizing the individual product designer in design studies can be misleading, and even when collective design or distributed authorship are recognized, it tends to be a limited perspective on who contributes design labour. Relationships between actors are rarely explored in depth. There is little research on how manufacturers, distributors, retailers, and material

¹⁰¹ For example, the Bauhaus, the German art school founded in 1919, explicitly promoted the merits of "collective" design, involving businessmen, technicians, engineers, and artists. As mentioned above, the canon of design history features early twentieth century design consultancies established on the collaborative model of American advertising agencies. Walter Dorwin Teague and his contemporary Raymond Loewy, both industrial design "legends," offered a variety of services beyond design, which required employing and contracting a mix of designers, modellers, draughtsmen, technicians, advertisers, manufacturers, architects, engineers, and business psychologists. Walter Gropius, "The Theory and Organization of the Bauhaus," in *Bauhaus: 1919 – 1928*, ed. Herbert Bayer, Walter Gropius, and Ise Gropius, London: Secker & Warburg, 1975 (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1938), 20–29; Sparke, *Consultant Design*.

¹⁰² Tim Brown, "Design Thinking," *Harvard Business Review* 86, no. 6 (June 2008): 84–92.

suppliers influence design; for example, how advertising and retailing interact with design to drive demand and create meaning, or how consumers appropriate products in ways designers could never predict. Groups and studios (e.g. Bauhaus, Memphis, Frog, Smart Design, IDEO), along with brands and companies (e.g. Herman Miller, Ikea, Alessi), are celebrated as responsible for design, giving corporate personas rather than employees or users credit for products. The structures of these organizations and the involvement of many individuals are often ignored, with the exception of leadership roles like founders, CEOs, design directors, and well-known designers contracted or brought in-house. Occasionally other professionals receive credit for product design, like famous architects (e.g. Frank Gehry and Zaha Hadid), or engineers, who are almost never named though the centrality of their role is noted, especially in the design of new technologies, machinery, and transportation.¹⁰³

The systemic omission or masking of parts of the design process and the people responsible makes recognizing other sources of creativity and contributions to design more difficult. It is challenging to find archival materials and to dig beneath the surface of manufacturer and designer narratives in order to account for these complex relationships. Historically, designers have had varying levels of influence over production and as a result, many of their names were not recorded in design history. Designers of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries were more likely to be unknown and part of the factory staff, rather than figures of real authority.¹⁰⁴ Now, as craft historian Glenn Adamson observes, post-disciplinary production necessarily distributes authorship, but not credit.¹⁰⁵ Apple is an example of a brand with a few iconic designers receiving credit for products designed by much larger teams. As Fallan points out, Apple illustrates the challenge facing design historians when it comes to capturing “the fragmentation of competences and tasks in design practice.”¹⁰⁶ Steve Jobs and Jonathan Ive are the two names attached to Apple products, but 14 inventors are listed on the iPod ‘ornamental design’ patent, representing a more accurate picture of the design team, according to Fallan.¹⁰⁷ Outside of product and other design disciplines (i.e. taking place outside of design studios, providing services to other sectors like finance and health), it is easier to recognize the collaborative nature of design practice, as Julier notes: “we achieve a more varied and complex view which accepts that creative work comes as the result of interplay,

¹⁰³ Sparke, *An Introduction to Design and Culture*, 48.

¹⁰⁴ Wedgwood was reportedly the first manufacturer to use named designers to sell mass-produced goods, a practice that became common in nineteenth century Europe, and continues to be exploited by manufacturers today. Sparke, *Consultant Design*, 8, 14.

¹⁰⁵ Adamson, *The Invention of Craft*, 36.

¹⁰⁶ Fallan, *Design History: Understanding Theory and Method*, xii.

¹⁰⁷ Fallan, xii.

collaboration and support between creative people and non-creative people. It is a team effort.”¹⁰⁸ These observations point to the need for more holistic accounts of authorship and the potential for a richer understanding of the design process. Given the collaborative nature of design, design studies must do more to account for other actors and inputs.

¹⁰⁸ Julier, *Economies of Design*, 42.

Chapter 3: Global Design

The division of labour in which design is fetishized as an intellectual activity distanced from manufacturing is outlined in Chapters 2 and 4. In this chapter, I argue that the same logic is reproduced at a global scale, separating design and making between locations of so-called 'core' and 'periphery.' The dualism of local labour as creative and offshore labour as mindless is part of perceived international hierarchies of advanced and developing economies, but there lacks any deep understanding of the differences between types of creative work taking place across locations. Certain Western centres are represented as having greater design heritage and capacity, and these locations are expected, therefore, to delegate execution of production to other areas known for manufacturing. Furthermore, hierarchies of nations recognized for design (post-industrial) at one end, and mass production (industrial) at the other, reflect established beliefs about modernization and the steps of 'industrial upgrading' that emerging economies are expected to follow, meaning that traditional definitions of design go unrecognized in those places. This division is evident in design history's focus on certain countries, and in the approach to innovation by economists and geographers in global commodity studies. At a more symbolic level, certain nations, cities, and regions are reified as authors of design; these locations become part of brands that circulate globally, manifested in 'made in' and 'designed in' labelling and advertising. "Imaginative geographies" conflate location with select values and expertise, and influence understanding of where design activity occurs globally.¹⁰⁹ The resulting perceptions of design as an activity occurring primarily in advanced economies distract from specific local conditions that inform the global practice of design.

Issues of provenance are central to my project in terms of determining the sources of authorship and influences on the design of global commodities. In the first section of this chapter, I argue that the tension between culture-free and culturally-grounded design, between objects perceived as fluid and placeless, and those clearly tied to specific locations (or at least marketed as such, like "Designed by Apple in California, Assembled in China"), is productive in assessing how global design is practiced, inscribed, and appropriated by producers and consumers. Ignoring the heterogeneity of locations of production and consumption risks perpetuating the understanding of global design as homogeneous, or elevating high-profile places as the only recognized centres of power and activity. At the same time, accepting stories

¹⁰⁹ Reimer and Leslie, "Design, National Imaginaries, and the Home Furnishings Commodity Chain," 147.

of local production and national identity at face value obscures the complex global networks in which design operates.

Indeed, the global fragmentation of production is changing the spatial distribution of design activity yet the transnational division of design labour has not been the subject of focused academic study. In the second part of this chapter, I look at global commodity chain studies (GCCs), including the World Trade Organization's (WTO) Made in the World initiative (MITW), and their value to my project in terms of complicating and providing a more nuanced understanding of how the work of creating products is divided over space. GCCs allow the investigation of shifts in power and specialization both geographically and within systems of production and distribution. Research into GCCs show, for example, how innovation is distributed through supply chains, whether new product development is driven by manufacturers, retailers, or others, and how the global landscape is changing to reveal new areas of strength in unexpected regions. GCCs provide concrete analyses of the fragmentation of production and the different types of value added to a single product by multiple locations. They also offer insight into the many constraints and contexts that influence design along the chain.

In the third section of this chapter, I argue that despite the globalization of design, the nation continues to play a significant role in terms of regulating, promoting, and stimulating design work. Furthermore, goods carry ideas of design and authorship, reifying nations as originators of consumer products and obscuring global conditions of design and production. National identity reflects perceived strengths and weaknesses of a country's design and manufacturing sectors. This understanding helps actors to position themselves in relation to others in the commodity chain, and to judge the quality and value of globally circulating goods.

The approaches outlined in this chapter can be simplified in two contrasting but co-existing models of the global practice of design. The first model is characterized by dynamic exchanges and continual shifts in power represented through Appadurai's flows and multi-sited global networks, the kind of activity recognized by GCCs and Actor Network Theory (discussed further in Chapter 5), documenting local and global connections regardless of borders. The second model is hierarchical; the binary of core and periphery is still very much present; and the nation maintains significant power. The first scenario implies that design is continually moving and evolving as ideas, images, objects, and designers circulate, pick up, and transform local influences from around the world. The second suggests that design is a top-down system of communication, where research, ideation, and creativity take place in certain areas of the world before being sent to peripheral regions for execution. The global fragmentation of production

and shifting “territories of design” are recognized, but old hierarchies also persist in the global division of design labour.¹¹⁰

1. Global Design and Issues of Provenance

Global design reflects a new spatial logic that has resulted from the conditions of pan-continental production, including in the increased speed of information and manufacturing allowed by digitization.¹¹¹ This is especially apparent in the complex and seemingly intangible global system of fast fashion, a term which refers to the clothing industry but increasingly applies to product design generally. Fast fashion is made possible by offshore manufacturing and online distribution, where, as fashion historian Christopher Breward describes, the “traditional relationship between time, place and fashion creativity” is disrupted and appears to be dematerialized.¹¹² Design and craft historians Glenn Adamson, Sarah Teasley, and Giorgio Riello explain that, “within the design world, offshore manufacturing, digital design and manufacturing technologies and automated distribution systems have meant the intensification of transnationally travelling images and objects.”¹¹³ This allows not only a far greater reach in the dissemination and consumption of design trends, but also a corresponding blurring and dissolution of their origins. Ideas, images, components, products, and capital seem to move at lightning speed, drawing from invisible and inaccessible sources around the world, managed by virtual inventories, sold online, and shipped out from undisclosed locations. In some cases, products and images seem to circulate with no origin or restriction, while in others, those same objects are deliberately sourced, tracked, and acquired from specific locations. The human relationship to these global products is rarely straightforward or transparent, but rather mirrors cultural geographer Tim Edensor’s description of post-modern global identities as fragmented, mobile, fluid, networked, transnational, and virtual.¹¹⁴ These concepts point to the challenge of identifying authorship or mapping design actors and influences to a limited number of places.

The term ‘global design’ has come to refer to the borderless, on-line workplace of designers and to the mobility of a cultural elite that travels frequently to meet with clients and suppliers, circulating design concepts widely for production and promotional purposes. Multinational firms frequently locate their design departments where designers have access to

¹¹⁰ Julier, *Economies of Design*, 6.

¹¹¹ Adamson, *The Invention of Craft*, 165.

¹¹² Christopher Breward, “The Globalization of the Fashion City,” in *Global Design History*, ed. Glenn Adamson, Giorgio Riello, and Sarah Teasley, First edition (Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon; New York, NY: Routledge, 2011), 67.

¹¹³ Glenn Adamson, Giorgio Riello, and Sarah Teasley, eds., *Global Design History*, First edition (Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon; New York, NY: Routledge, 2011), 1.

¹¹⁴ Tim Edensor, *National Identity, Popular Culture and Everyday Life* (Oxford, UK: Berg, 2002), 27.

established design expertise and education, and where they share the lifestyles and values of target consumers. Designers can therefore be seen as direct links between markets and manufacturers that are located at great distances, or as Fry explains it, designers are “one of the key mediators gatekeeping the induction of the elsewhere.”¹¹⁵ Fry’s observation points to the reification of designers within circuits of global production. When the designer acts as ambassador for a product, representing the client or brand internationally, their visibility increases and they come to hold more information and power. Their global networks are subsumed under their individual reputation or that of their firm.

‘Global design’ has also come to describe objects that seem to have no discernible identity, which might appeal to consumers anywhere. ‘Global design’ suggests placelessness and mobility, and the challenge of pinning actors to one location. In 1992, design journalist Hugh Aldersey-Williams published *World Design: Nationalism and Globalism in Design* in which designers describe their ability to create objects that are “culture free.”¹¹⁶ Rather than targeting certain nationalities in the design of their goods, manufacturers realize that tastes unite consumers based on lifestyle more often than does citizenship. City residents may have more in common with urban dwellers on the other side of the world than with fellow citizens in rural areas.¹¹⁷

The products of global design aspire to be ‘readable’ by anyone, suggesting a cross-cultural aesthetic and an awareness on the part of both producers and consumers of design’s signifiers and signs. Sociologist Paul Du Gay proposes that design is an increasingly “global language” that allows designers to combine signifiers from around the world, creating new hybrids that are understandable by many and almost impossible to attribute to one source.¹¹⁸ Similarly, sociologists and cultural theorists Scott Lash and John Urry describe an “economy of signs” that transcends borders, navigated by the globally literate consumer who comprehends the symbolic value of commodities.¹¹⁹ This often unspoken form of communication makes the decipherment of global products challenging – it is difficult to isolate authorship when objects, images, and ideas migrate seemingly without provenance. The mixing of visual references to create a homogeneous language may also be an intentional strategy on the part of the

¹¹⁵ Tony Fry, “A Geography of Power: Design History and Marginality,” *Design Issues* 6, no. 1 (1989): 26, <https://doi.org/10.2307/1511575>.

¹¹⁶ Hugh Aldersey-Williams, *World Design: Nationalism and Globalism in Design* (New York: Rizzoli, 1992), 6.

¹¹⁷ Jeremy Aynsley, *Nationalism and Internationalism, Design in the twentieth Century* (London: Victoria & Albert Museum, 1993), 59.

¹¹⁸ Du Gay et al., *Doing Cultural Studies*, 74.

¹¹⁹ Lash and Urry cited by Kimbell, “Rethinking Design Thinking,” November 1, 2011, 288.

producers. According to anthropologist Arjun Appadurai, a hegemonic language of signs is another way to spread culture, just like advertising and fashion.¹²⁰ For historian Karen Fiss, global design and production involve a type of cultural imperialism, taking resources (creative, cultural, financial, etc.) where needed and distributing what some fear are Western-centric or purely American cultural products in exchange.¹²¹

A hegemonic system of design is not only due to contemporary forces of global mass production and distribution. Many of today's global systems of design stem from what design historian Jeremy Aynsley notes is the impact of post-war internationalism leading to agreed-upon standards, systems, and regulations. This includes everything from measures and patent laws to symbols and languages aimed at simplifying communication, as well as international design curricula and ways of doing "design business," including early mass production.¹²² Post-war designers working in the International Style sought "definitive" concepts, designs that would benefit or appeal to the majority of consumers and become universally successful, generating more abstracted forms and less culturally-specific influences.¹²³

Mass-produced goods, however, are not entirely free floating, neutral, or culture-less.¹²⁴ Instead, they 'touch down' at various points of production and consumption where local factors affect form and significance, transformed by the places through which they pass: "culture is continuously reterritorialized, resulting in the texture and experience of the local being altered through the unique interpretation and adaptation of external influences."¹²⁵ Mass-produced goods are evidence of what Appadurai terms the "micronarratives of globalization,"¹²⁶ the localized stories that illustrate the impacts of global flows, and "which allow modernity to be rewritten more as vernacular globalization and less as a concession to large-scale national and international policies."¹²⁷

Design practices and products emerge from particular cultural conditions, which do not have to be tied to unique locations, but can come from the convergence of many places. For example, online environments like Kickstarter facilitate global discussion and crowdsourcing of

¹²⁰ Appadurai, *Modernity At Large*, 42.

¹²¹ Karen Fiss, "Design in a Global Context: Envisioning Postcolonial and Transnational Possibilities," *Design Issues* 25, no. 3 (Summer 2009): 3.

¹²² Examples include the Bauhaus, the German school of applied arts, which established a model curriculum in 1922 featuring a common foundation year with courses in colour, form, and materials that students took regardless of their intended specialization; this model continues to be used in many design schools around the world. Aynsley, *Nationalism and Internationalism*.

¹²³ Aynsley, 20–21.

¹²⁴ Fiss, "Design in a Global Context," 7.

¹²⁵ Fiss, 7; Edensor, *National Identity, Popular Culture and Everyday Life*, 112.

¹²⁶ Appadurai, *Modernity At Large*, 10.

¹²⁷ Appadurai, 10.

product ideas. At the level of the object, anthropologist Daniel Miller looks at how one global commodity is appropriated locally and nationally in his analysis of Coke in Trinidad.¹²⁸ While Miller positions Coke as a meta-symbol and meta-commodity, one that has in itself become a signifier of globalization, homogenization, and capitalist dominance, at once American and borderless, he also provides concrete evidence of how Coke is re-territorialized through the melding of local and global traditions, competition, cultural interpretations, and appropriation of symbols.¹²⁹ At the level of the nation, design theorist Tony Fry demonstrates how one country, Australia, can become a repository for multiple global influences, shaped by particular geographic and economic contexts, which results in a “land of the simulacrum, a place of original copies and unplaceable familiarity.”¹³⁰ Because Australia never had a thriving manufacturing industry, its design culture developed into a “materialized bricolage formed from eclectic patterns of objects of immigration and appropriation, drawn from the forms of a modern world elsewhere [...] a fallout and modification of that which was originally created for other circumstances.”¹³¹ Fry and Miller illustrate that local factors have an impact on the consumption of design, seen both in how designers interpret global factors when creating new objects and images, and in how end-users perceive the significance of objects in local contexts.

The transnational movement of commodities, ideas, and images makes it almost impossible to find a “pure” local aesthetic or design tradition.¹³² Even if that aesthetic does exist, Aldersey-Williams notes that recognizing “national characteristics” is challenging because they “are deep-rooted and subliminal. They elude capture and dissection.”¹³³ Aldersey-Williams predicted that while differences between objects were becoming more subtle in the 1990s, they

¹²⁸ Daniel Miller, “Coca-Cola: A Black Sweet Drink from Trinidad,” in *Material Cultures: Why Some Things Matter*, ed. Daniel Miller (London: UCL Press, 1998), 169–87.

¹²⁹ Miller contextualizes Coca-Cola in Trinidad within much longer traditions of locally produced brown and red sweet drinks, the competition between local and global producers, the local class and race-based interpretations of the drinks and their bottles, and the adoption of rum and coke as Trinidad’s national beverage.

¹³⁰ Fry, “A Geography of Power,” 20.

¹³¹ Fry, 20.

¹³² Reimer and Leslie, “Design, National Imaginaries, and the Home Furnishings Commodity Chain,” 146.

¹³³ Aldersey-Williams observes that designers may not be able to identify cultural influence in their own work or other design from their home country, but they can see it more easily in design from other nations, just as they can more easily recognize national culture in songs, literature, and architecture because they are that much more removed from their creation. Aldersey-Williams, *World Design*, 6; One reviewer of Aldersey-Williams’ own book pointed to the difficulty of identifying nationality: “no one outside the field of design would be able to distinguish among items produced by different countries without referring to the captions. Aldersey-Williams’s text argues for nationalism but his illustrations argue for globalism.” David McClelland, “Book Reviews: Arts & Humanities,” *Library Journal* 117, no. 13 (August 1, 1992): 94.

were likely to become more pronounced with globalization.¹³⁴ He was right in that today, many designers and manufacturers employ signifiers of local identities and traditions in an attempt to differentiate their products.¹³⁵ Those origin stories reveal something of the values attached to the products and places, but often conceal the realities of global design and authorship through the fetishization of the local.

2. Design and the Global Economy

The study of global design reveals a complex system of many actors—financial, technological, and regulatory, among others. It is difficult to grasp this continually shifting landscape of design activity: where it takes place, who is leading new product development and intellectual property generation, which invisible sources of innovation and local expertise are contributing to supply chains, or which consumer markets are emerging and influencing design. A lack of data about how design work is distributed, along with simplified narratives of innovation and authorship embedded in corporate brands, make it even more challenging to question accepted models of the division of labour and to gain a more accurate picture of global design practice.

Design history and global commodity chain studies contribute to the celebration of design by using design as evidence of a nation's status in the global division of labour. A prevailing Western narrative about design has been that design is a necessary tool in global economic development, first for industrialization through concepts like 'design for development' and 'industrial upgrading,' and now for creative economies.¹³⁶ As such, design has gone unquestioned as part of the "natural evolution" of developing economies and the narrative of a global division of design labour has been told in relation to what Appadurai describes as the

¹³⁴ Aldersey-Williams, *World Design*, 8.

¹³⁵ This is especially evident with foods, in brands that have become synonymous with national identity (like Roots, Hudson's Bay, Canada Goose) or cities (like Drake's OVO store in Toronto, Shinola bicycles from Detroit), in the use of Canadian symbols like maps and wildlife in home furnishings, and in products sold with 'stories' about their design and provenance.

¹³⁶ The ideology of design as key to progress and economic success can be traced back to British government programs in the first half of the nineteenth century and to twentieth century modernization programs that exported Western design expertise and education to developing countries. In the late 1970s, the "design for development" movement gained acceptance in Third World countries, in particular in India, where the Ahmedabad Declaration on Industrial Design and Development was signed in 1979, based on work by the United Nations Industrial Development Organisation (UNIDO) with the International Council of Societies of Industrial Design (ICSID) a few years earlier. The Declaration promoted the adoption of design appropriate to "third world" conditions, focusing on design for industrial and economic development, in contrast to the humanitarian and environmental issues that had also come to be associated with the movement. Victor Papanek's *Design for the Real World: Human Ecology and Social Change*, first published in 1971, focused the design for development discussion on poverty and environmental issues. Victor Margolin, "Design for Development: Towards a History," *Design Studies* 28, no. 2 (March 2007): 111–15, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.destud.2006.11.008>.

“megarhetoric of developmental modernization.”¹³⁷ This includes European identifiers of progress and design maturation, such as the growth of design education, the establishment of design museums and associations, or the star status of individual designers, bringing Julier’s concept of ‘designeriness’ to the level of the nation.

Design has come to signify an advanced economy, while the perceived absence of design indicates a lack of development. This translates to an understanding of a global division of design labour, corresponding to East-West and North-South hierarchies of so-called ‘design-led’ countries in which certain nations control creative ‘head’ work, while others are considered suitable for the ‘hand’ work of assembly and manufacturing. While the authors of global commodity chain studies might adhere to the logic of industrial upgrading, their research can nevertheless provide more nuanced perspectives of the complexity of global production, and increase awareness of shifting “territories of design.”¹³⁸ This knowledge helps to expand the definition of design practice and the understanding of the spatial distribution of design activity in both local networks of production and far reaching global supply chains.

The past two decades have seen a call for more globalized histories that confront and provide alternatives to Western approaches that privilege Europe and the United States, or valorize Western modernization in developing countries. Indeed, Adamson, Riello, and Teasley state that, “Modernist design history’s triumphalist narrative of progress emanating from industrializing Europe after 1850 is simply out of date.”¹³⁹ While design historians may agree with this statement, writing global design history is challenging because it requires questioning old definitions and seeing beyond naturalized narratives of design. Design historian Victor Margolin frames it in this way:

Rather than considering design to be a product of industrialization, we need to think more broadly about the conception and planning of material and visual culture. This enables us to find design in all cultures while at the same time comparing the different conceptions of design and the ways of organizing design practice.¹⁴⁰

In some instances, this could mean looking for evidence of design beyond what historian Dipesh Chakrabarty describes as “histories posited by capital.”¹⁴¹ For example, local traditions of

¹³⁷ Appadurai, *Modernity At Large*, 10.

¹³⁸ Julier, *Economies of Design*, 6.

¹³⁹ Adamson, Riello, and Teasley, *Global Design History*, 2.

¹⁴⁰ Victor Margolin, “A World History of Design and the History of the World,” *Journal Of Design History* 18, no. 3 The Global Future of Design History (Autumn 2005): 239.

¹⁴¹ Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000), 31.

making and “living labour” (non-mechanized), and non-consumer relationships to objects, could fall outside capitalism but still influence the design and manufacture of commercial goods.¹⁴² Global design history risks an Orientalist approach by presenting, as literature professor and critic Edward Said argued, a homogenized and universalized world history that assimilates developments in Asia as examples of what has already happened in the West.¹⁴³ Narratives of modernization through the “introduction” of design (arguably always present but unrecognized by Western scholars) could be considered examples of Chakrabarty’s “transition narratives” from non-modern to modern, and the lack of design thinking and presence of factory production in developing countries as examples of “absences and failures of history to keep an appointment with destiny.”¹⁴⁴ Chakrabarty’s idea of “history 2s” suggests that there are alternatives if one can break free from the silent, omni-present referents of Western capitalism or the canon of Western design history.¹⁴⁵ Instead of moments of “positive unoriginality,” where developing nations are presented as following in Western footsteps, design historians might identify originality based on the non-western or non-modern.¹⁴⁶ This requires looking for invisible and alternative forms of design labour in unpaid and unrecognized positions throughout production, circulation, and consumption.

Alternative forms of design labour are largely overlooked in “industrial upgrading,” a prescribed path along which nations move from providers of labour to providers of innovation and intellectual property. Developing countries are expected to start with packaging and assembly, after which they may transition to OEMs (original equipment manufacturers) and then OBM’s (original brand manufacturers).¹⁴⁷ Designer and theorist Gui Bonsiepe lists five stages of development in design practice, moving from, as paraphrased by Margolin, “self-taught artists [...] working outside industry [...] to a search for services that characterize industrial design and finally to designers working in industrial enterprises.”¹⁴⁸ These stages follow the process of industrialization leading to a ‘developed’ nation. It is worth noting that Bonsiepe did not preclude

¹⁴² Chakrabarty, 61.

¹⁴³ Edward W. Said, “Orientalism Reconsidered,” *Cultural Critique* 1 (Autumn 1985): 102–103.

¹⁴⁴ Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe*, 31.

¹⁴⁵ Chakrabarty, 50.

¹⁴⁶ Chakrabarty, 30.

¹⁴⁷ Gary Gereffi, “Outsourcing and Changing Patterns of International Competition in the Apparel Commodity Chain” (Responding to Globalization: Societies, Groups, and Individuals, Hotel Boulderado, Boulder, Colorado: Initially prepared as a background paper for UNIDO’s World Industrial Development Report 2001, 2002), 1–26.

¹⁴⁸ Gui Bonsiepe cited in Margolin, “Design for Development” (Gui Bonsiepe, “Developing Countries: Awareness of Design and the Peripheral Condition,” in *History of Industrial Design: 1919-1990 The Dominion of Design*, ed. Carlo Pirovano (Milan, Italy: Electa, 1991)).

“small-scale industries,” suggesting a more inclusive vision of design and the recognition that non-Western, crafts-based production could co-exist with large-scale manufacturing.¹⁴⁹

The perceived global division of labour reflects how countries ‘rank’ as design-led nations. This depends largely on how ‘advanced’ their economies are, including their cultures of production and consumption.¹⁵⁰ Aldersey-Williams offers his own system for categorizing nations based on the state of their design sectors. In 1992, he concluded that Canada had skipped “factor driven” (crafts-based production), and moved from “investment driven” (imitative design) to “innovation driven” (original, good design). Only a few countries had progressed to “wealth driven” (post-industrial design, new craft content), including the Netherlands, Great Britain, and United States.¹⁵¹ Canada arguably straddles both innovation and wealth-driven design today. Similarly, urbanist Richard Florida categorizes nations based on how they nurture the creative economy. He predicted in 2003 that India and China would not become economic giants if they continued to invest in mass production rather than follow the US and other Western nations where he located most creative capital, including design (a prediction that has proven incorrect and follows the Orientalist model outlined above).¹⁵² National identities tied to manufacturing and quality of consumer goods take time to change: “Made in Japan,” often cited in design history as an example of progress through design, now has a certain caché and “Made in Korea” is no longer doubted for its quality, while “Made in China” and “Made in India” are still associated with ‘cheap.’¹⁵³ The values implicit in “designed by Apple in California, assembled in China” make it clear that global design is not an equal playing field where the nation has lost relevance.

Global commodity chain (GCC) or global value chain (GVC) research tends to accept and reinforce “industrial upgrading” and although this makes it challenging to find design outside this narrative of progress, the GCC model is useful to my project because it questions where power and design reside in the chain, and who is driving the development of new goods. This allows new questions about who is contributing to design and from where, particularly when design is seen as a form of control over production. Sociologist Gary Gereffi lists three main

¹⁴⁹ Margolin.

¹⁵⁰ Aynsley, *Nationalism and Internationalism*, 32.

¹⁵¹ Aldersey-Williams, *World Design*, 13.

¹⁵² Florida estimated design to be the fifth largest core industry of the global creative economy in 1999. He calculated that in 1999, \$140 billion USD was spent on design around the world, of which the American share was 39%. Florida, *The Rise of the Creative Class*, xxiv–xxv, 47.

¹⁵³ Presented as a post-World War II success story, Japan is depicted as rebuilding its economy by imitating Western and especially American products and manufacturing processes. Once other countries started competing with cheaper labour, Japan needed a distinct style and quality to set its exports apart, which is when Japan developed its own identifiably Japanese design aesthetic. Aldersey-Williams, *World Design*, 11.

power sources in commodity chains: producer-driven, where transnational corporations control manufacturing that requires significant capital and investment in research and technology; buyer-driven, where large retailers influence networks of smaller manufacturers that produce labour-intensive goods; and internet-driven, where on-line communication has facilitated the rise of e-commerce through direct contact between businesses and between businesses and consumers, controlled by giant “infomediaries” like Google and virtual marketplaces like Amazon.¹⁵⁴ All models have implications for where and what type of design work takes place. Manufacturers of producer-driven goods (e.g. car and computer companies) generate profit from proprietary technology, scale, and controlling production, meaning design is usually done in-house. Buyer-driven goods are made by “manufacturers without factories” (e.g. Walmart, The Gap) that separate design and marketing from production. They rely on middlemen and service providers like designers to link to offshore factories and markets and to respond quickly to consumer trends.¹⁵⁵ Developing economies are thought to become more competitive when they obtain information by working on buyer-driven goods.¹⁵⁶ Internet-driven commodity chains facilitate the sourcing of design services from almost anywhere. They allow designers to enter the commodity chain and deal with customers directly, and allow for mass-customization and lean/just-in-time production. In 2001, Gereffi argued that internet-driven chains are closer to customer-driven because customer “pull” is stronger than the manufacturer or retailer’s “push”—customers order what they want, when and where they want it.¹⁵⁷ Online marketing and data collection have since become so sophisticated that consumer pull may be an illusion.

In Global Value Chains, hand and head are separated on a global scale: design is seen as a high-value activity that takes place in the core (usually urban centres), along with activities like marketing, branding, and innovation, while raw materials, production, and assembly are outsourced to the periphery (usually outlying rural areas, now “offshore”). The core controls information, organization, and wealth, corresponding to the role of design as an originator of ideas and a tool for planning and the division of labour.¹⁵⁸ Some have argued that design was implicit in the relationship between the colonialist urban centre and the colonies, and thus

¹⁵⁴ Gary Gereffi, “Beyond the Producer-driven/Buyer-Driven Dichotomy: The Evolution of Global Value Chains in the Internet Era,” *IDS Bulletin* 32, no. 3 (2001): 30–40.

¹⁵⁵ Gereffi, “Outsourcing and Changing Patterns of International Competition in the Apparel Commodity Chain,” 2–3.

¹⁵⁶ Aldersey-Williams, *World Design*, 11.

¹⁵⁷ Gereffi, “Beyond the Producer-driven/Buyer-Driven Dichotomy: The Evolution of Global Value Chains in the Internet Era,” 35.

¹⁵⁸ G. Gereffi, M. Korzeniewicz, and R.P. Korzeniewicz, “Introduction: Global Commodity Chains,” in *Commodity Chains and Global Capitalism*, ed. Gary Gereffi, M. Korzeniewicz, and R.P. Korzeniewicz (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1994), 1–14.

facilitated the abuse of labour, natural resources, and environment.¹⁵⁹ Design continues to play a role in mediating these global relationships, and some of the original colonial centres maintain their positions of power over design. Certain cities and regions of developed nations (e.g. London, New York, Milan, Tokyo) are still known as leaders in design broadly speaking, while others are associated with specific industries (e.g. Silicon Valley for digital technologies, Southern California for car design, Paris for fashion), even though the production of these goods usually occurs elsewhere.

In 2001, Gereffi et al. observed that the split between core and periphery had widened, making it more difficult for developing nations to move up the ladder. They noted that, “as the capabilities in the supply base have improved, world-class manufacturing capacity has become increasingly commodified.”¹⁶⁰ The “tangibles” (“the transformation, manipulation and movement of physical goods”) are therefore easier to buy and to outsource, which has meant a reduction in cost for those activities, whereas the “intangibles” (“fashion trends, brand identities, design and innovation”) have become more important and expensive.¹⁶¹ Furthermore, core activities were “becoming more concentrated” while “manufacturing [was] splintering,” facilitated by digital communication, better market data, and inventory systems that allowed retailers to ask for more service, faster, from multiple suppliers in newly industrialising regions around the world.¹⁶² This implies that developing economies are less likely to offer design services and that the core has more power to source manufacturing as quickly and cheaply as possible. However, as sources below demonstrate, there is evidence that core activities are also splintering.

The concept of core and periphery has been challenged by the recognition that there are in fact multiple centres, reflective of a redistribution of core activities.¹⁶³ According to Gereffi, the shape of the GVC has changed from a “vertical chain of command” to “a web of independent yet interconnected enterprises” with “core firms act[ing] as strategic brokers at the centre” of virtual networks.¹⁶⁴ This suggests a shift from core cities to global companies that are distributed geographically and running seemingly place-less digital businesses. It also suggests a new role for designers juggling many inputs from around the world. As early as the mid-1990s globalization scholars identified the disintegration of the core-periphery model, replaced by the

¹⁵⁹ Fallan and Lees-Maffei, “Introduction: National Design Histories in an Age of Globalization,” 11.

¹⁶⁰ Gary Gereffi et al., “Introduction: Globalisation, Value Chains and Development,” *IDS Bulletin* 32, no. 3 (2001): 6.

¹⁶¹ Gereffi et al., 6.

¹⁶² Gereffi, “Outsourcing and Changing Patterns of International Competition in the Apparel Commodity Chain,” 16.

¹⁶³ Fallan and Lees-Maffei, “Introduction: National Design Histories in an Age of Globalization,” 4.

¹⁶⁴ Gereffi, “Beyond the Producer-driven/Buyer-Driven Dichotomy: The Evolution of Global Value Chains in the Internet Era,” 32–33.

multi-sited global market, defined by overlapping flows and multi-directional exchange.¹⁶⁵

Similarly, Alejandro Jara, former Deputy Director-General of the World Trade Organization, states that global manufacturing is dissolving core and periphery, and in the process, blurring differences “between resident and non-resident, between domestic and the rest of the world, between ‘us’ and ‘them,’” and erasing “the post-World-War II distinction between industrialised economies and developing countries.”¹⁶⁶

The recognition of a new division of labour and relationships of production, in which core activities are no longer confined to the traditional, Western-defined centres, implies that the locations and processes of design may be changing as well.¹⁶⁷ When design activity changes place, other nations take notice and may feel threatened by this demonstration of power – the international design community has been watching the rise of China with great interest since at least the 1990s.¹⁶⁸ In the context of developing economies, Margolin observes that, “if design begins to contribute to the success of large national enterprises, it may upset even further the asymmetric trade advantages of the developed countries.”¹⁶⁹ However, what the Western core was holding on to—the expertise in design, control of manufacturing, and close relationship to the target markets—is now increasingly provided by other manufacturing nations. Gereffi explains that as these “economies have moved toward more technology- and skill-intensive exports, it has become clear that ‘cheap labour’ alone is no longer an adequate explanation for Third World industrialization,” implying that skilled labour like design is playing a role in the

¹⁶⁵ Appadurai, *Modernity At Large*, 32; Brewer and Trentmann, *Consuming Cultures, Global Perspectives: Historical Trajectories, Transnational Exchanges*, 2.

¹⁶⁶ Jara, “Keynote Speech to the World Input-Output Database Conference in Vienna.”

¹⁶⁷ Breward describes a new landscape of design where cities like Shanghai, Mumbai, and Sao Paulo have joined the list of urban centres, contributing their creativity to the global fashion industry and diminishing the power of the traditional leading cities as originators. The identities of the major fashion centres like Paris, London, New York, and Milan are now based more on reputation and brand than on their function as centres of production, but their industrial roots—their histories tied to place—still play an important role in legitimizing those reputations. Breward argues that fashion operates in a “globally-understood ‘realm of values’” in which the original Western core cities hold sway as designers there “seek[...] to project their particular sense of life and culture onto the rest of the world’s markets in a fluid and responsive manner,” a dynamic relationship but still a top-down dissemination of design. Those Western cities rely on images of themselves as global fashion centres reinforced by the fashion industry and mass media, part of the fetishism of design on a global scale. Breward suggests that global flows of fashion are now so powerful that fashion itself selects and makes “fashion cities” rather than culturally and economically powerful cities creating fashion. Breward, “The Globalization of the Fashion City,” 66–68; Simona Segre Reinach, “Response,” in *Global Design History*, ed. Glenn Adamson, Giorgio Riello, and Sarah Teasley, 1st ed (Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon; New York, NY: Routledge, 2011), 69–71.

¹⁶⁸ James Woudhuysen, “Beyond the Dogma of Globalisation,” in *The Role of Product Design in Post Industrial Society*, ed. Tevfik Balcioglu (Ankara : Rochester, Kent: Kent Institute of Art & Design, 1998), 110.

¹⁶⁹ Margolin, “Design for Development,” 114.

dissolution of the core-periphery structure.¹⁷⁰ There is abundant evidence of what Julier refers to as shifting “territories of design,” including increasing design activity in the former Soviet Bloc, East Asia, and Latin America.¹⁷¹ In Taiwan and Hong Kong, and now mainland China, there are many indicators of ‘progress’ in the area of design. These reinforce the rhetoric of industrial upgrading according to Western criteria, but are worth mentioning. This includes a dramatic increase in the number of new design schools and patents,¹⁷² and evidence of the Chinese government’s Made in China 2025 plan to become the global leader in original technology development.¹⁷³ A period of rapid industrialization and urbanization produced a “new design culture,” which was showcased for foreign audiences at high profile events like the 2008 exhibition at the Victoria and Albert Museum, *China Design Now*, the 2008 Beijing Olympics, and 2010 Shanghai World’s Fair.¹⁷⁴ Chinese corporations like Lenovo, Huawei, and Haier now export Chinese-designed products to consumers around the world, occupying substantial shelf space in Western retail chains, in addition to targeting the growing Chinese consumer market. Respect for these brands may start to tip the balance of consumer tolerance from “made in” to acceptance and even desire for “designed in” China.

Deindustrialization in the West represents an important shift in the manufacturing sector and in the narrative of the global division of labour. There are nevertheless varying opinions about how much the sector has shrunk and the impact on design as a result. Florida positions the division of labour inherent in outsourcing and subcontracting as a boost to creativity because it allows new (local, Western) firms to enter the market and to specialize. Offshoring benefits smaller companies who can, according to Florida, outsource everything but the creative work (design, intellectual property, branding), reinforcing the West as the creative centre.¹⁷⁵ Urban geographer Winifred Curran offers an alternative perspective on creativity in local manufacturing in North America. She argues that in the excitement and push to attract “new”

¹⁷⁰ Gereffi, “Beyond the Producer-driven/Buyer-Driven Dichotomy: The Evolution of Global Value Chains in the Internet Era,” 31.

¹⁷¹ Julier, *Economies of Design*, 6.

¹⁷² In China’s Design Revolution, Lorraine Justice (former Director of the School of Design at The Hong Kong Polytechnic University) reports that China attained the status of third largest patent producer after the US and Japan in 2009, and that there were 1,125 art and design departments across China as of 2007, and 400 industrial design schools as of 2008, compared to only 53 industrial design programs in the US and around a dozen in Canada. Lorraine Justice, *China’s Design Revolution* (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 2012), 6, 116; Association of Canadian Industrial Designers, “Canadian Industrial Design Schools,” accessed September 3, 2017, http://www.designcanada.org/index_files/industrial_design_school.pdf.

¹⁷³ Jane Perlez, Paul Mozur, and Jonathan Ansfield, “China’s Technology Ambitions Could Upset the Global Trade Order,” *The New York Times*, November 7, 2017, sec. Business Day, <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/11/07/business/made-in-china-technology-trade.html>.

¹⁷⁴ Lauren Parker and Zhang Hongxing, *China Design Now* (London: V&A Publishing, 2008).

¹⁷⁵ Florida, *The Rise of the Creative Class*, 55.

creative industries, the creativity and innovation of traditional manufacturers already thriving in North American cities was overlooked.¹⁷⁶ Curran explains that there already exist established networks of small industries with the same characteristics of new creative clusters: flexible, connected, resourceful, and able to respond quickly to local consumer markets.¹⁷⁷

Deindustrialization and offshore production have been blamed for a decline in product design work in the West, leading designers instead to the ephemeral world of strategy, digital experiences, and the mediation of physical products through media such as advertising, packaging, and retail.¹⁷⁸ However, as policy analyst Vaclav Smil suggests, even with offshoring and major reductions in some sectors of the United States, manufacturing remains a relatively large and growing contributor to the American economy.¹⁷⁹ He argues that manufacturing continues to play a significant role and that, “neither the rapidly modernizing economies nor the postindustrial economies have experienced any dematerialization either in aggregate or in average per capita terms.”¹⁸⁰ Globally, economists and trade experts Marcel Timmer et al. report that between 1995 and 2008, employment in manufacturing increased by 70 million jobs.¹⁸¹ If the number of people employed in manufacturing worldwide has grown, if the quantity of ‘stuff’ produced globally is not shrinking, and if manufacturing is stronger than believed in Western nations, then how the work of product designers is presented should be questioned. Even if Western designers are no longer as focused on physical product design, this does not mean that globally, others are not.

The ‘fragmentation of production’ characterizes the spatial distribution of design and

¹⁷⁶ Florida’s creative class theories proved powerful in shaping urban development in certain creative centres of North America, but they have also been blamed (including by Florida himself) for gentrification and driving out the working and service classes. Richard Florida, *The New Urban Crisis: How Our Cities Are Increasing Inequality, Deepening Segregation, and Failing the Middle Class—and What We Can Do About It*, 1 edition (New York: Basic Books, 2017).

¹⁷⁷ Winifred Curran, “In Defense of Old Industrial Spaces: Manufacturing, Creativity and Innovation in Williamsburg, Brooklyn,” *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 34, no. 4 (December 1, 2010): 875, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2427.2010.00915.x>.

¹⁷⁸ Lash and Urry quoted in Julier, *The Culture of Design*, 41; The percentage of Western firms that focus on product design is small—as of 1994, 24% of design work in Europe was dedicated to product design; as of 1998, a survey by British magazine Design Week reported that only 14% of UK design consultancies included product design among their expertise, and for many, that meant packaging. Julier, *Economies of Design*, 22; Design Week, “Track Record,” *Design Week* (blog), March 27, 1998, <https://www.designweek.co.uk/issues/26-march-1998/track-record-2/> At the same time, obtaining accurate numbers of product designers is challenging because, unlike architects and graphic designers, they are not obliged or encouraged to seek membership in professional associations, and it can be difficult to identify in-house designers, let alone understand where other design activity by non-designers like engineers and entrepreneur-inventors may be taking place. .

¹⁷⁹ Smil, *Made in the USA: The Rise and Retreat of American Manufacturing*, 14.

¹⁸⁰ Smil, 19.

¹⁸¹ From 1995 to 2008, “42 million jobs in China were added, 20 million in India, 6 million in Brazil, and 2 million in Mexico.” Timmer et al., “Slicing Up Global Value Chains,” 112.

manufacturing in the twenty-first century, but economists are just starting to comprehend its complexity. As recently as 2013, international trade economists Michael Gasiorek and Javier Lopez-Gonzalez described GVCs and the “internationalisation of economic activity [as in their] infancy.”¹⁸² The “new international division of labour” emerged in the 1960s when corporate motives behind globalization changed from securing resources and expanding markets, to finding cheaper workforces, which led to the further division of the global commodity chain.¹⁸³ The World Trade Organization (WTO) describes the fragmentation of production as a “fundamental change that has been taking place in the structure of international trade.”¹⁸⁴ It is seen in faster and cheaper distribution and communication systems, and more open economic and trade policies that have made it more profitable to split production up over the lowest-cost areas of the world.¹⁸⁵ The result is that in addition to trade in finished products, there is increasing global trade in tasks (services such as design), materials, and intermediate components (elements of products). It is also increasingly common for multiple countries to contribute labour and capital to a single product, just as there is growing specialization of certain economies in segments of the global supply chain.¹⁸⁶ Timmer et al. show that global fragmentation and trade in ‘intermediates’ has been expanding steadily despite the 2008 financial crisis and rhetoric about re-shoring.¹⁸⁷ Each of those intermediates has its own supply chain and sources of innovation and creativity, which are rarely made transparent.

One of the debates surrounding the changing nature of GVCs is whether supply chains are more regional or global, which has implications for how networks of design take shape. Economists have found it useful to divide the world into zones of production: Factory Europe, Factory Asia (China, Japan, South Korea, Taiwan), Factory North America, and “rest of the

¹⁸² Gasiorek and Lopez-Gonzalez, “China-EU Global Value Chains: Who Creates Value, How and Where? Growing Linkages and Opportunities,” 8–9.

¹⁸³ Gereffi, “Beyond the Producer-driven/Buyer-Driven Dichotomy: The Evolution of Global Value Chains in the Internet Era,” 32; Some value chains, like leather and textiles, became fragmented as early as the 1970s and 1980s when Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan relocated production to other countries in Asia. Bart Los, Marcel P. Timmer, and Gaaitzen J. de Vries, “How Global Are Global Value Chains? A New Approach to Measure International Fragmentation,” *Journal of Regional Science* 55, no. 1 (2015): 77.

¹⁸⁴ This fragmentation is sometimes referred to as vertical specialization, production sharing, or supply chain trade. World Trade Organization, “WTO Made in the World Initiative Flyer” (World Trade Organization, c 2011), https://www.wto.org/english/res_e/statis_e/miwi_e/flyer_miwi_e.pdf.

¹⁸⁵ World Trade Organization.

¹⁸⁶ World Trade Organization; Los, Timmer, and de Vries, “How Global Are Global Value Chains? A New Approach to Measure International Fragmentation,” 67; Some sectors are more prone to fragmentation, like electronics, while automotive manufacturers represent an industry that prefers to assemble final products near consumer markets, and food products represent industries that rely more on local sources. Los, Timmer, and de Vries, “How Global Are Global Value Chains? A New Approach to Measure International Fragmentation”; Timmer et al., “Slicing Up Global Value Chains,” 106.

¹⁸⁷ Timmer et al., “Slicing Up Global Value Chains,” 106; Los, Timmer, and de Vries, “How Global Are Global Value Chains? A New Approach to Measure International Fragmentation,” 78.

world,”¹⁸⁸ but the geographical nature of fragmentation has changed since the turn of the century: in the 1990s it was more contained within the regions mentioned, while in the 2000s, emerging economies have become important suppliers of low-cost labour and intermediates, making fragmentation more global.¹⁸⁹ In their study of the period 1995 – 2011, economists and international trade researchers Bart Los et al. find that the global market has indeed moved on from regional to “Factory World.”¹⁹⁰

The global nature of design practice and the extent to which design is integrated in global supply chains has yet to be studied. However, new information is emerging from the “Made in the World” (MITW) project and the World Input-Output Database (WIOD), an in-depth analysis of “trade in value added” undertaken by the WTO.¹⁹¹ This research shows that it is increasingly less likely that the final country of origin (“where the last stage of production takes place before delivery to the final user”) controls the GVC or contributes the majority of the commercial value, making current product labelling and statistics about import/export misrepresentative.¹⁹² There is no transparency about the origins of design or other contributions to production, circulation, and consumption.¹⁹³ Having said this, there is interest in where innovation, and by extension design, occurs in GVCs, something the WIOD facilitates. This is demonstrated in a key study in this area comparing Apple’s iPod with PC notebooks.¹⁹⁴ Dedrick

¹⁸⁸ Gasiorsek and Lopez-Gonzalez, “China-EU Global Value Chains: Who Creates Value, How and Where? Growing Linkages and Opportunities,” 8.

¹⁸⁹ Timmer et al., “Slicing Up Global Value Chains,” 106.

¹⁹⁰ Los, Timmer, and de Vries, “How Global Are Global Value Chains? A New Approach to Measure International Fragmentation.”

¹⁹¹ World Trade Organization, “WTO Made in the World Initiative Flyer”; The WIOD captures how much labour, capital, and “intermediate inputs” are required to create an output in every industry around the world within and across nations. The WIOD covers all industries including manufacturing and services in the following countries, which combined, total over 85% of world GDP: all countries in the EU, plus Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, India, Indonesia, Japan, Mexico, Russia, South Korea, Taiwan, Turkey, and the United States. Timmer et al., “Slicing Up Global Value Chains,” 101, 103.

¹⁹² Timmer et al., “Slicing Up Global Value Chains,” 100.

¹⁹³ In 2008, services counted for close to 50% of jobs related to manufacturing. By including both manufacturing and services in the WIOD, both tangibles and intangibles are starting to be analyzed together. While design is not listed as a major category in the WIOD, it is reflected in industries like architecture and advertising, and likely with costs associated with industries served by design. Timmer et al., 112; World Trade Organization, “WIOD 2016 Release,” 2016, <http://www.wiod.org/database/wiots16>.

¹⁹⁴ In their assessment of the entire GVC, Dedrick et al. highlight three factors that determine who profits from innovation: industry evolution (new product types like the iPod are selected by the market to become “dominant designs”), appropriability (ability of the firm to retain control over and profit from innovation and intellectual property—e.g. Apple carefully controls design and has more leverage over their suppliers than PC manufacturers, meaning the company keeps an estimated one third to one half of the retail price of an iPod), and complementarity (availability and cooperation of networks of other suppliers and products needed to support the core product—e.g. the music industry agreeing to sell through iTunes to support Apple products). Jason Dedrick, Kenneth L. Kraemer, and Greg Linden, “Who Profits from Innovation in Global Value Chains? A Study of the iPod and Notebook PCs,” *Industrial and Corporate Change* 19, no. 1 (2010): 81–116.

et al. illustrate that the “dominant design” (the iPod) represents an initial investment in research and design, and drives innovation down the global supply chain. After the dominant product type has been established, competition is based on price and incremental innovation at the level of individual components and manufacturing processes.¹⁹⁵ Component suppliers try to deliver innovation in function, cost, and time-to-market to the parent manufacturer.¹⁹⁶ Dedrick et al. show the importance of context and that a product’s success relies on multiple supply chains and larger networks of distribution. They also demonstrate that there are many other layers of innovation, which continue to develop as new product types become normalized and more accessible. However, the lower-level suppliers and their work in innovation are rarely discussed in the realm of design studies.

The MITW research is important not least because it tests assumptions about what type of value countries contribute. In both advanced and emerging economies, contributions of capital and high-skilled labour are increasing while medium- and low-skilled labour are decreasing.¹⁹⁷ Timmer et al. explain, like Gereffi, that advanced economies are supposed to focus on the “intangibles” like brands and on intellectual capital like design, but the authors were surprised that emerging economies are also specializing in capital-intensive activities.¹⁹⁸ As countries move through industrial upgrading and become increasingly integrated in GVCs, workers in emerging economies are intended to move “upstream.”¹⁹⁹ This, together with higher levels of education, and advances in technology and mechanization, has implications for design. Timmer et al. cite the “routinization hypothesis” in which automation complements highly-skilled work and replaces medium-skilled jobs and some low-skilled positions.²⁰⁰ They predict that some low-level tasks may be re-shored to advanced economies thanks to new developments in mechanized production.²⁰¹ This is already seen in how computer-aided design, rapid prototyping, and visualization tools augment the work of the designer, while automation is reducing production and distribution jobs. This suggests that a further consequence of the global workforce transitioning to medium- and highly-skilled positions is that more people have greater opportunities to contribute to design.

¹⁹⁵ Dedrick, Kraemer, and Linden, 101.

¹⁹⁶ Dedrick, Kraemer, and Linden, 104.

¹⁹⁷ High-income countries are still contributing more high- and medium-skilled labour overall and other countries continue to provide more low-skilled labour overall. Timmer et al., “Slicing Up Global Value Chains,” 108, 110.

¹⁹⁸ Timmer et al., 115, 100.

¹⁹⁹ Timmer et al., 116.

²⁰⁰ Timmer et al., 115.

²⁰¹ Timmer et al., 106.

As production is increasingly fragmented, more sophisticated measures like the WIOD are required to assess value added to commodities from multiple sources. In the Made in the World project, trade analysts are redefining contributions—no longer is the last country of origin enough, now intermediate components and services are taken into account in addition to materials, labour, and capital. This has revealed unexpected shifts from low- to high-skill labour in both advanced and emerging economies. Developments in intangible services have also become more apparent with studies showing how the “dominant design” emerges and how innovation changes hands in the commodity chain as products become established. Understanding how design activities are recognized and valued along GCCs, and how design mediates relationships between “inputs” (actors), helps to show which actors influence design. Studies of how commodities are actually created can offer a more complete picture of design beyond Western nations and traditionally defined design roles.

3. Role of the Nation in Global Design and the Role of Design in the Nation

The significance of the nation is debated in the context of global design. On one side, scholars like historian Karen Fiss argue that factors like migration, connectivity, transnational capital, and the privatization of power have eroded the nation and made national identity almost irrelevant.²⁰² On the other side, design historians Kjetil Fallan and Grace Lees-Maffei, in their 2016 book, *Designing Worlds: National Design Histories in an Age of Globalization*, argue that those same factors make it more difficult to conceptualize the nation, but the nation has not declined in importance. Rather, they maintain that the nation should be re-conceived within a global framework.²⁰³ If given a choice between products ‘Made in Canada’ or ‘Made in China,’ consumers might find that the country of origin is still a consideration.

I argue that the nation continues to play an important role in the global division of labour as a real and perceived source of authorship in design. Design processes, objects, and uses all embody ideas of nation-ness. Uncovering the national origin and identity of globally produced goods sheds light on conditions of production, circulation, and consumption, and how the nation acts to create value. As a political actor, the nation regulates and stimulates design in the global economy. As a focus of personal and collective identity, the nation represents shared perceptions of place and the capacity to design and manufacture. Those perceptions are used to sell products in the global market and help actors to relate to others within global commodity chains. The following section looks at the role of the nation in shaping design and vice versa, identifying contexts and actors of influence over design.

²⁰² Fiss, “Design in a Global Context,” 5.

²⁰³ Fallan and Lees-Maffei, “Introduction: National Design Histories in an Age of Globalization,” 1.

Objects do not simply emerge from and reflect their places of origin, they can also contribute to creating ideas of place.²⁰⁴ Imagined communities are made symbolically and functionally concrete through design in corresponding local practices and networks that centre around material culture. Consumer products help to disseminate and extend national identities while obscuring more complex processes and dispersed contributions to production, circulation, and consumption. They become tools with which to characterize the local in contrast to the “other,” understood in terms of authorship and design qualities associated with place. At the same time, deciphering objects in the global flows of knowledge and culture, and searching for sources of design traditions, styles, and expertise, is challenging in the seemingly homogenized world of global mass production.

3.1 Regulation

While GVCs are generally discussed in terms of regions and the global, the common unit of identification remains the nation, a scale that retains an important role in the formation, promotion, and preservation of design.²⁰⁵ Nations regulate design directly and indirectly: they police and protect trade, manufacturing, copyright, human (and consumer) rights, and the environment, but they also stimulate and inspire design through initiatives like design councils, museums, schools, and funding for research and innovation. Each of these can be considered actors or contexts that shape design.

National governments support manufacturing infrastructure and help to generate narratives related to production and consumption, projecting identity systematically through support for industries, branding, and propaganda.²⁰⁶ Government procurement policies often mandate nationally made products with government-funded military contracts less visible but significant examples of how design and material culture continue to be tied to the nation.²⁰⁷

²⁰⁴ Reimer and Leslie, “Design, National Imaginaries, and the Home Furnishings Commodity Chain,” 147.

²⁰⁵ Fallan and Lees-Maffei, “Introduction: National Design Histories in an Age of Globalization,” 2.

²⁰⁶ Aynsley, *Nationalism and Internationalism*, 5, 7.

²⁰⁷ The White House has made a point of sourcing American-made furnishings since the early nineteenth century, though this wasn’t always easy. President Roosevelt’s complaint that, “We are dependent upon foreign factories for the very dishes from which the Chief Executive of the United States must eat,” points to the expectation that a nation should be self-sufficient in producing goods as well as or better than others (it wasn’t until 1918 that there was enough confidence in domestic porcelain to commission the state service from US firm Lenox). Lenox, “Lenox Whitehouse China,” accessed July 7, 2016, <http://www.lenox.com/index.cfm?ss=services&cat=about&lp=whitehouse>; The local sourcing of military equipment also implies that nationally based companies are more trusted and better suited to create products that protect fellow citizens. For example, Canadian company Boulet Boots in St-Tite, Quebec, was chosen as lead provider of boots for the Canadian Armed Forces during World War II. Boulet Boots produced 200 to 300 pairs of boots for the military each day, a tradition the firm continues through the sale of Canadian “cadet” and “parade” footwear. Boulet Boots, “Boulet Catalogue 2017,” 2017, <http://www.bouletboots.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/catalog-boulet-2017-en.pdf>.

National pride, self-sufficiency, support for the local economy, innovation, and provision of quality run throughout government messaging about national design and production, emphasizing particular strengths in production, circulation, and consumption to differentiate countries.

Regulatory systems illustrate how the national officially intersects with other scales of government to inform global design. Design historian Carma Gorman explains that, “designers all work within the constraints of a constellation of state, national, and international laws.” These affect everything from patents to trade agreements and even colour specifications.²⁰⁸ Regulation also dictates which products can be exported and imported, thereby helping to define the local material culture and the extent to which national design is shared with other countries.²⁰⁹ Gorman goes even further to argue that regulation encourages and discourages certain aesthetics, and in combination with climates of creativity and innovation, influences the “national character” of design.²¹⁰ However, Gorman observes that it is the destination country that often dictates the laws with which goods must comply, leading her to conclude that the “country of destination may now be more important for understanding design than country of origin.”²¹¹ This puts the onus on the manufacturer to follow foreign regulations and standards, and places liability for product defects and injuries with the maker, essentially pushing responsibility offshore.²¹² This is problematic when national safety, labour, and environmental laws do not always align in the governance of global manufacturing and product design.²¹³

Labelling is one of the most visible ways that national regulations influence design, affecting how provenance is explained and how design and nationality are sold to consumers. Through the Consumer Packaging and Labelling Act of 1980, the Government of Canada

²⁰⁸ Gorman lists the following areas where the law affects design: “standards governing patents, trademarks, copyrights, contracts, product configurations, color specifications, country-of-origin rules, trade agreements, labor conditions, liability, accessibility, environmental protection, and so on.” Carma Gorman, “Law as a Lens for Understanding Design,” *Design and Culture* 6, no. 3 (November 1, 2014): 273–274, <https://doi.org/10.2752/175613114X14105155617267>.

²⁰⁹ Gorman, 281.

²¹⁰ Gorman, 281.

²¹¹ Gorman, 276.

²¹² Gorman, 274.

²¹³ Gorman, 277; The Canadian government strategically positions its partnership with the US, the nation’s largest trading partner, as evidence of shared values about production and security: according to the Prime Minister’s Office, the two countries have the same sense of quality, safety, and responsibility, as seen in regulatory systems that protect citizens in global trade against “products coming to our shores.” Prime Minister’s Office, “Fact Sheet: Canada – United States: Neighbours, Partners, Allies,” Prime Minister of Canada, March 10, 2016, <https://pm.gc.ca/eng/news/2016/03/10/fact-sheet-canada-united-states-neighbours-partners-allies>.

regulates how “Made in Canada” is determined *if* a manufacturer chooses to use that label.²¹⁴ The Competition Bureau now distinguishes between “made in” (51% Canadian content) and “product of” (98% Canadian content), or if those do not apply, manufacturers are advised to add more specific qualifying statements such as “assembled in Canada with foreign parts,” “designed in Canada,” or “imported by.”²¹⁵ “Content” is measured based on how much is spent on producing and manufacturing the product in Canada, which means that even if most of the labour and materials are sourced offshore, a product can still meet minimum content levels if the most costly work (which could be services like design) is done in Canada.²¹⁶ For both “made in” and “product of,” the Act mandates that “the last substantial transformation of the product must have occurred in Canada,” which is further explained as a change in “form, appearance or nature” that makes the product fundamentally different.²¹⁷ The Competition Bureau assesses both literal and implied meanings in the overall impression given by symbols, packaging, images, and text.²¹⁸ For example, the Bureau notes that using the maple leaf alone is likely to lead consumers to believe that the product is made in Canada.²¹⁹

Manufacturers strategically use ‘made in’ labels to align themselves with national brands that are perceived to carry more value as sources of design and manufacturing. For example, the allure of shoes ‘Made in Italy’ is stronger than ‘Made in Canada’ based on a cultivated national brand linked to fine leathers and manufacturing traditions, notions of quality, and a reputation for leadership in fashion. ‘Made in Canada,’ in comparison with ‘Made in China,’ connotes stricter regulation and standards on issues like labour, health and safety, and the environment. Luxury analyst Luca Solca, writing for the *Business of Fashion*, compares how brands choose to associate themselves with certain countries by selectively disclosing origin. He notes that high-end lines like Giorgio Armani are made in “heritage countries” (i.e. Italy, France, Spain, Britain) while low-end brands like Armani Jeans are “imported.”²²⁰ Some “aspirational luxury brands” do not disclose where their products are made, likely because they

²¹⁴ Competition Bureau of Canada Government of Canada, “‘Product of Canada’ and ‘Made in Canada’ Claims Enforcement Guidelines,” December 22, 2009, 5, <http://www.competitionbureau.gc.ca/eic/site/cb-bc.nsf/eng/03169.html>.

²¹⁵ Government of Canada, 6, 16, 17, 20.

²¹⁶ Government of Canada, 16.

²¹⁷ Government of Canada, 6, 14.

²¹⁸ Government of Canada, 17.

²¹⁹ Government of Canada, 17; Penalties for misleading labeling are significant, ranging from the price of the product to \$15,000,000 for repeat offenders. The Act is intended to “promote fair competition in the marketplace” and provide “truthful and accurate information to enable informed consumer choice.” Government of Canada, 12, 18, 19.

²²⁰ Luca Solca, “The ‘Made In’ Dilemma: To Label, or Not to Label,” *The Business of Fashion*, June 14, 2015, <https://www.businessoffashion.com/community/voices/discussions/does-made-in-matter/the-made-in-dilemma-to-label-or-not-to-label>.

use cheaper labour in countries like China.²²¹ This “aspiration” translates to consumers as well, as Solca explains, “The Chinese — the largest nation of luxury consumers in the world — want their watches to be Swiss, their perfumes and cosmetics to be French, their cars to be German and their bags and shoes to be either Italian or French.”²²² This notion of “heritage countries” suggests that for consumers, some countries are historically leaders in design with more authentic claims to certain traditions of manufacturing.

While these national brands have currency in the minds of producers and consumers, there is debate over whether ‘made in’ labels have any meaning.²²³ Consumers are well aware of the global nature of production; it is no secret that goods are often assembled from components made in multiple places, but receive their ‘made in’ designation based on final location of assembly and packaging. National designations oversimplify the realities of global production, subsuming multiple locations and regional and urban identities—Made in China says nothing about where production takes place in the vast country, or the specialties of distinct areas of Chinese manufacturing. In addition to the WTO’s Made in the World project discussed above, alternative forms of labelling are starting to take precedence for consumers, such as “fairtrade” and “certified organic,” pointing to a shift away from trust in nations as indicators of quality and ethics, to value systems upheld by third parties.²²⁴

3.2 National Identity

National identity is important to this project because it reveals much about place of origin and authorship in everyday goods, at the same time that it oversimplifies production and conceals global contributions. Values associated with design, manufacturing, and consumption are reified in globally circulating objects, but also grounded in how actors perceive specific locations of production and use. As this project demonstrates, the design of consumer goods is a collective activity and one that reflects specific national conditions like culture, values, resources, and economy. Of course, ideas of nationhood extend beyond national borders and are transformed in the process.²²⁵ National identity, according to Edensor, appears at many points within global networks—in diasporic communities, reified in global commodities, and re-interpreted in new locations.²²⁶

²²¹ Solca.

²²² Solca.

²²³ The Business of Fashion, “Does ‘Made In’ Matter?,” The Business of Fashion, June 2015, <http://www.businessoffashion.com/community/voices/discussions/does-made-in-matter>.

²²⁴ The Business of Fashion.

²²⁵ Fallan and Lees-Maffei, “Introduction: National Design Histories in an Age of Globalization,” 2.

²²⁶ Edensor, *National Identity, Popular Culture and Everyday Life*, 29–30.

Design helps to make national identity visible and physical. As objects move around the globe, producers and consumers come into contact with physical evidence of other cultures, create meanings, and form judgments about themselves in relation to others and to place. Edensor describes this in terms of a “reification of the nation, as if different cultures can be identified, ticked off according to a preconceived set of national characteristics.”²²⁷ These include opinions about a nation’s capacity to design and manufacture, if its products represent quality, specialty knowledge and local traditions. As outlined above, these views of national material cultures are evident in consumer choices and in perceived hierarchies of the global division of labour and ‘design-led’ nations. Some of these stereotypes have been attached to countries and their products for centuries.

In addition to design offering purely symbolic representations, Fallan and Lees-Maffei believe that design offers physical, functional manifestations of national identity.²²⁸ Likewise, Edensor notes that certain traditions, behaviours, and relationships with object types are learned from an early age in relation to place. Communities experience the world differently through the objects that surround them and what those objects allow them to do, creating an “embodied, habitual, unreflexive way of knowing one’s place and the things which belong within it.”²²⁹ Despite globalization, certain object types continue to be associated with specific cultures through identifiable practices, materials, and histories of manufacture that often become the subject of “invented traditions.”²³⁰

It seems difficult to imagine that there might be something uniquely local about mass-produced goods in the current global market. Every shopping mall and main street appear to offer the same retail chains and ‘authentic,’ ‘original’ products are becoming harder to find and therefore more desirable.²³¹ Craft and design historian Paul Greenhalgh’s definition of vernacular craft points to these desired values:

The vernacular refers to the cultural produce of a community, the things collectively made, spoken and performed. It is as close to nature as a culture can get; the unselfconscious and collective products of a social group, unpolluted by

²²⁷ Edensor, 1.

²²⁸ Fallan and Lees-Maffei, “Introduction: National Design Histories in an Age of Globalization,” 8–9.

²²⁹ Edensor, *National Identity, Popular Culture and Everyday Life*, 106–107.

²³⁰ Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, eds., *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge Cambridgeshire: Cambridge University Press, 2012); For example, material culture historian Anne Gerritsen’s study of blue and white china shows that regardless of changes in taste or decoration for export markets, the ceramics have always been made in the same way and continue to be globally recognized as “Chinese.” Anne Gerritsen, “Global Design in Jingdezhen. Local Production and Global Connections.,” in *Global Design History*, ed. Glenn Adamson, Giorgio Riello, and Sarah Teasley, 1st ed (Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon ; New York, NY: Routledge, 2011), 31.

²³¹ Fallan and Lees-Maffei, “Introduction: National Design Histories in an Age of Globalization,” 15.

outside influence. It carries the mystique of being the authentic voice of society. There has been a tendency to associate this authenticity with pre-industrial, rural communities [...] The vernacular was noticed only when other forms of living began to destroy it.²³²

In the context of my project, this raises the question of whether mass production can also be considered a form of vernacular, a continuation of craft traditions mixed with other uniquely local conditions, like the arrival of foreign cultures, ideas, and technologies. Globalization has been perceived as a threat to local design but Fiss wonders if it may in fact help “to enrich and preserve culture through expanded access to the Internet and increased cross-cultural contact,” proposing that through circulation, ideas are kept alive.²³³

Manufacturers and advertisers capitalize on the idea that there may remain something truly vernacular. The “spectacle of the local” is a symptom of what Appadurai describes as “production fetishism” and “fetishism of the consumer.”²³⁴ Whether it’s a local maker, identifiable designer, or national brand, each distracts from the maze of commodity chains, offshore manufacturing, global management, and money flows behind mass-produced goods. Corporate narratives and product stories building on national and local origins are increasingly significant components of branding, giving individuality and provenance to otherwise unremarkable goods.²³⁵ In the process, the emphasis on the local appears to give consumers more agency in what they buy, where, and from whom.

The significance of place-based identities expressed through design and manufacturing is illustrated in a study of British and Canadian furniture by geographers Suzanne Reimer and Deborah Leslie. They demonstrate that narratives of design and “symbolic constructs” of place are attached to commodities as they move along the chain. They bridge global commodity chain and design studies research, generating a useful model for understanding the role national identity continues to play in design and manufacturing. Similar to the research conducted for my project, Reimer and Leslie analyze interviews, exhibitions, stores, as well as media coverage and corporate publications. They identify “imaginative geographies” that are tied to emotions and shared perceptions of how design and production occur.²³⁶ In the process, Reimer and Leslie show that national identity is often more important than other group allegiances for

²³² Paul Greenhalgh, “The History of Craft,” in *The Culture of Craft*, ed. Peter Dormer (Manchester University Press, 1997), 31.

²³³ Fiss, “Design in a Global Context,” 3.

²³⁴ Appadurai, “Introduction: Commodities and the Politics of Value,” 41–42.

²³⁵ Reimer and Leslie, “Design, National Imaginaries, and the Home Furnishings Commodity Chain,” 146.

²³⁶ Reimer and Leslie, 147.

designers, manufacturers, and consumers.²³⁷ Differentiation based on “myth-places” is apparent in inferiority complexes (Canadian and British manufacturers and designers compare themselves to those from Italy), national design heroes (Canadians still claim star product designer Karim Rashid though he was born in Egypt and lives in New York, and architect Frank Gehry who has lived in the United States since 1947), and urban design centres given national status (work done in London by designers from all over the world is characterized as British).²³⁸ Reimer and Leslie show that not only is identity integrated in the process of design and meaning making, but also that “collective identities are shaped in part by the circulation of designed objects that have cultural resonances.”²³⁹ Thus, through consumer goods, both producers and consumers articulate opinions about identity, often in relation to “place images.”²⁴⁰

3.3 Canada's Identity as a Design and Manufacturing Nation

An overview of Canada's design and manufacturing identities helps to contextualize the case studies that follow and the fetishism of 'Made in Canada' apparent in Chapter 6. The nation's current reputation in these areas is weak in comparison to that of the US and certain European countries, which demonstrate greater economic, political, and cultural investment in production. The power of design and nationalism is seen in the emergence of design cultures in Europe over the twentieth century that have overshadowed attempts at a broader European Union design identity—Italy, Denmark, and the Netherlands are examples of successful national design brands (in some cases, global brands like Ikea have done more to define their countries than government).²⁴¹ Post World War II, Canada also benefited from investment in design by Canadian government and industry, drawing international attention at events like the Milan Triennale (1957) and most significantly at Expo 67. Canadian design was promoted by a series of federal organizations, from the National Industrial Design Committee, founded in 1948, to its subsequent iterations as the National Industrial Design Council, National Design Council, and Design Canada.²⁴² The non-profit organization, Design Exchange, opened in 1994 with a similar mission. However, Canadian design of the twenty-first century does not benefit from the same continued expenditure and level of activity seen in Europe, and Canadian designers do not have access to the same scale of clients and markets available to their American counterparts.

²³⁷ Reimer and Leslie, 147.

²³⁸ Reimer and Leslie, 153.

²³⁹ Reimer and Leslie, 145, 146, 154.

²⁴⁰ S. Reimer and D. Leslie, “Design, National Imaginaries, and the Home Furnishings Commodity Chain,” *Growth and Change* 39 (2008): 145, 146, 154.

²⁴¹ Fallan and Lees-Maffei, “Introduction: National Design Histories in an Age of Globalization,” 15.

²⁴² Rachel Gotlieb and Cora Golden, *Design in Canada: Fifty Years From Teakettles to Task Chairs*, First edition (Toronto: Knopf Canada, 2001), 3–13.

Reimer and Leslie observe discourses of decline in Canadian manufacturing in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. Furthermore they note that, “a lack of recognition of design is not only felt within the manufacturing industry, but also derives from other places in the commodity network—design is not seen to be treated as part of a national culture.”²⁴³ This makes Canadian design and ‘Made in Canada’ that much more of a novelty today.

Design curators and critics have been reluctant to define a Canadian aesthetic, often claiming an international style based on a diverse population. In *Design In Canada*, design historians Rachel Gotlieb and Cora Golden trace the history of industrial design in post-war Canada in global terms.²⁴⁴ From the first generation of European-trained immigrants who embraced modernism to the current period of pluralism, the authors portray design as shaped by its relation to the outside world, and in particular to the United States. Design historian Jan Hadlaw and historian Joy Parr underline the influence of American and European design on Canadian products post World War II, particularly in the copying of American goods and subsidiaries that were manufacturing under American licenses.²⁴⁵ Hadlaw points out that the support and promotion of Canadian design for domestic and international markets in the mid-twentieth century led to a ‘Canadian-ness’ that is best understood as a rhetorical construct rather than an aesthetic sensibility.²⁴⁶ In contrast, the late-twentieth century saw a trend among designers to explore the regional Canadian vernacular in order to generate new forms and imagery.²⁴⁷ In the first decade of the 2000s, designers joined together across the country to create new objects that commented on the national psyche, gaining exposure through export initiatives and exhibitions supported by the government and institutions like the Interior Design Show and Design Exchange.²⁴⁸ These more recent efforts to construct Canadian-ness often rely on stereotypical motifs (e.g. based on Canadian geography and nature), or the resurrection of traditional materials and ways of making. A survey of eight designers revealed that they defined

²⁴³ Reimer and Leslie, “Design, National Imaginaries, and the Home Furnishings Commodity Chain,” 162.

²⁴⁴ Gotlieb and Golden, *Design in Canada*.

²⁴⁵ Jan Hadlaw, “Design Nationalism, Technological Pragmatism, and the Performance of Canadian-Ness: The Case of the Contempra Telephone,” *Journal of Design History* Advance online publication (2019), <https://doi.org/10.1093/jdh/epz013>; Joy Parr, *Domestic Goods: The Material, the Moral, and the Economic in the Postwar Years* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999).

²⁴⁶ Hadlaw, “Design Nationalism, Technological Pragmatism, and the Performance of Canadian-Ness: The Case of the Contempra Telephone.”

²⁴⁷ Gotlieb and Golden, *Design in Canada*, 46.

²⁴⁸ *Canadian Design Resource* is a web site started by designer Todd Falkowsky and others to document Canadian designs past and present. www.canadiandesignresource.ca

the Canadian-ness of their work in terms of social values like tolerance, hard work, honesty, sense of humour, celebration of difference, and concern for sustainability.²⁴⁹

As a manufacturing nation, Canada's identity stands in contrast to that of the United States, where manufacturing and 'Made in the USA' are highly politicized. As a brand, 'Made in America' (or 'Made in the USA') has become widely used by manufacturers and politicians to imply power, self-sufficiency, economic strength, and local jobs. Unlike Canada, in the US there are a number of organizations that represent companies and consumers who want to bring manufacturing jobs back to the United States by buying domestically-made products and supporting local business.²⁵⁰ The extent to which manufacturing and consumption are part of US identity is summed up one of those groups, American Made Matters, which equates "being American" with "buying American."²⁵¹ This sentiment is reinforced at the highest levels of American government with rhetoric defining Americans in relation to making, differentiated by their superior work ethic and expertise, and blaming other nations for stealing American jobs and wealth.²⁵² The closure of American factories and the unemployment caused by offshoring

²⁴⁹ Elise Hodson and Courtney Stewart, "The Quest for Canadian Identity: Representing a Nation Through Design. American Popular Culture Conference" (American Popular Culture Conference, Boston, 2007).

²⁵⁰ The Made in America Movement, "About The Made In America Movement," The Made in America Movement, accessed December 12, 2017, <http://www.themadeinamericamovement.com/about-us/>; American Made Matters, "Educating Consumers on the Powerful Importance of Buying Made in USA Products," accessed December 12, 2017, <https://www.americanmadematters.com/>; Go4 Made in America LLC, "Go4 USA Mobile App," Go4 USA, accessed December 12, 2017, <https://go4madeinamerica.com/>.

²⁵¹ American Made Matters, "Educating Consumers on the Powerful Importance of Buying Made in USA Products."

²⁵² At the 2012 Democratic National Convention, President Obama spoke about "goods that are stamped with three proud words: Made in America." He described "doing what America's always done best. We are making things again...bringing jobs back to America, not because our workers make less pay but because we make better products, because we work harder and smarter than anyone else." National Public Radio, "Transcript: President Obama's Convention Speech," NPR.org, September 6, 2012, <https://www.npr.org/2012/09/06/160713941/transcript-president-obamas-convention-speech>; For President Trump, the messaging remains clear and inflammatory—offshoring is something to be blamed on other nations. "No longer will we allow other countries to break the rules, steal our jobs and drain our wealth," Trump said in a weekly address tweeted by the White House in July, 2017, "Instead we will follow two simple but very crucial rules: We will buy American and we will hire American." In July 2017, Trump declared Made in America Day and Week in order to showcase national ingenuity and capacity, a natural fit with Trump's America First and Make America Great Again agendas. Nandita Bose, "Exclusive: Not Made in America - Wal-Mart Looks Overseas for Online Vendors," *Reuters*, July 27, 2017, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-walmart-vendors-exclusive/exclusive-not-made-in-america-wal-mart-looks-overseas-for-online-vendors-idUSKBN1AC1VJ>; The White House, "Made In America Week Recap," [whitehouse.gov](https://www.whitehouse.gov/blog/2017/07/24/made-america-week-recap), July 24, 2017, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/blog/2017/07/24/made-america-week-recap>; The impossibility of retreating from global systems of production in favour of making and hiring locally on a large scale is underlined by Trump's family businesses, which have been criticized for relying on factories in Asia and South America. This hasn't prevented Trump from using clichés to critique China, telling Fox News in 2010 that, "We don't need Chinese products, the stuff that's been sent over from China is—it falls apart after a year and a half. It's crap." Adam Gabbatt, "Trump's 'Made in America' Week: The President's Hypocrisy Is on Display," *The Guardian*, July 18, 2017, <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2017/jul/17/made-in-america-week-donald-trump-businesses>.

undermines US national identity. It is particularly damaging if the corporate motivation is not only cutting costs, but also superior manufacturing conditions abroad.

The American context illustrates how strongly people feel about production and consumption as part of their collective heritage and place on the world stage. However, the rhetoric of 'Made in America' sells an ideal that oversimplifies the conditions of the global market. Companies using 'Made in America' to gain consumer confidence often obscure how and where things are made and who they really support as employers and customers in global supply chains. Walmart illustrates the paradox of 'Made in the USA.' It is criticized for undermining local businesses and small town main streets through global sourcing and rock-bottom prices. The retailer has attempted to control the conversation by appropriating 'Made in the USA' within its portfolio of corporate social responsibility initiatives, and by "spark[ing] a revitalization of U.S.-based manufacturing [by] making production more affordable and feasible in the United States."²⁵³ Success has been limited even for this retail giant, illustrating the challenges of re-building manufacturing in the West.²⁵⁴

While the 'Made in Canada' discussion is far less political than 'Made in America,' national pride and identity surface in relation to advanced manufacturing and new technologies. As a post-industrial economy, Canada is expected to focus on research, development, and original intellectual property rather than re-shoring and protecting "low-end processing" jobs.²⁵⁵ The government therefore supports clean tech, energy, automotive, and food as Canada's areas of strength. These industries are described in terms of "Canadian" innovation and ingenuity, revealing something about how the country would like to be positioned globally.

²⁵³ Walmart aims to buy more Made in America and make it easier for suppliers to re-shore production, which it does through programs like Made in the USA Open Calls, Manufacturing Summits, and funding for training and innovation. Walmart, "Opportunity. U.S. Manufacturing," accessed December 31, 2015, <http://corporate.walmart.com/global-responsibility/opportunity>.

²⁵⁴ In a recent effort to compete with Amazon by increasing product diversity online, Walmart invited Chinese and Canadian suppliers among others to join American sellers. Reuters business analyst Nandita Bose reported that, "While there is a financial incentive behind the move, Wal-Mart's decision comes out of necessity: not all the goods its customers want - ranging from jeans to bicycles to beauty products - are manufactured within the United States." Furthermore, Bose cites a 2017 Reuters Ipsos poll revealing that the majority of American consumers believe in buying Made in the USA, but 37% refuse to pay more for that pedigree. Bose, "Exclusive."

²⁵⁵ Geoffrey Morgan, "What Happened to Industry Canada? Trudeau Elevates Scientific Research in New Cabinet Role," *Financial Post* (blog), November 4, 2015, <http://business.financialpost.com/news/economy/what-happened-to-industry-canada-trudeau-elevates-scientific-research-in-new-cabinet-role>.

3.4 Design and the Fetishism of Lost Manufacturing

Appadurai's concept of production fetishism can be extended to include the fetishism of lost manufacturing, both lamented and celebrated in historic accounts of innovation and success. Images of abandoned factories, the fascination with the ruins of Detroit, and historic sites dedicated to failed manufacturing, point to the break in industrial history when manufacturing moved somewhere else. Design has special significance in these post-industrial contexts, "where national industrial heritage and national design heritage become key identity markers."²⁵⁶ The re-purposing and celebration of artifacts of production suggest that nations have advanced to the next phase in their industrial evolution; they are achieving their destiny in the prescribed path of industrial upgrading. Design helps to tell this story and becomes a positive symbol of progress rather than economic downturn or lack of capacity.²⁵⁷

There is nevertheless a desire to rebuild the past, as explained by Edensor in the context of national identity: "the primordial origins of nations and their future orientation, the idea of being and becoming, are neatly brought together by the idea that nations may become that which they once were in some mythical 'golden age'."²⁵⁸ For some, the "golden age" is quite recent; the impact of factory closures continues to be felt in unemployment, re-training programs, dying towns, and the fallout from the 2008 financial crisis, which helped to re-ignite anger about offshoring and support for national protectionism. In this context, former factory workers are reified as "skilled workers, visionary entrepreneurs and technical geniuses who still exist, but governmental incompetence, devious foreign marketing, and insufficient patriotism have badly let down these heroic characters."²⁵⁹ The concern for lost manufacturing is manifested in material culture where changes to the production of everyday goods are made visible. Edensor observes that the disappearance and offshoring of familiar products creates anxiety among consumers.²⁶⁰ At the same time, the fetishism of lost manufacturing creates new

²⁵⁶ Fallan and Lees-Maffei, "Introduction: National Design Histories in an Age of Globalization," 9.

²⁵⁷ Red Dot Design Museum Essen is an example—it documents the most prestigious design competition in the world from within an old boiler house in a former industrial complex, now a UNESCO World Heritage site. This is appropriate given Germany's status as a leader in advanced manufacturing and self-proclaimed home of the current "4th industrial revolution." Red Dot Design Museum. "Museen." Red Dot Design Museum, January 8, 2018. <https://www.red-dot-design-museum.org/http://www.red-dot-design-museum.org/>, <http://www.red-dot-design-museum.org/>. James Temperton, "A 'Fourth Industrial Revolution' Is about to Begin (in Germany)," *Wired*, May 21, 2015, <http://www.wired.co.uk/article/factory-of-the-future>.

²⁵⁸ Edensor, *National Identity, Popular Culture and Everyday Life*, 18.

²⁵⁹ Edensor, 126.

²⁶⁰ Edensor, 110.

markets for niche products that combine traditional and new technologies.²⁶¹ Through nostalgia and the spectacle of the local, producers and consumers keep alive a memory of production and with it, hope for the revival of a thriving design and manufacturing sector.

²⁶¹ Shinola is a Detroit-based boutique manufacturer of high-end, “hand-crafted” bicycles, watches, and leather goods that refuses to “accept that manufacturing is gone from America,” and that believes in “the glory of manufacturing,” Shinola. “Places We Work.” Shinola. Accessed February 9, 2018. <https://www.shinola.com/places-we-work>. Shinola, “About Shinola,” Shinola, accessed February 9, 2018, <https://www.shinola.com/about-shinola>.

Chapter 4: Head and Hand - Design, Craft, and the Division of Labour

In this chapter, I argue that the division of labour underpinning design – the ‘thinking’ versus the ‘making’ in production – is false. Both cognitive and manual labour exist in the designer’s work and, significantly, in the labour of other workers. In part 1, I examine how industry and the division of labour have distinguished craft from design, and argue that craft, as handwork and skilled repetitive labour, still has a presence in manufacturing, one that can be seen as intellectual and creative or as unthinking and monotonous. Craft work can appear at odds with the work of the designer and the goals of mass production, and yet, looking at craft as a complete model of making offers a way to see value in the manual labour found both on the factory floor and in the designer’s studio. Furthermore, when manual and cognitive labour are considered inseparable, it is easier to find the intellectual work of design across production. In part 2, I look at how the intellectual work of design and creativity have been defined for both professional and non-designers. Across disciplines, studies of how designers think arrive at similar conclusions on specific modes of thinking, types of problem-solving, and the steps required to develop design solutions. Creativity is a more broadly applied term and is therefore useful for my project as it allows me to identify design under the guise of creativity in the case studies. At the end of this chapter, I extend the discussion of creativity to consider how it has been identified and valued within manufacturing and consumption.

1 Craft and Making

Examining the relationship between craft and design offers insights into the work of the designer and opportunities to find evidence of design in the work of other actors. By taking craft into consideration, it becomes easier to identify what has supposedly been lost in mass production, to bring ‘head’ work into focus on the assembly line, and to make ‘hand’ work more evident elsewhere. As a counterpoint to design, craft helps to situate making and provides insight into the practices observed in the case studies. The study of craft valorizes materiality and grounds the discussion of design in the physical realities of creating products, challenging the idea of design as digital and distanced from manufacturing. This underlines that the assumption that designers do not or cannot make is false, as are assumptions that others do not or cannot contribute to the creativity of design in mass production. Craft’s presence or absence in manufacturing, along with the politics and popular perceptions of craft, raise questions about what design is and is not. Just like design, manufacturers and consumers

fetishize craft in production, presenting an alternative type of authorship, which emphasizes individual makers and handwork, and attaches craft values to mass-produced goods.

In the realm of mass production, craft and design have been positioned as mutually exclusive. The division of labour that began with the Industrial Revolution in the eighteenth century, followed by techniques of scientific management developed in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, were intended to separate the craftsperson's role into unthinking, repetitive, manual labour for more efficient factory work, and intellectual, creative planning work to be undertaken by the designer. In contrast, outside of manufacturing, craftspeople are broadly defined by their control over production—they both design and make their own objects, demonstrating close integration of cognitive and manual labour. Craft scholars and labour historians debate whether craft was in fact ever eliminated from production or if it was re-distributed. Skilled making and creative thinking likely continues, potentially complimenting or undermining the designer's authority. They suggest craft is necessary for design and mass production and could therefore be considered evidence of the ongoing relationship between thinking and making across design activity. Craft helps to tell another story about manufacturing which sits uneasily in relation to the celebration of the designer, a story in which craft continues to exist not only on the factory floor, but in the designer's studio as well. Despite the emphasis on intellectual aspects of design work, tangible evidence of design activity reveals a blend of the cognitive and manual. The drawings, models, and technologies associated with the creative planning work of design raise questions about the role of physical labour, repetition, and skill, all qualities associated with craft.

The designer's role is becoming more valuable in relation to the mastery of the digital-immaterial than the physical-material, consistent with the privileging of 'knowledge' and 'creative economies' over the materiality of manufacturing. Chapter 2 outlines the perceived dematerialization of design work from design-for-manufacturing to design-for-services, and from design adding value through form and function, to adding value as business strategy. It is also seen in changing terminology: product design increasingly refers to digital products like mobile applications rather than physical objects. However, it is debatable the extent to which Western society has distanced itself from manufacturing and physical production. Scientist and policy analyst Vaclav Smil, in his study of manufacturing in the USA from the mid-nineteenth century to the present, questions the validity of "claims that postindustrial societies have found ways to dematerialize themselves as the magic of software drives the electronic worlds where

connection, information, and knowledge become superior to mere objects.”²⁶² He argues that overlooking the enormity of the material world that supports all of the consumption and delivery of services and digital products is a significant mistake. The transformation of raw materials into finished products remains an important source of innovation in the West and makes up a substantial part of the economy, and therefore warrants more attention in scholarly study.²⁶³

Craft and design work are largely distinguished by the impacts of mass production and the division of labour. While narratives of design have followed the Western history of industrialization and capitalism, crafts are often described as ‘naturally evolving,’ produced by local communities, and generations of anonymous (sometimes ‘primitive’) makers. Design is a profession based on rationalization and progress, and scientific and technical processes associated with mass consumption and mass production. In contrast, craft’s role in the production of consumer goods was severely limited through mass production. As a result, much of twentieth century craft discourse was dedicated to finding craft’s place in relation to art, and less attention has been given to craft’s relationship to design, even though the connection may be stronger in some contexts, such as manufacturing.²⁶⁴ Rather than seeing craft as a victim of modernity, Adamson repositions craft as industry’s other.²⁶⁵ As design is positioned as an enabler of industry, it follows that craft is also other to design.

Craft’s powerful image is influenced by three “threads” in craft discourse, as outlined by craft and design historian Paul Greenhalgh: craft as decorative art, craft as vernacular, and craft as politics of work. In the late nineteenth century, these perspectives were brought together by the Arts and Crafts movement to form a vision that, as Greenhalgh and design historians Grace Lees-Maffei and Linda Sandino argue, continues to shape understandings of craft, mass production, and factory conditions.²⁶⁶ One of the fundamental beliefs of the Arts and Crafts movement was that cognitive and manual labour are inseparable. Arts and Crafts leaders such as John Ruskin and William Morris saw creative practice as part of the physical process of making, as Greenhalgh describes: “craft was premised on the understanding that *cognitive* and *manual* activity were effectively the same.”²⁶⁷ The Arts and Crafts movement imagined craft as unalienated labour, in contrast with the unfulfilling, debasing factory jobs that were, in Marx’s

²⁶² Smil, *Made in the USA: The Rise and Retreat of American Manufacturing.*, 3.

²⁶³ Smil, xii.

²⁶⁴ Grace Lees-Maffei and L. Sandino, “Dangerous Liaisons: Relationships between Design, Craft and Art” 17, no. 3 (January 1, 2004): 212.

²⁶⁵ Adamson, *The Invention of Craft*, xiv.

²⁶⁶ Greenhalgh, “The History of Craft,” 25; Lees-Maffei and Sandino, “Dangerous Liaisons,” 210.

²⁶⁷ Greenhalgh, “The History of Craft,” 41.

words, “external to the worker.”²⁶⁸ This vision still resonated with labour historian Harry Braverman in the 1970s when he described the human “unity of hand and brain” being destroyed through alienated labour, becoming “divided and hostile...something less than human.”²⁶⁹ Similarly, but in the context of craft’s relationship to art over the twentieth century, visual arts critic Peter Dormer discusses a distancing of conception and execution, in which skills came to have a more negative connotation “as technical constraints upon self-expression” rather than “the content as well as the means of expression.”²⁷⁰ Manual skills have come to be associated with unthinking, uncreative labour, the antithesis to depictions of design work.

Outside of mass production, the distinction between design and craft is not always clear. There is the work of designer-makers and craftspeople who embrace both roles, designers and manufacturers who collaborate with craftspeople on products that showcase the handmade (e.g. Droog, Ikea partnerships with craftspeople in developing economies), and makers who employ new technologies that allow for small-scale production.²⁷¹ Furthermore, the idea of craft as an approach to work has been extended to other fields. Designer and professor David Pye looks beyond specific skills to attitude, framing craft as the workmanship and care that a maker takes regardless of technique or tool.²⁷² Sociologist Richard Sennett searches for a related but even broader application of craftsmanship in the context of industrial society in the early twenty-first century, proposing that it is “an enduring, basic human impulse, the desire to do a job well for its own sake.”²⁷³ His interest in the “intimate connection between hand and head” is useful as he argues that craftsmanship can be found in almost any job.²⁷⁴

Skill and repetition are defining aspects of the manual labour that characterizes craft, but their presentation as thinking or unthinking work alters how craft is viewed and whether craft can be identified in the factory. Braverman argues that factory work is not intellectual work and pins the destruction of craft to repetition. He describes that industrialization’s reorganization of making processes into small, repeatable actions, “systematically robbed [the worker] of a craft heritage” along with the creative, independent thought and skill associated with craft.²⁷⁵

²⁶⁸ Marx quoted in Greenhalgh, 33.

²⁶⁹ Braverman, *Labor and Monopoly Capital: The Degradation of Work in the Twentieth Century*, 125.

²⁷⁰ Peter Dormer, *The Art of the Maker: Skill and its Meaning in Art Craft and Design* (Thames and Hudson, 1994) as quoted in Lees-Maffei and Sandino, “Dangerous Liaisons,” 211.

²⁷¹ Rina Sabina Aouf, “Piet Hein Eek Unveils First Collection with IKEA,” *Dezeen*, June 17, 2016, <https://www.dezeen.com/2016/06/17/piet-hein-eek-unveils-first-collection-ikea-jassa-indonesia-vietnam-craft/>.

²⁷² David Pye (1968) quoted in Nicholas Goodison, “The Crafts & Their Industrial Future,” *RSA Journal* 145, no. 5484 (January 1, 1998): 101.

²⁷³ Richard Sennett, *The Craftsman* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008), 9.

²⁷⁴ Sennett, *The Craftsman*, 9.

²⁷⁵ Braverman, *Labor and Monopoly Capital: The Degradation of Work in the Twentieth Century*, 6.

Adamson compares historical perspectives of the cognitive and manual in craft. He states that leading up to the early nineteenth century, craft was seen as a mindful, thoughtful activity, after which it gained the reputation of being entirely physical, where skill was embodied and rendered through the hands, not the mind.²⁷⁶ He explores the respect for craft as skilled work on its own, without the need for intellectual labour, but points to the fact that craft as tacit, or “altogether unthinking,” is a reality that is difficult to accept for many.²⁷⁷ Skill can be considered an automatic reaction, perfected through repetition, a predictable rather than creative activity.²⁷⁸ Adamson argues that in fact, repetition is a defining factor of craft, portrayed both positively (leading to skill, precision, and quality) and negatively (the “intellectually dead hand”), and resulting in work described as tacit and instinctual.²⁷⁹ He links repetition of actions to repetition (reproduction) of forms, stating that imitation is an important craft tradition.²⁸⁰ This is in opposition to one of the defining characteristics of design: originality. At the same time, it allows for a more positive interpretation of factory work by aligning craft with the repetition, precision, and quality desired in mass production. Combining the view that repetition and skill are valuable, with the argument above that manual and cognitive labour are inseparable, suggests that intellectual, creative work may still be present in factory jobs, and furthermore, that craft might be found in the designer’s studio.

In fact, Adamson argues that craft skills have been highly valued by industry. While they may not be as visible, they still exist in manufacturing, redistributed across multiple roles. Contrary to the view that craft has been systematically removed from manufacturing, Adamson explains that industrialization did not displace craftspeople so much as it “put them in their place,” their skills being so valuable that capitalists sought to dominate them by dividing them.²⁸¹ As early as the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (long preceding Taylorism), factory owners studied and appropriated craft skills for the benefit of industry.²⁸² Detailed descriptions and images allowed factory owners to dissect and understand craft processes so that they could be repeated by anyone,²⁸³ similar to the drive to analyze, codify, and “harness” design thinking today (below). Adamson also points out that craft was divided and workers lost control over

²⁷⁶ Adamson, *The Invention of Craft*, 139.

²⁷⁷ Adamson, 171.

²⁷⁸ Adamson, 134–139.

²⁷⁹ Adamson, 143, 171.

²⁸⁰ Adamson, xxii, 142.

²⁸¹ Adamson, xix.

²⁸² Braverman, *Labor and Monopoly Capital: The Degradation of Work in the Twentieth Century*, 87.

²⁸³ Adamson, *The Invention of Craft*, xx.

production prior to mechanization (not only because of it),²⁸⁴ and that by the early nineteenth century, the majority of artisans still worked in small shops (not factories).²⁸⁵ This division of labour did not diminish skill, but allowed craftspeople to become more specialized.²⁸⁶ Furthermore, Adamson argues that craft was redistributed among other professions like artists and architects,²⁸⁷ as well as to new professions in manufacturing, as seen in the maintenance of complex factory equipment.²⁸⁸

In the context of advanced manufacturing, the practice of craft has an evolving role, which has been largely overlooked in design and craft studies. When the *Journal of Modern Craft* was launched in 2008, the editors called for “craft-based reading[s]” that “go against logic, against the grain, or against current scholarly fashion,” including the analysis of craft in factories.²⁸⁹ They assert that craft has an “instrumental role ... in late capitalist economies,” and suggest that while de-skilling may seem to have occurred due to the division and mechanization of labour, new craft skills are being developed in industry. They offer examples from car manufacturing, like the highly customized handwork that involves making prototypes, molds, and applying finishes to car parts.²⁹⁰ The inaugural issue of *The Journal of Modern Craft* includes a speech from 1973 by renowned design critic Reyner Banham, who argued that craftsmanship could be found on the assembly line: “the craftsman, as is normally understood, has far from disappeared. He has found a number of very important niches within the structure of manufacturing industry. We do not get his products directly, but nevertheless we do get his products.”²⁹¹

Craft can be difficult to recognize in manufacturing, partly because it does not conform to the original, purist definitions. As Adamson suggests, the more tacit, unspoken craft practices must be uncovered:

Still today, craft’s voice can be heard within a cacophony of competing interests, but only rarely does it come through loud and clear. One must strain to hear it: to detect its presence in a hand-made copy, to ferret out a concealed story of skilled

²⁸⁴ Forty, *Objects of Desire*, 53.

²⁸⁵ Adamson, *The Invention of Craft*, xvi.

²⁸⁶ Adamson, xvi.

²⁸⁷ Adamson, 30.

²⁸⁸ Adamson, 146.

²⁸⁹ Glenn Adamson, Edward S. Cooke Jr., and Tanya Harrod, eds, “Editorial Introduction,” *The Journal of Modern Craft*, 1 no. 1 (March 2008): 6.

²⁹⁰ Glenn Adamson, Edward Cooke, and Tanya Harrod, “Editorial Introduction,” *The Journal of Modern Craft* 1, no. 1 (March 2008): 6.

²⁹¹ Reyner Banham, “Sparks from a Plastic Anvil: The Craftsman in Technology,” *The Journal of Modern Craft* 1, no. 1 (March 2008): 139. (Lecture delivered at the Victoria & Albert Museum, London, Thursday, April 12, 1973)

production, to notice it lurking in the background of a building, garment, product, or image.²⁹²

As argued in Chapter 2, certain object types have been fetishized as evidence of design labour, in particular the drawing as representative of the designer's ability to visualize and abstract three-dimensional forms, and to translate concepts into instructions for others to follow. The identification of craft in manufacturing is similarly reliant on examples of hand work: prototyping, finishing, and tooling are all areas where an interdependence has been observed between hand work and automation. Adamson argues that, "modern craft exists in this impure state more often than not...Among the greatest failings of modern craft historians has been their neglect of this vast terrain of second-order workmanship."²⁹³ As this project demonstrates, craft exists beyond handwork. There is craft that integrates hand and machine work, craft that exhibits skill reliant on technology, and craft that exists in the repetitive work of the designer.

Craft may be challenging to identify in manufacturing from an academic perspective, but manufacturers and advertisers have had no difficulty in representing craft's role in production. Like designers and their practices, craftspeople and 'craft values' are fetishized to sell products. Craft plays an important role in the popular imagination when it comes to understanding where products come from, and connecting to the people who make them. Manufacturing now seems so distant and the global relationship between makers and consumers so diluted, that the value of craft and the desire for locally made objects have increased. This is not limited to craft fairs and boutique shops. In a recent lecture at the Canadian Craft Biennial, craft and design historian Sandra Alföldy argued that there has been a resurgence in craft and consumer appetite for craft starting after the financial crisis of 2008, signaling a desire for an alternative capitalism that includes emotional security, kindness, and slowness.²⁹⁴ The fetishization of craft, what Alföldy refers to as "craft washing," relies on the continued use of romantic stereotypes of craft rooted in the nineteenth century and earlier, mentioned above. This includes, for example, handwork and joy in making, and values like quality, honesty, simplicity, and connections to nature. These add value to products and make the conditions of mass production more palatable by increasing perceptions of individuality and personal connection.

²⁹² Adamson, *The Invention of Craft*, 171.

²⁹³ Adamson, 147.

²⁹⁴ Sandra Alföldy, "Crafting Kindness" (Canadian Craft Biennial, Toronto, 2017).

2 Design Thinking and Creativity

As illustrated in Chapter 2, the perceived de-materialization and de-territorialization of production, circulation, and consumption have contributed to the abstraction and intellectualization of design practice. Interest in the cognitive dimensions of design, the less tangible thought processes of design work, has led to the focus on 'design thinking' over the past two decades, part of a larger trend toward the "commoditisation of knowledge."²⁹⁵ Likewise, the idea of creativity has appealed to researchers in academic contexts but also with a view to its commodification.²⁹⁶ In contrast to design thinking, the term creativity benefits from broader acceptance and use, and is more often readily attributed to non-designers.

In the following section, I look at how fields as varied as psychology, education, computer science, and business have contributed to defining design activity and creativity. Their frameworks have had a significant impact on how design and creative work are valued today, who is recognized as a designer or creative person, and who can lay claim to using design and creative processes. All of the authors discussed below aim to understand the thought processes of designers, but they are less interested in how design fits in overall ecosystems of production and consumption. Despite their oversimplification of both design and creativity, these models are useful to my project as a commonly accepted baseline for identifying design and creative labour that can be used to argue for less visible forms of design activity outside the scope of the designer's role. I conclude with a discussion of how creativity has previously been recognized in the contexts of manufacturing and consumption. Studies from management, anthropology, sociology, culture, and material culture offer additional perspectives on how creativity is undertaken by actors throughout production, circulation, and consumption.

Since the 1960s, the concept of design thinking has been appropriated by other fields for their own uses, favoured at times by disciplines like computer science, psychology, and business consulting.²⁹⁷ In the early 2000s, the business world co-opted design thinking with its

²⁹⁵ Julier, *Economies of Design*, 46.

²⁹⁶ This is illustrated by design and innovation writer Bruce Nussbaum, who did much to popularize design thinking through Business Week Magazine. In 2011, Nussbaum announced that design thinking had run its course and that he was turning his attention to creative intelligence and a new measure, the "CQ," or "creative quotient." Bruce Nussbaum, "Design Thinking Is A Failed Experiment. So What's Next?," Co.Design, April 5, 2011, <http://www.fastcodesign.com/1663558/design-thinking-is-a-failed-experiment-so-whats-next>.

²⁹⁷ Robert Bauer and Ward Eagan trace the beginnings of research into design thinking to the 1960s, when work was undertaken to improve design education and processes, and there was interest in design methods for computer systems. Investigation into the psychology and epistemology of architecture, engineering, and industrial design began in the 1970s and has influenced current understandings of design thinking in management. Since at least as early as the 1980s, design thinking has been described as a unique method in psychology, education, and design, often contrasted with the sciences and humanities as a third mode of problem solving and approach to knowledge. Robert M. Bauer and Ward

promise of innovation, though design researcher and strategist Lucy Kimbell points out that this trend is losing popularity. In practice, applying design methods in different contexts has had limited success.²⁹⁸ The design world itself has mixed reviews of design thinking. IDEO was one of the first firms to capitalize on the process by visualizing it, turning it into a good story, and promoting it to customers and aspiring innovators. For designer and author Don Norman, design thinking is a useful myth intended to sell design services.²⁹⁹ Others have complained that design thinking has been adopted unsuccessfully outside of design, to the detriment of professional designers whose expertise is misrepresented.³⁰⁰ It is important to note that while the literature cited here is grouped under the 'design thinking' label, there is a difference between the academic research about how professional designers think and act, and the later models of design process intended for business audiences.

Within design studies, two concepts of designers co-exist: professionals, usually with design training and specialist knowledge, and anyone who undertakes open-ended problem solving and implementation of a solution (daily practice for almost everyone). There is a tension between the more elitist perspective that seeks to protect and celebrate designers' professional status, and the more democratic approach, which imagines everyone is a designer. For professional design associations, design is a service provided by an expert who is uniquely qualified to serve the needs of a client. The associations emphasize the professional aspects of design, based on training and knowledge of materials, manufacture, economic return, visualization, and giving form to ideas.³⁰¹

Opening up the conversation about who qualifies as a designer gives permission to find design in unexpected locations. Victor Papanek, designer, educator and critic, argued in the 1970s that "all men are designers," and that "design is basic to all human activity."³⁰² Herbert Simon, the social scientist, psychologist, and computer scientist (among other titles), wrote the often-cited work, "The Science of Design: Creating the Artificial," in which he claims that anyone

M. Eagen, "Design Thinking — Epistemic Plurality in Management and Organization," *Aesthesis* 2, no. 1 (2008): 64–74; Nigel Cross, *Designerly Ways of Knowing*, 1 edition (Basel; London: Birkhäuser Basel, 2007); Lawson, *How Designers Think: The Design Process Demystified*.

²⁹⁸ Kimbell, "Rethinking Design Thinking," November 1, 2011, 286.

²⁹⁹ Don Norman, "Design Thinking: A Useful Myth," Core77, accessed November 13, 2015, <http://www.core77.com/posts/16790/Design-Thinking-A-Useful-Myth>.

³⁰⁰ Lee Vinsel, "Design Thinking Is Kind of Like Syphilis — It's Contagious and Rots Your Brains," *Medium* (blog), December 6, 2017, https://medium.com/@sts_news/design-thinking-is-kind-of-like-syphilis-its-contagious-and-rots-your-brains-842ed078af29.

³⁰¹ Industrial Designers Society of America. *Industrial Design: Defined*. Retrieved from: <http://www.idsa.org/content/content1/industrial-design-defined>

³⁰² Victor Papanek, *Design for the Real World: Human Ecology and Social Change*, Second revised edition (first published 1984/1971) (Chicago, Ill: Chicago Review Press, 2005), 3.

is a designer who creates and undertakes plans to improve a situation.³⁰³ Indeed, when imagined as ‘decision-making,’ the design process is easily seen as part of everyday life: choosing what to wear, how to arrange a room, and what to make for dinner, are examples of problem solving that involve prior knowledge, creativity, and implementation of decisions. The same criteria are used to define the design process. Nigel Cross, a design researcher and educator, goes so far as to state that “design ability [is] a fundamental form of human intelligence,” and argues that it should be added to Howard Gardner’s six intelligences.³⁰⁴ Like Papanek, Cross considers everyone a designer, but he believes that some, whether amateur or professional, naturally have more design ability than others. He also believes that this ability can be developed with training and practice.³⁰⁵

The study of creativity offers a more nuanced understanding of the everyone-is-a-designer approach, and suggests that all acts of creativity can be taken seriously. In the simplest terms, creativity is defined as the ability to create something tangible or intangible that is both new (original) and useful (“task appropriate”).³⁰⁶ This can be an incremental newness, building on what already exists, or more radical concept development, as long as the final product is appropriate to the context (in design language, the solution must fit the constraints). Psychologist J.P. Guilford’s definition suggests that creativity and design are almost interchangeable terms: “A creative pattern is manifest in creative behavior, which includes such activities as inventing, designing, contriving, composing, and planning.”³⁰⁷

The study of creativity incorporates degrees and types of creativity, expressed as “level,” “development” and “style.”³⁰⁸ Creativity and psychology scholar A.G. Tan summarizes these levels as: “mini c: creativity for self-transformation in informal learning;” “little c: formal learning;” “professional c: domain-relevant innovation and invention;” and “big c: breakthroughs.”³⁰⁹ These levels illustrate that creativity is relative to its context. Some creativity constitutes everyday

³⁰³ Simon, H. A. “The Science of Design: Creating the Artificial.” In *The Sciences of the Artificial*. 111-139. Originally published 1969. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1996.

³⁰⁴ The six intelligences are now seven and include: linguistic, logical-mathematical, visual-spatial, musical, bodily-kinaesthetic, interpersonal and intrapersonal. Cross, *Designerly Ways of Knowing*, vi.

³⁰⁵ Cross, *Designerly Ways of Knowing*.

³⁰⁶ R. Reiter-Palmon, R.A. Beghetto, and Kaufman, J.C., “Looking at Creativity through a Business-Psychology-Education (BPE) Lens: The Challenge and Benefits of Listening to Each Other,” in *Creativity Research: An Inter-Disciplinary and Multi-Disciplinary Research Handbook*, ed. Eric Shiu (UK: Routledge, 2014), 12.

³⁰⁷ As quoted in Scott G. Isaksen and Mary C. Murdock, “The Emergence of a Discipline: Issues and Approaches to the Study of Creativity,” in *Understanding and Recognizing Creativity: The Emergence of a Discipline*, ed. Scott G. Isaksen et al., Creativity Research (Norwood, N.J: Ablex Pub. Corp., 1993), 23.

³⁰⁸ Isaksen and Murdock, 20.

³⁰⁹ Ai-Girl Tan, “Creativity in Cross-Disciplinary Research,” in *Creativity Research: An Inter-Disciplinary and Multi-Disciplinary Research Handbook*, ed. Eric Shiu (UK: Routledge, 2014), 73.

problem solving and is of little consequence to the rest of society, while other seemingly minor acts of creativity are important within certain settings (a child's school project can be creative within the confines of the assignment but would not be in a professional milieu). Inventions of new products and processes can have impact across an industry, while other discoveries can have broad societal significance. For the purposes of this project, identifying the different types or levels of creativity is useful because they are inclusive but not equal. While some design thinking studies have looked at how experienced, successful designers work, there is no agreed upon framework for understanding levels of design expertise.³¹⁰

There are several features used to describe the problem-solving process in design, which can be applied to non-designers as well. First, design problems are generally open-ended. Buchanan argues that in design, there is a hypothesis that needs to be proven: there is a question to answer, a problem to solve, and a solution to test, but contrary to the determinacy of science (a set of rules that can be applied to any problem), design is characterized by its indeterminacy (the process varies depending on the specifics of each project).³¹¹ Put differently, science is descriptive (how things are) and design is prescriptive (how things could be).³¹² The open-ended and exploratory nature of design leaves room for the unconventional, the possibility of creativity, and what cannot be predicted by preset methods of operation. There is no such thing as a wrong answer in design.

The second feature is common to design thinking and creativity: types of thinking that move from free association to focused knowledge generation. This includes “divergent production (differentiation: dissociation and distortion), convergent production (integration: combination and association)” and emergence (transformation, synthesis, “something qualitatively new grows out of something existing”).³¹³ Cross offers a similar list of creative thinking categories that are easily recognized in design and everyday life: combination, when something new is created from putting together two existing ideas; mutation, when something existing is changed; emergence, when something previously unseen is discovered in something existing; analogy, when something designed is inspired by something similar; and design from first principles, where the problem is framed using a set of criteria, like a design brief.³¹⁴

The third feature relates to the type of problems that are typical of design and the skills required to solve them. “Wicked problems,” a concept from design theorist Horst Rittel, has

³¹⁰ “Creative Cognition in Design II: Creative Strategies” Chapter 5 in Cross, *Designerly Ways of Knowing*.

³¹¹ Buchanan, ‘Wicked Problems in Design Thinking.’

³¹² Richard Buchanan, “Wicked Problems in Design Thinking,” *Design Issues* 8, no. 2 (Spring 1992): 5–21; Lawson, *How Designers Think: The Design Process Demystified*, 112.

³¹³ Tan, “Creativity in Cross-Disciplinary Research,” 71.

³¹⁴ “Creative Cognition in Design I: The Creative Leap” Chapter 4, Cross, *Designerly Ways of Knowing*.

been cited by designers since the late 1960s as a way to distinguish design work. He defines a wicked problem as a “class of social system problems which are ill-formulated, where the information is confusing, where there are many clients and decision makers with conflicting values, and where the ramifications in the whole system are thoroughly confusing.”³¹⁵ Cross points out that ill-defined problems may not be so much about the nature of the problem, but the nature of the designers and the process they prefer. Designers may be presented with a well-defined problem, but they will choose to reevaluate and redefine the project goals and constraints.³¹⁶

The fourth feature is the ability to distill large amounts of disconnected data and recognize patterns by using brainstorming, free association, combination, and integration strategies.³¹⁷ This is sometimes referred to as “abduction” or “abductive thinking,” the use of intuition to assess random information leading to open-ended solutions.³¹⁸ Bauer and Eagen label this behaviour as “arational” as it involves multiple ways of knowing: thinking, feeling, sensing, and intuiting.³¹⁹ The designer’s intuition is not an innate, natural sense but rather something based on experience. Lawson explains that designers rely on mental images of past personal experiences, referred to as “schema,” to interpret information.³²⁰ This is significant because it helps to dispel some of the ‘magic’ of design.

From the outside, there is a certain mystery to the design process. Professional designers appear to understand problems when others cannot describe them. They have the ability to generate a quick response which, “to the uninitiated observer, looks like an intuitive flash of genius.”³²¹ Design success stories often capitalize on the ‘magic’ of design, jumping from problem to solution, from sketch to final product, omitting great expanses of research,

³¹⁵ Quoted from 1967 publication of Rittel’s ideas by Churchman in Buchanan, ‘Wicked Problems in Design Thinking,’ 15.

³¹⁶ Cross, *Designerly Ways of Knowing*.

³¹⁷ Bauer and Eagen, “Design Thinking.”

Lawson, *How Designers Think*.

³¹⁸ This differs from the scientific process of induction whereby principles are applied to analyze set data leading to set answers.

³¹⁹ Bauer and Eagen, “Design Thinking.”

³²⁰ Lawson has also attempted to explain how designers come to focus on certain aspects of a problem, find seemingly random patterns in information, see new relationships and complete situations. He draws on cognitive science and computer processes to assess how designers move through sequences of “information transformation.” Lawson, *How Designers Think: The Design Process Demystified*, 132–136; Abduction has proven attractive to business audiences because it legitimates taking risks and promotes innovation. The “leap of inference” refers to when people think beyond what is immediately seeable or knowable in order to come up with a radically new concept. New ideas will be proven based on how they develop in the future. Heather Fraser, “The Practice of Breakthrough Strategies by Design,” *Journal of Business Strategy* 28, no. 4 (2007): 66–74; Roger L. Martin, *The Design of Business: Why Design Thinking Is the Next Competitive Advantage* (Boston: Harvard Business Press, 2009).

³²¹ Lawson, *How Designers Think: The Design Process Demystified*, 133.

problem solving, testing and refinement. Similar to the fetishization of the ‘heroic designer’ described in Chapter 2, the mystery of design thinking helps to maintain the distance between designer, client, and consumer. The designer is the one who adds value through creativity – they not only have professional skills, but also a sense of design that others do not.³²²

These characteristics of design thinking have been codified and visualized as process models, a further abstraction of design labour that oversimplifies the real practice of design. A number of cognitive models have been proposed, from linear processes to circular spaces (IDEO), to repeating cycles (Lawson), to overlapping “placements” (Buchanan), and even a “knowledge funnel” (Martin). Though these models have emerged from different fields, there are nevertheless three common phases that can be generalized as research, conception, and development. Authors use a variety of terms to describe them, such as: understanding, dreaming, building (Bauer and Eagen); inspiration, ideation, and implementation (Brown); and analysis, synthesis/evaluation, and creation of a solution (Lawson). Similar language appears in descriptions of creative problem solving: “formulating and stating the problem; generating ideas and options; and evaluating and putting the ideas into action;”³²³ and “preparation (problem perception), incubation (a gestation period through unconscious mechanisms), illumination (when the ideas for a solution appear), and evaluation (when ideas are tested and their validity and utility are assessed).”³²⁴

These models fall short in explaining the entire process of design thinking in that they usually deal with the front-end of research, problem solving, and innovation, without looking at implementation and the ongoing design work during production and use. In other words, studies of design thinking tend to stick to the creative, intellectual work typically associated with the design studio, the same scope of design labour represented in design history, as argued in Chapter 2. Kimbell, from a design management perspective, critiques design thinking as being divorced from practice and the diversity of experiences and contexts in which design occurs. She maintains that design thinking relies too heavily on “a dualism between thinking and

³²² While some have tried to dispel the myth of the flash of genius in vague terms, Lawson proposes that designers may be motivated by a “primary generator” rather than the analysis of a problem. This is an initial idea, a hunch, that may be rejected or carried through to the final solution. In other words, the open-ended, exploratory nature of problem-solving in design is biased by the designer’s intuition, which is based on their pre-existing knowledge. Lawson, 47.

³²³ Isaksen and Murdock, “The Emergence of a Discipline: Issues and Approaches to the Study of Creativity,” 19.

³²⁴ Colin C.J. Cheng, “Creative Climate, Creativity Capabilities, and New Product Creativity in the Internet Communication Space,” in *Creativity Research: An Inter-Disciplinary and Multi-Disciplinary Research Handbook*, ed. Eric Shiu (UK: Routledge, 2014), 210.

knowing, and acting in the world,” and that there is, in fact, more “doing” in design thinking.³²⁵ She maintains that design thinking is too designer-centred, lacks reflexivity, and “privilege[s] the designer as the main agent in designing.”³²⁶

Current design thinking models identify some of the stages of design labour that appear in my case studies, but they are not inclusive. By looking at the lived experiences, broader contexts, and other actors in the case studies, I arrive at a more representative depiction of the complexity and scope of design activity, and in the process, bring some of the respect (indeed fetishization) for the intellectual side of design work to actors who are typically left out of design thinking narratives. The idea that design is a “generic approach to problem solving”³²⁷ teachable to anyone, has been enthusiastically embraced outside of the design world, and illustrates that “conception,” as demarcated in the division of labour above, is not limited to designers. Yet, while design thinking is promoted as a holistic, problem-solving approach in which organizations should involve many stakeholders, there are actors left out because their contribution to design is not recognized. Re-conceiving design more broadly de-centres the role of professional designers, and in doing so, permits the inclusion of other actors who are not formally trained or labelled as such.

2.1 Creative Production

In the discussion of craft above, I argue for the possibility of finding craft and creativity in contemporary manufacturing outside and in addition to the role of the designer. In fact, initiatives recognizing ‘bottom-up’ creativity and problem solving have existed in manufacturing since at least as early as the nineteenth century, motivated by efficiency and innovation. As a form of capital, creativity is considered a resource that could be better exploited.³²⁸ Richard Florida proposes that “factory workers and even the lowest-end service workers have always been creative in certain valuable ways,”³²⁹ and that the creative economy can, in his opinion, erase divisions between traditional white and blue collar jobs (those who give and those who take orders).³³⁰ Florida is not alone in his conviction that creativity exists in service class positions and that innovation can be achieved by incorporating the knowledge of more actors in the supply chain. This was evident when limitations to scientific management became apparent

³²⁵ Kimbell, “Rethinking Design Thinking,” November 1, 2011, 285,289.

³²⁶ Kimbell, “Rethinking Design Thinking,” November 1, 2011.

³²⁷ Bauer and Eagen, “Design Thinking.”

³²⁸ Mark A. Runco, “The Psychoeconomic Perspective on Creativity and Innovation,” in *Creativity Research: An Inter-Disciplinary and Multi-Disciplinary Research Handbook*, ed. Eric Shiu (UK: Routledge, 2014), 88.

³²⁹ Florida, *The Rise of the Creative Class*, 10.

³³⁰ Florida, 70.

in the late nineteenth century, as managers made decisions to establish new processes without consulting skilled workers, resulting in a loss of knowledge on the factory floor. This led manufacturers to experiment with “industrial suggestion systems” in which workers were compensated for new ideas for tools and processes.³³¹ American manufacturer John H. Patterson nurtured what he referred to as the “hundred-headed brain” model, in which the base of the company supported the top through both manual and intellectual labour (factory workers who came forward with suggestions were awarded up to \$500).³³² After the Second World War, “total quality” and Japanese “Kaizen” programs emerged, examples of “continuous improvement” conducted in consultation with line workers and aimed at making all employees ‘thinkers’ rather than separating ‘thinkers’ from ‘doers.’³³³ More recently, an article in *Design Management Review* recognizes those workers who have greater expertise than their supervisors: “while practitioners of most manufacturing disciplines are not usually expected to be right-brain thinkers, they can nonetheless be creative about production problem-solving. This comes from years of cleverly troubleshooting everyday issues on the fly to keep production lines up and running.”³³⁴ From an academic perspective in line with my project, urban geographer Winnifred Curran expands the study of creativity and innovation by taking into account old and new models of manufacturing in North America, and “actors outside of the ‘creative class’ with opportunities for, and recognition of, the skills and contributions of those who are working class.”³³⁵ Each of these models highlights the connection between the value of creativity, intellectual work, and its existence in manufacturing jobs.

2.2 Creative Consumption

Understanding the creative work of consumers is not as straightforward or as systematized as that of producers. Evidence of production can be found in concentrated contexts of manufacture, retail, and advertising, but once in the hands of consumers, understanding how, where and by whom products are used and meaning is made, is far more

³³¹ Dean M. Schroeder and Alan G. Robinson, “America’s Most Successful Export to Japan: Continuous Improvement Programs,” *MIT Sloan Management Review* (blog), April 1991, 3–4, <http://sloanreview.mit.edu/article/americas-most-successful-export-to-japan-continuous-improvement-programs/>.

³³² Schroeder and Robinson, 5.

³³³ David J. Hall, “The Role of Creativity within Best Practice Manufacturing,” *Technovation* 16, no. 3 (1996): 119.

³³⁴ Peter Clarke and Jeff George, “Big Box Thinking: Overcoming Barriers to Creativity in Manufacturing,” *Design Management Review* 16, no. 2 (2005): 47, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1948-7169.2005.tb00192.x>.

³³⁵ Curran, “In Defense of Old Industrial Spaces,” 882.

chaotic and unpredictable.³³⁶ Consumption has been accepted as a creative activity by a broad range of fields, from marketing and consumption studies, to anthropology, sociology, material culture, culture studies, and design history. Rather than looking at 'levels' or proficiency of creativity, the literature focuses on the productive and creative work of use, appropriation, and meaning making. The extent to which consumers control the creation of meaning, identity, use value, and practices related to products infringes on (or complements) the responsibilities of the designer.

At a qualitative level, studies of consumption and material culture look at how objects and people mutually constitute meaning.³³⁷ Consumers re-contextualize and use objects symbolically to contest power, and to represent and construct identity, status, and taste. In order to be meaningful, consumer acts must be understood by other members of society. Sociologist Pierre Bourdieu's work on class illustrates how the same objects are interpreted differently depending on social factors like cultural capital, employment, and education.³³⁸ Thus, objects can have various meanings based on group affiliation, and objects reveal and solidify those categories.³³⁹ Du Gay et al. discuss "maps of meaning," frameworks of understanding shared by people of a certain culture.³⁴⁰ Consumers understand and interpret objects within these "maps" and contribute new meanings that are circulated and transformed. Context, association, and differentiation also play key roles in assigning meaning to objects. As anthropologist Mary Douglas and econometrician Baron Isherwood state, "all goods carry meaning, but none by itself."³⁴¹ How objects are organized and displayed gives meaning through association. Consumers are often presented with pre-determined networks of objects, like technologies that rely on each other, but consumers also construct unique networks of objects situated within unique contexts.³⁴²

Studies of consumption have been concerned with the symbolic value of objects and how people make meaning with them, and ignore what economists have traditionally focused on: rational decision making, exchange, and use value. The intangible promises of values, lifestyle, and identity tied to products are important, but so too is function, which is also at the

³³⁶ Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, trans. Steven F. Rendall, Third Edition (University of California Press, 2011), xii, 31.

³³⁷ Appadurai, "Commodities and the Politics of Value," 20.

³³⁸ Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste*, trans. R. Nice (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1984).

³³⁹ Mary Douglas and Baron Isherwood, *The World of Goods: Towards An Anthropology of Consumption* (London: A. Lane, 1979, 59).

³⁴⁰ Du Gay et al., *Doing Cultural Studies*, 8.

³⁴¹ Douglas and Isherwood, *The World of Goods*, 72.

³⁴² Ingram, Shove, and Watson, "Products and Practices," 12.

core of design activity. Studies of object agency, scripting (an important concept in ANT that is further explained in Chapter 5), and practices bring use and function back into focus.³⁴³ Here the emphasis is on what the object ‘allows’ the user to do, how the designer has embedded instruction for consumers or ‘delegated tasks’ to the object to carry out. The extent to which consumers ascribe or de-inscribe from those allowances and scripts is a related line of inquiry based in Actor Network Theory (further explored in Chapter 5), which shows how unpredictable consumer creativity can be.

Bringing all of the above together, product designers and sociologists Jack Ingram, Elizabeth Shove, and Mark Watson are interested in the practices of consumption, which, they argue, involve entire networks of objects, and evolve and influence product design just as much as design influences practice. They present six themes that tie products to practices: acquisition, scripting, appropriation, assembly, normalization, and practice.³⁴⁴ These categories represent an “unstable dynamic of innovation and of normalization,” starting with what drives the desire to acquire something new and extending to what objects allow users to do; how users make meaning and use of products within specific contexts of consumption; how objects mean in relation to other objects in certain settings and in broader networks of objects; and how understandings and expectations of objects and related practices become accepted and unquestioned.³⁴⁵ Objects become “constituents of practice” and “entities through which knowledge and social order are carried and reproduced.”³⁴⁶

While consumer creativity can be difficult to identify, some consumption is more deliberately, consciously creative. Craft, hobbies, and DIY design projects both encroach on designer territory and undermine systems of mass production and consumption.³⁴⁷ At the same time, some product categories are highly constructed by producers to elicit consumer creativity, like craft supply stores or the assembly of Ikea furniture. Others are far more open-ended and arguably require more creativity on the part of the consumer. The hacker or maker movement, sees consumers deconstructing and re-purposing products that were not intended to be taken apart. Industrial designer and educator Paul Atkinson outlines four categories of DIY defined by levels of creativity and need: pro-active, reactive, essential, and lifestyle, each to some extent

³⁴³ Albena Yaneva, “Making the Social Hold: Towards an Actor-Network Theory of Design,” *Design and Culture* 1, no. 3 (2009): 273–88; Ingram, Shove, and Watson, “Products and Practices.”

³⁴⁴ Jack Ingram, Elizabeth Shove, and Matthew Watson, “Products and Practices: Selected Concepts from Science and Technology Studies and from Social Theories of Consumption and Practice,” *Design Issues* 23, no. 2 (Spring 2007).

³⁴⁵ Ingram, Shove, and Watson, 13.

³⁴⁶ Ingram, Shove, and Watson, 14.

³⁴⁷ Paul Atkinson, “Do It Yourself: Democracy and Design,” *Journal of Design History* 19, no. 1 (2006): 1.

“enhanc[ing] people’s notion of themselves as an agent of design rather than merely a passive consumer.”³⁴⁸

There is reluctance to recognize the creativity of consumers within the design process, perhaps because this has been a defining characteristic of the designer’s role. Henry Ford’s famous (alleged) quote, “If I had asked people what they wanted, they would have said faster horses,” suggests that the producer has the creative capacity to envision a solution but the consumer does not.³⁴⁹ User-centered and participatory design approaches promote the involvement of consumers, but incorporating their creative ideas in the design process in any meaningful way is still far from standard practice. Ingram, Shove, and Watson suggest that designers operate with “tacit as well as explicit ideas about actual and potential users,” but that design education and practice offer “limited understanding of consumption, use, and material culture.”³⁵⁰

The question of how much agency consumers have compared to producers is important when arguing that consumers contribute to the design of products. Du Gay et al. describe the relationship between the two as a dialogue with unequal power relations.³⁵¹ Indeed, consumption has been treated as the lesser of the two types of production: “because people are not able to express themselves through their [paid] labour, which is represented as the ‘real’ authentic site of human self-creation, they have to seek compensation in the ‘false’ pleasures of consumption.”³⁵² However, Ingram et al. suggest that the consumer has equal power when it is acknowledged that “consumers, designers, and producers all are involved in coproducing the practices through which objects and materialized forms of knowledge have meaning.”³⁵³ The concept of “consumer sovereignty” puts consumers in the position of dictating production. They know best what their needs are and look to the market to give them options.³⁵⁴ Another perspective of consumer sovereignty focuses on the micro-politics of consumption and the ways in which consumers make meaning using mass-produced cultural products. In doing so, consumers are able to transform and appropriate what the market offers them and even resist

³⁴⁸ Atkinson, 7.

³⁴⁹ Patrick Vlaskovits, “Henry Ford, Innovation, and That ‘Faster Horse’ Quote,” *Harvard Business Review*, August 29, 2011, <https://hbr.org/2011/08/henry-ford-never-said-the-fast> Apple is an example of a company that proudly controls design and imposes innovation and spaces for consumer expression with little regard for market research or user testing—Apple knows best and the market, for the most part, seems to agree.

³⁵⁰ Ingram, Shove, and Watson, “Products and Practices,” 3–4.

³⁵¹ Du Gay et al., *Doing Cultural Studies*, 103.

³⁵² Du Gay et al., 88.

³⁵³ Ingram, Shove, and Watson, “Products and Practices,” 16.

³⁵⁴ Jim McGuigan, “Sovereign Consumption,” in *The Consumer Society Reader*, ed. Margyn J. Lee (Mass: Blackwell Publishers, 2000).

forces of production. With “consumption as pleasure,” consumers have the power and knowledge to move beyond simply differentiating themselves, and are able to construct identities of their choosing,³⁵⁵ act independently, personalize and add meaning to the objects and environments that surround them. In relation to design, this behaviour allows consumers to gain freedom from professionals, and “rail against the prescribed design edicts.”³⁵⁶

Critics argue that consumer agency is an illusion because it blurs production and wage labour with consumption and leisure. Consumers appropriate and make creative use of commodities for their own purposes, but they are also creating value for the producer by promoting brand awareness and serving as audiences for advertising and media without being paid for their time.³⁵⁷ Appadurai explains the “fetishism of the consumer” is the transformation of consumers into signs, a process that conceals the producer as the real centre of power and uses advertising to distribute images that persuade consumers of their own power: “These images of agency are increasingly distortions of a world of merchandising so subtle that the consumer is consistently helped to believe that he or she is an actor, where in fact he or she is at best a chooser.”³⁵⁸ Today, producers capitalize on the free creative labour of consumers by studying and encouraging certain behaviours and participation in producer-organized outlets. This is seen increasingly in online spaces that organize communities, customer engagement, crowdfunding, and crowdsourcing in support of consumer goods. Professor of business and marketing Colin Cheng’s study of Taiwanese tech companies highlights tactics to involve consumers in areas of design and product development that were traditionally the responsibility of the producer only.³⁵⁹ In comparison to offline spaces, consumers who participate in online forums either of their own or the manufacturer’s making, tend to be more independent and involved, and have strong opinions and product knowledge.³⁶⁰ There is a sense of community among these consumers who share values and support each other through problem solving related to the product. Similar to the manufacturers described above who solicit ‘bottom-up’ creativity from factory workers, Cheng describes what these manufacturers are doing with consumer input as “transform[ing] creativity into resource deployment,” reinforcing the financial

³⁵⁵ Du Gay et al., *Doing Cultural Studies*, 104.

³⁵⁶ Atkinson, “Do It Yourself,” 9.

³⁵⁷ John Brewer and Frank Trentmann, “Introduction: Space, Time and Value in Consuming Cultures,” in *Consuming Cultures, Global Perspectives: Historical Trajectories, Transnational Exchanges*, eds. John Brewer and Frank Trentmann, (New York: Berg, 2006), 12.

³⁵⁸ Appadurai, *Modernity At Large*, 42.

³⁵⁹ Cheng, “Creative Climate, Creativity Capabilities, and New Product Creativity in the Internet Communication Space,” 207.

³⁶⁰ Cheng, 207 –208.

value of consumer creativity.³⁶¹ As with craft in manufacturing, manufacturers and advertisers have identified the value of creativity in roles outside that of the designer, and are building on consumer ideas to adapt and create new products.

The above discussions of craft, design thinking, and creativity provide criteria with which to identify creative labour and actors of design in my case studies. These analyses of making, thinking, and creativity have originated in different fields of study and have been applied to select phases of production, circulation, and consumption. However, these concepts are equally useful across the three phases when considering that design and creative work fall to the producer, distributor, and consumer.

³⁶¹ Cheng, 210–211.

Chapter 5: Method—Telling the Story through the Object and its Networks

Chapters 2 to 4 have shown that design has been valued and fetishized in a variety of ways—as an object, profession, mode of thinking, form of creativity, and more. An ideology of design as an intellectual activity, increasingly separated from the physicality of making and manufacturing, ostensibly at the top of the creative class, is reinforced in signifiers like star designers, iconic objects, or clichés of creative process. The Western conception of design as de-materialized and de-territorialized has come to dominate understandings of global design. Narratives of progress and development also implicate design: nations are expected to participate in “industrial upgrading” and to use design to advance their financial and international standing as creators of innovation, original brands, and intellectual property – all indicators of design activity, but certainly not the whole picture. One of the principal challenges in assessing the case study objects, the Vanessa Boots by Mellow Walk and the Non Stop flatware by Gourmet Settings, is the identification of non-traditional design work and any division of labour that contests Western-focused design histories and perceptions of the separation of head and hand within and between post-industrial and industrializing nations.

These depictions of design have evolved over the past two centuries and circulate widely today, and while they are accepted by many, they do not go unquestioned. Design researcher and strategist Lucy Kimbell maintains that representations of design thinking are divorced from the realities of practice, that there is in fact more doing in design thinking, and much more complexity in real contexts and lived experiences.³⁶² Adamson et al. suggest that craft continues to have a place in manufacturing, suggesting that conception and manual skill have not been completely separated in production.³⁶³ Design historians, like Victor Margolin, and Adamson et al., call for research that moves beyond the West, that recognizes different sources and forms of design activity outside of design-led nations and design “cores” that control global networks of production and consumption, while design studies professor Guy Julier explains that “territories of design” are already shifting to emerging economies.³⁶⁴ I argue that sole authorship in design is misrepresentative and that design is not truly a top-down activity but an iterative and distributed process of give-and-take among many actors (people,

³⁶² Lucy Kimbell, “Rethinking Design Thinking: Part II,” *Design and Culture* 4, no. 2 (July 1, 2012): 129–48, <https://doi.org/10.2752/175470812X13281948975413>; Kimbell.

³⁶³ Adamson, Cooke, and Harrod, “Editorial Introduction.”

³⁶⁴ Margolin, “A World History of Design and the History of the World”; Adamson, Riello, and Teasley, *Global Design History*; Julier, *Economies of Design*.

tools, places, ideas). Furthermore, design is influenced by conditions throughout global production, circulation, and consumption that are outside of the designer's traditionally-recognized sphere. Proving these statements requires different types of evidence and ways of thinking about design.

In order to collect data that provides a more accurate, inclusive account of design practice, I conduct two case studies that reflect the complexity of global production, circulation, and consumption. I document and analyze the division of design labour—how the work of design is allocated over multiple human and non-human actors across time and space—in the creation and use of two mass-produced objects and their representations. I use research methods that allow me to de-centre the designer as primary author, look beyond the final object as representative of the entire design process, and question dominant hierarchies and perceptions of design (outlined in Chapters 2 to 4) in terms of who is 'permitted' to design and where, who controls design, and what design work should look like. Rather than selecting examples of 'high design,' the kind of rarefied objects celebrated by museums and media, I study two everyday products distributed through major retail chains. Rather than limit my investigation to the designers involved, I look for evidence of design work and influence over design by each of the actors connected to the object. Instead of using existing models of design processes, I seek to document design as it unfolds.

Actor Network Theory (ANT) is the primary organizing method I use to map the design activity that I observe in the case studies. I extend the definition of ethnography—the study of humans in their natural habitat—to consider objects in their natural habitats as well. As such, I present a type of 'object ethnography,' a model for design study that follows the development of an object in its many versions. The object is the thread that weaves through production, circulation, and consumption. Even though its form varies, the object is the one actor that links everyone and all activities. By following the boots and flatware, I seek to capture various moments of design "in flight," a concept that comes from Actor Network Theory (Latour and Yaneva), and which offers a way to consider design beyond final object and drawings. The object becomes an ever-evolving concept made up of many iterations, each a type of evidence of design labour, and each with its own network. Overlaid on the more linear trajectory of concept to development, manufacturing, distribution, purchase, and use, are contexts and networks of actors that influence design in a variety of ways and at multiple moments. Actor Network Theory permits accounting for actors, associations, and causal relationships as they appear, capturing social structures that I did not anticipate, and dissolving the polarities of macro/micro, global/local, and system/actor. Because this method privileges the object and the

material and social relations that surround it, I can collect data that give a fuller picture of the actors connected to the object and its design, rather than be limited by traditional workflows of design that originates with the designer and is executed by others. Ethnography supports ANT, which relies on description and attention to detail. In-person and on-line observation recorded through video, photography, and notes, allowed me to capture micro-scale interactions and actors that interviewees may have thought insignificant. Interviews allowed me to solicit information in a more direct way, and provided a more reflective and self-conscious perspective from participants on some of the same topics I documented through observation.

In this chapter, I explore how ANT can be used to formulate a more accurate and inclusive description of contemporary design practice in global settings, and outline how I collect and synthesize the data using an ANT approach. The object ethnographies are presented in the case studies of Chapters 6 and 7, and analyzed in Chapters 8 and 9.

1. Actor Network Theory

Actor network theory (ANT) provides a way to make sense of the complexity of the many people, locations, objects, and concepts uncovered through ethnography. It is useful in documenting relationships, guiding who and what I include in the case studies. ANT researchers follow chains of interactions rather than looking for actors that fit pre-defined roles. According to sociologist Bruno Latour, traditional sociological methods emphasize social structures and cannot accommodate situations where change, fluidity and varying actors are involved.³⁶⁵ In contrast, ANT is a “science of associations,” a way to describe the social, connecting who and what have causal effects to reveal networks that may not have been anticipated (“even the most mundane objects appear to be the product of a diverse set of forces”).³⁶⁶ One of the primary reasons for documenting the networks connected to Mellow Walk and Gourmet Settings products is to demonstrate that many actors play a role in the design process, and that these actors do not always fit prescribed social structures, such as corporate hierarchies, boundaries set around design roles, or traditional design settings like studios.

ANT relies on description, and forces the observer to slow down and pay attention to detail. Starting with the ‘facts’ (individual actors, actions, concepts, etc.), the sociologist can describe relationships rather than impose an existing social theory to explain why relationships exist.³⁶⁷ However, I wanted to test whether the assumptions about design in Chapters 2 to 4

³⁶⁵ Latour, *Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-Network-Theory*, 12.

³⁶⁶ Madeleine Akrich, “The De-Description of Technical Objects,” in *Shaping Technology/Building Society: Studies in Sociotechnical Change*, ed. Bijker et al. (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 1992), 205.

³⁶⁷ John Law, “Actor-Network Theory and Material Semiotics,” in *The New Blackwell Companion to Social Theory*, ed. Bryan S. Turner, Third edition (Oxford: Blackwell, 2008), 141.

were reflected in practice, acknowledging an agenda behind my observations. Accurate description can be a daunting task—without following a pre-existing model, the researcher is faced with an endless amount of detail and actors to connect. As Akrich points out, capturing all of the human and non-human relationships embodied in and connected by an object – its “sociography”— is a “mammoth task,” and one which risks producing an “end product [that is] banal.”³⁶⁸ Indeed, this was a challenge I faced when attempting to assemble the data into coherent network diagrams, commodity chains, life cycles, and written narratives.

As much as the ANT investigator follows actors and relationships as they appear, parameters are still needed to contain the project. As Michel Callon’s study of the domestication of scallops in France shows, boundaries are set by both the researcher and the actors.³⁶⁹ The network centres around a common problem, and identifying who is interested in solving that problem makes them an actor. My own objective to understand the design process, the life of the object and its significance, meant that my research questions overlapped with the goals of the designers I studied. The human and non-human actors who have contact with the designers made up the first group invested in the design problem, though they did not always define themselves or the other actors as part of the design process (“semiotic relationality” refers to how the actors define one another within a network).³⁷⁰ Callon demonstrates that within networks and their documentation, power relationships exist where certain actors “speak” for and “commit uncountable populations of silent actors” (in his case, through several chains of actors, three scientists represent an industry of fishermen, and a small group of scallops represent all scallops in St. Briec Bay).³⁷¹ Through negotiation with the designers and manufacturers in my case studies, I selected the first group of actors to record. This cross section of people, objects, materials, locations, and concepts then stood in for many other actors excluded from the scope of this study (e.g. in the Gourmet Settings project, hundreds of thousands, if not millions, of consumers are represented by the limited list of personas and target audiences defined by the manufacturer and retailers, and the roughly 100 consumers whose reviews I read online).³⁷² By defining the design problem behind a new product, the designer and manufacturer also defined and “enrolled” the actors that were part of the solution

³⁶⁸ Akrich, “The De-Description of Technical Objects,” 205–206.

³⁶⁹ Michel Callon, “Some Elements of a Sociology of Translation. Domestication of the Scallops and the Fishermen of St. Briec Bay,” in *The Science Studies Reader*, ed. Mario Biagioli (New York: Routledge, 1999), 67–83.

³⁷⁰ Law, “Actor-Network Theory and Material Semiotics,” 146.

³⁷¹ Callon, “Some Elements of a Sociology of Translation. Domestication of the Scallops and the Fishermen of St. Briec Bay,” 78.

³⁷² Customer reviews of Non Stop were summarized from Bedbathandbeyond.com and Amazon.com.

(network). At the same time, other actors defined different but integral problems (e.g. manufacturers defined challenges in sourcing materials, retailers defined new target markets and how the products would be displayed, consumers identified how the products could be improved), which necessitated the enrolment of even more actors. The list of actors grew over the course of my research, even if the designer did not always consider them part of the design process. It became apparent that, using Callon's term, many actors are "mobilized" through the design process, their voices heard and their actions felt in different locations, materials, and practices.³⁷³ Similar to social relations being embodied in commodities (Marx), in ANT, the design object represents contributions by many other actors (but also considers both human and non-human) and helps to configure and stabilize social relations.³⁷⁴ Thus, as seen in the case studies, the relationships between certain actors and practices are solidified and normalized around different steps in the object's development.

In studying global design processes, actor network theory is useful for dissolving the polarities of global and local. ANT's critique of sociology contrasts macro and micro, system and actor, asking how the local can be documented and at the same time be made to fit in a global structure. Latour's answer is to "flatten" the topography and render all positions equal, which helps to re-frame the "spectacle of the local" and the binaries of core and periphery, as discussed in Chapter 3. Global is situated on the same plane as local because connections between the two are made more visible.³⁷⁵ By localizing the global, concrete places and actors become examples of otherwise nebulous global structures, helping to counter the abstraction and homogeneity of globalization. To someone talking about the "global economy," Latour asks, "in what building?"³⁷⁶ For someone talking about global design, the local evidence is found in the myriad objects and materials that travel great distances to consumers around the world. When talking about global designers, the tendency to emphasize a hierarchy of roles in manufacturing is minimized. ANT provides a way to understand how big systems are produced, rather than accepting that their existence is inevitable or eternal.³⁷⁷ The Mellow Walk and Gourmet Settings case studies illustrate how very localized knowledge is distributed globally, and how the idea of having no choice but to manufacture within a global system or purchase goods produced offshore continually confronts local constraints. Both case studies illustrate the extent to which

³⁷³ Callon, "Some Elements of a Sociology of Translation. Domestication of the Scallops and the Fishermen of St. Brieuc Bay," 78.

³⁷⁴ Akrich, "The De-Scripton of Technical Objects."

³⁷⁵ Latour, *Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-Network-Theory*, 168, 176–178.

³⁷⁶ Latour, 183.

³⁷⁷ Latour, 184.

the blending of global and local occurs, how easily ideas circulate, and how difficult it can be to parse and attribute product elements to specific places or human actors.

Latour, along with John Law and Callon, developed ANT to study science and technology, where this conceptual, detail-focused model of action and agents proved useful in documenting the “socio-technical” networks of innovation, practice, circulation, success, and failure.³⁷⁸ Some, like Yaneva, have found it useful in studying processes of design and questioning existing design structures that privilege the designer as sole author, one of the aims of my project. In ANT, actions are considered the result of networks of materially heterogeneous actors rather than “great men.”³⁷⁹ Innovation is described as a complex process of many contributors, a collective activity expressed as shared ideas and property, where invention and imagination are just as likely to originate with engineers and scientists as with consumers or factory workers.³⁸⁰ My case studies give more agency to other actors in design and show that design practice is more distributed and multi-directional than presented in Chapters 2 to 4. Like the design process, innovation does not occur in a linear fashion. Instead, innovation is complex and unpredictable, what Latour describes as a “whirlwind model” where steps are purposefully mixed together, necessitating interaction, negotiation and compromise between actors.³⁸¹ Official, linear stories of creation with clear authors are developed after product development is complete.³⁸² Kimbell offers a related critique of design thinking studies, in which she points out the discrepancies between the messiness of practice and the overly simplified accounts of design processes. She notes that there is a tendency to separate “thinking and knowing” from “acting in the world,” ignoring the contexts within which designers operate.³⁸³ She proposes instead an ANT-like model: “A future direction for research into designers’ thinking and knowing, therefore, could take as a starting point practitioners’ being in the world and their relation to other social actors including artifacts and other social practices and institutions. To understand what happens in designing, it remains important to explore how political, socio-cultural, and

³⁷⁸ Bruno Latour, Philippe Mauguin, and Genevieve Teil, “A New Method to Trace the Path of Innovations. The ‘Socio-Technical Graph,’” in *Gestion de La Recherche, Nouveaux Problèmes, Nouveaux Outils.*, ed. Dominique Vinck, trans. Gabrielle Hech, Unpublished English translation (Brussels: Editions De Boeck, 1991), 419–80.

³⁷⁹ Law, “Actor-Network Theory and Material Semiotics,” 145.

³⁸⁰ Madeleine Akrich, Michel Callon, and Bruno Latour, “The Key to Success in Innovation Part 1: The Art of Intersement,” *International Journal of Innovation Management* 6, no. 2 (June 2002): 189; Madeleine Akrich, Michel Callon, and Bruno Latour, “The Key to Success in Innovation Part 2: The Art of Choosing Good Spokespersons,” *International Journal of Innovation Management* 6, no. 2 (June 2002): 212.

³⁸¹ Akrich, Callon, and Latour, “The Key to Success in Innovation Part 1: The Art of Intersement,” 189; Akrich, Callon, and Latour, “The Key to Success in Innovation Part 2: The Art of Choosing Good Spokespersons,” 212–214.

³⁸² Akrich, Callon, and Latour, “The Key to Success in Innovation Part 1: The Art of Intersement,” 194.

³⁸³ Kimbell, “Rethinking Design Thinking,” November 1, 2011, 298.

economic developments have shaped design practice over time.”³⁸⁴ She identifies ethnography and thick description as a potential remedy, rather than protocol analysis, artificial exercises, and designers’ verbal accounts of what they do.³⁸⁵ Both Mellow Walk and Gourmet Settings have refined their corporate narratives including how they present their product development and manufacturing processes. Part of my research was comparing stories of creation found in marketing materials and common phrases repeated by interviewees with the processes I observed through actor networks.

ANT has resonated with design historians because it gives agency to non-human actors. Referred to as “material-semiotics,” ANT deals with things and concepts, something Latour sees as missing from sociology.³⁸⁶ It is unlikely to find an event composed purely of connections between people or objects - the two are almost always intertwined.³⁸⁷ Latour argues that objects have the ability to be mediators, that is to have agency and the ability to influence other actors in a network. To be considered an actor, something (or someone) must be a mediator and not an intermediary, meaning that the actor must contribute to changing an outcome. ANT looks for “actants,” those who act or “shift actions.”³⁸⁸ An object can be an actor regardless of if it has a determining role (Latour gives the example of a hammer “hitting” a nail but not “imposing” the hitting of the nail).³⁸⁹ Certain circumstances make objects more visible as actors. In a design department, an artisan’s workshop, or a user’s home, objects “live a clearly multiple and complex life.”³⁹⁰ The degree to which actors are visible varies throughout my case studies, depending on how attached they are to a “program of action.”³⁹¹ It is for this reason that the finished consumer products – the boots, shoes, and flatware that appear in advertisements and museum collections – play what might be a smaller than expected role in the following case studies. They come and go at various points as different kinds of evidence of design work come into focus.

³⁸⁴ Kimbell, 298.

³⁸⁵ Kimbell, 298.

³⁸⁶ Law, “Actor-Network Theory and Material Semiotics,” 141; Latour, *Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-Network-Theory*, 73.

³⁸⁷ Latour, *Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-Network-Theory*, 75.

³⁸⁸ Madeleine Akrich and Bruno Latour, “A Summary of a Convenient Vocabulary for the Semiotics of Human and Nonhuman Assemblies,” in *Shaping Technology/Building Society: Studies in Sociotechnical Change*, ed. Bijker et al. (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 1992), 259.

³⁸⁹ Latour, *Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-Network-Theory*, 71.

³⁹⁰ Latour, 80.

³⁹¹ Latour, Maugin, and Teil, “A New Method to Trace the Path of Innovations. The ‘Socio-Technical Graph,’” 6.

In "Making the Social Hold: Towards an Actor-Network Theory of Design," Yaneva illustrates how objects can be interpreted as actors.³⁹² By considering the origins and use of everyday things, Yaneva illustrates the extent to which ordinary products influence daily life, and how the designer's intended social impact is received and interpreted by the end-user. She describes how designers "inscribe" object "scripts," "delegate[ing] action to the nonhumans."³⁹³ Objects mediate experiences of the world, guiding behaviour in a variety of ways, sometimes adopting human actions.³⁹⁴ Akrich defines "script" as the intended scenario of use and context within which the object will exist as predicted by the designer or "innovator." She underlines the importance of this script as a "key" to "interpret subsequent events," indirectly making an argument for production studies and giving more weight to the designer's work.³⁹⁵ Akrich contrasts "the world inscribed in the object" and "the world described by its displacement."³⁹⁶ ANT practitioners are especially interested in moments of crisis and dispute, when scripts are challenged, objects do not work as intended, and gaps are revealed between inscription (prescription by the designer), subscription (user acting as anticipated), de-inscription (user challenging the script), and ascription (the unpredictable contexts and larger forces within which the object exists).³⁹⁷

Akrich thinks about decisions made by designers in terms of "what should be delegated to whom or what;" in other words, the designer's role is defined by the planning of work for others to execute.³⁹⁸ In particular, the Mellow Walk case study shows that the designer delegates actions to non-humans within the production process ("redistributing competences and performances"), trusting the software to generate different patterns; or inscribing the pattern and choice of materials with instructions and "allowances" that factory employees "subscribe" to or "de-inscribe."³⁹⁹ Akrich argues that "technical objects contain and produce a specific geography of responsibilities, or more generally, of causes."⁴⁰⁰ Those geographies can be identified in the abstract mapping of relationships, but are also tied to concrete places – the factory floor, trade shows, retail chains, sites of raw material extraction, etc. At each site, actors are responsible for contributing something to the life of the object and have causal effect on the

³⁹² Yaneva, "Making the Social Hold: Towards an Actor-Network Theory of Design."

³⁹³ Yaneva, 276.

³⁹⁴ Yaneva, 276.

³⁹⁵ Akrich, "The De-Description of Technical Objects," 208, 216.

³⁹⁶ Akrich, 209.

³⁹⁷ Akrich, "The De-Description of Technical Objects."

³⁹⁸ Akrich, 207.

³⁹⁹ Akrich and Latour, "A Summary of a Convenient Vocabulary for the Semiotics of Human and Nonhuman Assemblies."

⁴⁰⁰ Akrich, "The De-Description of Technical Objects," 207.

creation, distribution and use of the end product. Identifying these geographies also helps to see the origins of what Reimer and Leslie call the “imaginative geographies” and associated “myth places” – what these networks tied to objects and locations comes to signify.⁴⁰¹

The question of how to identify “*the design*,” and whether it’s in the form of an idea, conversation, inspiration, sketch, plan, prototype, component, new or used product, is explored by Latour and Yaneva in “Give Me a Gun and I Will Make All Buildings Move: An ANT’s View of Architecture.” The authors animate architecture as “moving project” rather than static object. They question how to show buildings “in flight,” at multiple moments or “freeze-frames” in the “flow” of their existence, including the numerous human actors who play roles from clients to city planners to trades people and neighbours.⁴⁰² As discussed in Chapter 2 with the fetishism of the sketch, drawing, and prototype as evidence of the designer’s intellectual activity, Latour and Yaneva point to the limitations of drawings and models which “reduc[e] matter” and human thought to something accessible but far from material reality. In my case studies, where I follow the objects through their many iterations, I introduce a variety of other types of material representing the design, and show that each step is just as significant to the overall development of the product (e.g. sketches and prototypes are as important and instructive when explaining the concept to the retailer, as the technical drawings are to the factory manager, as the machinery and tools are to the factory worker, as the packaging is to the shopper). Each iteration is, as discussed in Chapter 3 with global value chains, reliant on its own network or supply chain, each with its own contribution to design and innovation. The concept of projects in motion is presented another way by Latour et al. as points along a curve: the same idea can be considered realistic, unrealistic, doable, expensive, ideal, and ridiculous at various stages of development and from different actors’ perspectives.⁴⁰³

The actor networks I mapped made the most sense when overlaid on a more linear diagram of iterations of the case study objects, “freeze-frames” that move from pre-conception through development, manufacture, distribution, sale, consumption, use, and re-use, each point feeding back into “the design.” This helped to illustrate that design is an ongoing process and that it is difficult to identify a clear start and stop. Yaneva and Latour both note a need for case studies about innovation processes and applications of ANT to design.⁴⁰⁴

⁴⁰¹ Reimer and Leslie, “Design, National Imaginaries, and the Home Furnishings Commodity Chain.”

⁴⁰² Latour and Yaneva, “Give Me a Gun and I Will Make All Buildings Move: An ANT’s View of Architecture,” 80–81.

⁴⁰³ Latour, Maugin, and Teil, “A New Method to Trace the Path of Innovations. The ‘Socio-Technical Graph,’” 27.

⁴⁰⁴ Akrich, Callon, and Latour, “The Key to Success in Innovation Part 1: The Art of Interressement,” 191; Yaneva, “Making the Social Hold: Towards an Actor-Network Theory of Design.”

2. Data Collection

Using the ANT model, I established a plan to collect information for my case studies in order to accomplish the objectives laid out at the beginning of this chapter. This involved finding the products that would become the focus of the object ethnographies; identifying some of the human and non-human actors (and recognizing that more would appear as the study unfolded); determining when, where, and from whom I could collect data; what form that data would take; and how I would record and structure information inspired by the formats described above. A variety of forms of ethnography, along with interviews and object analysis, were the most relevant methods because of their emphasis on detailed description and a balance of the human and non-human. Outlined below are the different approaches I used from 2012 to 2015 to both observe design in practice and gather official and unofficial accounts of design practice.

In order to determine which products would be most appropriate to document, in 2012, I met several times with representatives from Mellow Walk and Gourmet Settings, including the lead designers (Nelson Silva and Helen Kerr) and manufacturers (Andrew Violi and Hildy Abrams) (see Appendix A for a list of meetings, interviews, and observation sessions). With their help, I established lists of potential interviewees, locations, and moments for observation. I created first drafts of timelines representing ideal scenarios for the development of the case study objects based on the designers' and manufacturers' points of view. This became the basis of my object ethnographies and a point of comparison for my own observations and information from other sources. In the case of Mellow Walk, I was able to go to the factory at key points during product development and watch processes and decisions as they unfolded in the creation of the Vanessa line of footwear. For Gourmet Settings, I entered the product cycle much later, and was able to gain a historical perspective on the life of an object in production for 15 years. The Gourmet Settings study represents several iterations of the Non Stop flatware, one of the company's first lines of cutlery, which is still in production and says much about the evolution of the manufacturer over this period. Chapters 6 and 7 illustrate how these concurrent and historical ethnographies differed, the Mellow Walk case study offering a much more detailed look into modes of production and design decisions as they were made, while the Gourmet Settings study contextualizes a product's development over multiple generations of designers and models.

2.1 Ethnography

Ethnography calls for the observer to enter an existing situation rather than create new research parameters. The ethnographer records activities with the goal of answering research questions that are usually qualitative. This method is most successful when applied to a group of people or events that are limited in size. Direct observation, casual conversations, and interviews are the most common methods of collecting information, resulting in detailed notes or “thick description,” often with an observation guide to help maintain consistency.⁴⁰⁵

In participant observation, the researcher assumes an insider’s perspective. Sociologist Danny Jorgensen describes this method as useful for the study of phenomena such as processes, patterns, relationships and events, and for revealing information about phenomena that are invisible to “outsiders.”⁴⁰⁶ Observing tasks in the factory, then speaking with people about their actions, tools, and techniques, and how they think about their roles and what they produce, allowed me to gather first-hand accounts augmented by my own observations and discussions of those observations. In several instances, because I was limited in my observation of consumption, I recorded something closer to auto-ethnography, making notes about my own behaviour shopping for and using the case study objects.

2.1.1 Observation

Using notes, photographs, and video, I documented human and non-human actors that I identified as influencing design. My criteria were informed partly by the concepts of design outlined in Chapters 2 and 4, in particular as they relate to problem solving, creativity, and the communication of design ideas. More broadly, I looked for actors that had an effect on concept, form, function, fabrication, circulation, distribution, consumption, use, value, representation, and signification (meaning-making). This included, for example, the people I observed working on the product, as well as tools, materials, machines, and environments. I kept these criteria open-ended as my definition of design evolved using the organic nature of ANT to guide me in finding new links and actors. The case studies afforded different opportunities for observation. For Mellow Walk, the Vanessa boots were in development when I began my research, so I was able to observe design, prototyping, and production processes, as well as see the product in circulation online, in stores, and in use. I conducted five observation sessions of approximately one hour each at the factory. I observed the Vanessa pattern being designed; the first samples

⁴⁰⁵ Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays* (New York: Basic Books, 1973).

⁴⁰⁶ Danny L. Jorgensen, “Chapter 1: The Methodology of Participant Observation,” in *Participant Observation: A Methodology for Human Studies*, Applied Social Research Methods Series ; v. 15 (Newbury Park, Calif: Sage Publications, 1989), 12.

being cut, sewn, and lasted; the fit trials; and the final products coming off the line. Due to scheduling constraints, I observed other steps of production (cutting, lasting, and finishing) in more detail for other Mellow Walk products. I also went through the process of purchasing Vanessa boots at a Mark's store in downtown Toronto (Ontario, Canada), and visited the Mister Safety head office and store in North York (Ontario). For Gourmet Settings, my observation sessions were more limited as I did not travel to the Asian factories. I observed the Gourmet Settings head office in Richmond Hill (Ontario) including the current designer's studio, and I traveled to New York (USA) to observe the Gourmet Settings' showroom during the New York Tabletop Show, and to experience shopping for the flatware at Bed Bath & Beyond in Manhattan. In all cases, I was able to have casual conversations with other actors who were not formally interviewed.

2.1.2 Video Ethnography

Video ethnography is a form of observation that includes a range of activities, from filming interviews to documenting phenomena. At Mellow walk, I filmed people working then showed them the videos and asked them to describe what they were doing. This is based on the premise that what people say they do differs from what they actually do.⁴⁰⁷ During the formal interviews, I showed the videos and asked participants to describe what they saw based on a set of questions. This proved very effective as the people I observed are not often asked to reflect on their work and many are not native English speakers. Discussions about the videos helped to reveal more information than simply asking them to describe their roles.

2.1.3 Digital Ethnography

Because of the limitations in observing consumers and sites of consumption (there was no guarantee that people would be interested in them at the store, and little opportunity to watch people wear the safety boots or use the flatware at home), I observed online communities of consumers (e.g. consumer review forums ranging from independent blogs to conversations on Amazon), as well as public communication between consumers and producers (e.g. reproduced on the producer's or consumer's own web sites and social media). This gave me access to many opinions about the products and allowed me to assess how the "script" was received and "re-inscribed" by the users in relation to function, form, value, and meaning. Photographs on

⁴⁰⁷ For an example of video ethnography, see:
<http://www.manchesresearch.co.uk/mobility%20and%20aging.html>. Manches Research, "Video Ethnography," n.d., http://www.manchesresearch.co.uk/video_ethnography.html.

social media, especially Facebook for Mellow Walk, and Instagram for Gourmet Settings, gave me insight into how the products were used in context. Finally, I looked at the second-hand market to understand how consumers ‘sold’ the products themselves (e.g. E-bay, Craigslist, Kijiji).

2.2 Interviews

I organized structured interviews to build on my observation and video ethnography. I conducted ten interviews for Mellow Walk and eight for Gourmet Settings (two were by written questionnaire) with people representing roles from production (owners and senior managers, designers, production managers, and line workers), distribution (retail owners and buyers), and consumption (one consumer). Interviews lasted from 60 to 90 minutes, and with the exception of three people, interviewees were comfortable with me filming them. In two cases, I was asked to use an audio recording device, and in one case, notes only. Interviews took place in the offices of designers, manufacturers, and retailers across Toronto, after work hours in the Mellow Walk factory, and in various other locations that were convenient to the interviewees, such as local coffee shops and a local shoe studio. The factory workers were paid \$20 per hour for their time. All interviews were conducted in English with the exception of Nelson Silva’s simultaneous translation from Portuguese of my interview with Mellow Walk laster Manuel Boita. Two interviews with agents in Vietnam and Taiwan were conducted by email through written questionnaires. Interviewees were given their transcript and video footage with the option that they could correct or redact information within a limited time. I then shared all transcripts with the manufacturers to ensure there was no confidential information that could not be published.

The interviews allowed me to follow up on what I had already observed, to ask questions and encourage reflection. I sent a short written questionnaire in advance to collect biographical information and to help me understand interviewees’ professional, personal, and cultural backgrounds and how these influence their work. I also did background research on interviewees using LinkedIn, profiles on their company web sites, and media coverage. During the interviews, when applicable, they were asked to describe the video footage I had taken, and to review physical objects and documents that I had selected or that they had brought to the interview. I occasionally sent follow-up questions by email for clarification. The interviews were structured around several key themes: the production-circulation-consumption process, meaning, relationships, and globalization (see interview guides in Appendix 2).

I began with perceptions of the case study object and the intention behind it, asking them to describe the final product, its purpose, and target audience. In order to get different

perspectives of process and networks, I requested that interviewees describe (and sometimes draw) how the product moves from initial concept to the consumer, and to explain where they fit in that process and who they had the most contact with. I asked how they define design, where it plays a role in the overall process, who is responsible for it, and what are the most important factors influencing design. In addition to inquiring directly with interviewees about their own involvement in design, I approached the topic from different angles by inquiring about the types of decisions they make and problems they solve, whether they considered any aspects of their work to be creative, and, if given the opportunity, how they would redesign or improve the final product. To expand the actor network diagram to include local and global non-human actors, and to get a sense of how aware interviewees were of the bigger picture, I asked them about the tools, technologies, and materials used to create and distribute the case study objects. In the case of the Mellow Walk consumer, I invited her to describe a range of consumption activities, from her motivation to buy safety boots, to the shopping experience, the moment of purchase, wearing and caring for the boots, and what the boots mean in relation to her own style and identity.

To understand the meanings invested in the object at different phases, I asked interviewees about the symbolic significance of the case study objects, what messages the company's products convey, how these messages are delivered through branding and promotion, and how consumers feel about those messages. I also wanted to get a sense of what the objects mean to the interviewees at a more individual level—how the objects represent identities and relationships between producers and consumers around the world. I asked them for more personal opinions about the product, if they felt pride in the final object, if they saw their work reflected in it, and if they owned and used the company's products. I inquired if they knew the retail and wholesale prices (no one knew or felt comfortable revealing what it cost to produce the products) and if those prices represented the true value of manufacturing and good value for the customer. I asked them about the role of culture in design and manufacturing, and if there was anything that might identify the case study products as being “locally-made,” Canadian, or originating from another nationality.

Here, my goals were to see how much interviewees know about the broader networks centred around the object, how they see their relationships to other actors, and what they perceive to be the benefits and challenges of local and global relationships. I prompted them to speak about how they imagine offshore manufacturing, and how they see themselves in relation to global producers in their own networks and to those making similar products in other countries. With respect to how producers relate to consumers, I inquired where the products are

sold, who buys them, if they believe consumers have a sense of how they are made, how they see their relationship to consumers, and what message they would like to convey to consumers about the product.

Finally, I wanted to understand how the interviewees view globalization related to production and consumption, and what changes they have observed and anticipate because of globalization. I prompted them to think about issues like intellectual property, outsourcing, the role of local skills, knowledge and traditions, and the impact of the manufacturers' choices about where to produce and source components.

2.3 Mapping Material, Visual, and Textual Content for Analysis

Throughout my own research, and in interviews and observation, I collected textual, digital, illustrative, and three-dimensional materials, representing actors in production, circulation, and consumption, and sources contextualizing the case study objects and their networks. Iterations of the case study objects are represented through drawings, computer renderings, materials, components, prototypes, packaging, and documentation of the final product in retail environments and in use. Processes are illustrated through photographs and videos made by others (often for promotional purposes), and my own documentation of working spaces, tools and technologies, materials, and components, which I traced back to suppliers around the globe when possible. While I had no interaction with international actors like the CSA (Canadian Standards Association) or CATRA (Cutlery & Allied Trades Research Association), I was able to learn about their roles online. The re-framing of meanings through imagery and texts was revealed in packaging, advertising, point-of-purchase displays, trade show booths, awards, media coverage, museum exhibitions, and publications. Furthermore, manufacturer and retailer web sites, blogs, and social media, in addition to consumer feedback fora and social media, were rich sources of information about the creation of the case study objects and their perceived significance.

3. Data Analysis

After transcribing the interviews, making notes on videos, images, and objects, I coded and sorted the data based on themes responding to my research questions and new themes that emerged from the actors. I then began to visualize the information in a series of diagrams including timelines, network maps, organization charts (mixed with family trees), categorized lists of actors too lengthy to accommodate in other diagrams, global maps of flows of people and objects, and illustrations of overlapping historical and geographical contexts. Elements of these are included in the case study chapters and appendices.

I created one primary diagram for each case study that synthesized as much of this information as possible. The result was a combination of a network map and a timeline. This was somewhat challenging because while ANT is supposed to represent a dynamic system, a network map does not easily lend itself to showing change over time in the same way that a timeline does. To accomplish this, I returned to the process diagram I had made based on the steps of production, circulation, and consumption as idealized by the designers and manufacturing managers at my first meetings with them. Their perspectives had naturally led to a timeline heavy on production with less attention given to distribution and even less to circulation and consumption. Using Latour and Yaneva's idea of an object "in flight," that there is no single defining state of a design project (the final product is only one phase in an object's life), I tried to capture the many iterations of the case study object over time, moving from left to right. This trajectory helped me to stay focused on the "object ethnography" and keeping the object at the centre of my study. Using all of the data I collected, including photographs, video stills, and images of global suppliers found online, I then mapped as many actors as possible on top of this timeline, connecting them to each other and to iterations of the object. I attempted to create three bands of information, grouping production actors across the top, then circulation and consumption below. This was challenging because many actors belong to multiple groups and influence design at multiple stages, so while the object progressed in a more or less linear fashion, circling back and repeating some phases as necessary, the "inputs," or other actors contributing to design, did not fit a left to right model, but were better represented as a network map. The diagram for Mellow Walk was more detailed because of my observation in the factory, and because I was able to follow the object in real-time from concept to consumption. The final diagram, when printed, was over 16 feet long and three feet high. When it came time to write the case studies, I positioned myself in front of the diagrams and moved my chair and laptop from left to right. The Gourmet Settings time line is far less detailed and instead of focusing on the detailed steps of product development, takes a 25-year view (1990-2015) of the actors involved in the creation and distribution of Non Stop and related products.

ANT proved to be a useful model for this project in terms of flattening and connecting relationships between non-human and human actors no matter where they were located in time and space. Like ethnography, ANT allows for the flexibility required to follow a process that changes. It allowed for the inclusion of a much broader spectrum of actors than if I had limited myself to those identified by the designers and manufacturers when they described how the object moves from concept to consumer's home. No matter how un/important they seemed to others in the network, the actors I included were significant because they were connected

through the case study object and contributed to its design in some way. Thus, the lowly shoe sponge made it into the diagram because it was important to Maria Barreto's network of tools in the finishing department at Mellow Walk, or foundbyjune's kitchen table on Instagram was assessed as an example of consumer appropriation of Non Stop flatware.

The diagrams helped me to create a more complete picture of global processes of design and the division of design labour. Overlaying the timeline with the actor network allowed me to look for change over time (e.g. how does the computer rendering differ from the original concept, how does the consumer's use differ from the designer's intentions), and to identify multiple sources of authorship, creative contributions, influences on design, and collaborations between various actors. Linking the global and local revealed areas of concentrated activity and movement between locations. The diagrams provided enough information to question hierarchies and to challenge or add to models like global commodity chains and design thinking processes outlined in Chapters 2 to 4. Organizing the data in this way also helped me to visualize relationships and to analyze meaning, identity, and understandings of globalization and communities, which otherwise would have been based only on interviews and official messaging about the products.

Chapter 6: Case Study 1 - Mellow Walk

Mellow Walk and Gourmet Settings Case Studies – An Overview

The following two case studies are presented in four parts. First, the “Introduction” provides background on how I identified the case study companies and objects, as well as an overview of my research process. It also highlights notable themes that emerged, which make each case study unique. Second, the “Corporate Narrative” provides context for Mellow Walk and Gourmet Settings’ development, summarizing the organizations’ histories and messaging, including how they position themselves, their staff, processes, and products. This section draws attention to local and global factors that have influenced the case study company’s trajectory over time, and situates the case study object in relation to official corporate values that the organization seeks to embody in its brand and products. Third, the “Actors” section presents the many people, places, ideas, and objects that have a role in design, as connected by the case study company and its products. It explores how actors across scales and locations influence systems of Production, Circulation, and Consumption, providing context for the detailed review of the case study product. Finally, the “Object Ethnography” follows iterations of Mellow Walk’s Vanessa footwear line and Gourmet Settings’ Non Stop flatware. The ethnographies trace an arc from precedent objects to the case study objects in their many forms, including: concepts, research subjects, drawings, patterns, prototypes and sales models, materials and components, manufacturing trials and objects in production; as products presented in packaging, advertising, and retail; and as goods being purchased and used. These objects ‘in flight’ exist in multiple physical and digital iterations, as well as in the form of images, texts, ideas, and practices. At the end of each case study are the biographies of the interviewees, a diagram of the object ethnographies summarizing the phases of the objects’ lives and actors, and images of iterations of the case study objects, related materials and locations (referred to throughout this text using their figure numbers).

Based on the research objectives outlined in Chapter 5 and the networks revealed through the object ethnographies, I have selected certain human and non-human actors to highlight. Each is included because it fits Latour’s definition—it contributes to changing an outcome. In this case, the outcome is any physical, representational, or conceptual iteration of the ‘design’ of the case study objects. Because I argue that there are many different and invisible contributors to design activity, and that design activity can be more broadly defined, the actors presented here may not, at first, appear to be directly related to traditional understandings of design. Some demonstrate design work and play a role in the problem

solving, creative thinking, making, communication, and interpretation of design, while others exert influence through affordances and constraints. The actors are linked by the case study objects, each providing different contexts for creation, distribution, and consumption. Each actor picks up and creates meaning in relation to the object and to the other actors it comes into contact with directly and through the object.

I have chosen moments that show the division of design labour, the separation or combination of hand and head, and the involvement of designers in making, and of makers and others in design. There are moments where design work is undertaken in solitude and in collaboration with other actors. I focus on examples of creativity, craft, and innovation, but also show the more mundane, practical aspects of design work. The spatial distribution of design activity is made visible in the globally fragmented supply chains. Mapping the networks of global and local actors draws attention to both the dispersal of design authorship and areas of concentrated activity and movement. Furthermore, I look at how ideas of designers and design are discussed and presented, how these understandings are inscribed in corporate narratives and promotional materials, and how they are received and reinterpreted by various audiences. The case studies rely on thick description and are presented as stories that lay the groundwork for the analysis chapters.

It is worth noting some important differences between the two case study companies based on the scale, structure, and distances that define the relationships between management, design, production, and consumption. Gourmet Settings and Mellow Walk both came into existence in the early 1990s, but they chose very different paths for design and manufacturing. While Mellow Walk reinvigorated a traditional model of Canadian-based manufacturing with all manufacturing, design, management, sales, and shipping under one roof, there was no question for Gourmet Settings that they would outsource production to Asia. In fact, the company's earliest products were purchased from Chinese factories and repackaged to sell in North America. While Mellow Walk started with small, local retailers and has gradually expanded its national and international distribution, Gourmet Settings CEO Hildy Abrams and her partners chose to confront their biggest competitors on an international stage, obtaining their first orders from the giants of mass-market retail. Today, Mellow Walk makes approximately 8,000 pairs of shoes and boots each month, and Gourmet Settings sells 30,000–70,000 sets of flatware to Costco alone in one season. Mellow Walk employs about 60 people in Toronto, while Gourmet Settings has only 13 employees in Richmond Hill, Ontario. Gourmet Settings originally outsourced design entirely to Toronto-based firms Kerr + Company (product, packaging, and strategy) and Hahn Smith (graphic design, branding, and copywriting), but Gourmet Settings

has since hired several in-house designers who are former employees of Kerr + Company. Designer Nelson Silva's job at Mellow Walk focuses on product design with some influence on branding, packaging, and changes to existing modes of production, but designer Helen Kerr and graphic designer Nigel Smith (now Co-President of Kerr Smith) worked with Abrams to develop the entire manufacturing, distribution, and promotion system from the ground up—it was as though Gourmet Settings was being designed as a company in tandem with its core product, the flatware. Abrams and Kerr travelled to China together to establish connections and production processes. Eventually, Abrams engaged Daniel Choi, a local liaison based in South Korea and Vietnam, and COO of one of the factories they use, to oversee production in Asia on their behalf. Gourmet Settings maintains long-standing relationships with these factories and visits them several times a year, but the company is nonetheless 13,000 km removed from its manufacturers, a very different scenario from Silva's daily interactions with factory floor workers. As seen in the following chapters, these two different models of production and distribution are significant in the design of the case study products and in understanding the local and global relationships behind everyday consumer goods.

It is worth noting that research for the Mellow Walk case study took place between 2012 and 2015, and between 2012 and 2014 for Gourmet Settings. The two manufacturers have since published new web sites and some of their relationships with suppliers and retailers have changed. Several of the Mellow Walk employees have retired or moved to new jobs. Mellow Walk has also developed a new logo and brand system since the completion of this research.

1. Mellow Walk - Introduction

The Mellow Walk case study was made possible through my connection to Nelson Silva, Footwear Design Director since 2010. I first interviewed Silva in 2007, when he was Senior Footwear Designer at RMP Athletic Locker, where he designed and supervised the design of casual sports brands like Brooks and Vans. His office was in Mississauga and they produced shoes in China to sell at big box, department, and sportswear stores. That was Silva's first real design position after he finished his bachelor degree in industrial design at the Ontario College of Art and Design (now OCAD University). I did not know any other young designers who had landed a job in big manufacturing so early in their careers, and his job was intriguing because it was largely anonymous. Here was Silva, designing shoes that would be worn in the thousands, with a significant role that involved travelling to China to collaborate with the factories, but a job where he got no public recognition. He was working behind the scenes in a company no design magazine would ever feature, and his name would certainly never be attached to the products he designed or even to the company brand. Customers would never know who was responsible for the shoes they wore.

I was curious about what Silva's job entailed and how his education had prepared him to design on one side of the world and make on the other. Designers like Silva were surely dealing with a long list of barriers (cultural, linguistic, spatial, temporal, technological, logistical, regulatory) that many of the Canadian design successes profiled at the Design Exchange, Canada's national design museum, had never encountered.⁴⁰⁸ Silva would create colour renderings by hand, showing the shoes from several perspectives but with little technical detail, then scan and email them to a company in South Korea. Most of Korea's shoe industry had migrated to China, but had left behind an infrastructure of middlemen who were accustomed to dealing with Western clients and who could translate Silva's designs into patterns the Chinese factories could work from. Sample shoes would be sent to Silva in Toronto for review. He would provide feedback and go to China several times a year. While he was at first inspired by the prospect of designing better shoes for people who could not afford higher-end products, he was soon frustrated by the global process and found that trying to improve an unwieldy system from within was almost impossible. With price as the driving factor, he discovered he had little control over the end product. Sometimes he would get a good pattern maker in Korea or China, sometimes he would not. Sometimes the shoes looked great, sometimes they did not. Silva soon realized that despite his title as shoe designer and his education as an industrial designer, he had little knowledge about how a shoe was constructed. His drawings were being

⁴⁰⁸ I first met Silva when I was working at the Design Exchange and he was a student volunteer.

transformed into three-dimensional objects on another continent, a process where he would have liked more control. In his spare time, he started taking apart shoes from thrift stores, reverse engineering old shoes to understand how they used to be made. After eight years in athletic footwear, he left his job and joined Jitter Bug Boy Original Footwear, a small Toronto studio that hand makes custom footwear for the entertainment industry. The next year, the position opened at Mellow Walk and Silva was able to transfer his knowledge of mass and craft production to the last shoe factory in Ontario, and one that specialized in safety footwear.⁴⁰⁹

Mellow Walk is keen to tell its story and the CEO, Andrew Violi, allowed me to spend time with Silva, management and factory floor workers. I met with Silva in summer 2012 to get a tour of the factory. Mellow Walk's exterior is deceptively boring. The non-descript, two-story grey brick building (formerly a gym) blends into the light-industrial area south of Keele between Lawrence and Dufferin streets in Toronto. To the west of Keele is a residential, working-class neighbourhood, and to the east, Mellow Walk is surrounded by used car dealers and auto collision centres, wholesalers, religious centres, and a few other manufacturers like Robertson Foundries and Roots. There are no sidewalks and barely any landscaping beyond the rough parking lots. After passing through a small, no-frills front office, the factory unfolds in one large and mostly open space, divided up only for a management office, lunch room, kitchen, and safety testing lab (an old sauna). Everything happens under one roof: management, sales, design, manufacturing, shipping, warehousing, and most of the marketing. Mellow Walk has become a popular tour site for those lucky enough to get access. Popular discourse would have it that there is no manufacturing left in Canada, so to see the entire process in one place is a novelty, a glimpse into the way things used to be done, but also a showcase of modern equipment appropriate to a contemporary factory of its size anywhere in the world. Mellow Walk is a thriving business, but as the last of its kind, it also feels like a living history site.

From this initial meeting, I created a draft of the object life cycle diagram to capture what Silva had shown me in the factory. We met again in early Fall 2013 to get an overview of how the design, manufacturing and distribution processes work from his perspective. I met with Silva and the president twice more to discuss and get permission for the project. From there, Silva and I determined who to interview: Andrew Violi as President and CEO; Diana Sullivan as Plant Manager; Silva as Footwear Design Director; Carol Padda, Supervisor in Cutting; Arminda Romeiro, Sewing Machine Operator and Sample Maker in Fitting; Manuel Boita, Sole Layer in Lasting; and Maria Barreto, Supervisor in Finishing. Teresa Torres, Romeiro's Supervisor in Fitting and her friend, decided to join the interview with Romeiro. Silva suggested these people

⁴⁰⁹ Mellow Walk, "About Our Team."

because they covered management as well as the four divisions within the production line from a fairly senior point of view. Language and enthusiasm were also influencing factors. Had there been more time, it would have been useful to interview more junior employees on the factory floor, plus individuals from sales, shipping, and equipment maintenance. Aldo Violi, one of the co-founders, is now retired and his perspective on the Canadian shoe industry over the past three decades would have provided unique context. During the second meeting, Silva and I also determined that we would use the Vanessa line for the case study. This was based partly on timing as Silva was just beginning the design process and I could follow the line through to production, and because the Vanessa was something of a departure from the usual lines of women's safety shoes, representing a new design direction for Mellow Walk.

I interviewed Mellow Walk staff over the winter of 2013-14 either in the boardroom, on the factory floor, or offsite after work hours.⁴¹⁰ In the summer of 2014, I interviewed John Colantonio, Managing Director and owner of Mister Safety Shoes Inc., a retailer of safety equipment, clothes, and especially footwear. As one of Mellow Walk's primary customers, Colantonio helped to fill in the distribution piece of the story. The Vanessa boots were launched in Fall 2014 and I bought my own pair in early 2015. In the summer of 2015, I was lucky to be introduced to Bonnie McCabe, a consumer who had been wearing the boots for close to seven months in her position as a breakdown and dying artist for film and television.

I conducted five observation sessions at Mellow Walk at key moments of the design and development process. I took notes and photographs, and filmed when appropriate (filming the president answering emails would have been awkward). I filmed Silva creating the paper and digital patterns for the last, shoe, and zip-up boot version of Vanessa. I recorded Silva working with Fitting and Lasting on the first samples, and recorded the same people plus Sullivan and Bev Hodgins (Assistant Plant Manager) on the fit trials. Scheduling permitted me to film Padda and Barreto conducting typical tasks, but not working on the Vanessa per se. At some points, Silva was able to describe what was happening and at others, I was able to capture exchanges between people. One of the most successful parts of the interviews with the factory workers was when they described what they were doing in excerpts of the videos I had made of them working. This allowed us to get into the detail of their actions and thought processes, rather than the more humble and simplified accounts of their jobs they provided in response to interview questions.

I collected primary materials representing production: prototypes, samples and packaging; photographs of the Vanessa line at different phases of production; and photographs

⁴¹⁰ I paid the factory workers \$20/hour for their time.

of supporting design files and material samples. In terms of distribution and circulation of the Vanessa line, I studied: retail displays; Mellow Walk advertising including a mockumentary featuring the Vanessa boot (2015); the Mellow Walk web site and social media (blog, Twitter, Facebook 2013-2015); retailer product descriptions (2015); and media coverage about Mellow Walk (2013-2015).⁴¹¹ Finally, in terms of consumption, I collected: photographs of a consumer (McCabe) wearing the Vanessa boots at work; consumer feedback on the Mellow Walk web site and through social media; consumer reviews on online retailer web sites; and consumer descriptions of Mellow Walk products in the re-sale market (e-bay, Craigslist, Kijiji). Because the boot and shoe are relatively new, there is less public commentary on the Vanessa and I did not find any instance of the Vanessa on the second-hand market.

The object ethnography model evolved over the course of the study, divided over three concurrent timelines: production, circulation, and consumption. I incorporated as much detail as possible to represent steps over time, outside influences, and relationships between people, companies, objects, tools, and locations. With each interview transcript, I colour coded the actors mentioned so that in the final diagram, I could see who knew the most about which phases and how their knowledge and focus differed. A simplified version of the object ethnography diagram is included here (fig.1), along with detailed enlargements of certain phases and progressive iterations of the central object, sometimes seen in boot and shoe form (fig.2). The interviews and object ethnography diagram allowed me to build an organizational chart of Mellow Walk showing reporting structures as well as family ties (fig.3), in addition to a world map showing flows of materials and components, people, ideas and final products (fig.4).

While the Gourmet Settings and Mellow Walk case studies reveal similar insights, the following themes became evident during research and illustrate that the study of the Vanessa footwear offers its own, unique perspectives.

First, Mellow Walk consciously engages in the 'spectacle of the local' with its 'Made in Canada' branding and fetishism of craftsmanship. It celebrates the number of hands involved in making a pair of shoes and showcases the "shoemakers" (factory workers) on product labels. The story of the last shoe factory in Ontario is enthusiastically embraced by government and media. The case study reveals a number of 'place myths' and 'imagined communities' related to conditions of production in Toronto, including family ties and links to multi-cultural populations. The idea of quality, comfort, humour, safety, and advanced manufacturing are attached to ideas of Canadian-ness and contrasted with goods made offshore. This has particular meaning within

⁴¹¹ Note that Mellow Walk has launched a brand new web site with significantly different content since writing this study.

Canada but can be read differently wherever the footwear is exported. While Mellow Walk has refined this messaging through multiple channels, it is questionable how much value this branding carries in the realms of retail and consumption.

Second is the impact of global supply chains. Mellow Walk clearly articulates the benefits of being a small and nimble company that competes with the quantities and discounts of foreign manufacturers with its ability to target niche markets and respond quickly to retailer and consumer demands. It does this through small runs, new designs, and experimentation. At the same time, the scale of operations and capital means that Mellow Walk cannot invest fully in original design and must find economies and efficiencies by sourcing components from around the world in order to keep prices competitive. Silva talks about “making stuff fit,” showing design as a kind of ‘bricolage’ of global resources and distributed authorship. In the process, new strengths and relationships are made visible in the globally shifting territories of design. This is a different angle to ‘Made in Canada.’

Third is the role of regulation. As a safety product, the footwear must be certified by the CSA (Canadian Standards Association) before it goes into production. This is a rigorous process that requires a significant upfront investment by Mellow Walk. Once approved, the ‘platform’ (the configuration of outsole, insole, steel toe) cannot change, thereby dictating a common design feature of a new product line that also informs the design of the upper (the leather, lining, and fittings). The CSA, now a globally recognized institution for safety standards and certification, is in itself an interesting actor. It is an example of an organization that has transitioned to a post-industrial economy while benefiting from long-standing values associated with Canadian identity.

Fourth, this case study offers a more in-depth study of the manufacturing process because I had access to the factory and could follow the development of the product as it happened. I was able to observe manufacturing processes and speak with factory employees instead of soliciting secondhand accounts from designers and international agents. This gave me a much better understanding of the conditions of production and allowed unexpected actors to emerge, such as equipment, technologies, and their international sources, sales agents, and technicians. It allowed a more balanced perspective on the relationships between makers, designers, and managers, and shed light on the involvement of consumers and retailers in production. This inside view of manufacturing revealed a mix of craft, design, and repetitive work, and a combination of old and new technologies facilitating the integration of automated and non-automated labour. In addition to bottom-up creativity, there was also evidence of the designer undertaking manual work and participating in processes of making. The collaboration

between the designer and factory workers illuminated design's role in manufacturing: in many ways the designer is more connected and more responsible to those in networks of production than consumption, suggesting a different 'user' in 'user-centred' design.

2. Mellow Walk - Corporate Narrative

Mellow Walk was founded in 1993, during a recession when other Canadian apparel and footwear manufacturers were either closing or moving offshore.⁴¹² Aldo Violi, an accountant and financial manager, saw it as a good investment with co-founder and shoemaker, Gino Mellozzi. Both Mellozzi and Violi had worked together at Ritter Shoes in Scarborough before the company went bankrupt.⁴¹³ Mellow Walk's first incarnation was a small building at Finch and Keele in Toronto where daily output was one or two dozen pairs of women's nursing shoes to sell in Quebec.⁴¹⁴ They moved again before landing at the current 25,000 square foot location at Keele and Lawrence in 2003 (fig.5).⁴¹⁵ Mellow Walk's product line then expanded to include sandals, orthopedics and soft-toed casual footwear, producing brands for other companies.⁴¹⁶ In 2001, Mellozzi passed away (fig.6). His son, Anthony, remained plant manager at Mellow Walk until 2012 and now owns his own shoe company, Mellozzi Footwear. In 2001, Mellow Walk hired an experienced "shoe-dog," Brian Suckling, a travelling shoe salesman with 40 years under his belt. It was Suckling's idea that Mellow Walk should focus on safety shoes – the company credits him with teaching them how to make safety footwear and get certification, and with securing big clients that would sustain the business.⁴¹⁷ Violi's sons took over the company with Jeff Violi in charge of sales (2003) and Andrew Violi in charge of marketing (2005). In 2012, their cousin, Rob Violi, took over as CFO and in 2013 Andrew Violi became President. Starting in the mid-2000s, under the leadership of the next generation of Violis, Mellow Walk went through a process of brand definition and specialization, moving away from producing for other manufacturers. When Nelson Silva took over as Design Director in 2010, he inherited a clear brand vision that he built on by exploring new colours, details, and materials in the traditionally

⁴¹² Mellow Walk, "Rob Violi," Mellow Walk, accessed August 18, 2015, <http://www.mellowwalk.com/about/rob-violi/>.

⁴¹³ In my interview with Maria Barreto, she indicated that she left Ritter Shoes in 1986 because it closed. Carol Padda indicated that she worked there from 1975 for 17 years before moving to Mellow Walk. Anton Ritter's obituary states that he opened the company a few years after he arrived in Canada in the late 1950s and that he employed 100 people. Barreto indicated that Gino Mellozzi was 'the boss' at Ritter and that Aldo Violi also worked there.

⁴¹⁴ Mellow Walk, "Our Twentieth Anniversary Year," Mellow Walk, accessed August 18, 2015, <http://www.mellowwalk.com/posts/our-twentieth-anniversary-year/>.

⁴¹⁵ Mellow Walk.

⁴¹⁶ Andrew Violi, "Meet Jeff Violi, Mellow Walk's VP, Sales," Mellow Walk, accessed August 18, 2015, <http://www.mellowwalk.com/posts/meet-jeff-violi-mellow-walks-vp-sales/>; Mellow Walk, "Andrew Violi," Mellow Walk, accessed August 11, 2015, <http://www.mellowwalk.com/about/andrew-violi/>; Mellow Walk, "Jeff Violi," Mellow Walk, accessed August 18, 2015, <http://www.mellowwalk.com/about/jeff-violi/>.

⁴¹⁷ Andrew Violi, "Mellow Walk Salesman Dies at 83. Last of the Original Shoedogs.," Mellow Walk, accessed August 18, 2015, <http://www.mellowwalk.com/posts/mellow-walk-salesman-dies-at-83-last-of-the-original-shoedogs/>.

black leather product line.⁴¹⁸ In 2014, it was announced that Mellow Walk had outgrown their facility and would be taking over the building next door. New business and growing offshore markets like the Middle East require more space and more equipment.⁴¹⁹

As the “last shoe factory in Toronto” and the last “fully integrated factory in Ontario,” Mellow Walk’s ‘Made in Canada’ story is compelling. The company may source materials and components overseas, but all design and manufacturing happens in one building, as do all management, sales, warehousing, and shipping-related activities. Mellow Walk’s corporate narrative is one of a proudly Canadian, family-run company that went against the offshoring trend and invested in manufacturing at home. Dedication, teamwork, sacrifice, and employee and customer loyalty are all part of the Mellow Walk story. In some sense, my project played right into the company brand, which emphasizes, if not romanticizes, making. Like the few remaining shoe factories in this country, there is a marketing focus on tradition and craft: “Handcrafted in Toronto, 40 pairs of hands make each and every shoe.”⁴²⁰ Quality is guaranteed not by the latest technology, but by over 50 “shoemakers” who work together under one roof with design and management (fig.7).⁴²¹ A leather maple leaf attached to every pair of shoes, along with labels profiling individual makers working happily in the factory, connect the consumer to a place and face. “Made in Canada” is sometimes included in the Mellow Walk brand mark as well.

Mellow Walk’s success has led members of Canadian provincial and national governments to hold up the company as a shining example of small business and manufacturing. Provincial and federal ministers use it for photo opportunities like the launch of Small Business Week (2012), and the Ontario Ministry of Research and Innovation profiled the factory in a video overview of the 40 steps required to make a shoe and in a photo album on Flickr.⁴²² In 2014, the late Minister of Finance, Jim Flaherty, was fitted for shoes by Andrew Violi in the Mellow Walk factory (he chose the David Brogue, the “dressiest steel-toe safety shoe”), part of a long-standing tradition that the Minister gets new shoes before announcing the budget

⁴¹⁸ Andrew Violi, “Inside Our Shoes: The World According to Mellow Walk Designer Nelson Silva,” Mellow Walk, accessed August 18, 2015, <http://www.mellowwalk.com/posts/inside-our-shoes/the-world-according-to-mellow-walk-designer-nelson-silva/>.

⁴¹⁹ Andrew Violi, “Mellow Walk Is Growing to Keep up with Demand.,” Mellow Walk, accessed August 18, 2015, <http://www.mellowwalk.com/posts/mellow-walk-is-expanding-to-keep-up-with-demand/>.

⁴²⁰ Andrew Violi, “About Our Team,” Mellow Walk, accessed August 18, 2015, <http://www.mellowwalk.com/about/>.

⁴²¹ Violi.

⁴²² Ontario Innovation, “Mellow Walk,” Flickr, November 9, 2012, <https://www.flickr.com/photos/ontarioinnovation/sets/72157632026821482>.

(fig.8).⁴²³ With Mellow Walk employees looking on at his press conference, Flaherty spoke about the strength of the Canadian economy and brand. These events and the media coverage they engender reinforce the Canadian success story that Mellow Walk has come to symbolize.

As the other Toronto shoe factories closed, Mellow Walk became one of the few places where unemployed shoemakers could find work in the city, forming a group of people with experience going back to the 1970s. Collectively, they have a memory of the industry that is difficult to resurrect elsewhere – knowledge of companies that closed, of work practices that no longer exist, and of personal relationships formed several workplaces ago that continue to bind them today. Individually, their stories, mainly as new immigrants to Canada, are fascinating. Today, Mellow Walk employs over 60 people, including 50 on the factory floor and at least another dozen in the office and sales. Four have been there from the beginning (23 years) while another eight have been there over 10 years.⁴²⁴ While the people I interviewed were more senior, close to 20% of the employees are under 30 years old, part of Mellow Walk's efforts to support the next generation and reduce unemployment.⁴²⁵

Mellow Walk manufactures approximately 2,000 pairs of shoes per week and maintains an "in-stock" program in addition to filling custom orders. A steady supply of standard, popular models are sold through a variety of safety, work wear, and orthotics stores, but retailers can also order models in limited runs. Mellow Walk's largest market is in southern Ontario, with additional distribution in Montreal, Vancouver, and other cities across Canada, and some distribution in rural areas and the U.S. Mellow Walk is expanding its reach on-line with limited sales on its own web site, and through distributors like Steel-Toe-Shoes.com and Shoeme.ca. Globally, Mellow Walk is now selling in the Caribbean and Middle East, and for a limited time, sold to distributors in Africa.

Mellow Walk sees itself as having invented the niche market of casual, fashionable safety shoes for light industry, going so far as to call them "dress safety shoes" (fig.9).⁴²⁶ Target customers work in light industry or move between the worlds of office and industry, usually for

⁴²³ Mellow Walk, "New Mellow Walk Shoes for the New Budget," Mellow Walk, accessed August 18, 2015, <http://www.mellowwalk.com/posts/new-mellow-walk-shoes-for-the-new-budget/>.

⁴²⁴ Andrew Violi, "Mellow Walk Gives Long Service Employee 'The Boot,'" Mellow Walk, accessed August 18, 2015, <http://www.mellowwalk.com/posts/mellow-walk-gives-long-service-employee-the-boot/>.

⁴²⁵ Andrew Violi, "Our Top 5 Moments from 2014," Mellow Walk, accessed August 18, 2015, <http://www.mellowwalk.com/posts/our-top-5-moments-from-2014/>; "Small Businesses Can Do More to Help Young People Get Established with Their Careers," Mellow Walk, accessed August 18, 2015, <http://www.mellowwalk.com/posts/small-businesses-can-do-more-to-help-young-people-get-established-with-their-careers/>.

⁴²⁶ Mellow Walk, "Jeff Violi"; Andrew Violi, "Product Reviews: New Metal-Free Safety from Mellow Walk," Mellow Walk, accessed August 18, 2015, <http://www.mellowwalk.com/posts/product-reviews/new-metal-free-safety-from-mellow-walk/>.

indoor work but sometimes crossing over to construction sites too (e.g. architects, inspectors). Mellow Walk suggests their shoes are appropriate for those who work in areas like manufacturing, labs, healthcare, security, warehousing, transportation, or the management of those work sites.

The Mellow Walk brand emphasizes comfort, fit, and quality. With its origins in orthopedic footwear, the company has managed to create comfortable foot beds and last shapes despite the steel toe (the Mellow Walk “Dream Fit Comfort System”), which is important for shoes worn on the job all day, every day. When Violi says that “a Mellow Walk shoe fits right out of the box,” he means there is no breaking in period, a common problem in work footwear and “tough” boots.⁴²⁷ John Colantonio, Managing Director of retailer Mister Safety, says customers are sold the moment they put their foot into a Mellow Walk shoe. While some Mellow Walk models can be purchased with the standard \$120 voucher allotted by employers, others are more expensive than what the competition offers, but this too is part of the sell: “We don’t compete on price; instead we compete on value for money.”⁴²⁸ This could be translated as: we cannot produce as cheaply as imports, but we offer more design, more quality, and more control because we own the means of production and we own it locally. The main office, which includes the president, plant managers, and designer, is embedded in the middle of the factory on the same floor as the line workers. This group plus the CFO and Manager of Sales regularly check quality on the factory floor, and each person I interviewed on the production line sees their own job as crucial to the quality of the production process and the final product.

Part of Mellow Walk’s “value for money” approach is targeting niche markets. Within the casual comfort safety wear market, they have a selection of tried and true models like the Patrick 5142. Colantonio described their universal appeal and a call he received from a salesperson on the Mister Safety shoemobile: he “called me in a panic, saying, ‘whatever you do, buy more, lots and lots and lots because everywhere I go, that’s all they want.’ [...] And it wasn’t just us. It was our competitor’s best seller, it was the other competitor’s best seller. It was the company’s best seller.” Loyal customers order Mellow Walks repeatedly, sometimes in multiples in the event that they are no longer available. Some customers like them so much, they wear them outside of work, and Violi and his staff enjoy sharing stories about Mellow Walk sightings. Colantonio too had stories of loyal customers who wore the shoes in unexpected places: “we’re going into a meeting and there’s a very senior guy and he’s got a pair of Mellow Walks, and he says, ‘I can’t take these off my feet, my wife gives me heck all the time, I wear

⁴²⁷ Mellow Walk, “Andrew Violi.”

⁴²⁸ Mellow Walk.

them around the house, but they're just my favourite shoes, they're my most comfortable shoes.' And that doesn't happen with safety shoes." Because of the scale of production and the close relationship between design, sales, management, and the factory, Mellow Walk is able to experiment and produce small runs quickly. In one instance, Violi gave in to customers' pleas for more Mary Janes for the summer (they had run out everywhere else), and he stopped the production line to make 24 pairs.⁴²⁹ This kind of flexibility allows the company to take more risks with design and create new products for sub-markets.

The case study object fits within this strategy of exploring new niche markets. The Vanessa 412109 boot and shoe were based on the idea that there is a group of women who need to wear safety boots only occasionally, or who want safety boots versatile enough to wear to the office, to job sites, and then out to dinner. As an overall design strategy for the company, Silva aims to create safety shoes that look just as good as regular shoes, products made Canadian through their "understated sophistication."⁴³⁰ According to Silva, their closest relatives in the mainstream footwear market are athletic and comfort shoes, which makes it all the more difficult to design something resembling what is available in the fashion market. One of Silva's challenges is to hide the steel toe, to conceal the clunky and bulbous shape and make a more delicate shoe that does not scream 'safety.' Introduced in 2015, the Vanessa represents a design departure for Mellow Walk, what Silva describes as "veer[ing] from dressy to motorcycle inspired."⁴³¹ The energy behind the project and excitement about the new line led Violi to develop a promotional campaign on the perils of "distractingly good looking safety wear." Who was involved in this journey, the local and global contexts and constraints that inspired and limited the development of the Vanessa, are explored next.

⁴²⁹ Andrew Violi, "Summer's Here and so Is Our Mary-Jane Safety Shoe," *Mellow Walk* (blog), July 2, 2015, <http://www.mellowwalk.com/posts/summers-here-and-so-is-our-mary-jane-safety-shoe/>.

⁴³⁰ Violi, "Inside Our Shoes: The World According to Mellow Walk Designer Nelson Silva."

⁴³¹ Andrew Violi, "Up Close with Mellow Walk's Footwear Designer," *Mellow Walk*, accessed August 18, 2015, <http://www.mellowwalk.com/posts/up-close-with-mellow-walks-footwear-designer/>.

3. Mellow Walk - Actors

When I set out to create the object ethnography diagram for Mellow Walk's Vanessa shoe, I intended to document as many actors as possible and how they were connected. I had defined actors as people, objects, organizations, places, ideas, and activities. I wanted to show the development of the shoes: how they were designed and manufactured, how they were distributed, how representations of the shoes were constructed and circulated, and how consumers acquired and used them. The plan was to create a linear timeline illustrating phases in the shoe's life from first idea to consumer use. Overlaid on the timeline would be all of the factors influencing the design and interpretation of the object, and how they were connected to each other and to the shoes. Drawing from Actor Network Theory, I wanted to treat all actors equally by 'flattening' the hierarchy and accepting the actors as they appeared rather than searching out social structures I presumed to exist. The issue soon became where to draw the line, so to speak. As I reviewed all the interviews, photographs, objects, and documents I had collected, it became apparent that this timeline could have no clear start and finish, that there would never be enough room on the page for all of the actors, and that the spaghetti mess of lines connecting the network was almost impossible to read. Mapping out the research proved that the design process is complex. The next challenge was seeing patterns and producing a coherent story. Before I discuss the specific design development of the Vanessa line, I first categorize the actors, how they relate to each other and to Mellow Walk's safety shoes in general. Actors are in bold and can be found individually or as categories, such as 'industry' and 'market,' on the object ethnography diagram (fig. 1). This bigger picture is necessary to set the context for the Vanessa because new products are never created in a vacuum and it is difficult to isolate a single design story. The origins of the Vanessa can be traced to decades of corporate history and a long tradition of shoe manufacturing in Canada, to ideas influenced by other ideas, relationships, regulation, and the simultaneous production of other safety shoes within the factory and within much larger settings of related industries, markets, and global flows.

3.1 Production

Manufacturer

The **Mellow Walk team** can be divided into four overlapping groups of actors: **makers** (design, manufacturing), **distributors** (orders, shipping, sales), **communicators** (branding, marketing, sales), and **infrastructure providers** (finance, administration, cleaning,

maintenance). People move between these groups and have more responsibility at different points. For example, as President, Andrew Violi is involved in developing product concepts and manufacturing processes, dealing with customers, defining the brand and marketing materials, and running the company. As Plant Manager, Diana Sullivan contributes to design during the fit trials, managing the manufacturing process, overseeing orders and shipping, and ensuring the factory has the right materials and equipment to run smoothly. Carol Padda is in charge of the cutting department but also does some cleaning after hours. Everod runs the side lasting machine but also maintains equipment. Less officially, everyone is involved in spreading the story about Mellow Walk as they wear the shoes, talk about the product and company, or even appear on the product labels. Employees can also be understood through the company hierarchy (fig.3) which consists of a board of directors, management (President, CFO, Vice President of Sales), middle management (Designer, Plant Manager), four manufacturing departments with supervisors (Cutting, Fitting and Sewing, Lasting, Finishing), shipping and warehousing, and sales and administration.

Design

The idea of design plays a less prominent role in the Mellow Walk corporate narrative than it does for the second case study, Gourmet Settings, but Nelson Silva's position as designer is celebrated nonetheless. He is the second designer to be hired by the company, and perhaps the first to be publicly showcased on the web site.⁴³² John Colantonio, who as Managing Director of Mister Safety Shoes, has watched Mellow Walk evolve, suggested that it was the first designer who set Mellow Walk on its path to success: "I think that they were fortunate that their previous designer was really a shoe guy. He was a shoe guy, a factory guy, a design guy. He built the last and as far as I know, he was really instrumental in launching them on the right platform. And he had really good designs that [are] still the number one sellers." Silva and Violi are building on the work of their predecessors.

Mellow Walk's investment in design is seen in its support for Silva's training at Ars Sutoria in Milan, and its willingness to take design risks by letting Silva experiment with new models outside the traditional Mellow Walk offerings. The designer is positioned as a more senior member of the hierarchy of production—he is the only staff member to be grouped with the three Violi cousins as "management."⁴³³ Andrew Violi's voice is strong here as well. He sees himself in many ways as a kind of creative director, describing his own responsibilities as brand direction, product development,

⁴³² Violi, "Inside Our Shoes: The World According to Mellow Walk Designer Nelson Silva."

⁴³³ Mellow Walk, "Nelson Silva," Mellow Walk, accessed August 11, 2015, <http://www.mellowwalk.com/about/nelson-silva/>.

innovation in production, and niche market identification. He collaborates with Silva to establish the look and feel of Mellow Walk, to understand current trends, and develop new product ideas. He also works with local creative agencies on advertising. While the company is trying to build business through design and innovation, its public-facing brand still relies on an image of craft, the individual “shoemakers,” and their handwork. As seen below, interviewees who work in the factory have respect for Silva’s position as designer, and see his work as distinct from theirs in several ways.

Historical Context and Global Fragmentation

In *The Story of the Sony Walkman*, Du Gay et al. trace the history of the CEO’s family to debunk the myth of the hero at the helm of the company. In the process, they demonstrate the important role that family money, upbringing, and cultural context had in the company and the product’s success, an example that prompted me to ask questions about interviewees’ backgrounds and to consider the role of Mellow Walk’s history on current product development.⁴³⁴ This led me to consider several other groups of actors: the now defunct group of **Toronto shoe manufacturers** where many of the employees used to work, including the two co-founders of Mellow Walk; **shoe industries in other countries** where some of them were trained; and more broadly, the countries they or their parents immigrated from and the **immigrant communities** they established in Toronto that had an impact on where they worked and for how long. These connections are evident in the knowledge they bring to Mellow Walk, and in the personal, almost familial, connections they had to the founders. The ties to their home countries are apparent in the languages they speak at break time, the flags hung at Mellow Walk, and the decoration of their personal workspaces (e.g. images of soccer teams). Silva’s fluency in Portuguese allows a different level of communication and relationship with the factory workers.

Mellow Walk’s claims to be one of the few remaining shoe factories in Canada and the last in the province can be contextualized in the historical development of the shoe industry, its automation, and migration to other areas of the world.⁴³⁵ The first half of the twentieth century

⁴³⁴ Du Gay et al., *Doing Cultural Studies*, 42–48.

⁴³⁵ The history of shoe production has received less attention than shoe design, and histories of the Canadian shoe industry in general are lacking. There exist various facts about firsts—in 1666, the first Canadian census recorded 20 shoemakers with an average of four to five employees working out of their homes, and the first tannery in Canada was built in Quebec in 1668. Frances Kelley, “Footwear Industry,” *The Canadian Encyclopedia*, February 7, 2006, <http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/footwear-industry/> Shoes have been celebrated as icons of design in exhibitions and histories of fashion, and there is an abundance of picture books that pay homage to the most famous and outrageous of footwear. The early automation of the shoe industry is well documented, but in the second half of the twentieth century, literature turns to shoe design, particularly high fashion and athletic shoes. Technical advances today are complex and more likely to be

saw the growth of the Canadian shoe industry, particularly in Quebec and Ontario, with success stories like Grebb in the Kitchener-Waterloo area of Ontario, and Bata Shoes, a Czech-owned, global company that established a factory town, Batawa, in eastern Ontario in 1939. The Canadian shoe industry thrived until the 1960s, but broadly speaking, the twentieth century was marked by decline and specialization – consolidation of factories, mechanization, fewer jobs, greater efficiency and output, followed by failure to compete with low-cost imports from Asia, all of which resulted in a much leaner and more focused list of shoe manufacturers. The related industries of leather and tanning suffered too. The development of synthetic replacements and imports of cheaper shoes in the 1960s combined to influence design, and by the mid-1980s, just over 50% of American shoes had leather uppers.⁴³⁶ As shoe manufacturing declined in the US, so too did leather tanning.⁴³⁷

As the industry became more mechanized, there was more equipment that required greater space, power, and capital, making it difficult for small shops to compete and leading to the consolidation of factories. In Canada, the decrease from 292 footwear factories in 1950 to 169 factories in 1985 shows the impact of efficiencies in production as well as competition from offshore manufacturing. In that 35-year period, the number of employees in the industry dropped from 20,785 to 14,164 but production grew from 33.9 million pairs of shoes in 1950 to 43 million in 1985. The value of the industry also grew from \$111 million to \$870 million.⁴³⁸

The late 1960s is considered the high point of Canadian footwear production (52.9 million pairs were made in 1968), but the industry was dramatically affected by low-cost imports shortly after. In 1972, 6.8 million pairs of shoes were imported to Canada, a number that grew to 75 million by 1986, representing over 60% of the Canadian market.⁴³⁹ Import quotas were put in place from 1977 until 1985 on men's and children's shoes, and until 1988 on women's footwear, but the federal government was blamed for not doing enough to protect the Canadian shoe

discussed in journals and industry reference books. In the absence of studies on Canadian shoe design and production, general developments described here in manufacturing, technology, and labour are based on histories of English and American footwear histories. The more recent picture of Canada's position as shoe producer and consumer in the global market is based on data from Statistics Canada and industry reports. Since the cancellation of the long-form Canadian census in 2010, it is more difficult to find data on domestic manufacturing. Forty Canadian companies voluntarily include themselves in the government's "Canadian Company Capabilities" database, and while Mellow Walk and some of the more well-known names do not appear, the list is indicative of the kinds of niche markets that Canadian shoe manufacturers now serve. .

⁴³⁶ Whitten and Whitten, *Handbook of American Business History*, 217.

⁴³⁷ Whitten and Whitten, 217.

⁴³⁸ Kelley, "Footwear Industry."

⁴³⁹ Kelley.

industry.⁴⁴⁰ By the early 1980s, outsourcing was already being explained by the existence of more advanced factories offshore: “I am bored with reading that our manufacturing facilities are not adequate or efficient enough to compete with foreign plants,” wrote the Vice-President of Canadian Buttons Ltd. in a letter to the *Globe and Mail* about the news of cancelled shoe quotas in 1981. In his view, “A great number of Canadian factories are every bit as modern as their Eastern contemporaries. The only things that differ are the better salaries and finer living conditions that the workers enjoy in Canada. I submit that there are few items that we make that cannot be duplicated in developing nations. It is only a matter of time and leadership from a western entrepreneur before all Canadian products will be manufactured elsewhere.”⁴⁴¹ In 1990, the *Globe and Mail* recommended that readers invest in American footwear, everything from manufacturing to distribution to retail, then “the top-rated industry in the United States,” despite having undergone similar short-lived import quotas.⁴⁴² According to the *Globe and Mail* analyst, Canada had nothing left to invest in—the Montreal stock exchange featured “one limping manufacturer.” The headquarters of Bata Shoes, then the largest shoe company in the world, were located in Don Mills, Toronto, but it was privately owned.⁴⁴³

The few historical accounts of Canadian shoe manufacturing end in the 1980s. Statistics Canada’s surveys of manufacturers (1998-2003), and data on the export and import of footwear (1990-2014), offer a picture of the much-reduced domestic industry and the rapid growth of imports.⁴⁴⁴ The footwear industry has remained concentrated in Quebec (Quebec City and Montreal) and Ontario (Toronto and Kitchener-Waterloo) (fig.10) but between 1998 and 2003, Quebec lost 9 of 40 manufacturers and Ontario’s sector shrunk from 30 to 13 manufacturers.⁴⁴⁵ By 2012, there were only 26 shoe factories remaining across the country, employing approximately 3,000 people (2011).⁴⁴⁶ As of 2012, the Shoe Manufacturers Association of

⁴⁴⁰ Edward Clifford, “U.S. Shoe Industry Shines, Canada’s Scuffs: ON STOCKS,” *The Globe and Mail* (1936-Current), January 6, 1990, sec. Report on Business; G. Ritz, “Shoe Quotas,” *The Globe and Mail* (1936-Current), December 11, 1981.

⁴⁴¹ Ritz, “Shoe Quotas.”

⁴⁴² Clifford, “U.S. Shoe Industry Shines, Canada’s Scuffs.”

⁴⁴³ Clifford.

⁴⁴⁴ Statistics Canada “Footwear Statistics” semi-annual survey was conducted from 1990 to 2005. Digital versions are available on their web site from 1999 to 2003. There are over 50 HS (Harmonized Commodity Coding and Description System) categories. I chose a few overarching categories to give context for the Canadian shoe industry and a few specific codes related to safety footwear. For example, I did not include categories such as sewing machines, machines for working leather, metal fittings, etc. Statistics Canada and US Census Bureau, “Canadian Imports and Exports,” August 14, 2015.

⁴⁴⁵ Statistics Canada and US Census Bureau.

⁴⁴⁶ worldfootwear.com, “Country Profile 2011 Canada” (worldfootwear.com, 2012); Susan Krashinsky, “Give ‘Em the Boot.,” *Globe & Mail*, November 30, 2012.

Canada estimated that 93% of footwear sold in Canada was made in China.⁴⁴⁷ Counted in numbers of shoes, Canada is the 42nd largest world exporter at 12 million pairs per year, 14th largest shoe importer at 164 million pairs per year, and twentieth largest shoe consumer in the world at 160 million pairs per year (2011).⁴⁴⁸ These numbers seem big, especially for a country with a population of close to 35 million, but Canada represents only 6% of the value of the entire shoe market of the Americas, while the US represents 74% (2014).⁴⁴⁹

By looking at the top ten countries with which Canada traded footwear from 1990 to 2014, patterns emerge that are indicative of the changing global landscape of shoe manufacturing. Over that 24-year period, there was a 211% increase in imports of footwear to Canada from \$888 million to \$2.7 billion.⁴⁵⁰ Italy ceded first and second place to China and Vietnam on the list of the ten biggest exporters of shoes to Canada. The US, Brazil, Spain, and Portugal have remained consistently in the middle to bottom half of that list. Taiwan, Hong Kong, South Korea, and now Thailand have disappeared from the list, and Canada no longer buys significant numbers of shoes from the UK or France. The shoe industries of Indonesia, Romania, and India are growing in importance for Canada.⁴⁵¹ In terms of which countries buy shoes from Canada, the US has remained the largest importer of Canadian-made footwear, purchasing anywhere from 36 to 85 times more than the second largest buyer (in 2014, the US bought close to \$65 million of Canadian-made shoes). The wealthier nations of Europe (UK and Germany especially), plus Japan and Australia, used to be among the top ten importers of Canadian-made footwear, but this changed in the late 2000s. By 2014, Russia and Kenya became the second and third largest importers, followed by Middle Eastern, African, and South American countries.⁴⁵² The numbers are also telling for footwear components and manufacturing: Canadian exports have decreased by 22% and imports have increased by 149%, while imports of leather and shoe making equipment have dropped drastically (-70% and -53% respectively).⁴⁵³ Overall, these rankings show a shift away from traditional shoe centres (Italy) and Canada-Europe trade relationships, while “Factory North America” remains strong in

⁴⁴⁷ Krashinsky, “Give ‘Em the Boot.”

⁴⁴⁸ worldfootwear.com, “Country Profile 2011 Canada.”

⁴⁴⁹ “Footwear Industry Profile: Canada,” *Footwear Industry Profile: Canada*, May 2015, 2.

⁴⁵⁰ Statistics Canada “Footwear Statistics” and Statistics Canada and US Census Bureau, “Canadian Imports and Exports.”

⁴⁵¹ Statistics Canada “Footwear Statistics” and Statistics Canada and US Census Bureau.

⁴⁵² Statistics Canada “Footwear Statistics” and Statistics Canada and US Census Bureau.

⁴⁵³ Statistics Canada “Footwear Statistics” and Statistics Canada and US Census Bureau.

terms of regional supply chains.⁴⁵⁴ The four Asian Tigers are less prominent as manufacturers, and China too may be declining in relation to emerging economies like Vietnam and India.

The metal-toed footwear markets are more irregular and the amounts traded make up only 5% of domestic exports and 4% of imports. Canadian-made, metal-toed footwear exports would indicate growth in Mellow Walk's market, up 89% (from \$1.8 in 1990 to \$3.6 million in 2014). However, imports of metal-toed footwear also grew by an astonishing 1785% (from \$5.8 to \$108.9 million), suggesting that Canadian safety shoe manufacturers cannot keep up with demand or are choosing not to compete with the large quantities produced offshore. The United States is the largest customer for Canadian safety shoes, followed by the UK and the United Arab Emirates. Australia, France, Denmark, Iceland, and Cuba are also regular buyers.⁴⁵⁵ Canada imports safety shoes primarily from China, Vietnam, and the US, and regularly from France, Italy, and Mexico.⁴⁵⁶

New developments in shoe manufacturing technology have contributed to an excess in global manufacturing capacity, making the market that much more competitive.⁴⁵⁷ The footwear manufacturers that do remain in Canada are small and survive by specializing in niche markets with products that are more expensive and offer something different than the mass-produced goods imported from China and Vietnam. Not surprisingly, Canada is known for footwear that withstands bad weather and rugged conditions, is waterproof, protects against cold, or can be used in particular work conditions. La Canadienne in Montreal makes up to 1,000 pairs of women's winter boots daily, sold by 350 retailers across North America.⁴⁵⁸ Tatra in Dunnville, Ontario, manufactures specialty safety boots for industries like mining, forestry, and oil.⁴⁵⁹ Boulet in Saint-Tite, Quebec, has been making work boots since 1933, and has served the Canadian army since at least World War II.⁴⁶⁰ Canada West Shoe Manufacturing Inc. revived a company that closed in 1959 and continues to make all of their uniform and western boots in Winnipeg. At the time of writing, Roots, with their location just around the corner from Mellow Walk, still manufactures casual leather goods in Toronto, producing a small line of footwear,

⁴⁵⁴ Gasiorrek and Lopez-Gonzalez, "China-EU Global Value Chains: Who Creates Value, How and Where? Growing Linkages and Opportunities," 8.

⁴⁵⁵ The fluctuation in countries that import Canadian-made metal-toed footwear may be due to one-off projects requiring safety wear (e.g. the tiny island of New Caledonia off the coast of Australia was the 3rd largest buyer of Canadian metal-toed shoes in 2014).

⁴⁵⁶ Statistics Canada "Footwear Statistics" and Statistics Canada and US Census Bureau, "Canadian Imports and Exports."

⁴⁵⁷ "Footwear Industry Profile," 14.

⁴⁵⁸ Krashinsky, "Give 'Em the Boot."

⁴⁵⁹ Tatra Footwear Products Canada, "Safety Boots & Shoes," accessed February 4, 2019, <http://tatra.ca/>.

⁴⁶⁰ Boulet Boots, "History," *Boulet Boots* (blog), accessed December 18, 2017, <http://www.bouletboots.com/history/>.

bags, and accessories as part of their larger apparel offerings sold in their own stores across the country.⁴⁶¹ Some of the more internationally known brands like Cougar have moved most of their operations overseas but maintained headquarters in Canada, while others have been bought by American companies and are no longer based in Canada, such as Sorel and Bauer Skates.⁴⁶² Canada also has strengths in orthopedic footwear (where Mellow Walk started out), rubber boots, and footwear supplies like felt liners.

The biggest success story in the current Canadian shoe industry is the Aldo Group. It exemplifies the global fragmentation of supply chains, the vertical integration of manufacture and retail, and the strategic location of design services. The privately-owned firm was established in Montreal in 1972 and is run by the son of the original owner, Aldo Bensadoun. Corporate headquarters have remained in Montreal but production of shoes and accessories has moved offshore (60% to China and the rest to other parts of Asia, Brazil, Eastern Europe, and Italy). Most design work remains in Canada, but Aldo has also opened a design centre in London, England, as well as offices in Italy, Switzerland, and China for the “absorption of international trends” and to keep control over global production and distribution. With four brands and 1,900 stores in 90 countries, the company positions itself as a truly global organization with a product designed for consumers anywhere: “a family of brands custom-built to meet the demands of the modern international customer,” one that operates in “A borderless world. A seamless marketplace.”⁴⁶³ Altogether, the Aldo Group has close to 20,000 employees and revenues of \$1.8 billion (2013).⁴⁶⁴

At the other end of the scale, there is a small but thriving industry in fashion and custom footwear in Canada. Jitter Bug Boy is a Toronto-based workshop where shoes are still made by hand, and one of a few companies in the world that produce custom shoes for entertainment, surviving on contracts with production houses primarily in London, England. Toronto-based designer Ron White makes two lines of heels known for their comfort: the high-end collection is

⁴⁶¹ Roots Canada, “Roots Canada Leather Factory,” Roots Canada, accessed February 3, 2019, https://www.roots.com/on/demandware.store/Sites-RootsCA-Site/en_CA/Page-Show?cid=161115_roots_features_leather_factory.

⁴⁶² Columbia Sportswear Company, “Transparency in Supply Chain Statement,” 2017, https://www.sorel.com/on/demandware.static/-/Sites-Sorel_US-Library/default/dwac61acc7/about-us/CSC_Transparency_in_Supply_Chain_Statement_FY2017.pdf; Bauer, “Customer Service,” accessed February 3, 2019, <https://www.bauer.com/en-CA/help>.

⁴⁶³ Aldo’s four branded retail chains are Aldo, Call it Spring, Little Burgundy, and Globo. Aldo has also expanded to wholesale distribution and third-party sourcing, as well as design and manufacturing collaborations with giants like Target and Joe Fresh.

⁴⁶⁴ “Footwear Industry Profile,” 21; ALDO, “ALDO History | ALDO Story,” accessed February 4, 2019, <http://www.aldogroup.com/story-and-milestones.html>.

produced in Italy and the under-\$200 line in China.⁴⁶⁵ One of the more renowned Canadian companies in fashion footwear is Fluevog, designed in Vancouver and made in Portugal, Poland, Peru, Vietnam, China, and Mexico, distributed through its 19 North American stores.⁴⁶⁶

Despite the Canadian footwear industry shrinking so substantially, there is a wealth of expertise about design, manufacturing, and retail that remains in the country. Interviewees represent several generations of this knowledge accumulated from across multiple factories and roles, in addition to new knowledge obtained through formal education and experience in global supply chains. Andrew Violi, along with his brother and cousin, took over Mellow Walk from their father who had worked with other shoe factories in Toronto. Colantonio, whose father was a friend of Aldo Violi, is in a similar position as manager of his family's business, Mister Safety, a successful retail chain based on a legacy of construction work, organized labour, and worker's safety. Colantonio remembers that when he started in the business in 1985, everything was made in Canada. There were approximately 60 shoe factories still in operation in Toronto, many of which sold to Canadian retailers like Eatons. Colantonio describes the 1990s as the major turning point. China opened up to foreign trade, changing the scale at which shoes were ordered, and making it difficult for Canadian companies to compete (Colantonio).

The other interviewees have worked with a long list of shoe factories that closed, went bankrupt, or moved operations offshore. This led them to work at Mellow Walk. Their collective experience says much about Ontario's once thriving footwear industry. Sullivan has been Plant Manager at Mellow Walk since 2009, after 23 years at Terra Footwear Ltd., a manufacturer of high-tech safety boots that sold its Ontario factory in 2005 to Kodiak (another Canadian company that was re-shoring its operations), and then closed its Newfoundland factory in 2014 in favour of a combination of offshore manufacturing and a new manufacturing centre in Cambridge, Ontario.⁴⁶⁷ Silva has a range of large-scale production experience in China through his work at RMP Athletic in Mississauga, and small-scale production with his time at Jitter Bug Boy making footwear by hand. Maria Barreto (Finishing), Carol Padda (Cutting), Teresa Torres (Fitting), and Manuel Boita (Lasting) have close to (or over) 40 years each of experience in shoe

⁴⁶⁵ Francine Kopun, "Ron White and John Fluevog Are Two Young Canadian Shoe Designers Who Are Working Their Way up in the High Fashion World of Footwear.," *The Toronto Star*, May 30, 2014, http://www.thestar.com/business/2014/08/30/how_canada_carved_out_a_place_in_the_global_shoe_market.html.

⁴⁶⁶ Fluevog Shoes, "Frequently Asked Questions," *Fluevog Shoes* (blog), accessed May 17, 2018, <https://www.fluevog.com/customer-service/faq/>.

⁴⁶⁷ Terry Roberts, "Terra Nova Shoes to End Production This Month, Pay Back Loan | CBC News," CBC, November 10, 2014, <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/newfoundland-labrador/end-of-an-era-nearing-with-terra-nova-shoes-closure-1.2827776>; Shirley Won, "Kodiak Ties the Knot with Terra," April 5, 2005, <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/report-on-business/kodiak-ties-the-knot-with-terra/article978443/>.

manufacturing. Barreto and Padda have worked at Mellow Walk since it opened, but their relationships to founders Aldo Violi and Gino Mellozzi started almost two decades before. Barreto worked at Dora Shoes (Toronto) starting in 1972, and when it closed, she went on to find employment at Ritter Shoes (Scarborough), where Padda had been hired in 1975, and where both women met Violi and Mellozzi. Ritter went bankrupt in 1992. Torres, from the age of 12, worked in family businesses in Ecuador making shoes by hand. She worked at Olympia Shoes (Toronto) before it closed. Arminda Romeiro (Fitting) has 28 years of experience in shoe manufacturing, starting at Topaz Shoes (Toronto), a company founded in 1976 before production was moved to Latvia for lower manufacturing costs.⁴⁶⁸ Boita is the most recent of the interviewees to join Mellow Walk (2012) but has extensive experience in Portugal as shoemaker, factory worker, supervisor, and general plant manager. Boita comes from Bendita, the third largest shoe centre in his home country. At 14 years old, he began working in a small shoe studio, after which he moved to progressively larger factories, including one that specialized in high-end shoes for a French brand, and a technically advanced plastics factory that made everything from buckets to injection-molded soles. Coincidentally, even the consumer I interviewed, Bonnie McCabe, has experience designing and making shoes in Bali.

With these long careers, it is no surprise that almost all of the interviewees stated that they learned everything on the job. For many, the shoe industry is the only thing they have known and this translates to a deep, tacit knowledge of their roles. Interviewees whose parents immigrated to Canada have more formal education. Violi has an MBA in corporate communication and a certificate in radio broadcasting. He has transferred these skills to Mellow Walk's marketing, branding, and social media. Colantonio trained as an electrical engineer and worked at the Canadian Standards Association. His understanding of manufacturing keeps him interested in the Mellow Walk factory, where he is known to drop by and help problem solve. Silva's education in industrial design in Canada and shoe design in Italy gives him a valuable combination of design process and pattern making.

Tools and Technicians

The history of the shoe industry helps to explain Mellow Walk's position in the market and global supply chains, and it shows how the trajectory of the Canadian sector has led to this small, niche market of locally-made safety wear. The history of shoe manufacturing further illustrates how Mellow Walk shoe design is shaped by tools and technology.

⁴⁶⁸ Council of the Baltic Sea States, "Baltic 21," accessed September 28, 2018, <http://www.baltic21.org/>.

In many ways, shoe making still resembles practices of the Middle Ages. Innovations in footwear designs from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries have carried on, like the welted shoe, or the placement of the main seam on the back of the heel, allowing for one smooth piece of leather across the toe (the vamp) and sides (the quarters).⁴⁶⁹ Many of Mellow Walk's processes are based in innovations of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, like sewing machines that stitch leather (1856), or the ability to cement rather than stitch a sole to the shoe (1932).⁴⁷⁰ Shoe making is recognized as labour intensive and difficult to mechanize due to the intricate construction of footwear and the variability of leather, two factors that figure in Silva's plans for production, and particularly in the Cutting and Lasting departments where stretch and flaws in leather become important.⁴⁷¹ Rather than redesigning how shoes were made, machines were developed to mimic handwork, meaning that there is a legacy of craft built into the equipment and embodied in practices that are still in use today. Automation eventually had the biggest impact on pattern making and cutting, again visible at Mellow Walk.⁴⁷² Whitten and Whitten observe that historians have identified more innovation in footwear manufacturing equipment than in the design of shoes themselves.⁴⁷³ This is noteworthy because it underlines the role that technology plays in determining the design. The forms, techniques, and processes allowed by the machines set parameters for what Silva and the factory can produce. Finishing was the last job to be mechanized and continues to require more human labour (cleaning, lacing, packing, etc.).⁴⁷⁴

The landscape of **machinery, tools, and software** is changing as manufacturers integrate advancements in the science of footwear design and engineering, but the blend of old and new technologies shows the co-existence and mutual influence of past and future practices on design. Sophisticated injection molding machines find their place in the same factories as lasts and hand tools that have been in continuous use for centuries. At Mellow Walk, there is a range of equipment, from an old skiving machine, likely from the 1950s, to the latest rougher and cementer from Italy, making Mellow Walk the first footwear company in North America to own

⁴⁶⁹ A welted shoe has a strip of leather that joins the upper to the outside edge of the sole creating a space between the insole and sole. June Swann, *Shoemaking*, Shire Album 155 (Princes Risborough: Shire, 1986), 7.

⁴⁷⁰ Swann, *Shoemaking*.

⁴⁷¹ Whitten and Whitten, *Handbook of American Business History*, 220.

⁴⁷² Swann, *Shoemaking*, 18; Whitten and Whitten, *Handbook of American Business History*, 225.

⁴⁷³ Whitten and Whitten, *Handbook of American Business History*.

⁴⁷⁴ Swann, *Shoemaking*, 19.

one.⁴⁷⁵ There is a combination of simple hand tools (hammers, scissors), manually operated electric machines (buffers, some of the sewing machines), and fully computerized equipment (computer numerically controlled — CNC — cutting machine). This equipment is expensive, durable, and not often replaced, though Mellow Walk is investing in new machines that will make production faster, more efficient, and precise. Their goal is not to replace people with machines, but to use machines to greater advantage to increase output and quality.

Where this equipment comes from reflects shifts in manufacturing centres. When Mellow Walk opened, it was able to take advantage of the shrinking Canadian footwear sector to secure second-hand machines from companies that were closing. Mellow Walk owns primarily German, Italian, and Japanese machines, but as manufacturing has moved to Asia, the selection of factory equipment made in Asia has grown. Sullivan explained a recent decision to buy a new machine from Taiwan. She preferred the European companies that she typically bought from, but the German model was more than twice the cost, and the Italian model was more than three times as expensive. Because the **Taiwanese company** used the same distributor in Canada that Sullivan had always dealt with, she knew she would get the same quality of service in terms of immediate repairs and maintenance. In this case, a trusted local relationship made the switch to a relatively unknown international supplier tenable. The **distributor, USM Americas** (based in Montreal), is a descendant of the once controversial United Shoe Machinery Corporations, set up in the US and UK in 1899 to mechanize hand processes, bring together multiple manufacturers, and lease equipment to shoe factories.⁴⁷⁶ These global flows of equipment and technological expertise are rooted in long-standing systems of control and competition. American technology was once key to the mechanization of the shoe industry in North America and Europe. Today, USM still manufactures its own line of machines in Massachusetts but its primary business is representing offshore manufacturers.⁴⁷⁷

The tools and the **technicians** who maintain equipment and train users, play a role in making sure the factory keeps running, and determining what can be achieved with the design. The inventory of equipment offers certain affordances and informs what Mellow Walk can produce. Silva takes this manufacturing capacity into consideration as he designs patterns (can

⁴⁷⁵ Andrew Violi, "Mellow Walk Oohs and Ahhs over New Cerim Rougher/Cementer," Mellow Walk, accessed August 30, 2015, <http://www.mellowwalk.com/posts/inside-our-shoes/mellow-walk-oohs-and-ahhs-over-new-machine/>.

⁴⁷⁶ USM Americas Inc., "Who We Are," accessed August 21, 2015, <http://www.usm-americas.com/who-we-are/index.html>; Whitten and Whitten, *Handbook of American Business History*, 222; Swann, *Shoemaking*, 25.

⁴⁷⁷ USM Americas Inc., "US Made Machines," accessed August 21, 2015, <http://www.usm-americas.com/shoe-machines/us-made.html>.

they make it and how efficiently). The absence of certain equipment has major repercussions. Without direct injection or the budget to create custom molds, Mellow Walk is limited to open molds purchased from suppliers. As a result, pre-designed soles define the ‘outsole,’ the entire base of the shoe from which everything else is designed. Silva talks about the value of technicians as sources of information and as enablers for increased productivity and innovative use of the machines. In his observation, the Italian technicians in particular play an important role in the global exchange of knowledge as Italy is still recognized as a leader in research and development. It is common, in his observation, to find Italian technicians working in Chinese or Mexican factories (complaining about the quality of the pasta).

Global Supply Chains

Mellow Walk’s supply chain illustrates regional and global networks of production, and cities as centres of specialist activities. Mellow Walk suppliers include last makers in Germany and the US, outsole suppliers and mold makers from Germany and Italy, an American insole supplier with a factory in China, a lining supplier in the US, steel toe manufacturers in Brazil, and fittings and composite (plastic) safety toes from China. Mexico’s leading factories, expertise in shoes and leathers, and ability to manufacture in small quantities in proximity to Canada, makes the country an important source of materials and fittings for Mellow Walk, an example of ‘Factory North America.’ An agent in the ‘**shoe city**’ of **Leon** deals with local factories on behalf of Mellow Walk, and an **on-line supply catalogue** connects Silva to two metal **fittings** (zippers, eyelets, buckles) producers there. Mellow Walk sources most of its leathers in Leon from Lefarc, a respected Mexican-owned company that employs over 150 people, producing up to 5,000 hides per week for clients in the fashion and automotive sectors. Lefarc is known for its environmentally sustainable practices and was recognized as the second best tannery in the Americas after the Red Wing S.B. Foot Tannery in Minnesota (2013).⁴⁷⁸

This partial list of Mellow Walk suppliers gives a sense of the company’s network and its position within global footwear manufacturing supply chains. Further investigation would reveal more networks of local and global actors that feed into those companies. The account managers, sales representatives, and independent agents are cultural and industrial intermediaries, facilitating transactions, helping to source materials and components, and offering suggestions based on products they have worked on with other shoe manufacturers around the world. These internationally sourced materials and components reflect their own cultures of production and global flows of knowledge and goods, like the Italian expertise

⁴⁷⁸ Lefarc, “Our customers and certifications testify for us.,” accessed September 11, 2015, <http://www.lefarc.com/eng/clientes.html>.

combined with Mexican manufacturing represented in leathers exported under NAFTA to Canada. These sites of manufacturing also become clearinghouses for design ideas from other manufacturers and industries. At Lefarc, Silva can learn how the tannery's customers, companies including Frye, Aldo, Zara, and Blundstone, as well as high-end Mexican and American shoemakers, and even the automotive industry, are using leathers.⁴⁷⁹ When Silva worked on athletic shoes in China, manufacturers would show him catalogues of components (soles, insoles, eyelets, laces, zippers, etc.) that were likely proprietary to bigger manufacturers like Nike and Adidas who could afford to design them from scratch. An informal interview with an athletic clothing maker in Toronto revealed that it is common for companies to copy and borrow design elements through the intermediary of offshore factories that serve multiple clients and countries. In this way, suppliers in manufacturing chains circulate and facilitate the global exchange of design ideas at the site of production.

One group of actors is defined by its non-participation in the Mellow Walk case study. These are the **Canadian suppliers** who are *not* used, despite Silva's best efforts to include them. Given that the manufacturing ecosystem in Canada is so small, that Mellow Walk supports 'Made in Canada,' and maintains quality through control of local production, a close relationship with local suppliers would make sense. Mellow Walk has attempted to work with the few Canadian suppliers of outsoles and buckles, and the last tannery in Ontario. For a variety of reasons, these relationships were not sustainable – minimum orders were too big, leathers did not meet the standards Mellow Walk could source elsewhere, and sometimes relationships were not easy to maintain. In the ultimate irony of Mellow Walk's 'Made in Canada' project, the glue and thread are the only Canadian materials the company uses!

Regulation

Regulation-related actors play a significant role too. This includes everything from trade agreements, tariffs, taxes, customs, and shipping laws that influence materials Mellow Walk can import, the imported footwear Mellow Walk is competing against, and which foreign markets make the most sense for Mellow Walk to pursue. Because Mellow Walk is dealing in protective wear, health and safety regulations directly impact design. In Ontario, the Occupational Health and Safety Act stipulates what kind of protective clothing is required depending on the job site. Some provinces require the employer to pay for safety shoes while others, like Ontario, do not. Some employers provide safety wear while some unions and employers reimburse employees – Mellow Walk cited \$100-\$120 as an average amount. This influences how much people will

⁴⁷⁹ Lefarc.

spend and the price point influences the design in terms of budget for materials and labour. The CSA checks safety on work sites and thus has an impact on how the Mellow Walk factory itself is set up and run.

The design of the footwear must receive CSA approval before it goes into production. The Canada Occupational Health and Safety Regulations defer to Standard Z195, *Protective Footwear*, a standard set in 1970 by the non-profit organization, CSA Group (formerly the Canadian Standards Association), which is credited with helping to reduce foot injuries by 60% on Ontario construction sites between 1968 and 1984.⁴⁸⁰ CSA approval is a big hurdle for Mellow Walk, as it must be for all safety footwear manufacturers. Mellow Walk has its own internal testing laboratory where it pre-tests new designs before sending them to CSA. Mellow Walk subjects footwear to rigorous testing and tries to replicate CSA procedures depending on intended use and what the shoes are designed to protect (toe or sole protection against being crushed, punctured or cut; materials that resist slippery surfaces, chemicals or electricity; and static dissipative footwear that protects sensitive equipment from static charge).⁴⁸¹ The look of the ‘upper’ is unimportant at this stage; rather it is the design and construction of the ‘platform’ that matters—the combination of the outsole, midsole, insole, liner and steel toe (all components sourced outside of Canada). The shoes are cut in half and a plasticine ‘toe’ is inserted to mimic the impact of 125 kJ of energy dropped on a real foot (for a demonstration, see Mellow Walk’s video of a forklift driving a 700kg load over a steel-toe shoe).⁴⁸² Once past internal testing, the platforms are sent to CSA at a cost of \$4,000 per platform. Once approved by CSA, Mellow Walk can attach the appropriate CSA label (fig.11) to any shoe or boot with that platform, but the platform cannot change. The design, engineering, and money invested in developing and getting CSA approvals means that shoe manufacturers try to maximize each platform. The platform essentially dictates the bottom half of the shoe design for multiple styles, as seen at Mellow Walk where the uppers can vary substantially but the outsole, shape of the toe and much of the fit remain identical.

The CSA Group standards have national and global implications. Since its founding in 1919, the CSA’s international authority has grown substantially, an interesting example of how

⁴⁸⁰ Government of Canada Department of Justice, “Consolidated Federal Laws of Canada, Canada Occupational Health and Safety Regulations,” October 31, 2014, <http://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/regulations/Sor-86-304/page-64.html#h-163>; CSA Group, “Z195-14,” ShopCSA, accessed August 22, 2015, <http://shop.csa.ca/en/canada/protective-footwear/z195-14/inv/27015092014>.

⁴⁸¹ Mellow Walk, “The CSA Safety Tag on Your Mellow Walk Shoe,” Mellow Walk, accessed August 23, 2015, <http://www.mellowwalk.com/posts/the-csa-safety-tag-on-your-mellow-walk-shoe/>.

⁴⁸² Mellow Walk, *Quentin Safety Shoe*, accessed August 31, 2015, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KClg8rNi2uA>.

Canadian expertise and the Canadian brand have grown to influence manufacturing around the world.⁴⁸³ As a member of the ISO (International Organization for Standardization), CSA works with other countries to set standards and to certify products on their behalf. Since NAFTA came into effect in 1994, CSA has expanded into the US and is licensed to issue some American certifications. CSA offers local services through its offices in the US, Japan, Taiwan, India, Germany, and Britain. It also maintains labs in Chinese manufacturing centres and ports.⁴⁸⁴ The CSA labels are universally accepted across Canada and the US, and are a requirement for any safety footwear sold in Canada. This makes Mellow Walk's trade with the US easier and also helps to regulate the Canadian market by preventing the sale of cheaper, uncertified safety shoes. Counterfeit CSA labels have been found on imported work boots, an instance where copyright infringement had serious implications. The Markham-based importer was forced to recall boots because they risked posing "a threat of serious injury to the user."⁴⁸⁵ The CSA labelling is another indicator of 'Made in Canada' and could be read as associating values of regulation, standardization, safety, authority, and government intervention with the products. Inside Canada, CSA labels are essential and indicate compliance with the law. Outside Canada, CSA labels add an aura of safety, official-ness, authenticity and quality.

3.2 Circulation

Distribution

Distribution groups everything that helps to **track**, **move**, and **communicate** about the shoes. In the factory, this involves **work orders** that accompany the samples from department to department, giving each section of the line special assembly instructions. It also involves the pacer board that tells employees in Lasting and Finishing how many pairs they have made compared to their daily goal. This includes the **inventory software** and **labelling system** that Sullivan uses to manage new **orders**, **work in process** and the **in-stock program**. It also includes the **vehicles**, **shippers** and **paperwork** required to move the footwear across the city and around the world. These can influence design through efficiency in manufacturing, monitoring demand and promoting certain styles, and even the size of packaging (Mister

⁴⁸³ CSA Group, "History," CSA Group, 2013, <http://www.csagroup.org/global/en/about-csa-group/history>.

⁴⁸⁴ CSA Group.

⁴⁸⁵ CSA Group, "APB-01-04 Scorpion Industrial Safety Footwear Inc. and CSA International Announce the Voluntary Recall of Scorpion Safety Footwear, Sold Throughout Canada Except in Ontario," Product Alerts and Recalls, January 13, 2004, <http://www.csagroup.org/global/en/about-csa-group/certification-marks-labels/global-brand-protection/product-alerts-recalls/productalert/safety-footwear-scorpion-industrial-safety-footwear-inc-01-04>.

Safety's only concern with Mellow Walk boxes is that they do not take up too much room in his shoe mobile).

Communication and Promotion

Overlapping with distribution is the **communication** category that clusters Mellow Walk's promotional channels in **print—advertising** (billboards and posters), **packaging** (labels, shoe boxes) and **displays** (sales wall at Mellow Walk, trade show booths)—and **digital media** (**web site, blog, social media, and correspondence**). Violi has developed the Mellow Walk **brand**, choosing to work with local advertising and design **agencies**. The use of local suppliers for this kind of design work suggests a kind of expertise and understanding of the brand, audience, and systems of distribution that are considered unique to Toronto. The communication of the Mellow Walk brand and products sets parameters for interpreting the design of the safety shoes by other actors, in particular the sales team and consumers.

Trade Shows

Silva, Andrew Violi, Jeff Violi, and the sales team visit **trade shows** around the world for different purposes. The Toronto Footwear Show and the Atlanta Shoe Market are examples of events where Mellow Walk has a booth and connects with buyers. The Abu Dhabi International Petroleum Exhibition and Conference allows Mellow Walk to explore a specific industry and build clients in the Middle East who have their own context-dependent needs (fig.12). The World Wide Safety Trade Show in Germany helps Violi to stay on top of the latest trends in the safety sector, from regulations to new equipment and materials. The most important for the design and manufacture of Mellow Walk's shoes is Lineapelle in Milan, an "international exhibition of leather, accessories, components, fabrics, synthetics and models."⁴⁸⁶ It is here that Violi and Silva see the latest in shoe design across all sectors, meet **suppliers** and **agents**, and source **lasts, materials, and components** from around the world.

Retail

The **market** category of actors includes the **fashion market** where Mellow Walk draws design inspiration and where **consumers** are exposed to and influence trends, which have an impact on how they receive and use Mellow Walk products. It also includes the **safety market** that encompasses Mellow Walk's **competitors, colleagues, and retailers** (fig.13). Each of these categories brings a **global, national, regional, and local** influence to the design of Mellow Walk shoes.

⁴⁸⁶ Lineapelle, "Lineapelle," Lineapelle, accessed August 21, 2015, www.lineapelle-fair.it/en.

The Canadian footwear market is considered a growth area, expanding by 5.8% in 2014 to \$5.9 billion, and projected to reach \$6.9 billion by 2019.⁴⁸⁷ The footwear market is increasingly diversified with niche sub-markets and more rapid turnover of styles, moving away from the two-season cycle to the ‘fast fashion’ approach of clothing retailers.⁴⁸⁸ Shoe retail is dominated by large corporations including chains (Town Shoes, Brown’s, Payless), big-box shoe stores (Designer Shoe Warehouse), more integration of shoes by clothing retailers (H&M, Zara), department stores (Target, Hudson’s Bay) and grocery stores (Loblaws/Joe Fresh), as well as giant on-line distributors (Zappos.com, Shoeme.ca). Further consolidation is anticipated in the Canadian shoe market.⁴⁸⁹ With the competition able to survive on economies of scale and brand recognition, smaller companies have more success serving niche markets.⁴⁹⁰ It is challenging for manufacturers to maintain successful retail outlets, however many retailers manufacture their own lines to sell among other brands. In the safety market, Mark’s may be the most recognized brand for work clothing and footwear, but a long list of specialized retailers have sold safety footwear for decades in Canada, some with mobile shoe stores that sell directly to work sites (Work Authority, Mister Safety, Chaussures Belmont, Collins, Acklands Grainger).

Silva and Violi have an ongoing conversation about the fashion market and what “looks” would be appropriate to adapt for Mellow Walk. International influence comes from the competitors who share store shelves and who they encounter at trade shows. Locally, Silva and Violi are exposed to trends in Toronto stores and particular neighbourhoods—Silva’s notes and sketches for the Vanessa include reflections on Queen Street West, an area known for fashion boutiques, not far from Silva’s home.

The retailers also take responsibility for promoting Mellow Walk among all of the brands they feature on their web sites and advertising, acting as intermediaries between multiple manufacturers and consumers. The often unimaginative **in-store displays** tend not to promote one product over another, and store signage presents all information as equal (figs.53, 54). In terms of **customer experience**, stores like Mister Safety offer a high level of personal service and the staff helps customers to navigate the models and sizes quickly, and to interpret the various designs and features. In bigger chains like Mark’s, customers are for the most part left to fend for themselves among aisles of boxes and chaotic displays. There, customers may or

⁴⁸⁷ “Footwear Industry Profile,” 2.

⁴⁸⁸ “Footwear Industry Profile,” 14, 17.

⁴⁸⁹ Kopun, “Ron White and John Fluevog Are Two Young Canadian Shoe Designers Who Are Working Their Way up in the High Fashion World of Footwear.”

⁴⁹⁰ “Footwear Industry Profile,” 14.

may not find a size in stock, and risk buying the wrong footwear if they do not compare specifications across inconsistently labelled competitors.

3.3 Consumption

Under **consumption**, the actors can be classified in many ways: location, job, employer requirements, personal style, lifestyle, shopping habits, etc. Consumers participate in the market through shopping and consuming, but they also create meanings through messages about the product (consumer reviews, communication with Mellow Walk online), selling the product to co-workers and others through personal testimony and wearing them to work, and through the second hand market (thrift stores and online).

Mellow Walk deals with individual family-run stores that reflect local needs as well as with chains that represent national and regional consumption. The buyer from Belmont Sécurité can give them an idea of consumer tastes in Montreal while Loto Safety gives insight into the United Arab Emirates market, and Tomcas represents buyers in the Caribbean. Silva notes how tastes change regionally. Black shoes are popular in Ontario, for example, while Québécois customers have more appetite for bright colours and greys in their footwear. Local conditions and consumer tastes filter up through front-end **retail staff to buyers** who communicate with Mellow Walk. Mister Safety's customers fall into two categories, those who work outside (construction, landscaping, utilities) and those who work inside (municipal, factories), and while the retailer targets individual buyers, it also deals directly with employers who organize visits from the Mister Safety Mobile Store. The 'shoe mobiles' fit customers at their place of work, allowing for a different type of feedback concentrated in certain industries.⁴⁹¹

Mellow Walk staff come in contact with the end-consumer in different contexts. Consumers express their needs and design ideas directly to Violi through email, the web site, and social media. Mellow Walk has an agent in Montreal and sales representatives who travel across North America to visit buyers, collecting knowledge about how the product is used and valued by different consumer groups. The factory workers I interviewed reported being on the lookout for Mellow Walk shoes – who is wearing which models in which contexts and how they compare to other shoes for sale (as Colantonio put it, “When you’re in this business, you always look at people’s feet”). Romeiro has seen the same man wearing his Mellow Walk shoes to a coffee shop on several Sundays; Torres likes to visit Mark’s to look at the shoes; a salesman once offered Barreto shoes she had packed herself; and Padda likes to discuss price and quality of the leather with retail staff when shopping. These interactions with various actors in

⁴⁹¹ Mister Safety Shoes, “Mobile Stores,” *Mister Safety Shoes* (blog), accessed May 16, 2018, <https://mistersafetyshoes.com/mobile-store/>.

the market influence staff perceptions of the products they create, and subsequently influence design, quality, and pride in work.

Finally, **location** is an overarching category of actors. Conducting an ethnographic study meant that it was important to consider the 'natural habitats' of the case study object. This ranged from the **designer's desk** to the **factory floor**, from the **Mellow Walk building** to **trade shows, stores**, and **online** sales distributors. It included **work sites** where the boots are compared with competitor products, broken in, and exhibit specific kinds of wear and tear. Locations also included sites outside of work, like **home** or wherever consumers feel it is appropriate to wear Mellow Walks (several interviewees wear their safety shoes to and from work, but draw the line at church and weddings). The object ethnography diagram features locations at the scale of **neighbourhoods** (where Mellow Walk is located and how it relates to nearby manufacturers like Roots), **cities** (like Toronto as a source of immigrant labour or Leon, the shoe city in Mexico), **countries** in terms of markets and national identities ('Made in Canada,' Portugal as a "shoe country"), and **continents** (concepts of Asia as a source of cheap shoes, Europe as a place with more style, and Africa as a climate where glues melt and shoes come apart). In each of these, the case study object derives meaning in relation to the location and surrounding "networks of objects."⁴⁹²

⁴⁹² Elizabeth Shove et al., *The Design of Everyday Life*, First edition (New York, NY: Bloomsbury Academic, 2008).

4. Mellow Walk: Object Ethnography

The next section tells the story of Vanessa's creation. While the steps were not always clearly defined, there are certain decision points that help to delineate phases. This object ethnography describes the actors, iterations, points of change, inputs, and factors influencing the design process and the division of design labour.

Initial Concept (fig.14)

Mellow Walk produces one or two new designs each year. Product concepts generally emerge from an ongoing dialogue between the President and CEO, Andrew Violi, and the designer, Nelson Silva. Whereas Violi is more focused on expressing the Mellow Walk brand through communication channels and the overall stewardship of the company, Silva's job is to interpret the brand through the product design. The two work closely together through this conversation and share a similar responsibility in developing the "visual language" for products that are both "on trend" and in keeping with what they consider a "Mellow Walk shoe." They travel to trade shows together and compare the "looks" they see in the local and global fashion markets. There is an interesting dynamic between the design of "soft-toe" shoes in contemporary fashion and Mellow Walk's current steel-toe safety wear. Violi and Silva look for inspiration and new ideas from outside the company but they also search for common ground with what they already do. They hope to find something in the fashion market that is easily translated to a safety boot. This means a design that seamlessly incorporates technical specifications (the bulbous steel toe for example) and the Mellow Walk brand requirements of comfort, fit, and casual.

In the case of the Vanessa, Frye boots became the model that most closely represented what Violi and Silva wanted to achieve. The high-end, American "work boot" is popular in mainstream fashion where customers pay anywhere from \$250 to \$1,400 USD per pair. While the intended use of the boots may be different, the corporate narrative sounds familiar: craft and quality are two of Frye's key words, and the company promotes its American heritage and Made in USA products (and leathers).⁴⁹³ Fryes may still be used as cowboy, motorcycle, and military boots, but they have been appropriated on runways and fashion magazines, making casual urban wear their primary function. This kind of overlap is easy for Mellow Walk to build on. Fashion imitating work is easily reversed to work imitating fashion in the Vanessa. Similarities

⁴⁹³ Jamie Feldman, "Why You Need To Follow This Boot Company On Instagram," The Huffington Post, April 15, 2015, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2015/04/15/frye-makers-series-documentary_n_7065114.html.

are apparent between the initial Vanessa sample boot in distressed brown leather and Frye's Engineer boot in rugged dark brown.⁴⁹⁴ There are many differences in technical specification and execution, but the production model of the Vanessa appears almost identical to pictures of Frye's *Veronica* in black.⁴⁹⁵ Whether the name was intentionally close is unknown, however this kind of borrowing or "interpretation," as Violi referred to it, is typical in apparel design. In fact, the fashion market abounds in mid-calf and taller "Engineers," sturdy boots with straight legs and buckles with roots in work and motorcycle boots over the last century.

Silva described the fashion motivation behind safety shoes: "No one's trying to make a statement with their safety boots. They're trying to blend in with our shoes." In his opinion, consumers do not want their safety boots to stand out but rather become an extension of what they already wear. Adapting current styles is safer because the consumer is already familiar with the look and can easily integrate the shoes with their wardrobe. People tend not to replace safety shoes until they wear out or until they are eligible for another voucher from their employer, and it is common to own one pair of safety shoes and wear them every day. This makes the fashion cycle much longer and contributes to more conservative styles.

Silva spoke about a slow, iterative design process that builds on previous models in contrast to the more radical innovation often associated with design. Illustrating the diversity of design that Silva is able to achieve with the same platform, the Vanessa 'pump' is considerably different from the Frye-inspired boot. The shoe version was intended to fill the gap left by the popular but discontinued Pauline, a model similar to the Hush Puppy steel-toe pump discussed below (fig.56). Mellow Walk hoped to satisfy customers with the Vanessa, as seen in this letter by Violi comparing their design:

Hi Joceline, Wow. A 10 year-old Pauline safety shoe. A great testament to made in Canada quality. Vanessa is truly an update to Pauline. Vanessa offers a grade 1 safety toe (highest level) while Pauline is grade 2. Vanessa also offers a metal free protective plate and protection against contact with electricity (ESR). Pauline featured a static dissipative sole. When it came to fit we opted to build in more comfort with Vanessa, more interior space and a full length PU ultra comfortable insole.⁴⁹⁶

Mellow walk finds compromise between this safer approach to design and its ability to take risks as a small manufacturer. Because Mellow Walk cannot compete on scale or price

⁴⁹⁴ The Frye Company, "Engineer 12R," The FRYE Company, accessed August 24, 2015, [//www.thefryecompany.com/engineer-12r/d/77400](http://www.thefryecompany.com/engineer-12r/d/77400).

⁴⁹⁵ The Frye Company, "Veronica Short," The FRYE Company, accessed August 24, 2015, www.thefryecompany.com/veronica-short/d/76509.

⁴⁹⁶ Andrew Violi, "Vanessa 402109 (In Stock)," Mellow Walk, accessed August 30, 2015, <http://www.mellowwalk.com/womens-shoes/vanessa/post-402109/>.

with imports, it focuses on niche markets and smaller quantities, a strategy that allows for more experimentation. Mellow Walk's more style-conscious footwear appeals to a variety of small target markets, one of which is women who want heeled safety shoes. The company identified a slightly younger demographic, one that would be attracted to the Frye boot's "cowboy" look. Of everyone interviewed, Violi was the most specific in describing that group: younger women in their 20s and 30s who are starting their careers, are fashion conscious, do not need to wear safety shoes all day, and might just wear the boots outside of work. The Vanessa is intended to blur the lines, to be unrecognizable as safety footwear and able to hold its own next to mainstream shoes, worn just as easily in the office, on the factory floor, or out for dinner.

By investing in the Vanessa line, Mellow Walk intended to create several models using the same platform. Throughout the research and discussion phase, Silva sketches brogues, lace-up ankle boots, and "mini cowboy boots" using the same sole and heel silhouettes for each (fig.14). His black and white drawings are loose, sometimes annotated, and feature a level of detail and decoration in stitching, line, and fittings uncharacteristic of Mellow Walk products. By the end of this initial concept development phase, a decision is made to pursue a new product line. The target audience, purpose, and general design direction and criteria are set. At this point, the design is a blend of Violi's brand vision and Silva's design concept based on their experience, market research, and a solid model provided by Frye, a non-competitive shoe manufacturer from the fashion market, plus feedback from buyers when possible.

Platform (fig.15)

Silva and Violi attend Lineapelle in Italy, a trade show that brings together tanneries and synthetic material suppliers, lasts, and component makers, designers, schools, and an exhibition of thousands of the latest material samples.⁴⁹⁷ At the Fiera Milan, the centre of Italian trade shows in the heart of the manufacturing and design region of Italy, Silva and Violi are exposed to the latest ideas, over 1,000 exhibitors, and agents and manufacturers from all over the world. Lineapelle is where Silva and Violi complete a substantial piece of the design work: establishing the platform for all shoes and boots in the Vanessa line. Silva described the process as shopping for the components as he walked the show, first finding the right last from a German supplier, then turning around to discover the Italian mold maker and a selection of rubber outsoles that fit the last he had just picked up, and which would handle indoor and outdoor conditions. Further on, they discovered a steel toe from Brazil and a sock liner that met their needs. They would use the foam and midsole material they always use, and source the

⁴⁹⁷ Lineapelle, "Lineapelle."

insoles from Meramac, an American supplier with a factory in China (the American company's logo would be hidden on the bottom, and Mellow Walk's printed on top).

Putting together the platform is like fitting together a puzzle. Violi and Silva have a sense of what they want it to look like, but they need to find matching components from different suppliers in different corners of the world. This approach to design, using open-mold, off-the-shelf components for the bottom half of the shoe, may reduce originality and control over the design but it also reduces time and investment. A new mold for a last or outsole could cost hundreds of thousands of dollars. Silva described this phase of design as "mak[ing] things work. We fit things together." Problem solving means adjusting and making do with what is available. Not only do components have to physically match, but they have to meet the criteria of budget, safety, minimum orders, and lead times. Throughout the process, Silva and Violi juggle wholesale costs and consider how far they can push the retail price above the \$120 rebate. How much more are customers willing to pay for a more fashionable safety shoe?

Somewhere along the way, Silva starts to settle for the "what's possible" version of the original design concept. Once back in Canada, they select one from a handful of rubber outsoles they found in Milan. It had a faux leather, painted finish where Silva would have preferred a real leather, layered sole and heel. Fake stitching is molded in the top of the sole in deference to the popular belief that stitching is better than glue. The lasts are sent back and forth to the suppliers several times until they get the "Mellow Walk fit," roomy enough for consumers to insert their own orthotic supports and with a thinner toe to accommodate the protective toecap.⁴⁹⁸ A Mellow Walk video of a last maker's workshop reveals what a labour intensive process this is. Wood lasts are hand carved one at a time before being cast in resin to make multiples. Mellow Walk acquires three toe sizes to use for all the lasts. The Vanessa will be made in sizes 5.5 to 11, meaning that the pattern will have to be adjusted to accommodate the limited sizes of steel toes.

At the end of this phase, the platform components have been decided on and modified if necessary (fig.16). The platform design does not change from this point forward unless it fails safety testing. The platform has a major influence on the design of the upper as it moves from sketches to final concepts.

⁴⁹⁸ Mellow Walk, "Safety Meets Glamour with Mellow Walk's New Vanessa," Mellow Walk, accessed August 25, 2015, <http://www.mellowwalk.com/posts/safety-meets-glamour-with-mellow-walks-new-vanessa/>.

Certification Model (fig.17)

Silva spoke about the importance of the internal structure of a safety shoe. A rigorous design process is required to ensure that the CSA Group will certify the platform, and that the last, toe, liner, and layered sole combination will be comfortable to wear all day. Once satisfied with the platform design, Silva works with Carol Padda in Cutting, Teresa Torres or Arminda Romeiro in Fitting, and a handful of people in Lasting to make a quick sample with the new platform and an upper based on previous models. Other factories have separate sample rooms but at Mellow Walk, samples are made by stopping the assembly line as needed. Once complete, the sample is handed over to the Assistant Plant Manager, Bev Hodgins, to manage in-house safety testing. The Vanessa is tested for its ability to protect toes, and resist electric shock and punctures (fig.18). If the sample did not pass internal tests, Hodgins' feedback would help Silva with any redesign and further samples before she or Plant Manager Diana Sullivan send the Vanessa to CSA Group labs. This is an important step in the Vanessa's progress and Sullivan expresses relief and pride when they move the shoes through this phase.

Upper (figs.19, 20)

Meanwhile, Silva works on the design of the upper. He researches and selects leathers and fittings, while narrowing down the number of concepts. They try some new leathers from Lefarc, opting for distressed browns with names like "Soft Vintage" and "Montana." Silva sources buckles for the first samples but later discovers they do not stand up to wear and tear. He finds replacement buckles from Rimini de Mexico, an Italian company with manufacturing in Mexico, which may also supply Frye (Silva). Ultimately, as Plant Manager, Sullivan orders the materials and fittings for production, but as part of Silva's design work, he sources and orders the first samples.

Silva develops two or three models for each shoe type in the Vanessa line: a slip-on shoe, a slip-on boot, and a lace-up boot. These coloured sketches exhibit more precision, clearer lines that lead to pattern pieces, and textures that hint at what materials will be used. Though each concept is quite different, the platform, proportions, and some of the curves remain the same. Silva pushes the design a little further than what he knows is possible at Mellow Walk. Coloured leathers, textured elastic gores, ankle details, perforated decoration, delicate buckles, and straps have little chance of making it to the final product, but they help to open people's minds and get the conversation started. Violi describes seeing Silva's hand-coloured renderings on the Mellow Walk web site: "it's only on close inspection that one realizes that these are not stylized photographs but amazingly detailed free-hand drawings, and that's

when you begin to appreciate his artistry.”⁴⁹⁹ Indeed, these are the kind of beautiful illustrations usually associated with the design process. Despite his title as Design Director, Silva shares control over most aspects of design, with the exception of these sketches where the output is entirely his own. Decisions about which design to pursue, however, are collaborative. Silva and Violi (often in consultation with the sales team) use the drawings to choose three directions that Silva goes on to refine for the sales models (figs.21, 22).

Sales Models (fig.23)

Silva creates first drafts of the patterns and takes the samples through the line – cutting with Padda, sewing with Torres and Romeiro, then on to Lasting and Finishing. They start to identify potential challenges with the design. Silva has never worked with straps before and they are starting to curl. Torres has experience making cowboy boots and solves the problem by gluing two pieces of leather together to double the thickness of the straps.

They arrive at three sales models that have evolved substantially from the hand-drawn renderings. The first is described as a “pump,” a more feminine version of the other slip-on shoes in Mellow Walk’s women’s lines, but nothing like the common pump in the fashion market with a lower cut, higher heel, and more delicate sole. Second is a short, black lace-up boot with pebbled leather, a simplified version of the blue boot with scalloped ankle that Silva originally drew. Third is a short, brown zip-up boot made of distressed leather with a strap and buckle across the front and a thin strap with rivets on the side (fig.22). These models are not finished to the same standards as the retail product but serve to convey the design concept.

Jeff Violi and the team usually present sales samples at trade shows to gather feedback from buyers. The samples are also taken to local buyers’ offices or shown in the Mellow Walk boardroom. At this point, the retailer can really influence a new design. The buyers react to the samples based on their experience of what sells and on what they hear from customers and sales associates. Their advice can take the form of affirmation or rejection of the design – we like it or we do not, this will or will not sell—and they may place an order before production has even begun. Their advice can also be more constructive, offering suggestions on how to improve the design through different choices in colour, material, detailing, etc.

For the Vanessa, this consultation process leads to more changes. The short brown boot evolves to a mid-calf boot without the side zipper to be made of a thicker, more durable black leather. At the end of this phase, the buyers have given their tacit approval and the decision is made by senior management that the design direction is good.

⁴⁹⁹ Mellow Walk, “Nelson Silva.”

Wear Testing

Rather than conducting formal user testing with focus groups, observation, or other techniques to gather feedback from end-users, the company turns to its own staff, and sometimes friends and family, as “wear-testers.” In many ways, they represent target consumers through their work in a factory where they are required to wear safety shoes. Feedback from the wear testers is provided informally to Silva at various points throughout product development. Sullivan happens to have the perfect size 7 feet and wear tests the Vanessa platform with an early shoe pattern. She fits the profile of the Vanessa buyer with her management job, working both in the office and on the factory floor. When she described the Vanessa, she offered a more nuanced view of user needs, including the desire for a higher heel (but not too high to wear all day), and the reluctance to buy shoes where the heel was high enough that it would require her pants to be hemmed (the small heel of the Vanessa means that she can avoid this). When I asked Sullivan about the design of Mellow Walk shoes, instead of talking in general terms about style or function, she turned to personal preferences (“I like,” “I would want/I may not want”). She was confident in her role as wear-tester and as the expert when it came to how the shoe felt on her foot. Sullivan described making design recommendations based on personal experience: “I think my part is...making sure that it fits and it feels right when you walk in it.” She comments on proportions, dimensions, and leather finishes but did not label this contribution as design.

Pattern

With the go-ahead on the Vanessa design direction, Silva starts making the patterns in earnest. The previous samples were made using quick drafts that helped to convey the look and to solve some of the initial manufacturing problems posed by the pattern. In this next phase, Silva designs for manufacturing, creating patterns that will eventually be used in mass production.

In manufacturing and apparel, it is common for design to be split between two jobs: the “designer” generates the concept sketches while the “pattern maker” creates the technical drawings that will direct the manufacturing process. This is one of the more obvious instances in the division of design labour, separating what appears to be the creative conceptual work in the idea generation and freer flowing lines of Silva’s sketches, from a more precise mechanical work in the dimensioned blueprints and digital files readable by machine. Silva recognizes the two roles differently within his own job, labelling them as design and pattern technician. One type of work is valued over the other – the designer’s name is remembered for the first step while

the pattern maker, who plays a crucial role in developing the design, falls into obscurity. Nevertheless, as described below, pattern making is an intensely intellectual and creative activity. Ideas are transformed as they move back and forth between 2-D and 3-D and between hand and digital rendering. The pattern maker must think at a more granular level about what is possible in the factory, taking into account the machines at their disposal, the workers' skills, and the amount of time each design detail will add to labour costs.

Luckily for Mellow Walk, Silva also has the skills to create the pattern, which allows for a more direct translation between the original idea and its execution, though the process is never unidirectional. His experience manufacturing in China and his training at *Ars Sutoria* in Milan, helped to prepare him for this task. Design is often referred to as a visual language, usually in reference to a designer's palette or the meaning conveyed by final products. However, the function of design as language is also apparent within the design process itself: its clarity impacts how faithfully the design is translated. In global manufacturing, detailed "tech packs" have their own universal, visual language of instructions, dimensions, materials, etc., that are intended to be understood anywhere. Like all translators, it is common for factories to take some liberty in interpretation and to 'fill in the blanks.' It is also common for samples to return from overseas factories that differ from the original design.

Because Silva is embedded in the Mellow Walk factory, he has more opportunity to work through the pattern with the very people who will make the shoes. This allows him to see first hand how they will read and interpret his visual directions, to verbally explain and physically demonstrate his own intentions, to learn from them how they would change the pattern, and finally, to modify the pattern in response to this feedback. Verbal language is important here, but perhaps more so in building relationships. The fact that Silva can speak Portuguese helps him make friends on the factory floor. In my observation, however, the visual and physical language of making takes precedence in the creation and refinement of the pattern.

The precision of the pattern is crucial because it impacts the entire production process, which is very incremental and linear. A mistake at the beginning is magnified through production. As Silva said, there is little room for risk in manufacturing. The investment in the equipment, labour, and the process itself means that once production begins, any error along the way can be costly. A faulty pattern could lead to a shoe that does not fit the last. A missed line of stitching due to a missing pattern mark may not be caught until Finishing, at which point the lasted shoe may be too awkward to put through a sewing machine.

Last Pattern (fig.24)

The precision of “making stuff fit” starts with the design of the platform and the performance of the shoe in safety testing. The pattern must continue that precision by making the upper work with the platform. The last is the unifying piece – it is the reverse of a mold, a shape that dictates the form of the top and bottom of the shoe from the inside out. It returns again and again in a shoe’s development, maintaining the shoe’s shape until the end of the Lasting line. The last is thus the starting point for the pattern and Silva tries to mimic that shape carefully. The final pattern should be as true to the last as possible but also provide a calculated margin for error during production. As an iteration of the Vanessa, the last connects the designer-craftsperson who created it in Germany, with Silva and the Mellow Walk lasting team who will handle a version of that last for every pair of Vanessas they make.

Silva begins moving from the three-dimensional last to a two-dimensional pattern by covering a size seven last in masking tape, marking the centre lines then peeling off the tape and sticking it to a piece of paper. A new paper shape is traced off the tape and used as a pattern to cut two identical pieces of waxed tissue paper. Those pieces are then taped together to create a paper shell over the last – the malleability and stretch of the tissue paper gives a sense of how the leather will lie (fig.28). Silva might play with the shape to get the proportions of the shoe or boot, but the main purpose is to test for fit against the last. The paper pattern is revised slightly based on how the tissue lies. This becomes the “true-to-last” pattern that forms the basis of all Vanessa designs going forward (fig.27).

Paper Patterns (fig.25)

Silva uses a combination of techniques to arrive at the paper pattern for the boot and shoe. Where possible, he saves time by working off an existing model. He takes a similar Mellow Walk slip-on shoe, cuts down the leather to approximate the new shape he wants, then repeats the technique of taping and marking key pattern lines, showing the heel, quarters (sides), vamp (top/front), and elastic gore (side inserts). He transfers the key measurements from the taped-up shoe to the last pattern. Silva draws over the hybrid shape free-hand and with a series of rulers, French curves, and standard shoe curves to get the classic “ballerina” lines of a lower cut across the top and extra space for the steel toe. Silva has these curves memorized and uses the standard shapes to verify his work rather than to guide it. It is interesting to note that the standard shoe curves represent centuries of knowledge about shoe construction and the human foot. The shoe forms from Ars Sutoria are used by Silva and other graduates around the world, evidence of common design practices. Silva draws with a steady, controlled hand,

repeating every line at least five times. He chooses the final lines and goes over them in pen, creating the final paper pattern for this step. As Mellow Walk had no precedent for the boot, Silva builds on the last pattern and sales sample, and changes some of the decorative details in the process (figs.29, 30).

Digital Patterns (fig.26)

To digitize the pattern, Silva goes back and forth between drawing by hand, drawing on the tablet, and drawing on the screen. He uses Caligola, a software designed for the shoe industry to make and grade (size) patterns. Caligola is a product of Comelz, an Italian equipment manufacturer that also supplies the computer numerically controlled (CNC) cutter. Silva's patterns are thus easily transferred from his computer to the factory floor because the Comelz machine can read those files.

Silva traces the paper pattern on his tablet with a lens cursor, a mouse-like tool that allows him to record key points and lines in the pattern, which he then tweaks on screen. Some pieces do not transfer easily, like the vamp which has complex curves and must stretch evenly without accentuating the edge of the steel toe. Silva prints the vamp, makes a new version by hand and re-scans. He does some loose sketching and annotation in Caligola, and makes other adjustments by overlaying printed pieces on his original hand-drawn pattern. He looks for ways to simplify the design through fewer pieces and to add detailing that creates visual impact without adding substantially to labour. When he is satisfied with the digital pattern, he prints the pieces on tissue paper, cuts them out and tapes them together, creating an updated paper shoe that he can test on the last (fig.31).

Silva finalizes the size 7 pattern, adding notches and other instructions for cutting and sewing. The lining pattern is built off the shoe pattern but in two pieces instead of four. The software then grades the pattern, adjusting dimensions for the different sizes (fig.32). Silva will have to tweak these as well, given that the proportions cannot remain consistent with only three steel toe sizes for the full range of shoes.

Silva's technique points to one of many intersections between craft and design in manufacturing. Craft historian Glenn Adamson sees digital design as separate from the physicality of craft: "computers are valuable because they are so completely detached from the body. Physical strength, hard-won somatic skills, human scale: usually these are simply not relevant in digital design."⁵⁰⁰ Yet Silva's digitization process integrates somatic skills (drawing, cutting, taping, tracing) and the human scale (the last and the foot) with a mastery of the

⁵⁰⁰ Adamson, *The Invention of Craft*, 167.

abstraction of software. The final pattern is created using the latest technology, but its development is arguably a craft. His ability to draw free hand, to produce the smooth curves of the shoe, comes from years of practice. Silva relies on simple tools and materials (tape, paper, scissors, knife, awl, pens, and markers) even though he could make the entire pattern on the computer. The fluid movement back and forth between hard copy and digital media, each step involving finely controlled handwork, creates one inseparable process where every action and tool relies on the other to achieve the final pattern. Perhaps Silva is part of a generation of designers caught between those who only ever used pencil and paper and those who work only on screen. Or maybe the physical actions – the feel and craft of pattern making – are necessary to transition from a 3-D, physical last to a 2-D, digital pattern and back again.

First Trials

Once the pattern is complete, Silva works with the factory supervisors and a few other line workers to test it. They will take the samples through Cutting, Fitting, and Lasting, solving problems with the pattern as they go. The first samples and the fit trials (described below) are the phases where the factory workers have the most impact on the design.

Cutting (fig.33)

Cutting is a small department, thanks to the powerful CNC cutting machine and Padda's expert use of it. According to Padda, the machine does the work of four people who would have once used dies and cut by hand. According to Violi, Comelz cannot believe how quickly and accurately Padda can operate their machine.⁵⁰¹ Padda sees it as her responsibility to keep the machine going all day; any pause in operations means less productivity. Padda cuts most materials for the factory including leather, sponge, lining, backers, insoles, felt, and tricot. At a rate of 400 to 450 pairs per day, she cuts leather for 1,800 pairs of shoes each week and dedicates one day to cutting linings.

It is a job that moves quickly and requires total focus. The shape of every hide is different and defects are hidden by tanning and finishing, part of the reason that shoe making has been difficult to mechanize. As Padda calls up the pattern pieces on her computer screen, she has to decide where she will place them on the leather. The most important pieces, the vamps, must be cut on the best part (the back of the cow) and angled depending on how they should stretch.

⁵⁰¹ VioliVioli, "Leather Cutting: Step One in a Great Pair of Safety Shoes," Mellow Walk, accessed August 27, 2015, <http://www.mellowwalk.com/posts/leather-cutting-step-one-in-a-great-pair-of-safety-shoes/>.

Smaller pieces like the counter corners and back straps can be cut on the stomach and closer to the tail where the leather is thinner. As she selects pattern pieces on the screen, the machine projects the outlines on to the leather and Padda moves them into place, trying to maximize the hide while avoiding scars and holes. She locks the pattern pieces in place as they move along the conveyor belt, before they reach the machine's two blades, all in a matter of seconds. The CNC cutter also prints the sizes, various stitch lines and markers for Sewing and Lasting to follow. It is a physical job—she has to stand all day, lift hides, and feed them continuously so the machine never stops. Padda goes to the gym to stay fit for work.

Padda expressed that the two most important aspects of her position are knowing how to cut and knowing the leather. This requires understanding the software, the machine, what Silva wants, the patterns, and how the shoe should work and move in terms of stretch on the foot and in Lasting. Padda described the material as a defining factor: the quality of the shoes depends on the quality of the leather and she can differentiate Mellow Walks from their competitors based on the superior hides they use. With her decades of experience, Padda has great confidence in her knowledge of leather and considers this one of the principal ways she contributes to design. Sullivan and Silva seek her opinion on orders and she gives feedback on aspects like thickness, stretch, scarring, softness, whether it is easy to cut, or marks too easily. In her opinion, everything starts with the leather and everything starts with her. If Padda does not cut the vamp pattern in the right spot on the hide, Sewing may not notice, but Lasting could overstretch the leather and send the shoe back to the beginning for repairs.

Padda's work is very careful and intentional, and it is not difficult to find craftsmanship in her knowledge of tools and materials. She solves problems about how best to use the leather, decisions she executes in part by hand. Like the pattern making process, Padda moves fluidly between computer screen and conveyor belt, handling the hides and operating the mouse. She has some control in her work and certainly feels ownership and pride in her role. It's her choice which pieces she calls up and where she puts them ("I bring them," "my vamps"). Padda described it as a combination of working with your hands and your head. Rather than mindless, repetitive actions, this is precision work that requires total concentration. Not using your mind is not the same as working, according to Padda. The mind is required, essential, integral. She explained that there is a level of focus that is difficult for new employees, where all else is tuned out and she has to regroup before entering a conversation or using words.

Padda is convinced that everyone at the factory influences the design in some way. She also identified creativity in her job through one-off projects like creating new samples. Padda's contribution at this phase includes recommendations to Silva on how to work with the stretch of

the leather and the direction in which to cut to meet the requirements of the pattern. Padda has taught Silva a great deal about leather since he started there. Sometimes, she gives suggestions on the pattern shapes based on how they fit on the hide, and finds ways that the pattern can be modified to reduce waste by joining or separating pieces. Silva also asks Padda for her opinion on the look of the shoes, and Padda mentions that often, they will arrive at the same choice, indicating that they have similar tastes and agree on the design.

After Padda has finished cutting, Samira picks out the pieces on the other side of the conveyor belt and organizes them for Fitting. Before they leave Cutting, someone skives the leather, using a special machine to shave the edges so that the seams are easier to sew.

Fitting (Sewing) (figs.34, 35)

Fitting is the largest department and is responsible for assembling the entire upper before it meets the platform in Lasting. This job may be split among multiple people (e.g. someone will sew all the vamps and sides together, and someone else will sew all the linings). There are a number of different kinds of equipment and workstations. Some people operate specialized sewing or interfacing machines; some work in the gluing stations; and some do table work which consists mostly of handwork like gluing or attaching buckles. The patterns vary in complexity – Torres and Romeiro say that there are fast shoes and slow shoes, easy and difficult designs and leathers. Torres does not think in terms of how long it takes to make a shoe (“I never check times”), but when pressed, she and Romeiro estimated that they can make a sample in 10–15 minutes.

Like Padda, they summarized the most important skills in relation to tools, materials and design: knowing how to use the sewing machines, how to sew leather, how to understand a pattern and its construction, and how to give Silva feedback to improve the design. They also share Padda’s opinion that their jobs require focus and that it’s difficult to train new people. Romeiro attributes her abilities to on-the-job training, timing, practice and years of experience. These comments suggest that the work is not easy and takes some time, years even, to master the required skills.

At the sample phase, Silva works closely with the supervisor, Torres, and a sewer and designated sample maker, Romeiro. Together, they go through the entire process of making the shoe upper and in the process, they critique, refine, and even modify the design. Here, the design refers to how the pattern as script translates into a 3-d object during manufacturing. It is a test of design as a language and as a set of instructions for others to execute, and at Mellow

Walk, it is a conversation and collaborative activity between the designer-pattern drafter and makers. Silva sits at Romeiro's table while they work out how the pieces fit together, the order in which they should be sewn, where the topstitching and CSA label will go, how the lining fits in the shoe, and more. Silva assists, cutting the foam for the back of the heel and taping the elastic gore so it does not stretch during lasting. He and Romeiro talk through the process, but mostly they show each other how things are working. Torres interjects, helping to solve problems and figuring out other details she will delegate. They encounter issues like missing notches, markers, and stitch lines that Silva will need to add to the pattern. Some sizes are off and pieces need to be made a bit shorter or longer. As each of these processes are decided on, Silva takes mental notes about how he will modify the digital pattern. Each step should be intuitive and easily "read" by everyone on the line.

The Vanessa boot is not as straightforward as the shoe, as it is outside of what they are accustomed to making. The boot presents a number of design details that need to be resolved including where and how the back strap should be attached. The back of the heel is awkward to sew because some of the angles are too extreme. The height of the boot also causes problems. The post-bed on Romeiro's sewing machine is not high enough to handle the length of the leg and turning it inside out is a challenge. The biggest issue becomes the counter pocket, a piece of soft leather sewn inside the boot to hold the counter, a stiffener that is heat set to shape the heel. In consultation with Torres, they decide to do away with the leather liner, leave the quarters exposed inside the boot down to the sole, and insert the counter between the quarters and the external back heel.

At the end of this phase, there is a fully sewn upper. The lining and leather are left open at the bottom as the steel toe needs to be inserted between the layers. Without any sole or firm structure other than interfacing on the vamp, the uppers are floppy and still do not look like a boot or shoe (figs.36, 37).

There is some caché to making the samples, perhaps because it is a change of pace, a challenge to do something more creative, or because it is an opportunity to give input. Only the supervisors and more experienced workers participate. Torres enjoys this aspect of her work: "I LOVE to make samples...I don't know why I like it, I like it. In other companies [where I worked previously], I [only made] samples." Romeiro, on the other hand, likes making samples but also likes the rhythm and pace of regular sewing. Some periods are more sample intensive, like the week I interviewed them, when they had 24 pairs of samples to make for a US trade show. They agree that making samples can give them a headache. Figuring out how to put the pieces

together requires concentration, but there is also reward in problem solving how to make production easier and more efficient.

While their contribution to the pattern design was obvious to me, both Torres and Romeiro felt unsure about saying that they contributed to the design. Neither saw their jobs as creative right away, but eventually admitted that the biggest opportunities for their input and problem solving arise when working on new styles and samples. They described giving Silva ideas and that sometimes those ideas turn out well. Romeiro says that she's "ok with ideas" but does not consider herself creative enough to design. She claims that she never thought about how she would re-design the shoes and does not see it as her place to change design or style, only to "give a little opinion."

Lasting (figs.38, 39)

Silva takes the samples to Katarina who operates the counter-molding machine. They try several thermal plastic counter shapes to see what fits the pockets on the heels and Silva relies on Katarina's expertise to choose pieces that will fit the samples and work well in her machine. They trim them and decide if they will need new counters for this pattern or if they can use existing stock. Katarina heat sets the heels but if they are not perfectly aligned, the entire shoe will be off kilter in Lasting. Silva confesses that he starts to get nervous at this point. If something goes wrong, the sample could be ruined. At the same time, the lines are taking shape and Silva's 2-D pattern is coming to life.

Once in Lasting, the uppers are put on the lasts and matched with midsoles, the stiff liners that will sit between the insoles and outsoles. The sequence of machines and workstations is impressive. The technology is complex and the lasting machines in particular are highly automated. On the toe laster, a series of levers, rollers, and presses pull the lining taut around the last and midsole. The steel toe is placed over the lining and another lasting machine pulls the leather vamp down. The shoe is then moved to the side laster where the quarters and heel are pulled tight. Each machine lasts only one shoe at a time. In other areas, actions are more manual, like hammering the steel toe in place, buffing, and gluing the metal shank to the bottom of the midsole (necessary with the Vanessa to support the arch created by the heel). A lot of cement (glue) and heat are used as the shoe moves through the line. The heaters shrink the leather around the last and reactivate or set the glue for various procedures.

In Lasting, each workstation involves a different task. I interviewed Manuel Boita who works at the end of the line attaching the outsole (fig.40). He first centres the sole on the bottom of the shoe, which is already sticky, then places the shoe upside down in a pneumatic sole

press. A high-pressure balloon is lowered onto the outsole so it forms a solid bond with the shoe. Boita repeats this action one shoe at a time, 800 times a day. Like the others, Boita's job is about precision. Putting the soles on quickly but accurately is the most important part in his opinion. In a split second, he has to judge what is acceptable and adjust if necessary. Also like his colleagues on the production line, Boita sees his role as one of the most important. It is the last major task in the construction of the shoe and an error would mean starting all over again. He describes how decades in other shoe factories have led to an intuitive sense of when a shoe is properly aligned. Boita sees his job as requiring intense focus to avoid mistakes. There is repetition but it is the opposite of mindlessness.

There is no supervisor in Lasting, but if Boita could speak English fluently, Mellow Walk could take better advantage of his deep knowledge of footwear manufacturing. Boita is a special case among those I interviewed. He has been in Canada for only a few years, but has close to 50 years of experience in the Portuguese footwear industry in far more senior positions. He also took a course in quality control, and though his job at Mellow Walk requires some measure of quality control, he takes this responsibility "to a new level" according to Silva. He assesses the shoe at the end of production to find errors made along the way (e.g. crooked stitching, twisting the shoe at the beginning of lasting). He suggests changes to Silva, Hodgins, and Sullivan, and wishes they would ask him for his opinion more often. He also coaches his co-workers, reminding them of the final product, the customer, and the importance of quality. He benefited from mentors who taught him the subtleties of making shoes better and wants to share that knowledge with others. Silva believes that quality, one of the defining features of Mellow Walk products, has improved since Boita's arrival.

Part of Boita's approach to quality control is a set of design principles that carry across footwear. He has a strong understanding of the design and construction of the shoe, and how these impact ergonomics. He has insight into how consumers react to shoes in conscious and unconscious ways, and how good design can ensure that people wear their shoes for a long time and become repeat buyers. "Comfort" is a word that the Mellow Walk brand is built on, but other than Violi's explanation of the "Dream Fit Comfort System" (based on an orthotic last and a multi-layered sole), Boita is the only interviewee who describes what makes a shoe comfortable.⁵⁰² He discusses how the body impacts shoes and vice versa, the stress associated with repeatedly putting pressure on the same spots, and that people will end up with sore feet without being able to pinpoint what about the shoe gives them trouble.

⁵⁰² Andrew Violi, "Demystifying the Dream Fit Comfort System," Mellow Walk, accessed August 18, 2015, <http://www.mellowwalk.com/posts/demystifying-the-dream-fit-comfort-system/>.

During the sample and fit trial stages, Boita and Silva have the opportunity to discuss the shoes and take Boita's opinion into account. Silva respects Boita's ability to quickly analyze a shoe by looking at how it sits and how it has been worn. Silva gives the example of a men's shoe where Boita identified a problem early and they were able to fix it. An error in the last was causing the heel to sit up at the back and if customers did not notice the problem in the store, he warned that over time, they would develop pains in the arches of their feet. Silva confirmed that this happened when he wore the shoe.

Once the sole has been applied, Silva and Boita place the Vanessa boot on the ground and walk around it, discussing how it sits, the proportions, if it's balanced, and how it "feels." Boita considers how it will look on a store shelf and on the foot, and how the design will impact function. He likes it! He jokes with Silva that he will give him a diploma for his good work.

Boita considers design a collaborative process and though he sees himself as contributing to design in the prototyping phase (samples), he thinks of himself as an executor, not a creator. He distinguishes between the first phases of design which are abstract (concept, drawings, pattern) and the second phases of design which are tangible (models, samples). Someone gives him the "creation" and he finishes it, though arguably his opinion feeds back into the 2-D pattern so he is bridging both phases. He describes participating in the "craft of making the sample," when the drawing is transformed into a shoe. Together, the two phases make the design. This is a more integrated definition than what I received from some of the other interviewees, who see design as "Silva's drawings," separate from prototyping. Boita finds creativity in the problem-solving aspects of his job and wishes he had more opportunity to do this.

At the end of this phase, the First Trial resembles the final product (fig.41). The management and sales teams weigh in again on the design. The Vanessa boot re-gains the side zipper. Though the sales sample had a zipper originally, Silva felt the leg of the boot was short enough that the wearer could slip it on and off. However, during lasting, Silva notices inconsistencies. They have one last shape for both the boots and shoes which is limiting because both need different allowances for taking them on and off. The first time Silva put the boot on the last, it worked, but the second time it was tighter and did not come off as easily. The team decides that the zipper is necessary. They cannot risk selling a boot that consumers cannot put on and the benefits outweigh the additional costs of the fittings and labour.

Fit Trial Size 7

The pattern is updated and the process starts again. The shoe and boot are run through Cutting, Fitting, and Lasting at the “ideal” size, seven. This time, Sullivan and Hodgins are more involved with Silva and the supervisors because they need to understand and likely make changes to production processes.

Sullivan does not see herself as part of the design other than giving informal feedback on comfort and style, especially based on wear testing. For Sullivan, the creative part of her job is problem-solving processes in the factory. She believes time studies and efficiency do impact design. For example, making shorter stitch paths in collaboration with Silva would reduce time without changing the look. Sullivan also considers human resources management. Whereas Silva is thinking about how to work with staff to gather opinions and improve the design, Sullivan is concerned with how to motivate them to work more efficiently. They are both considering how to facilitate the line workers’ jobs – Silva from the perspective of making the pattern easier to follow, incorporating a margin for human error, and making tasks less arduous or painful; and Sullivan from the perspective of increasing productivity by reducing the time required for each step and streamlining overall production.

Sullivan feels it’s important to have a designer in-house, “right in the factory,” because it allows for faster problem solving, more effective and direct communication, brainstorming, interaction, and collaboration between designer and manufacturer. In Sullivan’s opinion, they have to strike a balance between “get[ting] that look” and being efficient. Compromises must be made in manufacturing which result in changes to the design.

Fit Trials All Sizes

Once everyone is satisfied that the size 7 pattern will work with the last and can move through the production line efficiently, Silva finalizes the other pattern sizes from 5.5 to 11. They are put through Cutting, Sewing, and Lasting to reveal any discrepancies, especially with proportions. Bigger shoe sizes start to look clunky and because there are fewer steel toe sizes than shoe sizes, some shoes will suit the toe perfectly while others may look awkward. Silva tweaks the pattern to minimize this.

First Production

When the patterns are finalized, Sullivan schedules first production. She ensures they will have the right materials in house when they are needed by the different areas of the factory. This time, the entire line of Vanessa shoes will go through Finishing and get packaged up to ship or wait in the warehouse (fig.42). Three to four hundred pairs of shoes are “finished” every day by Maria Barreto and her team. This involves a final quality check, inserting insoles and laces, stitching uppers to outsoles if necessary, polishing out scuffs, and filling scratches acquired during production, removing excess cement, trimming threads, and finally, adding the leather maple leaf tag with the embossed Mellow Walk logo. Finishing also assembles and labels the boxes then packs the shoes in tissue before Bob takes them back to the warehouse, part of the same building. Finishing still relies mainly on handwork and other than the sewing machine and buffers, the tools are simple (scissors, knife, sponge, cloth, wax crayon, label gun). Barreto gives design feedback to Silva about the samples. She is torn between wanting to please customers with new styles and new lasts, and knowing that customers will always want the classic best sellers. Andrew, Jeff, and Rob Violi, and especially Silva, Sullivan, and Hodgins, will be checking quality throughout first production. At the end of this phase, Sullivan and Silva can be confident that the production line can handle the Vanessa and they are now ready to integrate the Vanessa shoes and boots into the regular manufacturing schedule. On February 5, 2014, Violi announces that the Vanessa boot will be available later that spring, followed by a blog post in June that it will be available in August.⁵⁰³ Facebook posts in August show it coming off the assembly line (fig.43).⁵⁰⁴

Production and Custom Orders

Managing production is a complex system. Sullivan uses customized software to help her balance inventories of materials and finished products with new orders and work in process, while taking into account variables like staffing and equipment repairs. How this system is run, and the choices about what to keep in stock versus what to make available for custom order, impact the design.

⁵⁰³ Andrew Violi, “Introducing Vanessa,” Mellow Walk, accessed August 30, 2015, <http://www.mellowwalk.com/posts/introducing-vanessa/>; Mellow Walk, “Safety Meets Glamour with Mellow Walk’s New Vanessa.”

⁵⁰⁴ Mellow Walk, “Mellow Walk Footwear - Photos,” August 14, 2014, <https://www.facebook.com/MellowWalkFootwear/photos/a.198818593558056/559591844147394/?type=3&theater>.

The speed of production is tied to the design of the final product. Silva aims for a pattern that can be made efficiently, but if the shoes are made too quickly, the quality could suffer. If the final product is off balance, stitch lines are crooked, or the shoes are uncomfortable, the consumer's perception of the design will diminish. Based on previous experience elsewhere, Sullivan is experimenting with pacer boards in Lasting and Finishing. Typically, the workers are paid a flat, hourly rate, likely minimum wage or slightly higher, no matter what quantities they produce.⁵⁰⁵ Now, the Lasting line sets their own goals on the pacer board based on how much money they want to make. Everyone can track where they are in relation to that "perpetual goal." Sullivan now knows that it takes 62 seconds for a shoe to make it through Lasting. If it takes much longer, she will investigate, and if the quality suffers, then more quality control is necessary.

Sullivan speaks about the functions of the factory as distinct places (the factory, the office, the warehouse, the sewing line, etc.), suggesting separate parts that must work together. Listening to her made me think about the factory as one big machine with inputs and outputs. The orders and raw materials go in and the finished shoes come out. Sullivan consults first with Natasha on the status of new orders and on Thursday nights, "put[s] a ticket into the factory" and "five to six weeks later, it will come out."

The company runs an "in-stock program," which means they keep a continuous supply of popular models so that retailers can quickly replenish when they are low on sizes and styles. This is one of the distinguishing features of local production according to Mellow Walk. When ordering from Asia, retailers order by the container load, which means that if they run out of a certain size or just need a few pairs of a certain model, they still have to invest in huge quantities. Furthermore, it takes five to six weeks for the shipment to cross the ocean (not including manufacturing) which is the equivalent amount of time that Mellow Walk can fulfill a custom order. If shoes are in stock at Mellow Walk, the design is likely to succeed because it is easy to source and retailers can confidently keep it on display. Silva believes that retailers have conservative tastes, something alluded to by Colantonio, Mister Safety Managing Director, when he spoke about buyers as barriers to the styles that a younger generation of sales staff could easily sell. These factors influence the reproduction of more conservative styles.

Mellow Walk is nevertheless flexible in its production schedule. During an apparent national shortage of Mellow Walk Mary Janes, Violi received enough on-line requests from individual customers that he stopped production to make 24 pairs for the first people to order

⁵⁰⁵ The hourly rate estimate is based on a job description posted by Mellow Walk during the time of this study but does not represent all jobs in the factory or take into account seniority or responsibility.

them.⁵⁰⁶ Retailers who want custom orders can request as few as 36 pairs of any style. Four months after a new line has been in regular production, Mellow Walk decides which two models to keep manufacturing and which should be available by custom order only. So far, the Vanessa shoe and engineer boot have made it to the in-stock program but not the lace up boot.

Communication (fig.44)

How the brand and products are represented and communicated influences the design and its reception by retailers, media, and the public. Since Violi is involved in the early concept development for the Vanessa, he can articulate the design vision and how it fits the Mellow Walk brand and corporate narrative. His language differs slightly from Silva's but the overall message about the final product is consistent. Their ability to verbalize what the product is about, the target audience, and intended use, is far more sophisticated than that of anyone else I spoke with, though an interview with Jeff and one of his sales team might change this observation.

As Violi presents the new line through photographs, texts, and videos, he is sharing an interpretation of the design that he hopes will ultimately influence customers to buy the product. His words help to inscribe his vision in those images and in the object. In the process, customers may pick up some of that product and brand positioning and use it in their own interpretation of the Vanessa. In turn, this will influence how they appropriate the footwear, and how they contribute to circulating messages about the product through interactions with co-workers, friends, and family, customer reviews, and on-line postings. Violi recognizes that two versions of Mellow Walk co-exist and complement each other: how customers have come to define Mellow Walk, and how Mellow Walk has defined itself. The Vanessa exists then as a "Mellow Walk shoe," a concept that Violi believes customers recognize based on comfort, fit, and brand identity.

As a medium-sized company without a huge marketing budget, Violi uses some traditional advertising and takes full advantage of social media, as well as inviting media exposure by hosting events in the factory. In the past, Mellow Walk has created simple advertising that establishes the main messages of the brand. Billboards promoting a tour with Mister Safety in southern Ontario (fig.45) sum up the approach: orange background, white logo and text, photograph of one men's and one women's shoe (almost identical at first glance), and slogans: "Trust the original for comfort and safety;" and "Canadian made comfort" next to what

⁵⁰⁶ Violi, "Summer's Here and so Is Our Mary-Jane Safety Shoe."

looks like an official stamp - the red maple leaf surrounded by the words “Made in Canada” and “Proudly since 1993.”⁵⁰⁷ “Give your tired, sore feet the boot” is the biggest call to action, presented in an upper case font mimicking spray paint and stencil, an allusion to safety notices found in construction and other work sites. Ironically, Mellow Walk makes few boots. Comfort, safety, Canada, and original are the key messages. In Quebec, the cumbersome translation, “Dites adieu à vos pieds fatigués et endoloris” was updated to a more direct checklist: “sécurité, confort, style.” The shoes pictured help to announce Mellow Walk’s niche market and help to bridge the world of heavy-duty work and big safety boots with the world of light industry and casual shoes. This framework is converted to large posters for store windows and to pull-up banners and display systems for trade shows. While none of these print materials have been updated yet to feature the Vanessa, the boots do grace the cover of Mellow Walk’s 2015 sales catalogue (fig.46). Turned slightly to the side, the pair of boots fills the orange cover, with the Mellow Walk word mark printed boldly over them in white. This clean layout, without the cursive “M” logo and featuring only one slogan, “Handcrafted in Canada since 1993,” signals a new design direction. The “2015 Safety Footwear Collection” is about craft, quality, tradition, fashion, and Canada. Design is elevated, safety is almost an afterthought, and comfort is left to the inside of the catalogue.

Violi uses the web site to speak primarily to end-users (rather than the retailers) about the company, the products, and where to buy them. This is where the ‘Made in Canada’ story is elaborated with explanations of why Mellow Walk manufactures in Canada when others gave up. As Violi puts it, part of their competitive edge is the nice Canadian family business story.⁵⁰⁸ Mellow Walk’s strategy to get customers on board involves explaining where shoes come from and how they are made.⁵⁰⁹ The website emphasizes family, commitment, and real people, with photographs of the “shoemakers,” biographies of the “leadership” and a shot of the entire team in the warehouse (fig.7). Corporate values like durability and longevity are embodied in the product: the company toughs it out in Canada; the employees dedicate their entire careers to Mellow Walk; the footwear is good quality and will last. Customers can expect the same kind of personal service and commitment that the family-run company shows its employees.

⁵⁰⁷ Mellow Walk, “Mellow Walk Footwear - Photos - Mellow Walk’s Billboard in Scarborough,” July 6, 2012, <https://www.facebook.com/MellowWalkFootwear/photos/a.198818593558056/262587460514502/?type=3&theater>.

⁵⁰⁸ Chris Allen, *Realtor Chris Allen Interviews President Andrew Violi of Mellow Walk Footwear*, accessed August 31, 2015, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I4RzXi67NE>.

⁵⁰⁹ Chris Allen.

In the women's collection presented on the web site (fig.9), the Vanessa boot truly stands out among the black shoes (one pair of red), and several pairs of boots (one Aussie-style and a lace-up boot). In general, the clunky-ness of the steel toe and thick sole are less noticeable in the boots, while the shoes are more difficult to disguise and blend in the fashion market. The Vanessa heel is slightly higher and the shoe appears somewhat more elegant than the rest of the Mellow Walk collection. The web site product descriptions are minimal, giving safety standards, material and construction details, along with suggestions for what industries they are appropriate. The Vanessa is intended for "light manufacturing, management, logistics, warehousing, transportation, automotive [and] hydro."⁵¹⁰

The blog is where Violi's journalism training comes into its own. His writing offers more context, from the serious to the playful, for the values associated with Mellow Walk products. This includes company news like the visit from the Minister of Finance Jim Flaherty; product updates and tips on how to choose safety shoes; competitions for custom shoes; "Tuesday mail days;" interviews with Silva; company events like employee milestones, fundraisers, and factory visits from the Easter Bunny; plus the occasional opinion piece on topics like youth employment. It is on the blog that Violi introduces the Vanessa boot:

Ladies, meet Vanessa! She is our latest and we think our prettiest boot from the workshop of Mellow Walk's in-house designer, Nelson Gonçalves Silva. Evoking the classic motorcycle boot, with an upper made from our exclusive Kashmir-milled leather, and a sole designed in Italy, Vanessa walks down the street with the quiet confidence that comes with good looks. Nobody needs to know that she's also got you covered for light industrial use. We are very excited about Vanessa. So whether you wear safety shoes or not, you will want to get your hands on a pair.⁵¹¹

This description sets up the Vanessa as pretty, exotic, a little bit wild and definitely street worthy, an unusual combination for a safety boot. While 'Kashmir-milled' suggests eastern origins, the leather is milled in Mexico to make it suppler and the added descriptor may be more of a reference to the softness of cashmere. The Vanessa is linked to Italy, and the suggestion that the designer, whose European name has been spelled out in full, has a workshop, connects the boots to craftsmanship and tradition beyond any claims that could be made by a Canadian manufacturer (Silva's "workshop" is an office space shared with Violi, Sullivan, and Hodgins). This is a Canadian safety boot in disguise!

⁵¹⁰ Violi, "Vanessa 402109 (In Stock)."

⁵¹¹ Violi, "Introducing Vanessa."

The Vanessa shoe is presented as the pump with the perfectly sized heel that can be worn with anything in the office, from trousers to pencil skirts. According to the account manager Jessica, it “is a great fashion shoe for architects, office workers, health and safety reps and others who need to be able to move from the office to the factory floor without changing footwear.”⁵¹² Violi describes the Vanessa line as elegant and glamorous, “with beautiful heel detailing.”⁵¹³ The Vanessa is not only “feminine,” but also referred to as “she,” a seductress whose “allure” is so powerful she attracts those who do not even need safety shoes.⁵¹⁴

One of Violi’s marketing strategies is “building a community of Mellow Walkers” through word of mouth and repeat business.⁵¹⁵ He places great importance on customer service. He personally answers emails and messages through the web site and social media. Every product page and blog entry features reviews and conversations between customers and the company president, ranging from praise and excitement about the new line, to problems that Violi is able to solve (where they can be purchased, how to relieve pinching from the steel toe) and some that he cannot (why one boot was shinier than the other). He uses Facebook and Twitter to further the corporate personality with more competitions, photographs, and news stories on the shoe industry, manufacturing, trade, technologies, maker communities, and more. Mellow Walk comes across as a company that is current and in touch with its customers.

The Vanessa line was featured in a Mellow Walk mockumentary launched in May 2015, produced by the marketing agency Clever Samurai in Mississauga and promoted online by the international marketing firm Emerse, based in Sweden, England, and Hong Kong. Mainstream news distributors picked up on the story and the hilarious two-minute video had over 10,000 views in three months. The video is filmed at the factory and features all of the senior staff. The premise is that Mellow Walk wants to change the perception that safety shoes have to be ugly. In doing so, the company created footwear that is so attractive, it is distracting to the point of being unsafe. Bob from shipping is so busy looking at his feet he crashes his forklift. The guy in the kitchen is mesmerized by his shoes and pours coffee on the floor. Jessica in sales refuses to take off her Vanessa boots, despite the neck brace caused by a shoe incident. Mellow Walk’s conservative safety shoes have become dangerous and Violi’s attempts to go back to ugly footwear are unsuccessful. He resolves to keep making *beautiful*, comfortable, safety shoes. A

⁵¹² Andrew Violi, “Our Vanessa Pump Goes Where You Go,” Mellow Walk, accessed August 30, 2015, <http://www.mellowwalk.com/posts/our-vanessa-pump-goes-where-you-go/>.

⁵¹³ Mellow Walk, “Safety Meets Glamour with Mellow Walk’s New Vanessa.”

⁵¹⁴ Mellow Walk.

⁵¹⁵ Chris Allen, *Realtor Chris Allen Interviews President Andrew Violi of Mellow Walk Footwear*.

follow up promotional “safety card” was developed to warn customers about the “distractingly good-looking safety shoes” (fig.47).

The video’s opening sequence announces a shift in design strategy. Mellow Walk is officially erasing the style boundaries that limit where safety shoes can be worn: “Since 1993, Mellow Walk has handcrafted comfortable safety shoes;” “Now, they’re making attractive designs for outside the workplace.” The company continues to make comfortable, quality shoes, but now they do not have to be removed at the end of the workday. What started as a design tactic for the Vanessa may have become a broader Mellow Walk strategy. Customers have long worn their Mellow Walk shoes outside of work but the Vanessa is the first line to intentionally encourage this behaviour.

Distribution (figs.48, 49)

Outside of this on-line marketing, Mellow Walk has little control over the messaging around its products. However, the packaging, which is the only direct, physical link with the customer other than the shoes, provides another opportunity to sell the ‘Made in Canada’ story. The Mellow Walk shoebox is simple. The no non-sense design uses matte, two-colour printing on an unfinished brown cardboard. Well-placed finger holes on the sides make it easy to pull out from the shelf and lift the lid. The top, front, and sides are Mellow Walk orange with the white name, logo, maple leaf stamp, and slogan, “Trust the original for safety and comfort.” The web site and “Comfort made in Canada” are on one end, while “Give your tired, sore feet the boot!” is printed on the back. The box prioritizes English while French is printed in more awkward locations. Never missing an opportunity to show how things are done behind the scenes, Mellow Walk published two videos about the box assembly, one of which is a competition among factory staff (blindfolded) and Violi to see who can build them fastest.⁵¹⁶

As other manufacturers do, Mellow Walk places a product label on the end of the box that faces out when stacked. This includes basic information like a photograph of the Vanessa, its name, product number, barcode, colour, size, safety ratings, and “Made in Canada” with a maple leaf. On previous models, Mellow Walk included a QR code so when shoppers scan the boxes with their smart phones, a video addresses them directly in the store: “Oh hey there, I’m Andrew Violi, and I see you’re looking at Daisy, our brand new ladies’ safety shoe. And like all of

⁵¹⁶ Mellow Walk, *Shoe Box Making Contest at Mellow Walk*, 2015, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4LV-doldmkk>.

our shoes, this one is made in Canada.” He gives a quick sales pitch and thanks customers for buying Canadian, an interesting strategy for big box retailers with few sales staff.⁵¹⁷

Inside the box, the boots have two labels. There is a stiff, black leather maple leaf with an embossed Mellow Walk “M” which is of high enough quality that customers might keep it. There is also a bilingual paper label with a summary of features. ‘Made in Canada’ is reinforced with a personal connection to a factory worker whose photograph and name are presented with an explanation that “each pair is handcrafted in Canada by over 40 skilled shoemakers, including Gladys” (fig.50).

This may help Mellow Walk to connect with the consumer in the store and when they unpack the shoes at home, but manufacturers still have little control over how their products are displayed. Mellow Walk shoes risk getting lost among the competition. In a store like Mister Safety, it can be difficult to differentiate brands in a wall of over 50 black safety shoes (fig.51). There is little variation in cost, with more mainstream names like Doc Martin and Hush Puppies priced in the same range as the Mister Safety brand. Each gets a small shelf with a tiny label that conveys basic information and the brand logo, except for the Mister Safety shoes which get preferential treatment thanks to coloured labels and diagrams. Nowhere does it indicate where any of the shoes are manufactured. Colantonio would say that ‘Made in Canada’ is a bonus and not a selling feature (the Mister Safety brand shoes are made offshore). The boxes are kept in the back and Mellow Walk’s labels are removed, making the company’s storytelling efforts pointless in this context. It is up to the customer to look inside the shoe to see where it is made. In this scenario, Mellow Walk has to count on its good relationship with the retailer and hope that it includes great customer service and product knowledge.

In big chains like Mark’s, which include all kinds of clothing, footwear, and accessories, the customer service is much poorer and the shopper is left to fend for themselves. Products are displayed with others on long shelves over stacks of boxes that the customer is expected to search through on their own (fig.52). The displays become messy quickly and the customer experience is far less personal than in the smaller shoe and safety stores. This is the setting for Mellow Walk’s packaging to speak on behalf of the company. The Mellow Walk boxes are attractive and appropriate to the product, but they are subdued and almost dull in comparison to the competition. Other brands rely on glossy boxes covered in photographs, text and over-the-top graphics. The Mellow Walk boxes appear classier than the neighbouring pink and black Moxie Trades brand, or the yellow and black Tarantulas next to the men’s lines, but they risk

⁵¹⁷ Mellow Walk, *Mellow Walk Footwear - “Daisy” Line of Safety Shoes*, 2013, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fxw7vmzDs8s>.

being overlooked. The labels on the shelves include the full Mellow Walk logo, tag line, and “Made in Canada.”

The online positioning of products by retailers is inconsistent. Some promote certain brands with banner ads and photographs on their home page. Some retailers publicize their own Canadian history, but do nothing to promote ‘Made in Canada.’ Mark’s is a proudly Canadian, 30-year old company with close to 400 stores across the country. Its mission is being “committed to outfitting Canadians with the confidence to look and feel their best for life in Canada. Mark’s carries all the apparel necessary for the job of being Canadian.”⁵¹⁸ What that job looks like is not explained, but the clothing suggests it is casual, outdoorsy and somewhat conservative, not a stretch from the Mellow Walk brand. It would be logical to advertise Canadian-made products but there is no indication if any of Mark’s inventory is made in Canada. American distributors are more likely to celebrate domestic manufacturing and include “Made in Canada” in Mellow Walk product descriptions. The Canadian online distributor, Shoeme.ca, makes no indication of where the Vanessa comes from, while the American online retailer, Steel-toe-shoes.com, lists “Made in Canada” and provides a “Made in the USA” search filter. Steel-toe-shoes.com also creates a video of each shoe in rotation. Mellow Walk loses some control here too – the Vanessa shoe in particular shows glue and scuff marks.

In general, the retailers do not go out of their way to differentiate the products through display, online, or in the stores. Clusters of similar shoes give the impression of choice but unless a sales person understands the differences and shares that knowledge with the customer, the playing field is leveled through display. Much of the personality provided through packaging and marketing becomes invisible. The customer may have some pre-existing knowledge and brand awareness, but in the end, the products themselves may be all the customer has to base a decision on.

Retailers tend to categorize safety footwear by purpose as casual and dress, athletic, hiker, rubber, and 6” or 8” work boots, followed by more specific breakdowns by style, industry, and technical specification. When it comes to the Vanessa boot, there are some sportier lace-up work boots, leather combat, and steel-toe cowboy boots that look similar in the safety boot market. However, the only thing that comes close is the Moxie Trades Side-Zipper Motorcycle Boot (fig.53). The competitor product has an aluminum rather than steel toe, pebble finish, lace-up front, a number of straps and a hot pink Charlie’s Angels-esque logo. It does not exude the same sense of quality or classic design but retails for the same price. The closest competition

⁵¹⁸ Mark’s, “About Mark’s,” accessed August 31, 2015, <http://www.marks.com/shop/en/marks/AboutMarks>.

for the Vanessa shoe is still the Hush Puppies steel-toe Gems pump, the original product to which Mellow Walk felt it was losing market share (fig.56). While the Vanessa shoe is more of a subtle update on an existing product category, the Vanessa boot more closely resembles what is in the fashion market but is entirely new for the safety market.

Consumption (figs.55-59)

For “Mellow Walkers” who do not communicate with Violi, the retailer is the primary intermediary. Questions, complaints, returns, and requests all funnel through the sales staff to the buyers and on to Mellow Walk. The feedback they receive in the store is immediate, quantitative (inventories of what sells) and qualitative (anecdotal information about fit, style, price, etc.). Colantonio talks about the influence of the consumer on what products they carry: “ultimately, the people decide, the customers decide.” According to Colantonio, what makes a shoe design successful is closer to magic than science, and knowing what to buy is based on his “feeling of what can sell.” He relies on the instincts of sales people who have sold thousands of shoes, and on testing new models in stores.

I interviewed a new Mellow Walk customer who purchased the Vanessa boot in late 2014. Bonnie McCabe does not altogether fit the target audience description. McCabe is a bit older and is not starting a career in management or light industry. She works in costume for film and television and runs her own fashion businesses. She once designed sandals in Indonesia, and likely has more insight into the world of fashion and shoe manufacturing than most Mellow Walk customers. She is not required to wear safety boots at work, but chose to out of concern for her own well being. She is influenced in part by her boss who wears safety boots, and she is cautious about the big dye pots she lifts and the heavy items others carry through her area. A year ago, she spilled boiling water at work and suffered burns inside her running shoes. The film union does not mandate safety boots for her position, although the theatre union she also belongs to, does in other contexts. She is unaware of any potential rebates from the unions and is not particularly concerned with being reimbursed. She remembers paying around \$165 for the Vanessa boots, an excellent investment in her opinion given how much she loves them. They are much cheaper than equivalent footwear in the fashion market (she references Fryes at \$300) and slightly less than the Aussie steel-toe boots (\$180) that she finds uncomfortable but would have bought otherwise.

The Vanessas are the first safety boots McCabe has ever owned (she used to borrow safety shoes if she was required to wear them). There was no urgency to McCabe’s decision and she took her time finding the right pair. She went into the experience assuming that all

safety footwear is ugly and that the only fashionable option would be the Aussie boots. She is a customer prepared to take style over comfort. Mark's was the only store she could think of so she visited the large outlet near her house in the east end of Toronto. It did not take long for the Vanessa to catch her attention. Her first impression was, "oh my god, they're fantastic...they're the only cool boots there." She sums them up as a "funky motorcycle boot, very cool, with a steel toe for safety." She remembers nothing about how they were displayed or packaged. They were out of the box, on the shelf with the rest of the shoes, and McCabe had to look for a size eight which neither she nor the staff could find. She spent the next several months visiting Mark's whenever she passed one. She could not find the Vanessas, let alone the right size. She eventually returned to the original store, where the size eights had been restocked, and discovered that they were too large. A size 7.5 fit perfectly. This story is significant for McCabe because had the sales staff known anything about the product in the first place, they would have recommended a smaller size. It is also significant because in McCabe's experience, the sizing for shoes and apparel made in Asia does not fit North Americans. Her true size is 7.5 but she has not worn a 7.5 shoe for years. The more accurate sizing of Mellow Walk's lasts became an indicator of Canadian design for her. McCabe describes trying the boots:

I put them on and they were possibly the most comfortable boot that I've ever put on in my life. The uppers are made out of a really soft leather and really pliable. I find with most of my boots, the Fries, the leather's so hard, it takes so long to break in. You just about die, you know? And the fit was perfect and the fact that I took a half size smaller made me happy too. And they're light, they're really light and flexible, so your feet are comfortable all day long. And then I wore them to work and everybody loved them.

McCabe's reference point for the Vanessas are the Frye boots she owns, the same reference point that Silva and Violi used for design inspiration. The Fries cost twice as much but are less satisfactory in some regards. The psychology of wearing a smaller size and being complimented by colleagues makes her feel positively toward the boots. As predicted by Mellow Walk, the comfort is a defining feature. McCabe took her running shoes and athletic insoles to work in case the boots made her feet sore but she did not need them. She has since worn the Vanessas every day at work with little evidence of wear.

McCabe sees the boots as extensions of her own style, some of the "basics" in her eclectic and edgy "bo-yo" wardrobe. She likes to combine boots and shorts and would happily wear the Vanessas outside of work if they were not so "wrecked" from dying, painting and breaking down costumes and textiles (fig.60). Seven months in, McCabe's boots look well loved. They have splashes of paint on the toes and have turned a lighter shade of black with

creases where McCabe's feet bend. They blend with the old t-shirts, stretchy pants and big overalls she wears at work. The Vanessas are now McCabe's, reflecting her style and her work. She has done nothing to prevent the staining, no cleaning, polishing, or spraying. They are work boots after all, she explains. When this pair eventually wears out, she intends to replace them with the same model.⁵¹⁹

McCabe contributes to the circulation of images and ideas about Vanessa. As a self-described "fashionista," McCabe's style has influence at work. McCabe observes a kind of film set style ("a lot of girls that like to look cool on set") and her co-workers soon pick up on the Vanessas and buy their own. McCabe also has ideas for Mellow Walk – a square toe, a distressed brown leather, more "cool stuff." She has no objection to "borrowing" in design and hopes that Mellow Walk keeps Frye as its model. She feels that manufacturers and stores do listen to the consumer and that her buying preferences have influence.

McCabe had never heard of Mellow Walk before she bought the boots and could not remember the brand name at the time of the interview. However, as a first time buyer, she was interested to know more about their product line, including the men's shoes, and intended to follow up by looking at their web site. McCabe had been exposed to none of the marketing materials yet her interpretation of the Vanessa boot was largely what Violi and Silva intended. Her mind immediately jumped to the Frye boot which was the original design inspiration. For McCabe, the Vanessa is easily decoded within the fashion world and in reference to what it is not: the other safety shoes available at Mark's. The Frye boot reading made the Vanessa instantly familiar and appealing to McCabe, and it helped her see the boot as a fashion choice that matched her style in and outside of work.

Where the Mellow Walk message is lost is the origin story. McCabe had no idea that the boots were made in Canada despite all the labelling and packaging. McCabe manufactures her own lines of clothing and accessories in Indonesia and is well aware that the low costs of offshore manufacturing make things possible that she cannot do at home. For this reason, she was impressed that Mellow Walk could manufacture in Canada and sell for such a low price but wondered how they could make any profit. McCabe says she is not influenced by where things are made when shopping for anything (clothing, shoes, household goods, etc.). At the same time, she has distinct ideas about production as it relates to place. After learning that the boots were made in Canada, she assumed that all the materials were Canadian, especially the leather which was a major selling point for her: "Leather is one of our products. It's a really soft, soft hide. I mean yeah, I hope it's Canada." She was surprised to find out the leather is Mexican.

⁵¹⁹ As of 2019, McCabe has purchased two more pairs.

When I mentioned that the soles were made in Germany (mistakenly—I later found out they were made in Italy) she responded that they must be very good quality. When I mentioned that the lasts were American (in error, the lasts are German), she said that this would explain why the sizing was more accurate than shoes imported from Asia.

McCabe will probably dispose of her boots once she has worn them out, but other Mellow Walk customers sell their used and almost new shoes online, contributing in a different way to the circulation of ideas about Mellow Walk. Most often, the ads are recycled material, with technical descriptions cut and paste from Mellow Walk or other web sites. The photographs provide a glimpse into the houses where the sellers live.

5. Mellow Walk - Interviewee Biographies

Fig.62



Andrew Violi, President⁵²⁰

"All of my job is creative. I get to assist in product development. I get to influence what happens in production and how production flows. I'm sort of the brand manager, so I get to make sure I'm happy with how the brand reflects in the packaging. That's what makes my job fun, I think, is that there's so many elements that are creative."

Born: Canada

Languages: English

Lived in: Canada

Family connections: Violi co-owns the company with his brother, Jeff Violi (Managing Director of Sales). Their cousin, Rob Violi, is CFO. Violi's father, Aldo Violi, was an

accountant who co-founded Mellow Walk with shoemaker Gino Mellozzi in 1993. Mellozzi passed away in 2001 and Aldo Violi has since retired though he continues to visit the factory.

Role: Violi sees his responsibilities primarily as brand direction, product development, innovation in production, and niche market identification. He works closely with the designer to establish the look and feel of Mellow Walk, to understand current trends, and develop new product ideas. He works with local creative agencies on advertising. He travels internationally to visit trade shows and foreign clients. Violi is literally the voice of Mellow Walk—he is the principal author of the company blog and social media, and corresponds directly with customers.

History at Mellow Walk: Before becoming President in 2013, Violi was Managing Director of Marketing from 2005-2012.

Education: MBA, Corporate Communications (Royal Roads University), Certificate, Radio Broadcasting, Broadcast Journalism (Humber College), BA, Political Science (Trent University).

Work experience: Prior to working at Mellow Walk, Violi had experience in communications and marketing for health and human resource consulting.

Related experience and interests: Violi has been a member of various professional committees related to shoes and safety footwear. He was recognized in the "Top 40 Under 40 Italian Canadians in 2010" and in the 2011 publication, *The Next Generation Made in Canada: The Italian Way*.⁵²¹

⁵²⁰ Interview with the author December 2013.

"Andrew Violi," *LinkedIn*, accessed August 11, 2015, <https://ca.linkedin.com/in/andrewvioli>.

Mellow Walk, "Andrew Violi."

⁵²¹ Italian Cultural Institute, *The Next Generation Made in Canada: The Italian Way*. Mansfield Press Inc., 2011.

Fig.63



Nelson Silva, Footwear Design Director⁵²²

“The creative part is the designing—creative problem solving—because this boot isn’t hitting the runways anytime soon. The creativity is integrated into... making this a comfortable boot that has a steel toe and still looks like a street boot.”

Born: Canada

Languages: English, Portuguese

Lived in: Canada, Italy

Role: Silva considers the most important part of his job to be the efficient integration of design, pattern, and sourcing of materials and components. He is responsible for quality control, sample coordination, brand direction, research, and development. Pattern making and time management are two of the most needed skills for his job.

History at Mellow Walk: Silva started in his current role at Mellow Walk in 2010. The company supported his training in Italy.

Education: Pattern Making and Technical Design, Footwear Design (Ars Sutoria, Milan), Bachelor of Design, Industrial Design (Ontario College of Art and Design, Toronto).

Work experience: Silva was Senior Footwear Designer at RMP Athletic Locker where he designed shoes for mass production in China for eight years (Mississauga). He worked as a Shoe Maker at Jitter Bug Boy Original Footwear where he created handmade custom shoes for theatre for five months (Toronto) before getting the position at Mellow Walk.

Related experience and interests: Silva comes from a family of makers and entrepreneurs. His great grandfather was a cobbler in the countryside of Portugal. His mother is a seamstress and sample maker and his parents run a small family bakery where Silva grew up decorating cakes. Silva’s interests in fashion, art, colour and proportions, traditions of shoemaking and issues of equity, influence his design work in terms of the aesthetics of the final product, as well as how manufacturing is influenced by craft and hierarchies within production.

⁵²² Interview with the author January 2014. Advance questionnaire and interview with the author, January 2014.

“Nelson Silva,” *LinkedIn*, accessed August 11, 2015, <https://ca.linkedin.com/pub/nelson-silva/2/22/b92>. Mellow Walk, “Nelson Silva.”

Fig.64



Diana Sullivan, Plant Manager⁵²³

"[the Vanessa is] probably the most fashionable [shoe] that we've made. Which is nice to see, a little bit more fashion for the safety line."

Born: Canada

Lived in: Canada

Language: English

Family connections: Sullivan's husband, Bob, is in charge of shipping at Mellow Walk.

Role: Sullivan sees her principal responsibilities as managing manufacturing processes, purchasing,

planning, and quality control. She is also involved in human resources, inventory, shipping and customs. Her priorities are issues of timing, logistics, efficiencies, production flows, raw materials, processing orders and balancing in-stock with in-process inventory. She sees experience in the shoe industry and organizational skills as key to her position.

History at Mellow Walk: Sullivan has been Plant Manager at Mellow Walk since 2009.

Education: Business Diploma, Accounting (Georgian College). Despite her training in business, Sullivan says she learned everything on the job.

Work experience: Sullivan held similar positions at Terra Footwear Ltd. for 23 years where she was Plant Manager, Industrial Engineer, and Assistant Plant Manager. She left Terra Footwear in 2008 after the company was hit by the recession and was forced to shut one of its two Canadian factories and start importing more.

Related experience and interests: Sullivan has close to 30 years of experience in the Ontario shoe industry and is well informed about how the business has changed and how global supply chains work. She made a work trip to Chinese factories in 1996.

⁵²³ Interview with the author, January 2014.

"Diana Sullivan," *LinkedIn*, accessed August 11, 2015, <https://ca.linkedin.com/pub/Sullivan-sullivan/27/930/815>.

Fig.65



Carol Padda, Supervisor, Cutting⁵²⁴

"It all depends on the leather. It starts with the leather... Everything starts with me."

Born: India

Lived in: India, England, Canada

Language: mostly English

Role: As supervisor, Padda is in charge of a section of the line as well as her own workstation. Padda does all of the cutting (leather, insoles, sponge, etc.) for an average of 1,800 pairs of shoes per week. She operates the computer numerically controlled (CNC) machine using patterns supplied by Silva, and gives feedback on the quality of leather to Sullivan and Silva. The most

important part of Padda's job is knowing how to cut efficiently, knowing the leather, and placing different pattern pieces in the most appropriate locations on the hide.

History at Mellow Walk: Padda was one of the first employees at Mellow Walk. She has been there for 20 years, but has known Aldo Violi for 37 years. She met both Aldo Violi and Gino Mellozzi at Ritter Shoes where they worked together until the company went bankrupt. At Mellow Walk, Padda worked in stamping before becoming a supervisor. After eight years as supervisor, she was given responsibility for the CNC cutter.

Education: Padda has no formal training, but learned everything on the job. She has worked in almost every department of a shoe factory including cutting, casing, styling, marking, fitting, and sewing. She regrets turning down Aldo Violi's offer to train her in lasting.

Related experience and interests: Padda's first job in Canada was at the Ritter Shoe Company, starting in 1975. She held a number of positions there including preparation, cutting, stamping, splitting, and decoration. It was at Ritter Shoes that Padda started working with leather. Padda is the only one of her family to work in shoe manufacturing. The rest of her family owns businesses, some in clothing. Padda's interests outside of work involve going to the gym to stay fit for her job, which requires standing all day. She no longer crochets or sews because she prefers to spend time with her six grandchildren.

⁵²⁴ Interview with the author, February 2014.

Fig.66



Arminda Romeiro, Sewing Machine Operator and Sample Maker, Fitting⁵²⁵

"I don't even bother trying something else because I sew. That's my passion. I love sewing."

Born: Azores, Portugal

Lived in: Portugal, Canada

Language: Portuguese, English

Family connections: Romeiro's daughter, Jennifer, also works in Fitting.

Role: Romeiro pieces together and sews the leather uppers following the markers provided by Silva on the pieces cut by Padda. Sometimes she sews an entire upper, sometimes she only sews one component. She

also works with Silva and Torres to make prototypes and samples. Experience, responsibility, focus, and skill in sewing leather, using the sewing machines, and understanding the patterns are the most important requirements for her job. Hard work and quality are strongly valued in her position.

History at Mellow Walk: Romeiro has worked at Mellow Walk for twelve years and plans to work there until her retirement.

Education: Romeiro has no formal education and learned everything on the job.

Work experience: Romeiro has 28 years of experience in the shoe industry. When she first arrived in Canada, Romeiro worked in a factory packing pasta but could not tolerate the smell. When she learned from a friend who was doing table work at Topaz Shoes that there was an opening in sewing, she left the pasta factory the next day. She worked at Topaz Shoes (founded in 1976 in Toronto) before production was moved to Latvia due to lower manufacturing costs.⁵²⁶ After Topaz Shoes closed, Romeiro and many of her colleagues found employment at Mellow Walk because it was the last shoe factory in the area. Romeiro contemplated other work but likes the shoe industry too much to leave.

Related experience and interests: Romeiro used to knit and crochet but no longer has the patience for these hobbies.

⁵²⁵ Interview with the author, February 2014.

⁵²⁶ The Baltic Times, "New Footwear Factory Launched in Ventspils," *The Baltic Times*, January 20, 2001, <https://www.baltictimes.com/news/articles/727/>.

Fig.67



Teresa Torres, Supervisor, Fitting⁵²⁷

"I love, I love making shoes."

Born: Ecuador

Lived in: Ecuador, Canada

Language: Spanish, English

Role: Torres sews uppers and makes sure that her department sews close to 2,000 pairs of shoes a week. She works with other supervisors to solve problems and manage repairs. Torres loves to make samples and works closely with Romeiro, Silva, and Sullivan on samples and fit trials.

History at Mellow Walk: Torres has worked at Mellow Walk for 15 years and plans to retire from there.

Education: Torres has no formal training and learned everything on the job.

Work experience: Torres has almost 39 years of experience in the shoe industry. She worked at Olympia Shoes in Toronto before it closed and then moved to Mellow Walk. Olympia specialized in dressy shoes and boots. Because of the number of new shoes they were designing, Torres was able to work on one or two samples a day.

Related experience and interests: Torres comes from a shoe-making family in Ecuador. She first started making shoes with her brothers and sisters for the family businesses when she was 12 or 13 years old. The shoes were all made by hand at that time.

⁵²⁷ Interview with the author, February 2014.

Fig.68



Manuel Boita, Sole Layer, Lasting⁵²⁸

"The craft of making the sample, the art...The design is still abstract, the shoe is tangible. The combination of the two makes the whole thing, the design."

Born: Portugal

Lived in: Portugal, Canada

Language: Portuguese, some English

History at Mellow Walk: Boita has been working at Mellow Walk since 2012.

Role: Boita is almost at the end of the lasting line. His job involves aligning the sole with the upper quickly and accurately before positioning it in a pneumatic sole press where extreme pressure solidifies the sole in place. He repeats this one shoe at a time, up to 800 times a day. His job requires a measure of quality control, but he goes further and assesses the end product for issues that occurred earlier in the production line.

Education: Boita took a course in quality control in Portugal, and otherwise has learned everything on the job. He believes that the only way to become a shoemaker is by watching and correcting each others' mistakes. He benefited from mentors who taught him the subtleties of making shoes better, and he likes to share his knowledge with others who haven't had the same experiences.

Work experience: Boita considers himself a shoemaker, a title he is proud of though he said that some would consider that title downplaying his skill set. He has a great deal of experience and is very knowledgeable about the industry from multiple perspectives – shoemaker, factory worker, and plant manager. Boita comes from Bendita, the third largest shoe centre in Portugal. When Boita was 14 years old, he began working in a small shoe studio that employed 15 people. Groups of small companies started joining together to make bigger factories and in 1971, at age 17, Boita's studio was absorbed into a factory of 300 people. His first job was die cutting leather. In 1973, he enrolled in the army where he spent 27 months. His cousin, who had been one of 12 owners of a large shoe factory, opened a smaller facility and invited Boita to join him as supervisor of cutting, and later as supervisor of cutting and sewing. Within three years, Boita had assumed the role of general plant manager, a position he kept until 1986. He was invited to work at a technically advanced plastics factory that made everything from buckets to injection-molded soles. For two years, Boita was in charge of a sewing department of 80 people. He then joined his brothers who had just created a new Goodyear Welt factory that produced high-end shoes for a French brand.⁵²⁹ He stayed there for two years before moving to Canada where his wife's sister was already living. He spent the first few months in Canada building cabinets and working in renovations. One of his co-workers was wearing a pair of Mellow Walk shoes and Boita realized they were made in Toronto so he investigated,

⁵²⁸ Interview with the author, translated by Nelson Silva, January 2014.

"Manuel Boita," *LinkedIn*, accessed August 11, 2015, <https://ca.linkedin.com/pub/Boita-boita/65/4a4/429/en>.

⁵²⁹ Goodyear Welt refers to the construction of the sole. The welt is a piece of leather (or other material) that connects the outsole to the upper. One edge of the welt is stitched to the outside edge of the outsole (the stitching is visible on the sole of the shoe) and the other edge is stitched to the outsole. The insole and interior construction of the shoe are left free, meaning the seam is less likely to be felt and less likely to let water in. The soles can also be more easily replaced. This is a more labour intensive process characteristic of more expensive shoes.

leading to a job. He currently has a second job working in a restaurant.

Related experience and interests: Time permitting and with access to the right tools, Boita would spend more time working on shoe projects in the evening. At the time of the interview, he was fixing a pair of friend's shoes. He's always thinking about shoes!

Fig.69



Maria Barreto, Supervisor, Finishing⁵³⁰

*"You can go see many shoes, but I go to see my shoes."
(on visiting Mark's)*

Born: Madeira, Portugal

Lived in: Portugal, Canada

Language: Portuguese, some English

Role: Barreto is in charge of the Finishing department where people stitch soles, clean, remove excess glue and threads, fix scuffs, insert the laces and insoles, add the maple leaf tag, assemble boxes, and pack the shoes in boxes before they are taken to the warehouse next door. Barreto packs between 300 and 400 pairs of shoes a day. She is the last person to look at the shoes and has to

make sure they look ok.

History at Mellow Walk: Barreto started working at Mellow Walk in 1992, before the company officially opened its doors. Barreto had a close relationship with both of the original Mellow Walk owners, Gino Melozzi and Aldo Violi, and worked with them at Ritter Shoes. Melozzi personally invited her to work at Mellow Walk. She retired in July 2015.

Education: Barreto did not go to school in Canada. She learned everything on the job, including some English. She learned a variety of roles by filling in for people when they were away, but stayed in Finishing because she never had a chance to learn sewing.

Work experience: In Portugal, Barreto worked for a company where she embroidered textiles for wall hangings and furniture coverings based on patterns. Barreto moved to Canada in 1971 at the age of 21 where she began a 42-year-long career in shoe manufacturing. Through a friend of her aunt's who worked for Immigration and who helped Portuguese and other newcomers find jobs, Barreto got a position at Dora Shoes (Toronto) in 1972 and worked there for 14.5 years. When Dora Shoes closed, Barreto moved to Ritter Shoes (Scarborough) where she worked from 1986 to 1992. When Ritter closed, she moved to Mellow Walk, supplementing her original part-time position with another part-time job in a nursing home for three months.

Related experience and interests: Barreto still embroiders at home for fun.

⁵³⁰ Interview with the author, February 2014.

John Colantonio, Managing Director, Mister Safety Shoes Inc.⁵³¹

“You can’t have something work unless it’s the right design. So when it comes to the footwear, there’s a lot that needs to go into the design because there’s a lot that could go wrong.”

Born: Canada

Lived in: Canada

Language: English, Italian

Family connections: Mister Safety started as a family company. Colantonio’s mother opened a family shoe store in 1969. In 1973, his father left his job at the Construction Safety Association of Ontario as an instructor for Italian-speaking workers, and they converted the store to sell safety footwear. Aldo Violi and Colantonio’s father had been friends since the early 1960s.

Role: Colantonio runs Mister Safety from the office in North York, overseeing close to 100 employees who work in the stores in Ontario and Alberta, the “shoe mobiles” (trucks that visit factories), the warehouse, and in administration. His principal tasks relate to sales, product selection, purchasing, and strategic planning. Mister Safety has its own brand of shoes and Colantonio works with suppliers to develop new products. The company does not hire designers and works mainly with overseas manufacturers in China, Vietnam, and Italy. Their target audiences are people who work outside (construction, landscaping, utilities) and inside (municipal, factories). Their market consists of both employers and employees.

History at Mellow Walk: Mister Safety has carried Mellow Walk shoes for many years and the retailer worked with Mellow Walk to develop new styles based on an American competitor in the 1990s. The two companies are geographically close and have maintained a friendly relationship now that the founders’ sons are running the businesses. Colantonio is known among the Mellow Walk staff because he drops by the factory.

Education: B.A.Sc., Electrical Engineering (University of Toronto)

Work experience: Colantonio worked part-time for the family business before he went to university. He worked for several years as an engineer at the University of Toronto and the Canadian Standards Association. His father wanted to sell the company but they decided that Colantonio should try it out first. He has been Managing Director of Mister Safety since 1985.

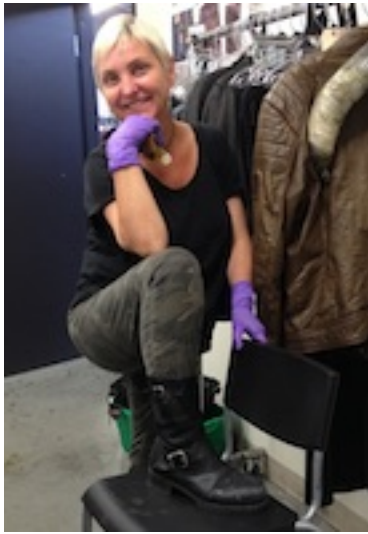
Related experience and interests: Colantonio’s enjoyment of team sports energizes him to work with others on common goals at work. His wife is a graphic designer.

⁵³¹ Interview with the author, July 2014.

“John Colantonio,” *LinkedIn*, accessed August 12, 2015, <https://ca.linkedin.com/pub/Colantonio-colantonio/16/279/bb5>

Fig.70 Photograph by Urs Dierker.

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Bonnie McCabe, Breakdown and Dying Artist for Film and Television, and Designer and Manufacturer for the Fashion and Garment Industry⁵³²

"[My style] is kind of eclectic. It's probably not what you'd consider high fashion. It's kind of like Bo-yo with a bit of breakdown. Bo-yo chic. Like Boho but different. Because Boho was a long time ago. It's got a little bit of funky new stuff. But my basics are my basics. And my shoes are my basics. My footwear always stays within a realm. I like boots, I like short shorts. I like kind of funky pieces."

Born: Canada

Lived in: Canada, Bali

Languages: English, Indonesian

Role: McCabe works in costume departments on film and television productions. She leads teams that alter clothing so that it appears

aged, distressed, used, etc. The breakdown and dying artists dye, cut, and modify fabrics to achieve the looks desired by the costume designer. She is a member of IATSE. The theatre local insists that members wear steel-toe boots whereas the film local does not. It was her choice to buy steel-toe boots for her current work in film.

History with Mellow Walk: This is the first pair of safety shoes that McCabe has owned. She had never heard of the Mellow Walk brand before but is pleased with the Vanessa boots and would replace them with more Mellow Walks once they wear out.

Consumer experience: McCabe purchased the Vanessa Boots in late 2014 from a Mark's in the east end of Toronto, several months after the boots had been on the market. Since then, she has worn them every day at work. She had anticipated that she would have to buy something "so ugly," but the Vanessa boots immediately caught her eye on the store shelves. She likes them for their instant and long-lasting comfort, lightness, flexibility, quality of leather, and their "funky motorcycle boot, very cool" style.

Education: Fashion Design (International Academy of Design & Technology); Fashion Apparel, Management and Manufacturing (George Brown College)

Work experience: McCabe originally worked as a production manager in a number of small to medium-sized clothing companies, doing everything from design to running factories. She moved to Bali where she established her own company producing for other brands and designing her own lines of silk-screened, beaded, dyed t-shirts and other products sold in resorts around the world. Coincidentally for this project, McCabe designed a line of sandals in collaboration with Indosole, a Balinese factory that uses recycled moped tires for the soles. She moved back to Canada in 2010 and returned to the film industry. She is launching a new business with a Montreal designer making digitally-printed scarves in Bali.

Related experience and interests: McCabe describes herself as a "bit of a fashionista" and the Vanessa boots match her style. When not at work, she enjoys working with her hands on everything from crafts and knitting to freelance custom clothing, including costumes for pole dancers. She is interested in making shoes and intends to work with a relative on a footwear shoe project. McCabe also spends her time being a mom.

⁵³² Interview with the author, July 2015.

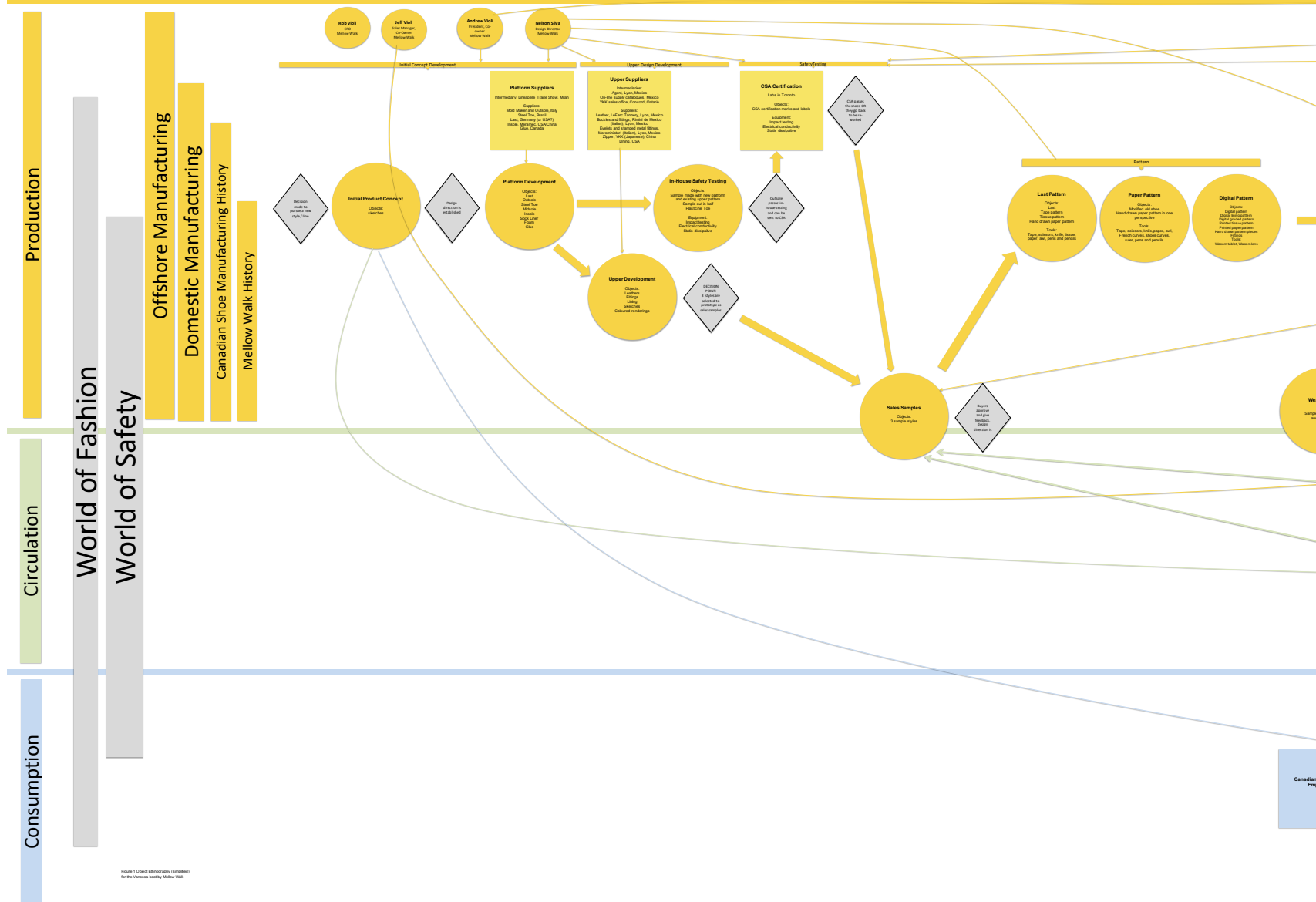


Figure 1 Global Ethnography (compiled)
by the Veterans Society of Canada

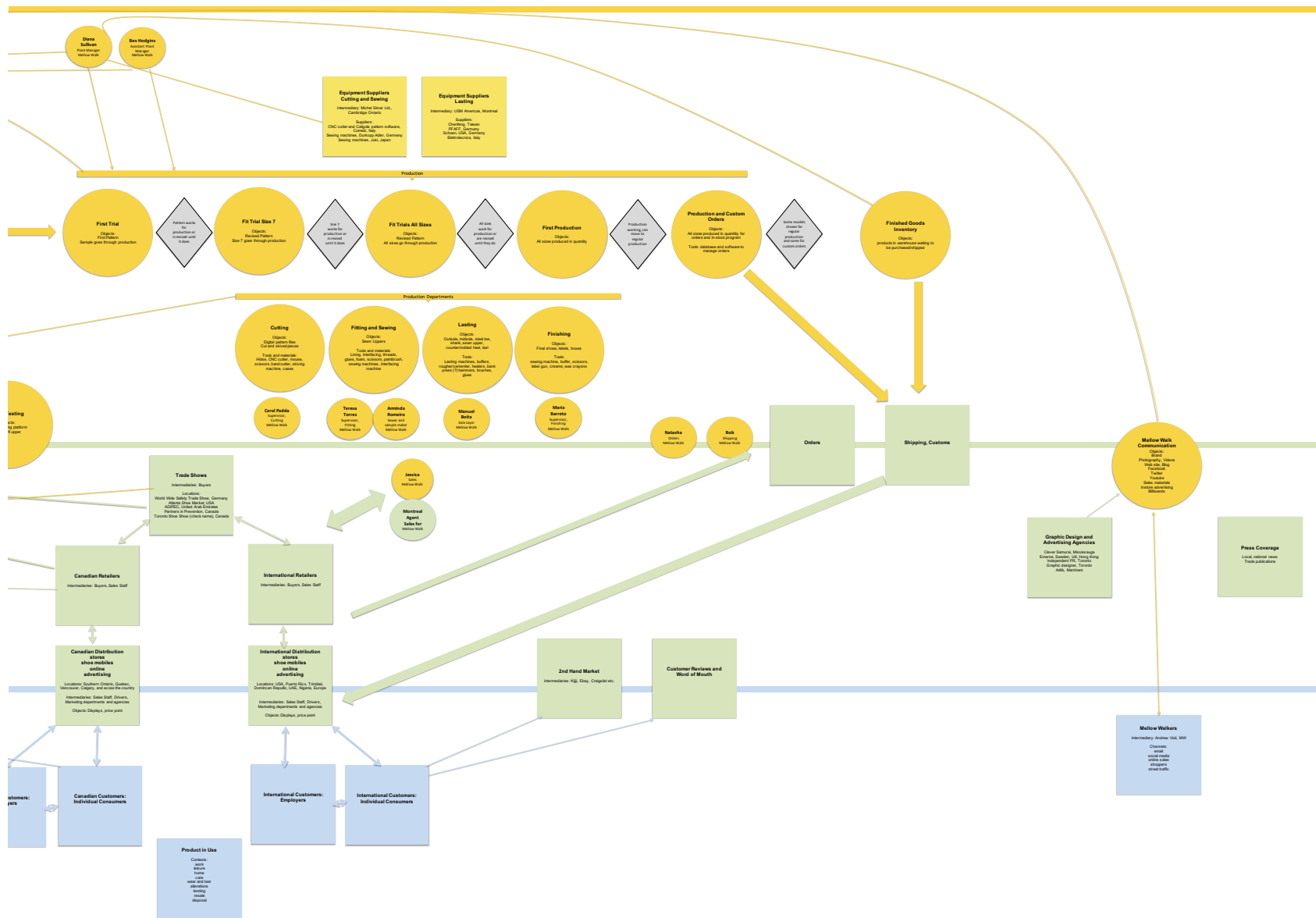




Figure 2 Vanessa Shoe and Boot by Mellow Walk, 2015.

Mellow Walk. "Safety Meets Glamour with Mellow Walk's New Vanessa." Mellow Walk. Accessed August 25, 2015.
<http://www.mellowwalk.com/posts/safety-meets-glamour-with-mellow-walks-new-vanessa/>.
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[illegible]

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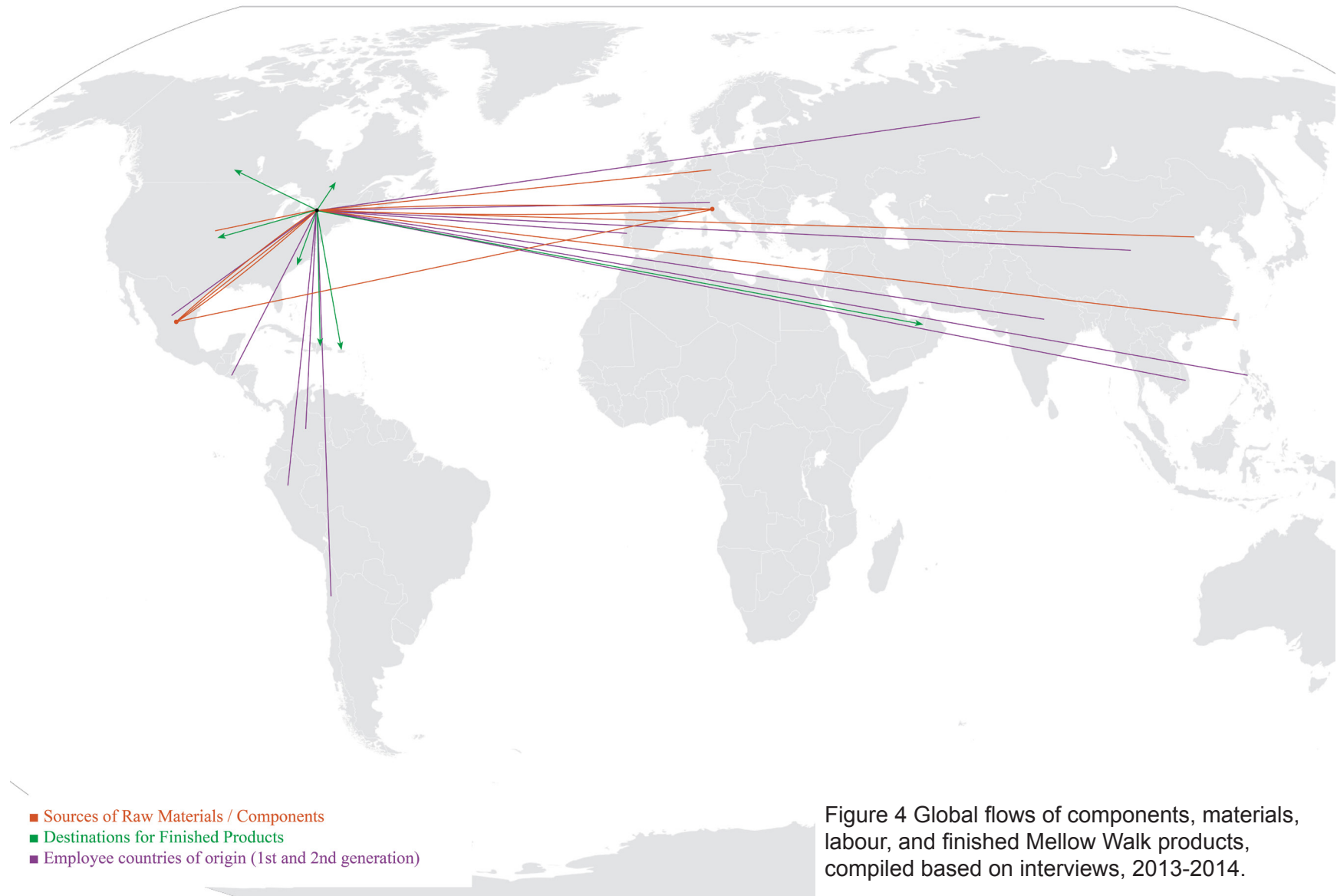


Figure 4 Global flows of components, materials, labour, and finished Mellow Walk products, compiled based on interviews, 2013-2014.



Figure 5 Mellow Walk Factory, photographed January 28, 2014.

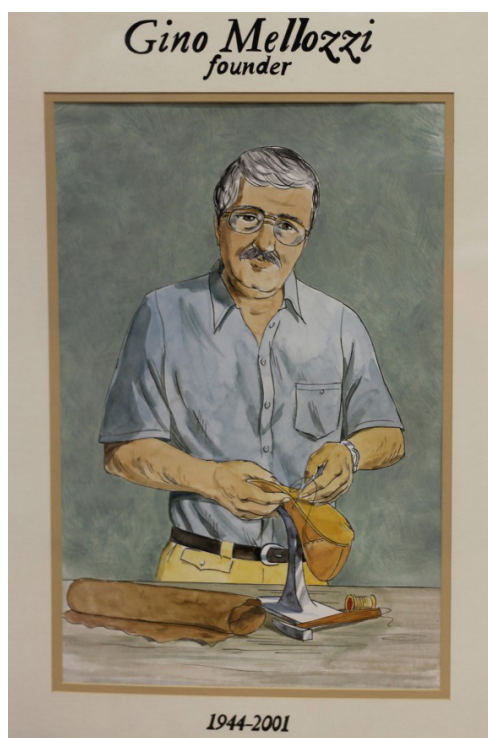


Figure 6 Gino Mellozzi, Co-founder of Mellow Walk.

Mellow Walk. "Our Twentieth Anniversary Year." Mellow Walk. Accessed August 18, 2015. <http://www.mellowwalk.com/posts/our-twentieth-anniversary-year/>.

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Figure 7 Mellow Walk Staff.

Mellow Walk. "About Our Team." Mellow Walk, February 5, 2014. <http://www.mellowwalk.com/about/>.
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Figure 8 Jim Flaherty, Minister of Finance, is fitted for new shoes by Andrew Violi at the Mellow Walk factory in preparation for the budget announcement, February 7, 2014.

Mellow Walk. "New Mellow Walk Shoes for the New Budget." Mellow Walk. Accessed August 18, 2015. <http://www.mellowwalk.com/posts/new-mellow-walk-shoes-for-the-new-budget/>.
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Women's Shoes

Share This:

Daisy

(Static Dissipative)



498092 (Coming Soon)

[More details](#)



421094
Colours: Black, Red

[More details](#)



424092 (In Stock)

[More details](#)



420092 (In Stock)

[More details](#)

Maddy (metal free)

(Electric Shock Resistant)



424128 (In Stock)

[More details](#)

Vanessa

(Electric Shock Resistant)



412109 (In Stock)

[More details](#)



402109 (In Stock)

[More details](#)

Maddy

(Electric Shock Resistant)



481049 (In Stock)

[More details](#)



425049 (In Stock)

[More details](#)



492049 (In-Stock)

[More details](#)



446049 (In Stock)

Colours: Black, Crazy Horse

[More details](#)

Jamie

(Static Dissipative)



4098 (In-Stock)

[More details](#)



4085 (In-Stock)

[More details](#)

Featured Retailers

Locate a Mellow Walk retailer in your area.



Women's Shoes

Over the years, we've been told that Mellow Walk is an odd and, somewhat, funny name for a safety shoe.

Well, if by odd one mean's comfortable, and by funny one mean's well-made; then yes we guess they're right on both counts.

And since 1993, workers across North America and

► Reviews

► Certified Quality

Figure 9 Women's Shoes, Mellow Walk Collection, 2015.

Mellow Walk. "Women's Shoes." Mellow Walk. Accessed August 1, 2015.

<http://www.mellowwalk.com/womens-shoes/>

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Shoe Manufacturers in 1998

Untitled layer



Niagara Shoes - Port Colborne



Angel Dancewear Inc. -
Toronto



Baffin Inc.- Stoney Creek



Bata Industries (Norimco
Division) - Batawa



Bauer Inc. - Hespeler



Bonnie Stuart Shoes Limited -
Kitchener



Brown Shoe Company of
Canada Ltd. - Perth



Brown Shoe Company of
Canada Ltd. - Stirling



Carlaw Marketing Limited -
Toronto



Diamond Shoe International
Inc. - Toronto



Dominion Skate Company -
Brampton

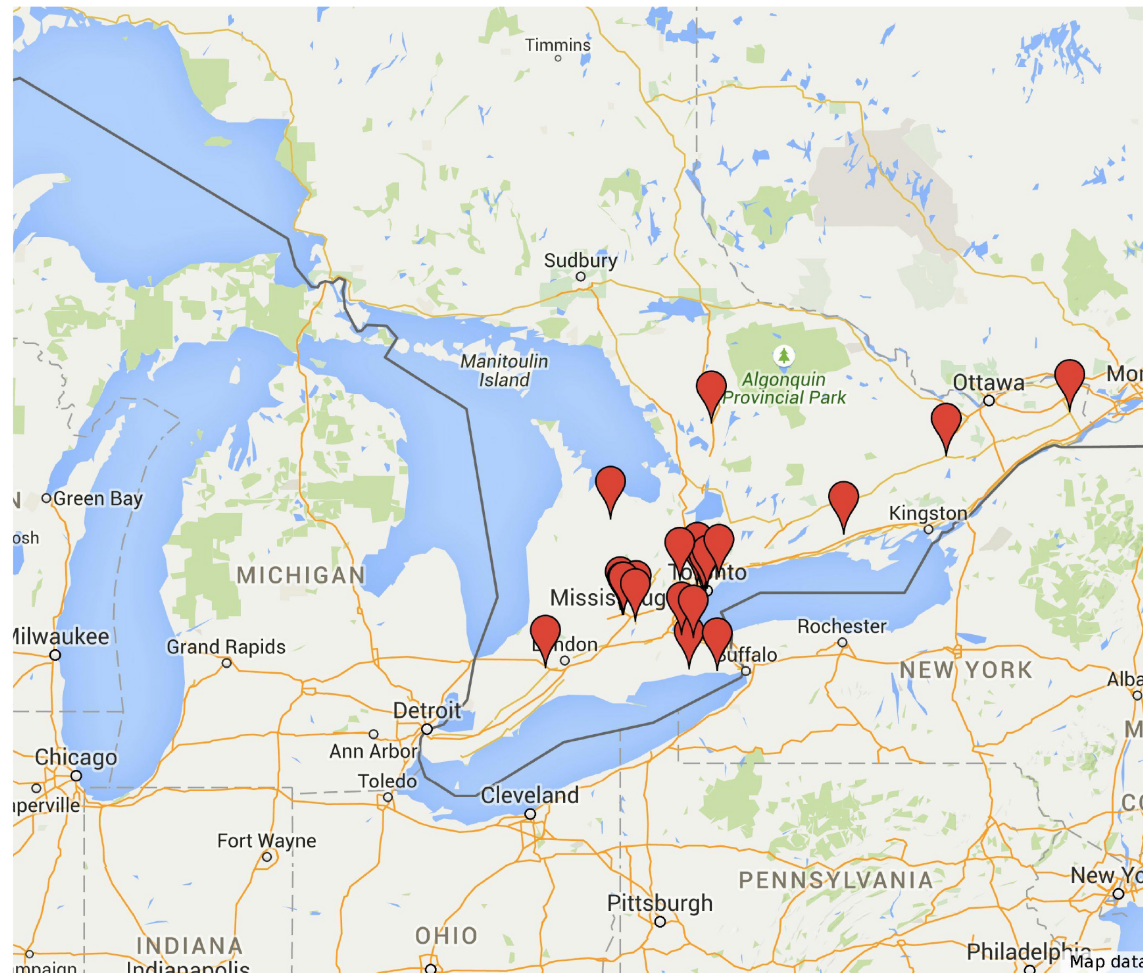


Figure 10 Map of Shoe Manufacturers in Ontario as of 1998.

Compiled using Google Maps (Map data ©2015 Google) and data from Government of Canada, Innovation. "Canadian Industry Statistics - Home." Statistical Reports. Accessed July 10, 2016. <https://www.ic.gc.ca/eic/site/cis-sic.nsf/eng/home>.

Apr 29, 2014

The CSA safety tag on your Mellow Walk shoe

Posted In
Blog

Discussion
Leave a comment

CSA stands for **Canadian Standards Association**, an organization that works with industry groups in various sectors including footwear. CSA determines a common set of standards that all must follow to use its markings. Certification is an on-going process, designed to ensure safety for customers, even beyond the certification of a particular shoe. Factories, like Mellow Walk, undergo ongoing compliance testing and CSA audits every three months, to ensure that certified products continue to meet the CSA standard.

What does a CSA Safety Tag Mean?

The most common CSA markings found on Mellow Walk safety shoes are explained on the Certified Quality section of our website. This is found on the product pages for **men's** and **women's** shoes. The tags indicate the standards to which the shoe has been certified. The safety symbols might relate to:

1. toe protection
2. sole protection i.e. protection against penetrations from the bottom of the shoe
3. protection to sensitive equipment from static charge
4. protection in case of accidental contact with electricity.

What is the difference between Grade 1 and Grade 2 safety footwear?

Grade 1 footwear offers the highest protection against accidental toe impact. This is represented by the Blue Rectangle or the Green Triangle (protective toe and plate) attached to safety footwear, including Mellow Walk's. Today, it is not as common to see safety footwear approved to lower protection represented by the Grade 2 standard.

Why aren't the CSA tags on both shoes?

Making Sense of CSA footwear markings

Mellow Walk safety shoes are certified to CSA standards. Where applicable, compliance to ASTM will be indicated on the shoe. The safety features will be indicated by the CSA tag on the shoe. Mellow Walk safety shoes display the following combination of protective markings:

- Grade 1 toe protection with Static Dissipation sole
- Grade 1 toe and sole protection with a Static Dissipation sole
- Grade 1 toe and sole protection with an Electric Shock Protection sole (indicated by the additional ESD logo)
- Grade 1 toe protection



Figure 11 “The CSA Safety Tag on Your Mellow Walk Shoe,” 2014.

Mellow Walk. “The CSA Safety Tag on Your Mellow Walk Shoe.” Mellow Walk. Accessed August 23, 2015. <http://www.mellowwalk.com/posts/the-csa-safety-tag-on-your-mellow-walk-shoe/>.

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Figure 12 Loto Safety Products selling Mellow Walk shoes at the Abu Dhabi International Petroleum Exhibition and Conference, 2012.

Mellow Walk. “Mellow Walk’s Autumn to Remember.” Mellow Walk. Accessed August 1, 2015. <http://www.mellowwalk.com/posts/esr-safety-shoes/>.

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Figure 13 Stores send shoe mobiles to work sites to sell directly to workers and employers, 2013.

Mellow Walk. “Mellow Walk Footwear - Photos - Magasin Industriel Shoemobile.” Accessed August 1, 2015. <https://www.facebook.com/MellowWalkFootwear/photos/a.198818593558056/433236136782966/?type=3&theater>. © Chaussures Mellow Walk Footwear Inc. Use of this material is by permission of the copyright holder.

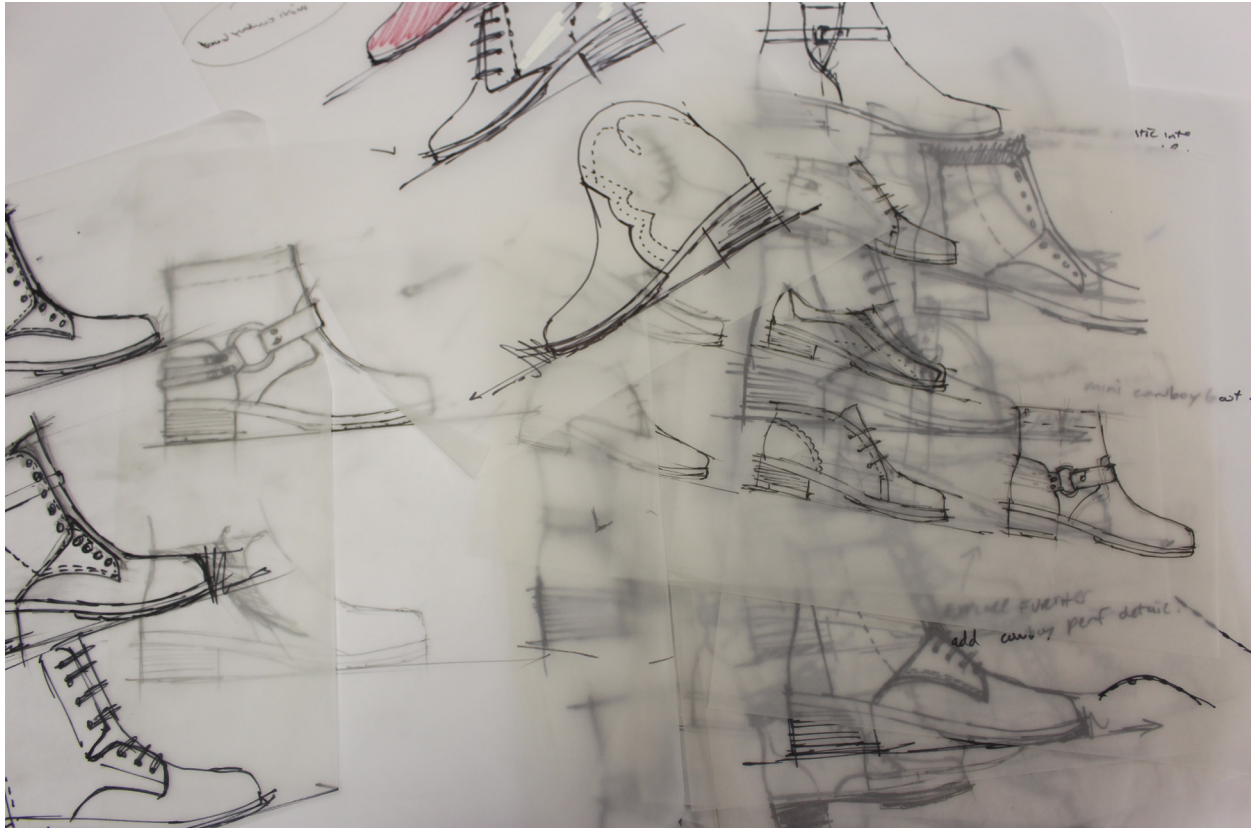


Figure 14 Vanessa concept sketches by Nelson Silva, photographed at Mellow Walk, December 10, 2013.

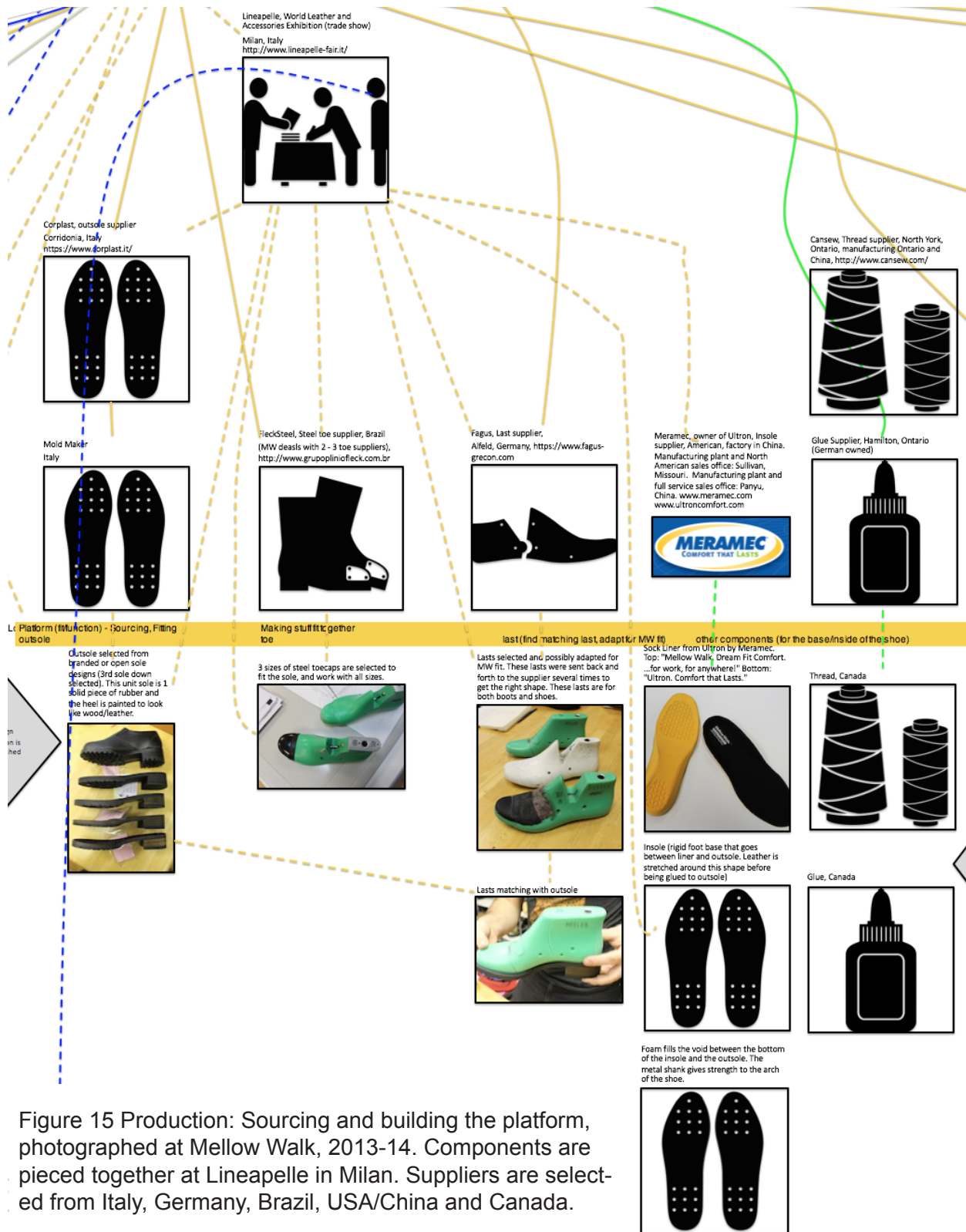


Figure 15 Production: Sourcing and building the platform, photographed at Mellow Walk, 2013-14. Components are pieced together at Lineapelle in Milan. Suppliers are selected from Italy, Germany, Brazil, USA/China and Canada.

Icons from the Noun Project, from top to bottom, left to right: Registration by Krisada, Insoles by Adriano Emerick, Boots by Nick Green, Shoe Last by Guvnor Co, Glue Bottle by sortagreat icons, Thread by Juan Pablo Bravo.



Figure 16 Vanessa outsole and last, photographed at Mellow Walk, December 10, 2013.

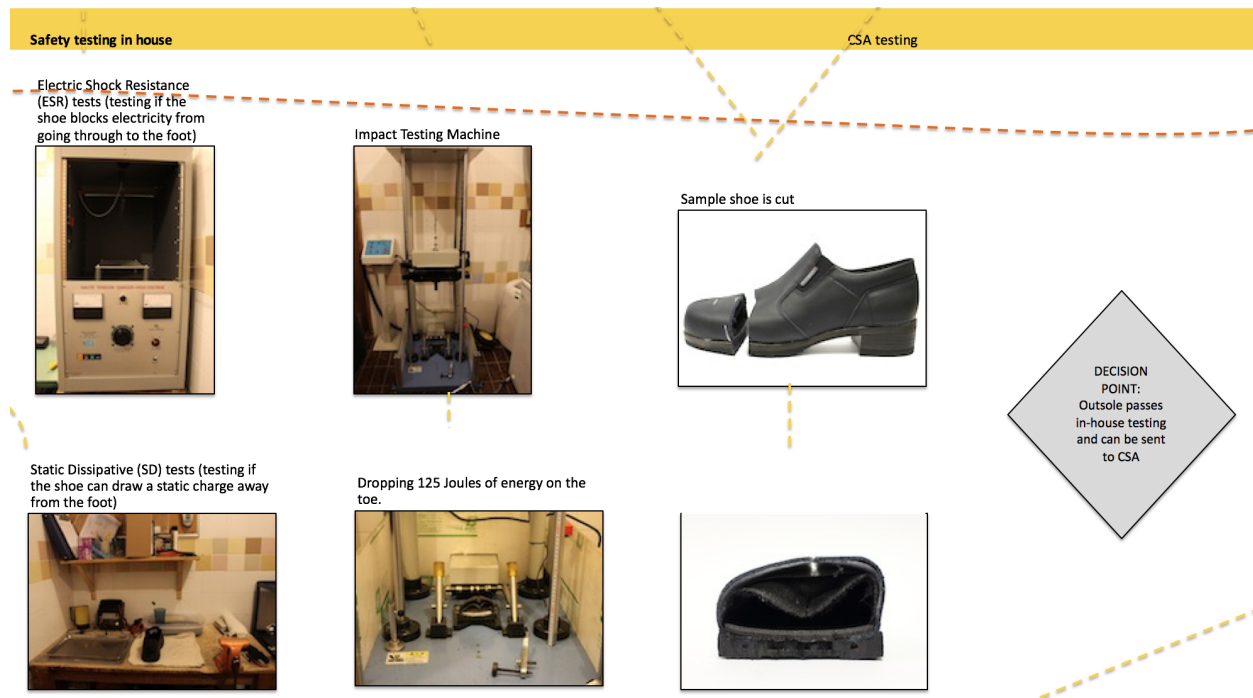


Figure 17 Production: In-house safety testing of the Vanessa platform before being sent to CSA for further testing and certification, photographed at Mellow Walk, December 10, 2013.



Figure 18 Vanessa platform after testing, photographed at Mellow Walk, December 13, 2013. The shoe is cut in half to reveal if the plasticine toe is damaged after 125 kj are dropped on the steel toe.

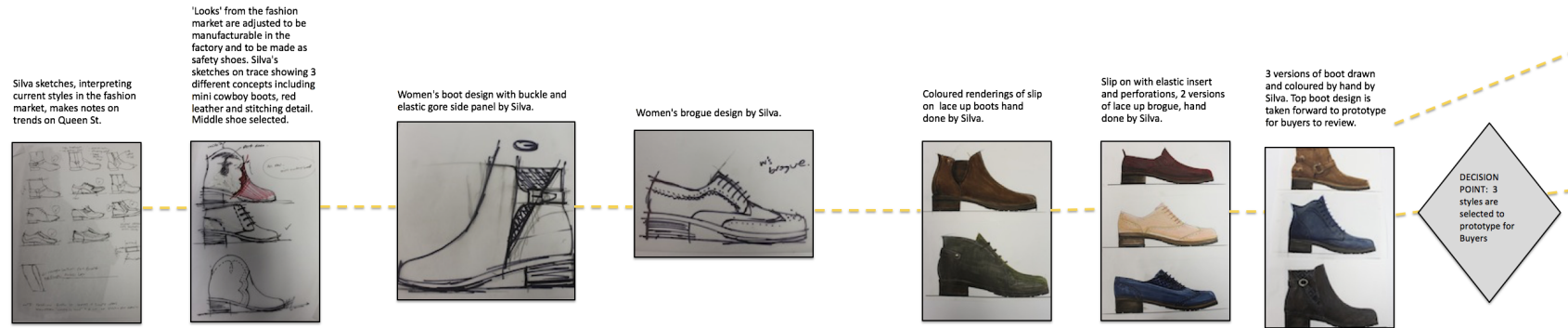


Figure 19 Production: Upper Design, photographed at Mellow Walk, December 10, 2013. Nelson Silva develops multiple concepts for the upper, three of which will be selected to make sales samples.

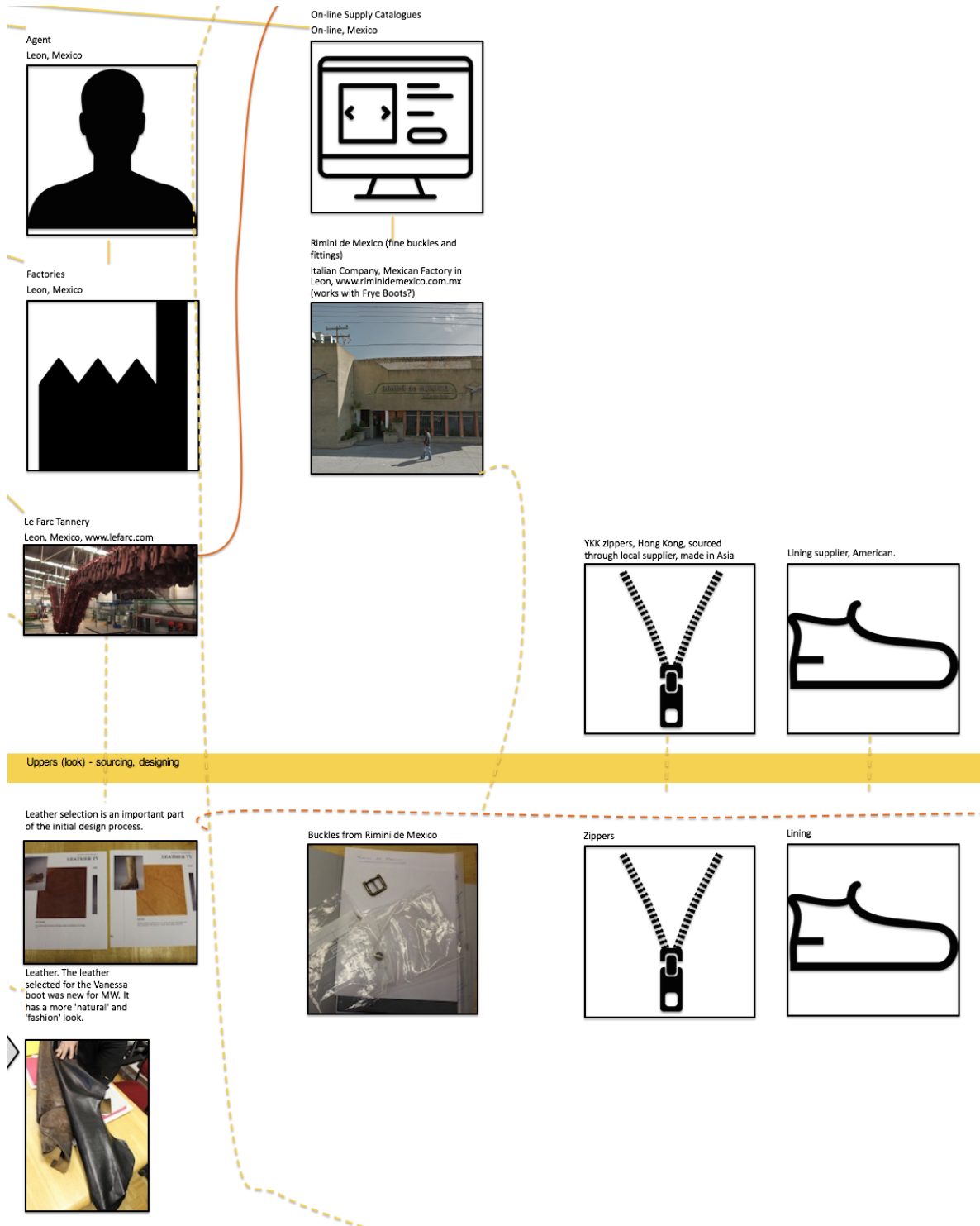


Figure 20 Production: Upper Design, photographed at Mellow Walk, 2013-14. The leathers and fittings are sourced primarily in Mexico.

Image of LeFarc Tannery from www.lefarc.com and image of Rimini de Mexico from Google Street View (©2014 Google). Icons from the Noun Project, from top to bottom, left to right: User by Rémy Médard, Online Shopping by MikaDo Nguyen, Factory by Michael Bundsherer, Zipper by Nicolas Vicent, Shoe by Philip Gleenf.



Figure 21 Vanessa concept drawings by Nelson Silva, photographed at Mellow Walk, December 10, 2013. The top shoe, and the brown and blue boots will become the Vanessa pump, engineer, and lace-up boots.



Figure 22 Vanessa engineer sales sample, photographed at Mellow Walk, December 13, 2013.

Sales Models/Samples (can be made in under half an hour) Feedback incorporated
Collections presented to buyers in Toronto and at international trade shows

Vanessa Brown Boot prototype - new for the safety market.



First prototype of boot, inside showing zipper and CSA tag.



DESIGN
DIRECTION IS
GOOD - get the
green light from
the buyers and
"we are happy

Vanessa Lace Up Boot prototype - classic style with Mellow Walk twist, more high end.



Vanessa Slip On prototype - ballerina style, more feminine, closer to typical MW shoe.



INTERNATIONAL TRADE SHOWS

Safety Trade Show in



Atlanta Shoe Market trade show where MW displays their products among 1800 other lines of shoes, USA



Partners in Prevention trade show, Toronto



ADIPEC (Abu Dhabi International Petroleum Exhibition and Conference) UAE



Figure 23 Production/Circulation: Sales samples are shown to buyers in Toronto and at trade shows for feedback, photographed at Mellow Walk, 2013-14.

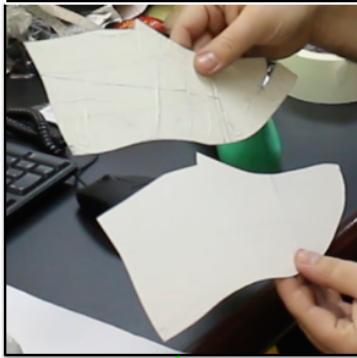
Icon from the Noun Project: Registration by Krisada.

Last Pattern

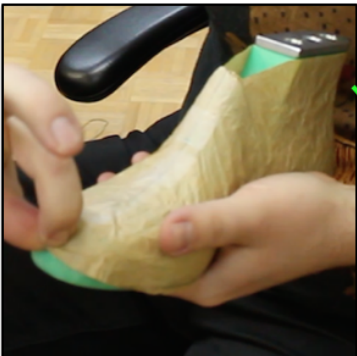
The last is taped and the centre lines are marked on it before the tape is peeled off. Precision is important.



The masking tape is removed from the shoe and laid flat. A new shape is traced to close the toe gap made in the tape pattern.



The pattern is traced twice on special waxed tissue which is cut out and taped together. The tissue pattern is placed on the last to identify any gaps or excess material in the pattern. The tissue should fit snugly.



The tissue is waxed and has some stretch to it.



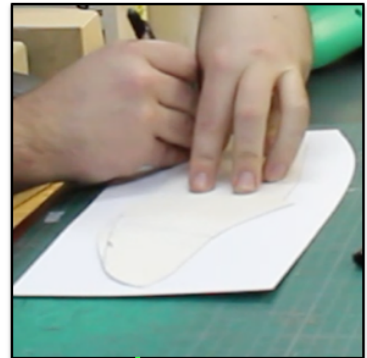
Any gaps between the tissue and last will be filled in by the thickness of the leather.



Adjustments are made to the paper pattern based on the tissue model, such as excess material being removed from the toe.



The paper pattern is re-traced to form the final "true to last" pattern. Key notches and lines are made on the pattern and some lines are smoothed out.



Silva cuts out the final pattern with an exacto knife and smooths out lines. Small tweaks are made for production. All future shoe patterns will be based on this last pattern.



Figure 24 Production: Vanessa last pattern made by Nelson Silva, photographed at Mellow Walk, December 10, 2013.

Shoe pattern

Silva cuts old shoes down to the desired shape then tapes over those shoes and draws new pattern lines on top.



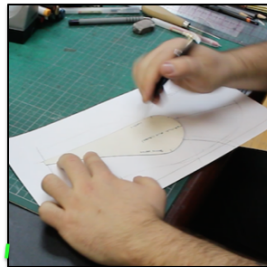
The last pattern is traced onto a new sheet of paper.



Measurements are taken of the modified old shoe and translated into a new pattern based on the last pattern and leaving room for the steel toe which isn't accounted for in the last dimensions.



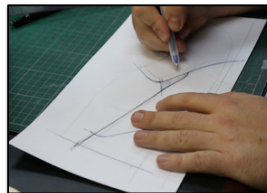
Silva sketches multiple lines freehand and uses rulers, french curves and standard shoe forms like the classic ballerina shape (pictured) to check his design. There are certain key dimensions that cannot be moved.



Silva plays with multiple lines, always comparing to the original shoe.



Silva picks his final lines and goes over them in pen. He adds lines for decorative stitching.

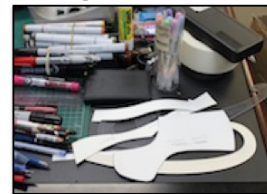


Boot Pattern

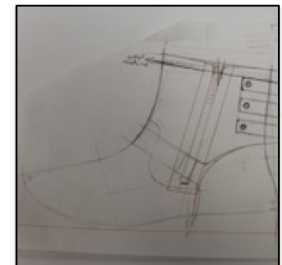
When there is no existing shape (like with the shoe), Silva has to draw the boot based on the last shape, his experience and inspiring models in the fashion market like Frye boots.



Silva uses classic shoe shapes - a combination of learnign from his previous work with running shoes and his training in Milan.



Hand-drawn boot pattern.



Final hand-drawn shoe pattern, to scale for size 7.

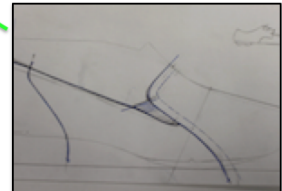


Figure 25 Production: Vanessa paper patterns made by Nelson Silva, photographed at Mellow Walk, December 10, 2013.

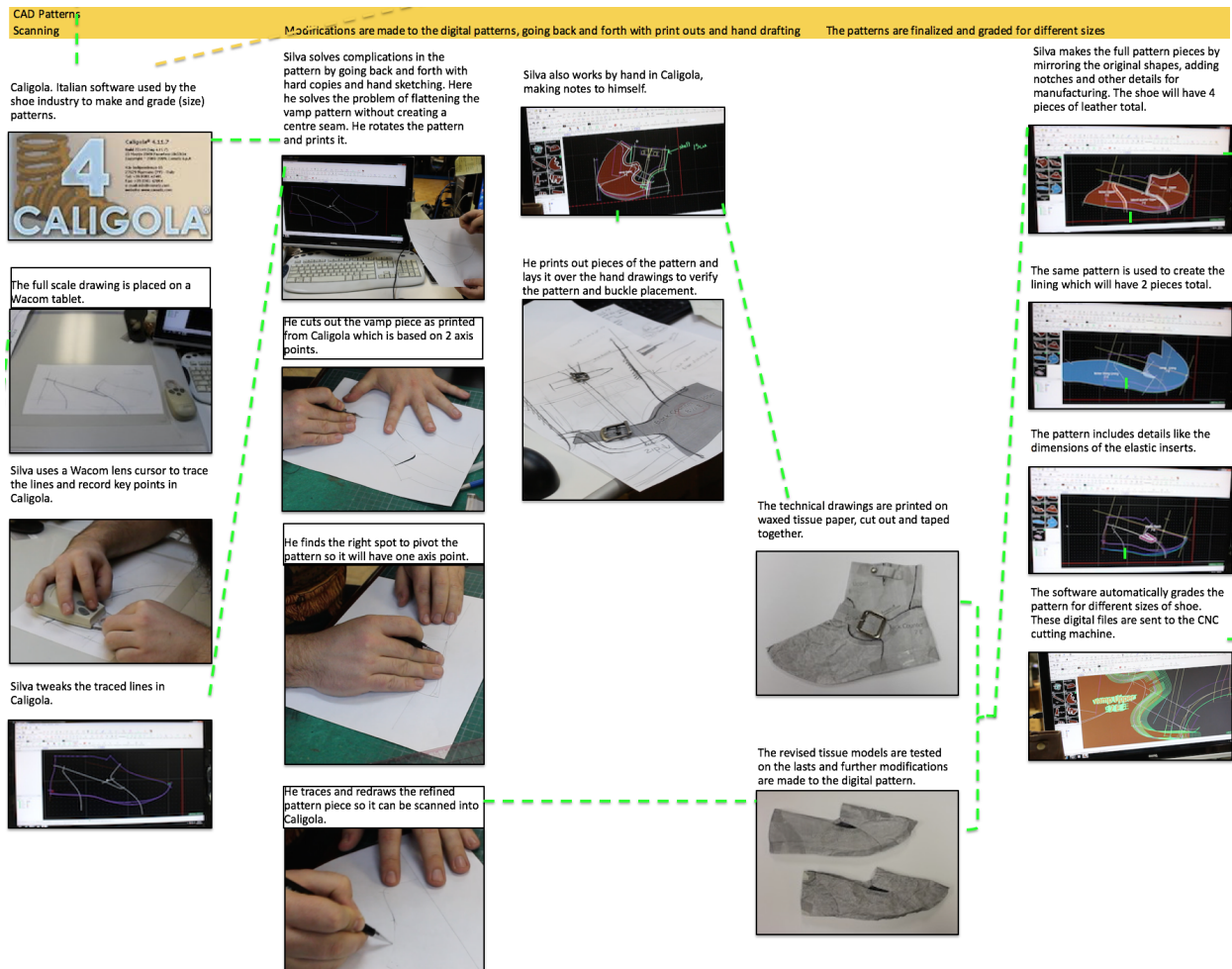


Figure 26 Production: Vanessa digital patterns made by Nelson Silva, photographed at Mellow Walk, December 10, 2013.



Figure 27 Last pattern made by taping last by Nelson Silva, photographed at Mellow Walk, December 10, 2013.



Figure 28 Initial tissue paper last pattern traced off tape pattern by Nelson Silva, photographed at Mellow Walk, December 13, 2013.

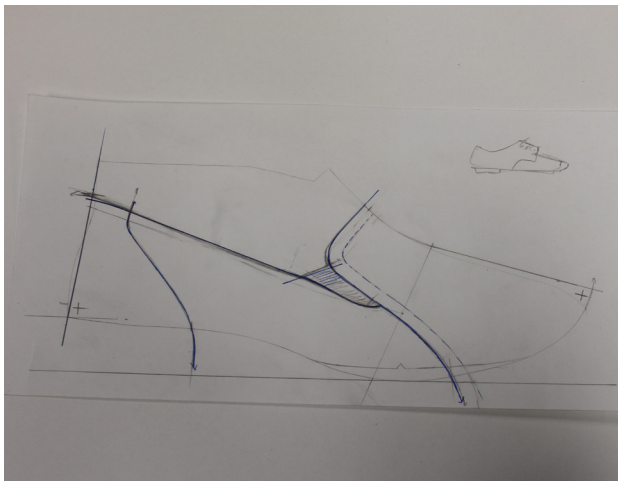


Figure 29 Hand-drawn paper shoe pattern by Nelson Silva, photographed at Mellow Walk, December 13, 2013.

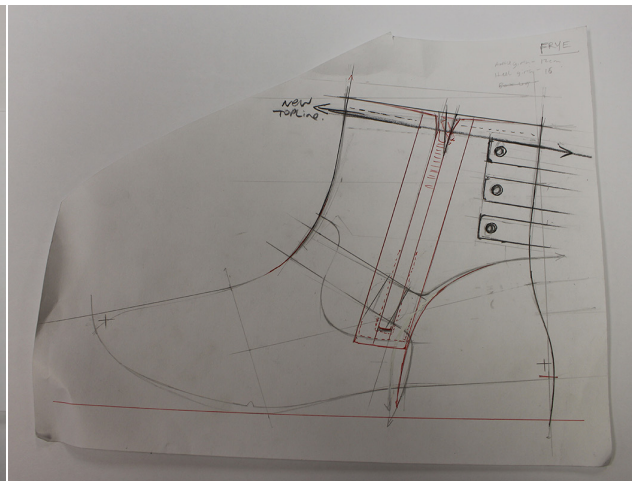


Figure 30 Hand-drawn paper boot pattern by Nelson Silva, photographed at Mellow Walk, December 10, 2013.



Figure 31 Digital boot pattern printed and assembled with fittings by Nelson Silva, photographed at Mellow Walk, December 13, 2013.

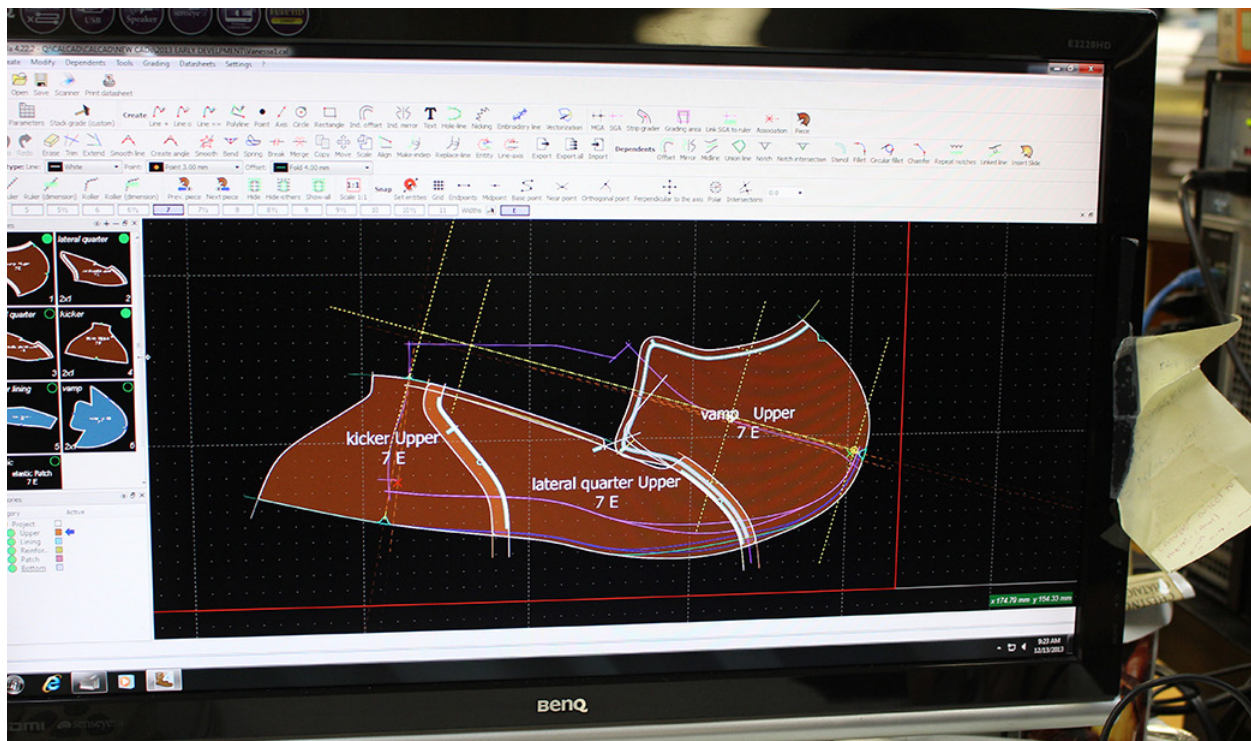


Figure 32 Digital shoe pattern by Nelson Silva using Caligola software, photographed at Mellow Walk, December 10, 2013.

Cutting

Leather selection, Pattern placement, Cutting

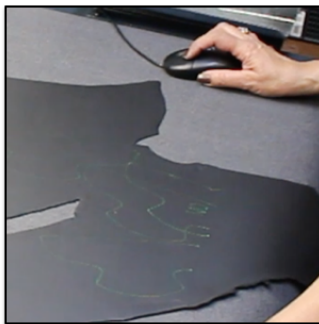
Cutting Machine (model CM44cn), Comelz Italia. The CNC laser cutter reads Caligola files and is used to cut and mark everything - leather, sponge, lining, felt, etc.



Padda checks and trims hides and places them on the conveyor belt in the CNC cutter. She carefully places the pieces on the hide to avoid scars. She rotates pieces to depending on how the hide stretches. The most important pieces - vamps - go on the right (the back), then the sides are closer to the stomach and the other pieces are closer to the tail.



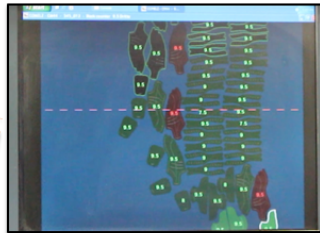
Padda calls up the pattern pieces on the computer and then places them with the mouse them on the appropriate spot on the hide. The CNC machine projects the outline of the piece on the hide as she works.



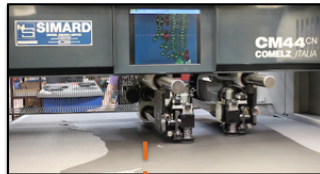
Leather hides from Mexico. Sourced by Silva, ordered by Sullivan, in consultation on quality with Padda.



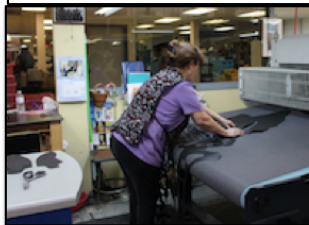
The screen shows all of the pieces that Padda has placed. It is a mix of sizes and pieces.



The machine marks, labels and cuts each piece so Samira knows which pieces go together and the stitchers know where to sew.



Samira removes the cut pieces and trims away the excess hide.

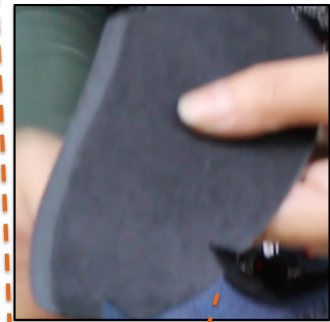


Skiving

Skiving machine



Skiving is the shaving down and smoothing out of the seam edges so that the leather can be more easily sewn.



Samira organizes and stacks the pattern pieces. She 'cases' them based on order, placing them in bins to be moved over to Fitting (sewing).



Figure 33 Production: Cutting, casing and skiving by Carol Padda and the Cutting department, photographed at Mellow Walk, January 28, 2014.

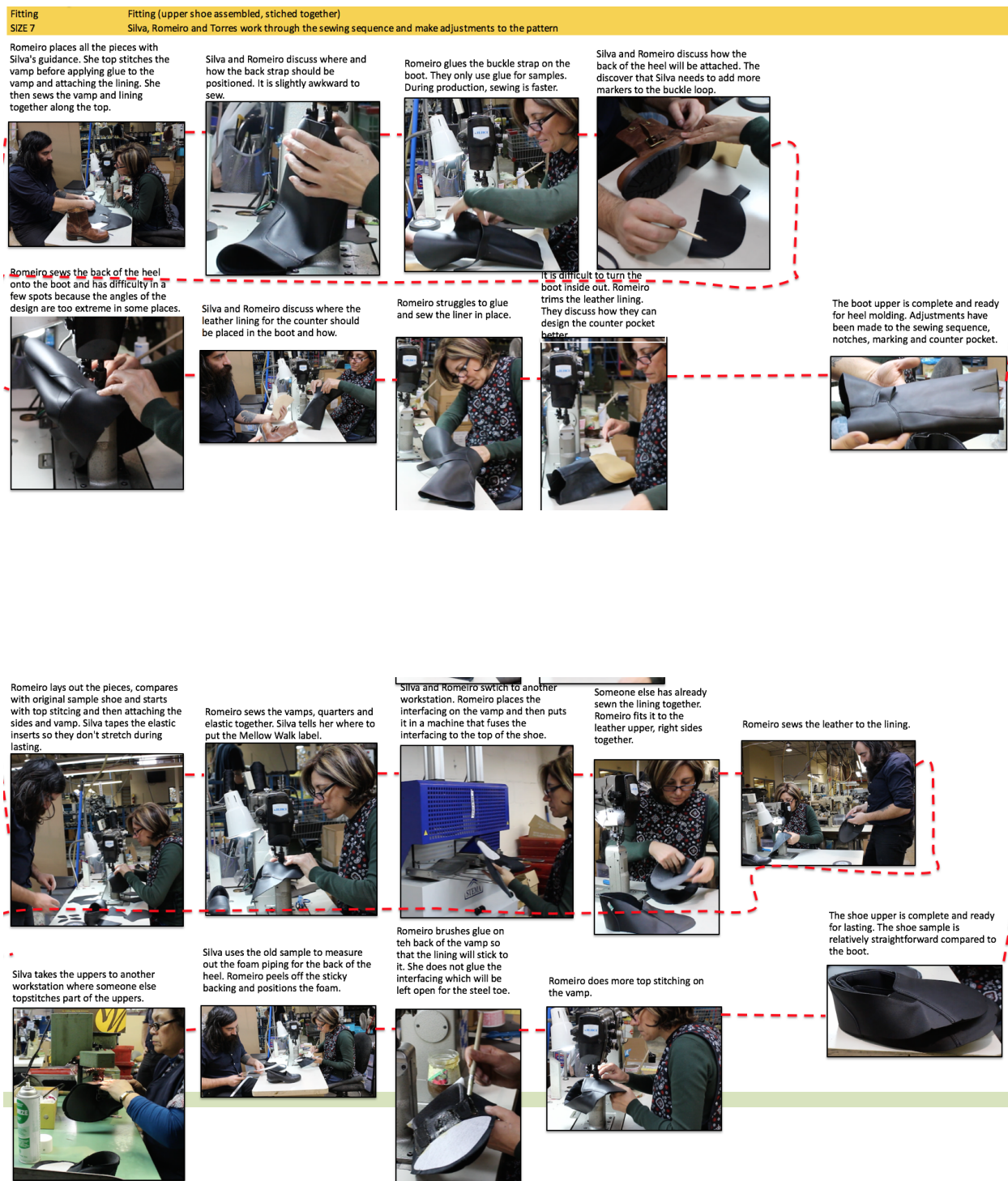


Figure 34 Production: First Trial - Fitting and Sewing Vanessa boot and shoe with Nelson Silva, Teresa Torres, and Arminda Romeiro, photographed at Mellow Walk, December 13, 2013.

Katarina finds an existing counter shape that fits the boot but it is too big. Silva trims it with scissors. They may need a new die for the boot counters.



Katarina's work sets the shoe for lasting. If anything is wrong at this stage, it will make the lasting crooked.



Katarina sets the counter for the shoe heel using an existing counter.



Katarina sets the boot counter in the heel molding machine.



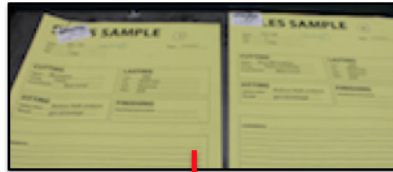
The upper sample is complete. The only rigid structure is the heel and interfacing.



She has to re-set it to get the shape right.



Sullivan and Hodgins produce sample sheets that give each department instructions about materials and components.



The upper samples for the size 7 Vanessa boot and shoe are complete and ready to send to Lasting.



Figure 35 Production: First Trial - counter molding the heel with Katarina and Nelson Silva, photographed at Mellow Walk, December 20, 2013.



Figure 36 Vanessa engineer boot, first trial, upper after it goes through Fitting and countermolding, photographed at Mellow Walk, December 20, 2013.

Figure 37 Vanessa lace-up and engineer boot, first trials, uppers resting on lasts next to outsoles and steel toes, ready for lasting, photographed at Mellow Walk, December 20, 2013.

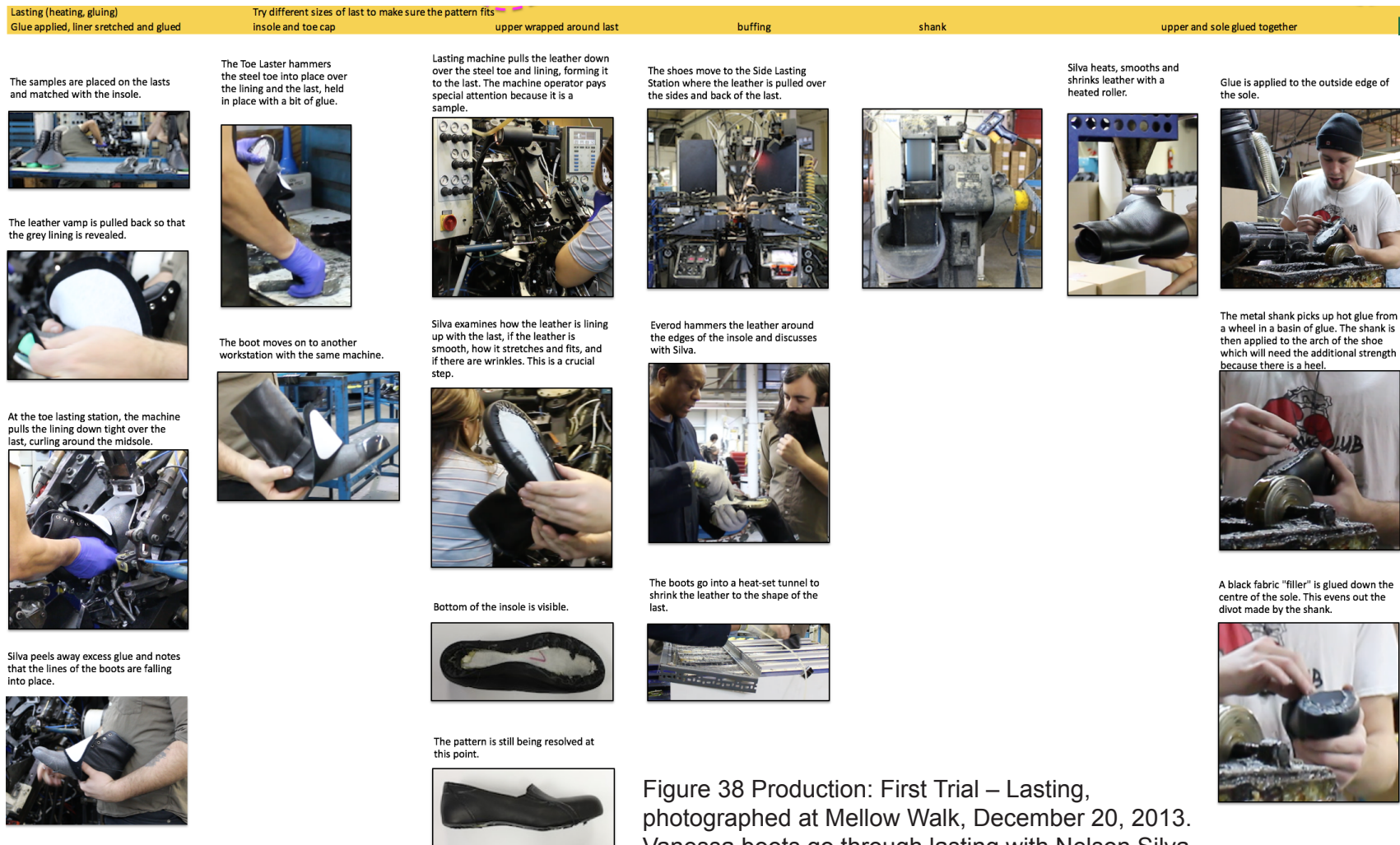


Figure 38 Production: First Trial – Lasting, photographed at Mellow Walk, December 20, 2013. Vanessa boots go through lasting with Nelson Silva and Lasting team.

Silva places the soles top side up and the uppers bottom side up on a conveyor belt that goes into a heating machine to reactivate the glues.



The upper is now attached to the outsole. Manuel performs an informal quality control check.



Boita centres the sole on the boot, gently presses the outsole to the upper, lightly tacking it in place.



Boita places the boot bottom up in the press. He places a spacer on the arch to even out the pressure that the rubber membrane will apply and to avoid the membrane from breaking because it can't reach into that cavity.



The high pressure balloon comes down over the boot and secures the outsole and upper, one shoe at a time. The shoe may move a few mm in this process.



Silva and Boita examine the final sample and agree that it looks good. Silva is satisfied with the sample though adjustments will still need to be made to the pattern.



The final samples are buffed and ready to move to Finishing.



Figure 39 Production: First Trial - Lasting, photographed at Mellow Walk, December 20, 2013. Manuel Boita applies soles to Vanessa boots with Nelson Silva.



Figure 40 Vanessa pump, first trial, before outsole is applied, photographed at Mellow Walk, December 20, 2013.

Figure 41 Vanessa boots, first trial, after they are finished in Lasting, photographed at Mellow Walk, December 20, 2013.

FIRST PRODUCTION WORK

Cutting

Fitting

Lasting

Finishing

insole

glue removal scuff removal tagging

box assembly box stickers wrapping

Quality Control (Silva, Sullivan, Violli)

Process is broken down over multiple people, someone might sew linings, someone might sew parts of the upper.

The Lasting line sets a goal for the pacer board which keeps track of how many pairs are made.



Shoes are lined up ready to be finished and packaged.



The Finishing department checks for quality and makes cosmetic fixes. Barreto checks paperwork against the final product. They finish 300 - 400 pairs of shoes/day.



For some models, the sole must be sewn on to the upper, reinforcing the glues that have already been used.



Maria Souza inserts the insole.



Any excess glue/cement is brushed off.



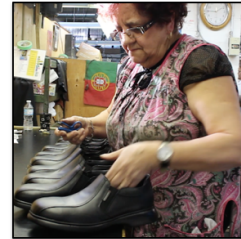
Cream is applied to the leather.



Barreto and Celeste buff and polish the shoes.



Barreto trims threads.



Barreto uses a wax/oil crayon to colour in any scratches and flaws.



(Rob)

The leather maple leaf is applied to the right shoe, through the elastic or safety label.



Example of a final shoe before packing.



Boxes are delivered flat.



Diana (not Sullivan) helps maria to fold bodes and apply labels indicating the shoe model.



Barreto packs 12 pairs of shoes at a time, one piece of tissue per box.



Figure 42 Production: Finishing, photographed at Mellow Walk, January 28, 2014. Maria Barreto and her team check, clean, label and pack shoes (Vanessas not pictured).

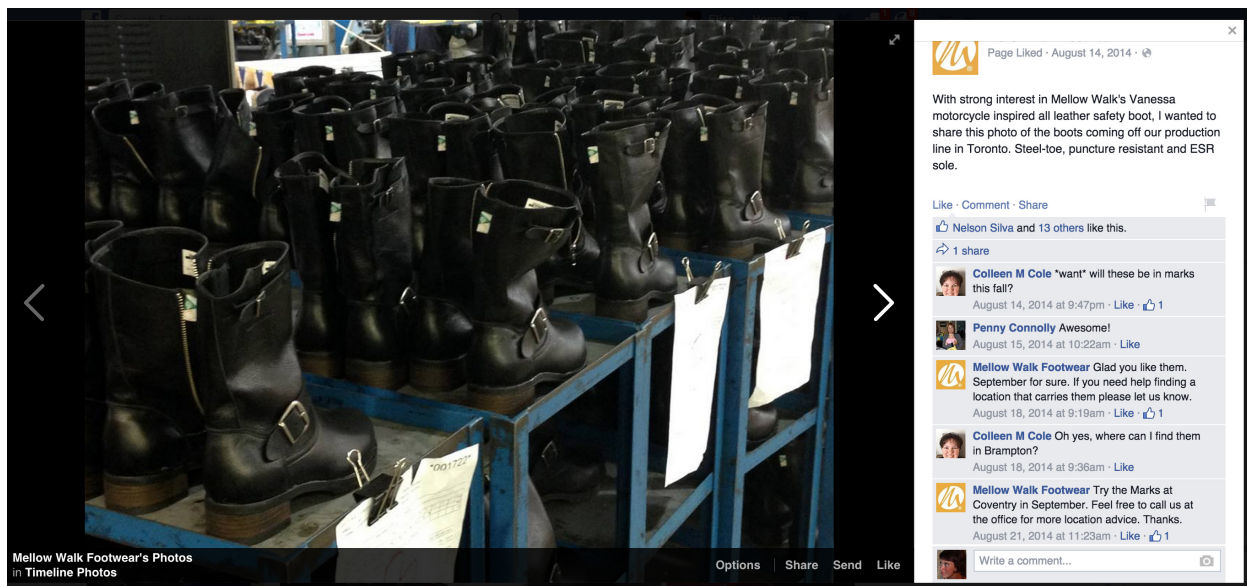


Figure 43 First production of Vanessa boots, August, 2014.

Mellow Walk. "Mellow Walk Footwear - Photos," August 14, 2014. <https://www.facebook.com/MellowWalkFootwear/photos/a.198818593558056/559591844147394/?type=3&theater>.

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Figure 44 Circulation: Communication. Andrew Violi communicates with customers online, via email, social media, sales materials, advertising, and trade shows.

Mellow Walk logo and various photographs from Mellow Walk web site, Facebook page, blog, Twitter account, and YouTube channel, accessed August 2015. Icons from the Noun Project, from left to right: Reply by Icons8, E-Commerce by Garrett Knoll, Chat by buzzyrobot, Shopping by Juan Pablo Bravo. © Chaussures Mellow Walk Footwear Inc. Use of this material is by permission of the copyright holder.

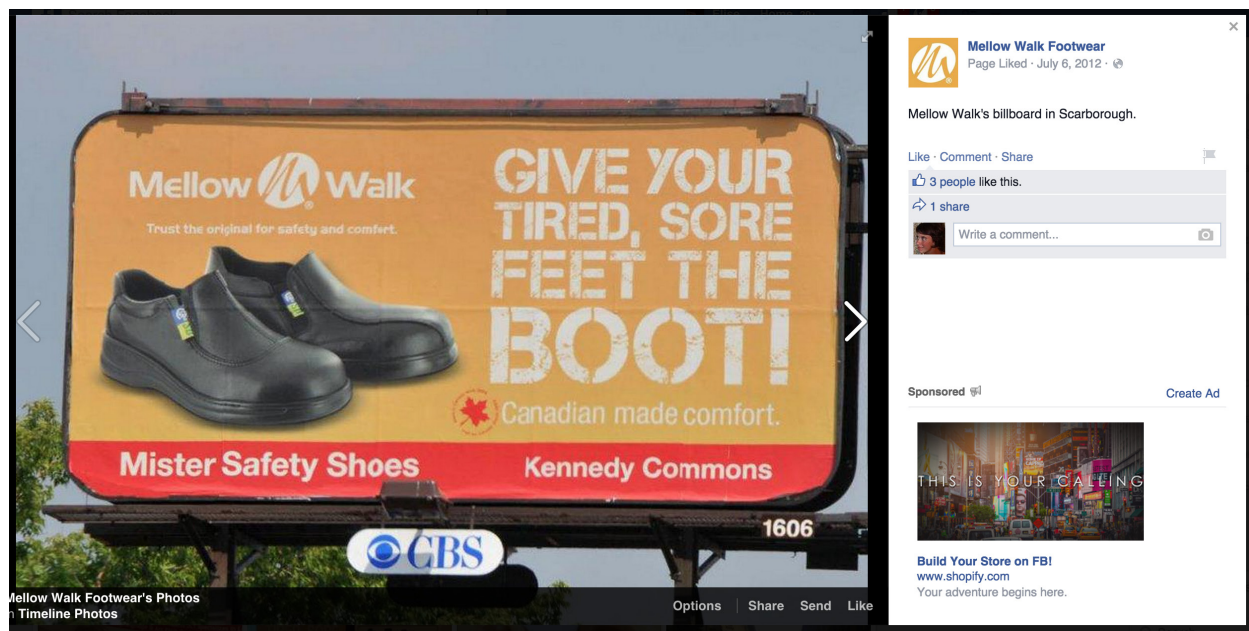


Figure 45 Mellow Walk billboard, celebrating tour with Mister Safety, Scarborough, 2012.

Mellow Walk. "Mellow Walk Footwear - Photos - Mellow Walk's Billboard in Scarborough," July 6, 2012. <https://www.facebook.com/MellowWalkFootwear/photos/a.198818593558056/262587460514502/?type=3&theater>.
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Figure 46 Vanessa boots on the cover of the Mellow Walk sales catalogue, 2015.

Mellow Walk. "September. Kids at School; Weather Still Glorious. (and We've Got Boots...)." Tweet. @mellowwalk, September 8, 2015. <https://twitter.com/mellowwalk/status/641281128645722112>.

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CAUTION

DISTRACTINGLY GOOD-LOOKING SAFETY SHOES

WE'VE ALWAYS PRODUCED A COMFORTABLE AND CASUAL SAFETY SHOE. RECENTLY, WE'VE STARTED MAKING OUR SHOES EVEN MORE ATTRACTIVE, WHICH MAY POTENTIALLY CAUSE DISTRACTIONS IN THE WORKPLACE. SO WHEN YOU WEAR THEM, PLEASE REMEMBER TO ALWAYS BE CAREFUL.



BE ADVISED TO ALWAYS LOOK FORWARD WHEN WALKING.



AVOID GETTING DISTRACTED WHILE OPERATING HEAVY MACHINERY.



BE SURE TO ALWAYS KEEP YOUR HEAD UP WHEN WALKING IN A FORWARD MOTION.



WHEN POURING HOT BEVERAGES, ALWAYS ALIGN LIQUID WITH THERMOS OR CUP.

WATCH OUR STORY AT [MELLOWWALK.COM](http://mellowwalk.com). WE HAVE A FULL LINE OF ATTRACTIVE SAFETY SHOES FOR MEN AND WOMEN. CHECK OUT SOME OF OUR FAVORITES LIKE THE DAVID.





MELLOWWALK.COM







AVERTISSEMENT

CHAUSSURES DE SÉCURITÉ À L'ESTHÉTIQUE DISTRAYANTE

NOUS AVONS TOUJOURS PRODUIT DES CHAUSSURES DE SÉCURITÉ CONFORTABLES ET DÉCONTRACTÉES. RÉCEMMENT, NOUS AVONS COMMENCÉ À FABRIQUER DES CHAUSSURES ENCORE PLUS ESTHÉTIQUES, CE QUI PEUT PROVOQUER DES DISTRACTIONS SUR LE LIEU DE TRAVAIL. LORSQUE VOUS LES PORTEZ, VEUILLEZ VOUS RAPPELER DE TOUJOURS ÊTRE PRUDENT.



RAPPELÉZ-VOUS DE TOUJOURS REGARDER DEVANT VOUS QUAND VOUS MARCHEZ.



ÉVITEZ D'ÊTRE DISTRAIT LORSQUE VOUS UTILISEZ DE L'ÉQUIPEMENT LOURD.



ASSUREZ-VOUS DE TOUJOURS GARDER LA TÊTE LEVÉE LORSQUE VOUS MARCHEZ EN AVANT.



LORSQUE VOUS VERSEZ DES BOISSONS CHAUDES, VISEZ TOUJOURS POUR LE THERMOS OU LA TASSE.

REGARDEZ LA VIDÉO DE L'HISTOIRE DE MELLOW WALK SUR [MELLOWWALK.COM](http://mellowwalk.com). NOUS OFFRONS UNE GAMME COMPLÈTE DE CHAUSSURES DE SÉCURITÉ ESTHÉTIQUES POUR HOMME ET POUR FEMME. JETEZ UN ŒIL À NOS FAVORITES, COMME LA VANESSA.





MELLOWWALK.COM



Figure 47 “Warning labels” from the Distractedly Good Looking Safety Shoe campaign by Mellow Walk, 2015.

Mellow Walk. “Distractedly Good-Looking Safety Shoes Take a Turn for the Better,” June 25, 2015. <http://www.mellowwalk.com/blog/posts/whats-new-from-mellow-walk/>.

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PACKAGING

Leather maple leaf embossed with Mellow Walk logo attached to shoes



Shoe Box, designed by contracted designer with input from Silva and Violi.



Labels featuring different workers are attached to shoes

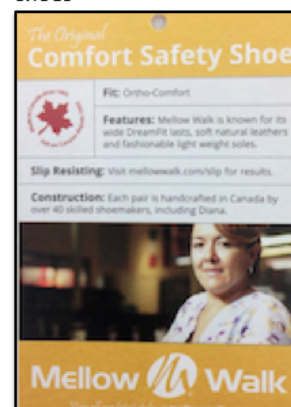


Figure 48 Circulation: Packaging, 2015.

Mellow Walk photographs from Mellow Walk web site, accessed August 2015.

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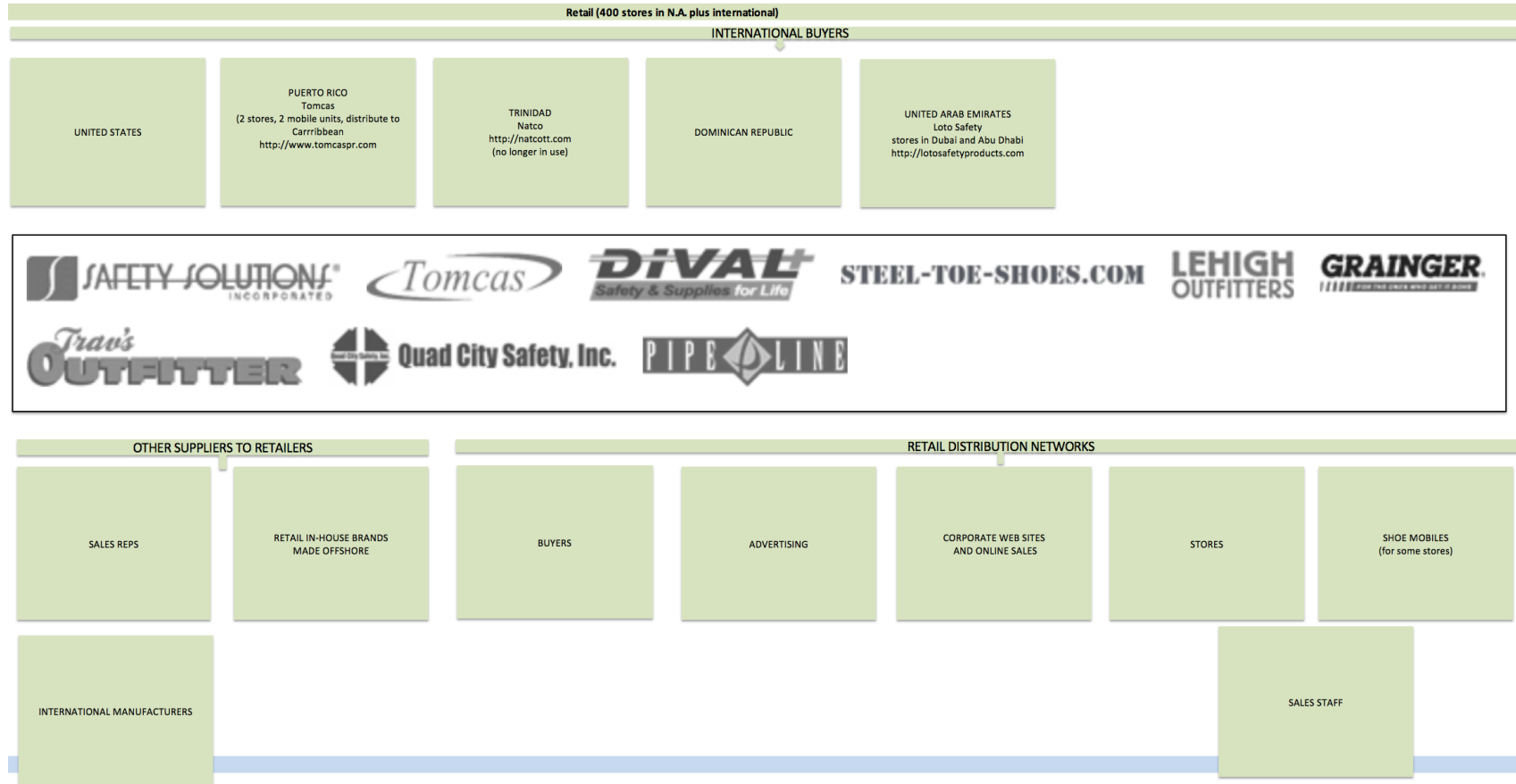


Figure 49 Circulation/Consumption: Canadian and international retailers sell Mellow Walk in their stores, shoe mobiles, and online. Actors include buyers, sales staff, retail displays, web sites and advertising, plus competitors and manufacturers of in-house brands.

International retail partner logos from the Mellow Walk web site, accessed August 2015.
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Figure 50 Gladys label on Vanessa boots, photographed at Mark's, Toronto, November 28, 2014.



Figure 51 Mister Safety, men's shoe collection, photographed at Mister Safety, North York, July 18, 2014.

Figure 52 Mark's women's safety shoes (Mellow Walk and Moxie Trades), photographed at Mark's, Toronto, November 28, 2014.



Figure 53 Moxie Trades Side-Zipper Motorcycle Boot is the closest competitor to the Vanessa engineer boot.

Steel-toe-shoes.com. "Moxie Trades 50131-L," Accessed September 12, 2015. www.steel-toe-shoes.com/product/Z-MOX50131.html.

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Figure 54 Hush Puppies Steel-toed Gems Pump is the closest competitor to the Vanessa shoe.

Hush Puppies. "Gems CSA 4 Steel Toe + SD." Accessed August 31, 2015. <https://www.hushpuppies.ca/CA/en-CA/Product.mvc.aspx/35717W/0/Womens/Gems-CSA-4-Steel-Toe-SD?dimensions=0>.

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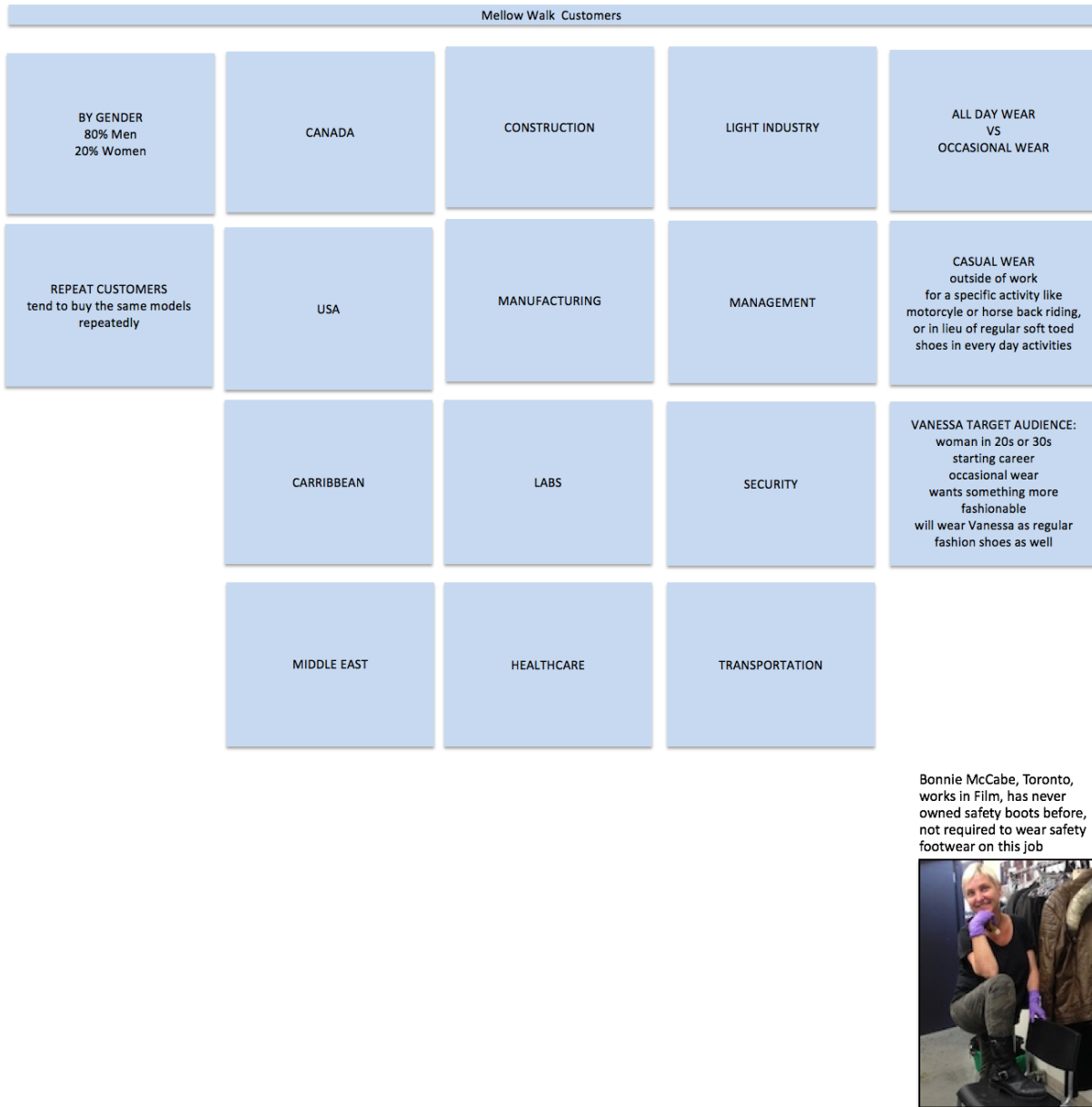


Figure 55 Consumption: Mellow Walk customers. There are many ways to categorize Mellow Walk consumers based on demographics, employment, location, lifestyle, etc.

Photograph by Urs Dierker. © Urs Dierker. Use of this material is by permission of the copyright holder.

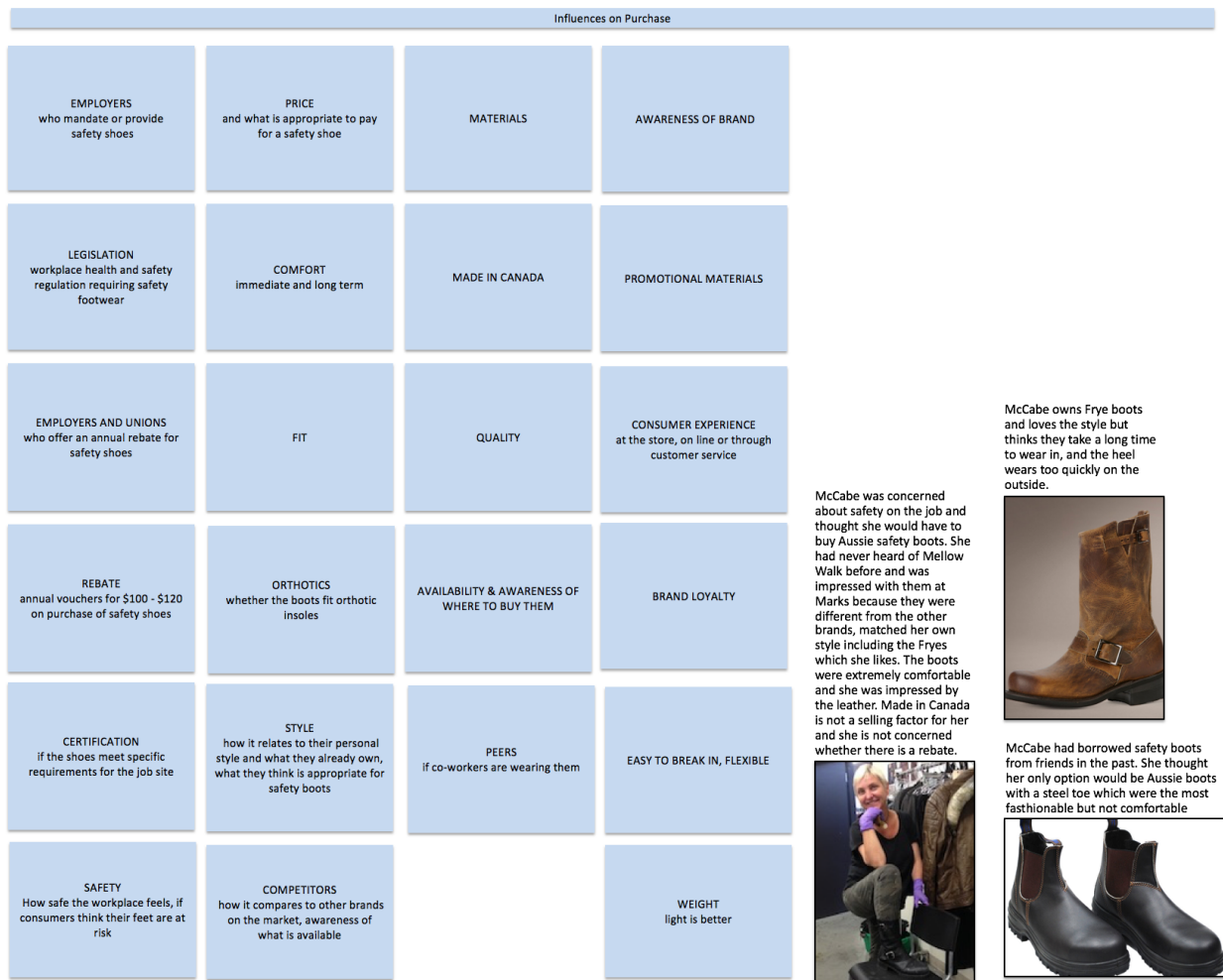
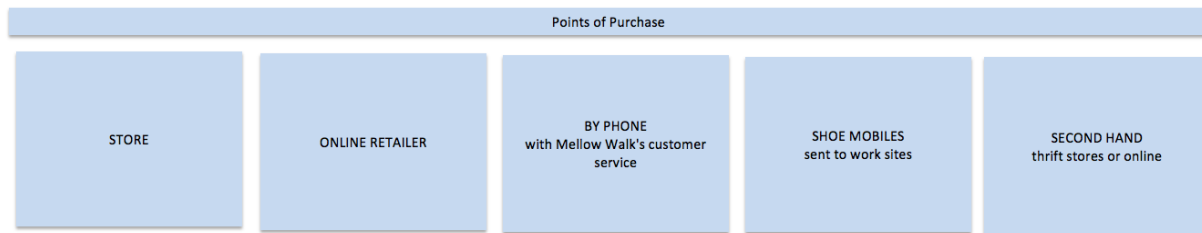


Figure 56 Consumption: Influences on purchase.



McCabe visited a Mark's at Eglinton and Warden in Toronto. She found the Vanessa boots but not in her size 8. The sales staff did not suggest another size. She spent several months looking in other Marks but couldn't find the boots. She returned to this store in December 2014 and tried on a 7.5 which fit.



McCabe had to find the boots herself and received little help from the sales staff who shared no knowledge of the product. McCabe loved the boots as soon as she saw them. Nothing else on the shelf came close in her opinion. She paid around \$165 and received a 15% discount because of her union membership.

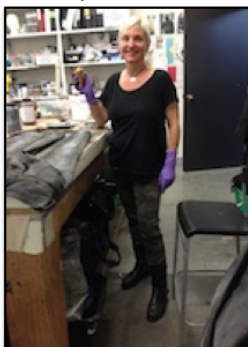


Figure 57 Consumption: Points of purchase.

Image of Mark's from Google Street View (©2018 Google).



McCabe took the boots to work the next day and has worn them every work day since. She didn't need to use her athletic insole in them. They were immediately comfortable for all day wear.



McCabe works in dying and breakdown in the costume department on a film set. She has spilled water, dyes and paints on her Vanessa boots. She has not cleaned or sprayed the boots. She has noticed barely any wear. She will keep them until they are worn out, discard them and replace them with the same model.



Figure 58 Consumption: Product in use, 2015.

Photographs by Urs Dierker. © Urs Dierker. Use of this material is by permission of the copyright holder.

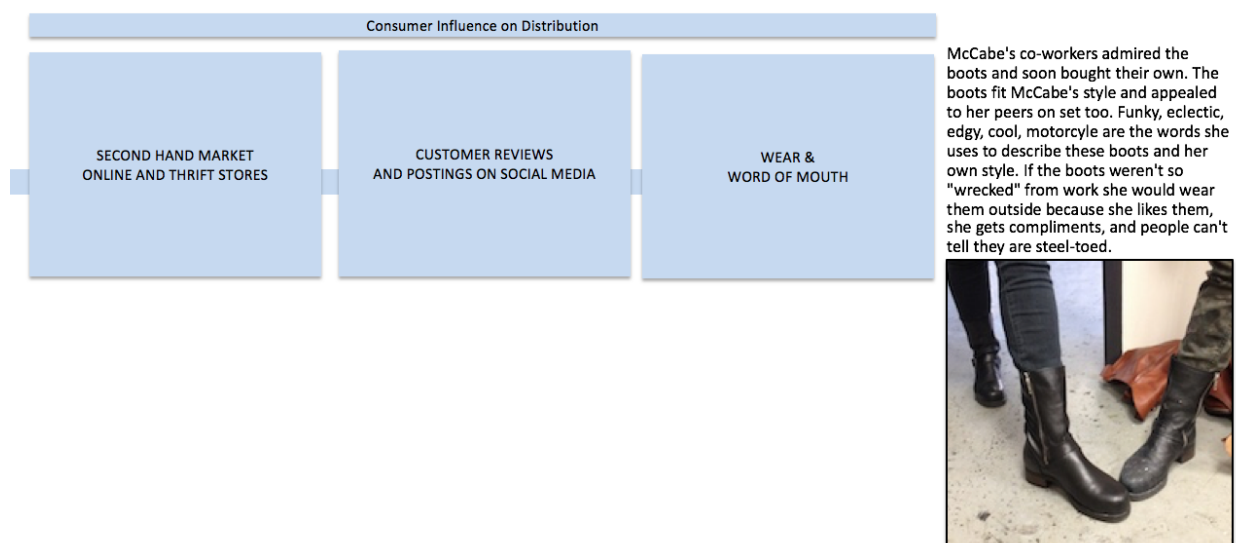


Figure 59 Consumption: Consumer influence on circulation/distribution, 2015.

Photograph by Urs Dierker. © Urs Dierker. Use of this material is by permission of the copyright holder.



Figure 60 Product modified in use, Toronto, 2015. Bonnie McCabe's Vanessa boots are now unique reflections of McCabe and her job as a costume breakdown artist for the film industry.

Photograph by Urs Dierker. © Urs Dierker. Use of this material is by permission of the copyright holder.

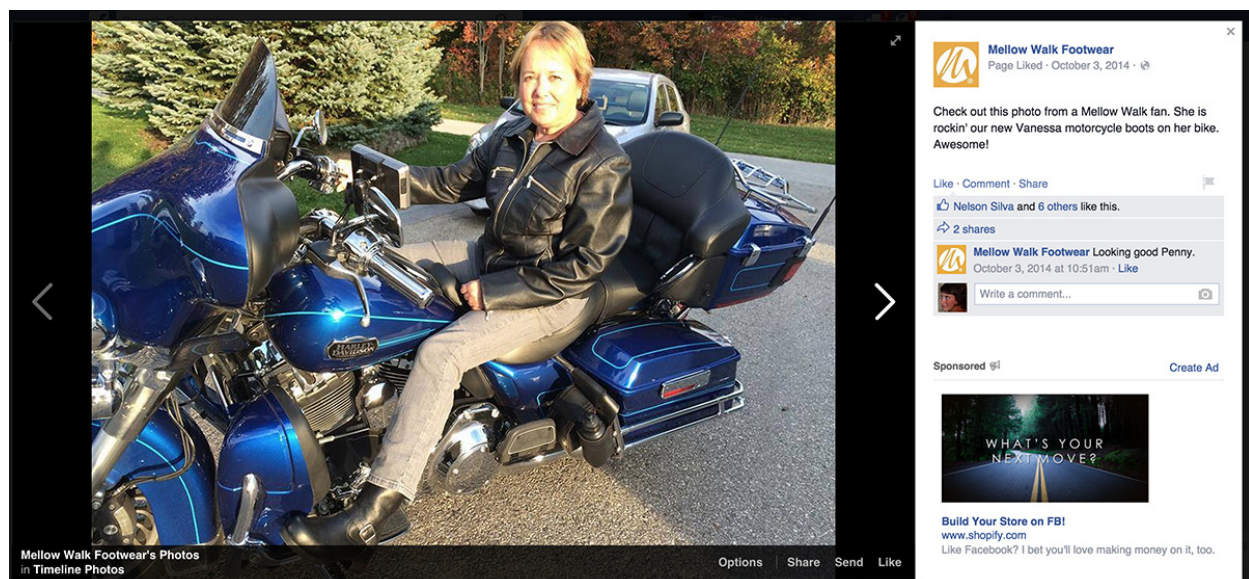


Figure 61 Product put to new use, 2014. “Mellow Walker” Penny shares a photograph of herself wearing the Vanessa boots. The boots, which Mellow Walk describes as “motorcycle” style, find new purpose as safety boots for transportation and hobby.

Mellow Walk. “Mellow Walk Footwear - Photos - Mellow Walk Fan,” October 3, 2014. <https://www.facebook.com/MellowWalkFootwear/photos/a.198818593558056/584129175026994/?type=3&theater>.

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Chapter 7: Case Study – Gourmet Settings

1. Gourmet Settings – Introduction

It is difficult to say how many Canadian designers find careers in mass production, who are responsible in some way for the many objects that fill everyday lives. A review of recent Canadian product design awards revealed mostly health care products, industrial machinery, electronics, furniture, and home accessories made in small batches. With the exception of the Canadian housewares company Umbra, there was little that represented the kind of anonymous design found in retail chains around the world. Some designers are likely embedded in corporations, but there are also a handful who, through the design promotion circuit of trade shows, media, and awards, have become known for their contract work in industrial design. Helen Kerr, Co-President of Kerr Smith, and the central designer in this case study, is one of the few Canadian industrial designers who have sustained a successful firm integrating product design and strategy, in addition to an academic career. Kerr has designed hundreds of objects that have gone into mass production, particularly in the kitchen, dining, and furniture categories, in addition to her work in forecasting and strategy for the government and private sector on topics like healthcare, banking, and the future of the Ontario economy. In 2015, Kerr was made a member of the Royal Canadian Academy of the Arts, but chances are most Canadians have never heard of her.

I became aware of Kerr's work for Gourmet Settings in the early 2000s when the flatware had just entered the market and was creating a buzz in the Canadian design world. A Canadian manufacturer (Gourmet Settings), in partnership with a leading Canadian design firm (Kerr + Company), had made it to the shelves of Walmart and even better, to Target, the retail chain that was 'democratizing' design across the United States. The Toronto-based museum, the Design Exchange, quickly acquired the flatware for its permanent collection, and published a case study of Gourmet Settings proclaiming the advantages of design for business, a theme that was repeated in articles about the company in mainstream newspapers and *Business Week* magazine.⁵³³ TV shows featured Kerr explaining her process, and the product, packaging, and website were all recognized with international design awards.

⁵³³ Reena Jana, "Flatware That's Anything But Flat: Two Toronto Design Firms Collaborate to Create a Holistic Design Strategy for an Eye-Catching, Award-Winning Brand of Eating Utensils Sold at Costco.," *BusinessWeek*, 2007, http://www.bloomberg.com/ss/07/07/0720_IDEA_costco/source/1.htm.

When I spoke with Kerr in 2012 to find out if there was a consumer product in development suitable for this study, I learned that her business is now more focused on intangible strategy and systems design projects. Even though writing a case study on Gourmet Settings is partly historical (rather than following the object as it is created), the flatware is an ideal fit for several reasons. It continues to be produced in Asia in the millions and has been sold on every continent. It gives insight into offshore manufacturing and the invisible design work that reaches the homes of consumers the world over. Design journalist Andrew Blum described Gourmet Settings as the antithesis to high-brow design attached to big-name designers, having “no austere ambition to be a self-justifying work of art. The process may be poetry, but the end result is—in the words of Gourmet Settings’ cheeky promotional materials—‘just a fork.’”⁵³⁴ It is on the one hand, a humble product that blends with the innumerable consumer goods stocking the shelves of big box stores, and on the other hand, a product described as having “completely changed this industry” (Smith). From my perspective as a researcher, I was lucky that the contract between Gourmet Settings and Kerr + Company had continued until recently (1998 - 2012) and that most of the design team was available to consult in Toronto. The client, Hildy Abrams, was thankfully very open to my project. Together with Abrams and Kerr, we settled on Non Stop as the case study object, one of the very first lines of flatware designed for Target, which is still in production today and sold in packaging that resembles the original boxes (figs.72, 73).

Abrams and Kerr were incredibly generous with their time and put me in touch with a variety of people to talk to along the commodity chain, which I did between fall 2013 and summer 2014. This included four members of the original design team: Helen Kerr and Johnny Lim from Kerr + Company, and Nigel Smith and Stéphane Monnet from Hahn Smith. Lim left Kerr + Company in 2013, and is currently the only in-house designer at Gourmet Settings. Monnet left Hahn Smith in 2008 to pursue work in other design studios, but opened his own firm in 2009 when Gourmet Settings approached him to design their packaging. At the Gourmet Settings office in Richmond Hill, I interviewed the President and CEO, Hildy Abrams, and I was able to visit Lim’s design studio. I conducted interviews in the offices of Kerr Smith (Kerr + Company and Hahn Smith have merged since the Gourmet Settings contract began) and Monnet Design, both in downtown Toronto. I am missing the voice of Sam Kump, the designer who, along with Kerr, was originally responsible for the Non Stop pattern at Kerr + Company. In New York, I interviewed a senior buyer who worked for one of the major retail chains and

⁵³⁴ Andrew Blum, “The Truth About Forks and Spoons. From Metropolis,” *Andrewblum.net* (blog), November 1, 2001, <http://andrewblum.net/2001/the-truth-about-forks-and-spoons-metropolis/>.

ordered Gourmet Settings for many years (she has chosen to remain anonymous). I visited the Gourmet Settings showroom in Manhattan during the New York Tabletop Show in the fall of 2013, and spent time in Bed Bath & Beyond to understand how the store was organized and how the case study product is merchandized. Finally, while I was unable to interview factory owners and staff, two agents based in Vietnam and Taiwan provided their perspectives on representing North American and European manufacturers in Asian factories through a written questionnaire: Daniel Choi is COO and President of Taeyang Vietnam Co., Ltd. (TYV), one of the main factories Gourmet Settings works with, and he deals with factories and steel suppliers in China and Vietnam on Gourmet Settings' behalf; and Sabrina Chen, owner and CEO of Spring Lotus Ltd., who works in the housewares business and connects major brands with factories and quality assurance services (she does not work with Gourmet Settings at present but is a close acquaintance of Abrams). I also drew from an abundance of material about Gourmet Settings in company promotional materials, press coverage, and consumer reviews.⁵³⁵

Rather than following Non Stop in detail as it developed through initial design and production, I tell the story of a line of cutlery over a decade and a half. The resulting object ethnography diagram covers a 25-year period (1990 – 2015) and focuses on changing relationships within production and distribution networks. Because I did not record steps in manufacturing myself, I used high-level summaries and videos from Gourmet Settings, as well as videos made by the design team and the media summarizing the production process. The trajectory of Non Stop emerged more clearly in some phases of production, circulation, and consumption depending on the available data. It was at times difficult to isolate because it is embedded in the corporate history and in collections of very similar products designed simultaneously. Interviewees could recall the phases of Gourmet Settings' development as a 'design-led' company more clearly than the specifics of the design of Non Stop. It was likely not that different from the 13 other lines of flatware created at the same time (1999) for Walmart and Target. In contrast, Lim was able to describe in detail the design process he uses today, along with his recent changes to the Non Stop pattern. Abrams, Kerr, and Smith, the original team that established the design process and strategy, have worked in design and manufacturing longer than the other interviewees and could speak more broadly about the changes they have witnessed. Kerr's holistic approach means she could discuss the entire process with some knowledge, whereas other interviewees focused on their own responsibilities. Conveniently for this study, Kerr is interested in distributed authorship and authority, which means that even though Kerr is often singled out as 'the' designer in media and on the Gourmet Settings web

⁵³⁵ I have done my best to cross-reference dates and names, but some timelines may be slightly off.

site, she would rather talk about collaboration and different contributors to design: “The outcome isn’t really the descriptor of what we do. The process is the descriptor of what we do. The designer isn’t so much the decisive author of everything. It’s a collaborative process.”⁵³⁶ The relationships between the human and corporate actors changed over the case study timeframe. The organization chart (fig. 71) illustrates that evolution, highlighting two different periods in the company’s history: 1990 – 2004, covering the founding of Gourmet Settings, the formation of its design and manufacturing ecosystem, and Non Stop’s life at Target; and 2005 – 2015, in which the network of designers and factories was reconfigured, and Non Stop migrated to Costco and Bed Bath & Beyond.

Several interesting themes emerge as the object ethnography moves from Non Stop’s predecessors, to prototypes and sales models in North America, to the cutlery in production in Asia, to store shelves and homes around the world, and finally to its redesign and reincarnation under a new name. First, the role of design: Gourmet Settings chose to invest heavily in design to grow the business and differentiate its products. An in-depth process of research and design, including a holistic and integrated approach to the supply chain, became a prominent feature of the company identity and a selling point for products. Messages about being ‘design-led’ were present in the earliest marketing materials, and are repeated in interviews today. With high-profile designers and firms hired to help establish its brand and product lines, Gourmet Settings bought in to the system of design promotion and was soon recognized with design awards and attention from media and museums. The emphasis on design strategy and design for business in this case study is evidence of the abstraction and fetishism of design activity. The Gourmet Settings story is so finely tuned that it was often difficult to see through the rhetoric to understand, for example, the influence of manufacturing on design.

Second, the global scale of the operation has a significant impact on this case study. The flatware represents mass production, mass distribution, offshore manufacturing, and global consumption, yet there are still elements of customization based on local tastes and dining practices. Abrams spoke about the additional pressures that come with designing for the world’s largest retailers, like delivering big quantities on time and of consistent quality for clients with little tolerance for unfulfilled orders. The size of the orders means that retailers have enormous power over what is designed and put into production, and Gourmet Settings is in many ways subject to the whims of retail buyers. Interviewees witnessed the early days of North American firms mass producing in Chinese factories and commented on changes they have seen since.

⁵³⁶ 291 Film Company, *Helen Kerr on Design Process. Dream Big. Do Good. Spread Joy.*, vol. Episode 106, Great Minds of Design, 2012, <https://vimeo.com/40184717>.

The intermediaries based in Asia gave insight into balancing the needs of Canadian design firms with those of Chinese factories, while respecting cost constraints and expectations of quality from Gourmet Settings and retailers. Those intermediaries help to make intangible global networks more concrete by recognizing the contributions of mold makers, factory workers, and craftspeople who speak another language and whose work is often invisible. In a global supply chain that seems vast and separated over great distances, personal relationships play an important role. There are certain actors who exert more pressure, and certain relationships that drive the design process. With Abrams and Kerr, there is a strong sense of partnership rather than a client-supplier relationship, and this level of collaboration helped them to lead the design process. Abrams invests a lot of time in building relationships with suppliers, which is in part how she guarantees quality and delivery on their promises.

Third, distributed authorship and iteration in design can be observed over nearly two decades of product development. This starts with Gourmet Settings' original Handmade patterns purchased in China in the early to mid-1990s, made by cottage industries. The cutlery and packaging designed by Kerr + Company and Hahn Smith from 1998 to 2012 have been modified and re-presented under different names and brands, distributed by different stores, and manufactured in different locations. The current group of designers are making their own changes within the existing families of products as well as adding new patterns. Competitor companies have circulated versions of Gourmet Settings flatware and packaging by copying, thereby pushing Gourmet Settings to create new designs.

Fourth, the packaging design and retail environment play significant roles. The design team spent considerable time researching how people eat, how flatware "lives" in stores, and how consumers shop. The packaging and its display became one of the most significant differentiators for Gourmet Settings. The boxes' bright colours, transparent fronts with openings so that customers can see and touch what they are buying, changed how the entire flatware industry presents its products today. Many interviewees agreed that it is the packaging that sells the flatware.

Finally, value and democracy are key themes. One of Gourmet Settings' goals was to fill a gap in the market for affordable, well-designed flatware. Kerr, like many designers, is drawn to the idea that everyone should have access to good design (coincidentally, Kerr taught Silva at OCAD and perhaps this influenced his own passion for democracy in design). When Gourmet Settings translated that philosophy into dollars, they came up against a clash of "value systems." Good value for customers at Walmart did not match Kerr's and Abrams' perceptions

of value, and this made it difficult to offer the design and quality they envisioned within prices that made sense for those customers.

2. Gourmet Settings – Corporate Narrative

“At the WalMart on Dufferin Street in downtown Toronto, the Gourmet Settings flatware cuts a commanding figure on the shelves. At \$30 for twenty pieces, it is among the most expensive cutlery in this discount paradise—and looks it: the elegant, oversize forms hover beneath clear plastic, and the clean lines of the package typography stand out among the blaring, blabbering boxes of the competition.”⁵³⁷ - Andrew Blum, Metropolis, 2001

Gourmet Settings designs, mass produces and distributes over 75 lines of flatware and several lines of dinnerware, glassware, and dining accessories to major retailers around the world. Located in the Greater Toronto Area, employing both in-house and contracted designers, Gourmet Settings is a small business that controls a global supply chain generating millions of units of flatware in China and Vietnam. It is a Canadian design success story. The company has won numerous design awards and is recognized for its innovation and leadership in the affordable cutlery category.

The firm is run by CEO and President, Hildy Abrams, a Montreal-born entrepreneur who started out in her family's business, Murray Sales, in 1987. From her basement office in Toronto, she expanded sales of imported kitchen gadgets and tools, and gained experience with big retailers by securing accounts with Sears, Zellers, and Bed Bath & Beyond.⁵³⁸ Abrams moved to the housewares company Trupco (short for “the really unique product company”) in 1994, where she became Vice President of Sales and Marketing, and worked closely with Moss Kadey and Steve Barnes who had founded the company in 1990. Kadey has a long history in entrepreneurship and private venture capital, and spent ten years as Vice President of Giftcraft Limited, a Canadian importer and distributor of gifts and novelties.⁵³⁹ Kadey had introduced Brita water filters to the Canadian market with big success and had similar plans for Trupco, while Barnes was more of a “silent partner,” the CEO responsible for financial operations.⁵⁴⁰ Like Murray Sales, Trupco dealt in ‘market goods,’ products (including flatware) manufactured overseas, which Trupco then re-packaged and sold in North America. The three partners

⁵³⁷ Blum, “The Truth About Forks and Spoons. From Metropolis.”

⁵³⁸ Presidents of Enterprising Organizations, “Hildy Abrams | Part I – Career Path, Blog 1,” April 17, 2014, <http://www.peo.net/hildy-abrams-part-i-career-path-blog-1>.

⁵³⁹ Titanium Corporation, “Corporate. Director: Moss Kadey.,” *Titanium Corporation*, accessed December 20, 2015, <http://www.titaniumcorporation.com/s/Directors.asp?ReportID=314519>. Moss Kadey is currently director of Titanium Corporation, a company that recovers waste material from the oil sands. He held the North and South American rights to manufacture and distribute Brita water filters.

⁵⁴⁰ Presidents of Enterprising Organizations, “Hildy Abrams | Part I – Career Path, Blog 2,” April 17, 2014, <http://www.peo.net/hildy-abrams-part-i-career-path-blog-2>.

wanted to develop a new product to cement Trupco's place. They saw an opportunity to rethink mass-market, lower-price range cutlery: "I had this notion that there was a lot of flatware on the market, but it was either really cheap and crappy or super expensive. There was nothing beautiful at a low price" (Abrams).⁵⁴¹ This made sense especially at a time when the American retailer Target was 'democratizing' design by hiring big name designers to create 'accessible,' well-designed goods.

Abrams, Kadey, and Barnes took on the challenge of reimagining affordable flatware and the accompanying consumer experience. In 1997, Trupco changed its name to Gourmet Settings. In 1998, after attempting to work with several other designers, they brought on Kerr + Company for product design. They started by creating new patterns for the existing Gourmet Settings Handmade line, variations of which are still popular sellers today. That initial work was just a taste of what would come: the concept would be expanded to a redesign of the entire system, creating an integrated process of manufacturing, packaging, distribution, retail display, sales and customer service, all driven by a belief in design processes.

By 2000, Gourmet Settings was selling a range of new, modern flatware styles in both Walmart and Target stores across North America. Abrams and her partners competed with well-established flatware manufacturers by introducing products that not only looked substantially different, but were also presented in a new way, in eye-catching boxes backed with a story about a company that cared. This was a bold move for such a small organization, pitting itself against companies like Oneida, which had been in operation for over 120 years and was selling close to 350 million dollars in flatware annually.⁵⁴² Abrams recalls a long-time trade journalist approaching her, surprised by Gourmet Settings' sudden appearance in stores. The cutlery and "interruptive" packaging received a great deal of attention, especially from competitors.

The media loved Gourmet Settings from the beginning. The company was covered by national newspapers and magazines, featured on cooking shows, and endorsed by Oprah's personal chef.⁵⁴³ Within the design world, the flatware was recognized by museums like the Design Exchange, which added several lines to its permanent collection, and the Cooper Hewitt National Design Museum in New York, which featured patterns in the recent exhibition *Beautiful User* (December 2014 – April 2015). A long list of design awards includes the prestigious

⁵⁴¹ Presidents of Enterprising Organizations, "Hildy Abrams | Part I – Career Path, Blog 3," April 17, 2014, <http://www.peo.net/hildy-abrams-part-i-career-path-blog-3>.

⁵⁴² Blum, "The Truth About Forks and Spoons. From Metropolis."

⁵⁴³ Gourmet Settings, "Restaurant Packages," n.d., <http://www.gourmetsettings.com/bulk-flatware>.

international Red Dot prize and a Gold medal from the International Design Excellence Awards.⁵⁴⁴

In 2004, after the initial success of the flatware designed by Kerr + Company, Abrams bought out her two partners with private equity from Argosy Capital.⁵⁴⁵ In 2009, she became sole owner, or as she puts it, the “accidental CEO.” Gourmet Settings started with a staff of four whose jobs evolved with the company. Phyl Felice moved from administration to product development, sales and supply chain management, while Jane Evans has remained the face of customer service (her name and number are still printed on the packaging). Today, 13 people report to Abrams, including an in-house designer, someone dedicated to the web site, and a few people in sales and accounting. Abrams’ daughter recently joined to expand business in the restaurant industry. Daniel Choi, the COO of TYV, is based in Vietnam and South Korea and helps Gourmet Settings to mediate with suppliers. He is often referred to as part of the Gourmet Settings staff.

The company is located in Richmond Hill, a town absorbed by Toronto’s northern sprawl and home to numerous small companies and light industry. Situated in a low strip of offices, Gourmet Settings’ calm and understated office is centred around a boardroom that doubles as a showroom. On one side, are the administrative offices for accounting, customer service, and management, and on the other is a two-storey space that holds a small amount of stock, a design office, and work tables with tools and materials for model making. Gourmet Settings also owns a space in Manhattan at FortyOne Madison Avenue, a building dedicated to housewares and tabletop showrooms. The space is open twice a year for the New York Tabletop Show.

⁵⁴⁴ Reena Jana and Michelle Cham Yu, “Online Extra: Case Study: Costco,” BloombergView, June 29, 2007, <http://www.bloomberg.com/bw/stories/2007-07-29/online-extra-case-study-costco> As early as 1999, Gourmet Settings received its first design award: the Carry On pattern was recognized with the prestigious international Red Dot prize issued by the Design Zentrum Nordrhein Westfalen in Germany. In 2001, American Cutlery Awards were given to the Carry On, Loft, Pure, Strand and Non Stop patterns. In 2003, the Balance line received the Design Plus Award at the Ambiente consumer goods show in Frankfurt, and in 2009, the Colonial and Gourmet Settings Army lines won National Product Design Awards from the Cooper Hewitt National Design Museum in New York (Gourmet Settings, “Award Winning,” n.d., <http://www.gourmetsettings.com/award-winning-flatware>). In 2004, Hahn Smith received a Design Exchange Merit award in Visual Communications for the packaging. One of the awards Gourmet Settings was most proud of was the gold medal at the International Design Excellence Awards in 2007, issued by the Industrial Designers Society of America for Gourmet Settings’ design strategy for Costco, a project that was subsequently written up in Business Week Magazine (Jana and Cham Yu, “Online Extra.”).

⁵⁴⁵ Presidents of Enterprising Organizations, “Hildy Abrams | Part I – Career Path, Blog 4,” April 17, 2014, <http://www.peo.net/hildy-abrams-part-i-career-path-blog-4>.

Like many small Canadian companies, Gourmet Settings manufactures offshore and sells the majority of its product outside the country.⁵⁴⁶ There are no flatware factories in Canada, and while there is still a local printing industry, making the boxes in Asia near to the flatware factories makes more sense. Gourmet Settings uses flatware factories in China (Tianjin) and Vietnam (Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh), which source steel from Vietnam, Korea, Japan, and China. The boxes are produced at several factories in China (Tianjin and Shenzhen) and Vietnam (Ho Chi Minh). Third party logistics companies store and ship Gourmet Settings stock from Brampton, Ontario, and Seattle, Washington.

The Gourmet Settings client list is global, with sales on every continent including in Canada, the US, Mexico, Chile, Colombia, the UK, France, Taiwan, Japan, Korea and Australia. Gourmet Settings' relationships with retailers have evolved since the late 1990s. Walmart and Target were its first major distributors. Neither of these relationships lasted, although Target is selling Gourmet Settings again today. Bed Bath & Beyond has carried Gourmet Settings consistently since 2004/5, and Costco has sold its products on and off for many years in North America and Asia. Over the years, retailers have ranged from big chains like Canadian Tire and Williams-Sonoma to higher-end design stores.⁵⁴⁷

Gourmet Settings was intended to appeal to young women and couples who were starting new lives. It found an audience in Walmart and Target shoppers who were ready for higher-end, more contemporary design, without spending a lot more. Within the flatware market, there is a variety of price points and a variety of offerings within each range. Manufacturers and retailers specialize in certain segments, and although Gourmet Settings is known for 'accessible' flatware, Abrams tells distributors who are sourcing the most inexpensive product to look elsewhere because Gourmet Settings cannot do "cheap" as well as other manufacturers. Most interviewees were clear on the niche that Gourmet Settings serves: "high design in the medium affordability" range (Lim). Today, a set of 20 (four place settings x five pieces) retails from \$50 to \$90 (USD).

Gourmet Settings' brand is defined largely by the company's commitment to design. It is rare for a small Canadian company to invest in design so heavily, or to allow designers like Helen Kerr the freedom to pursue such an extensive research and development process. Kerr, along with Nigel Smith and their teams of designers, introduced Gourmet Settings to a more strategic use of design that was applied across the business and global supply chain. The

⁵⁴⁶ Bob Ramsay, "The World Is Flat(ware)," *Globe & Mail*, August 2007, www.gourmetsettings.com/gourmetsettings/content/pdfs/globe-and-mail.pdf.

⁵⁴⁷ Ramsay.

collaboration between Abrams, Kerr, and Smith lasted for 13 years, shaping not only a large number of products, but also Gourmet Settings' identity and operations – they effectively designed the company and its products in tandem, and created a legacy of design work and processes that continue to inform new product development and messaging. This became part of the official corporate narrative and sales pitch, a frequently told story that conveys many of the company's values.

The following is a summary of Gourmet Settings' most common messages presented to consumers through packaging, promotional materials, and the website, to the media and to me during interviews. These ideas influence the design of the flatware:

- Flatware is important because it is used three times a day, 365 days a year, making it one of the most personal objects you'll ever use. Gourmet Settings has thought about how people eat and how flatware fits their lives.
- Flatware used to be boring, but Gourmet Settings made it fun, beautiful, and practical (it works better). Gourmet Settings products bring joy to customers' lives
- Everyone should be able to purchase affordable products without compromising on design. In fact, consumers may be getting more than they are paying for with Gourmet Settings.
- The company develops meaningful relationships based on trust, listening and collaboration. Gourmet Settings works *with* retailers and listens to consumers. The company makes promises that it keeps through guarantees and excellent, personal customer service.
- Gourmet Settings cares about and has considered everything and everyone related to flatware, its creation, and consumption. This is a meticulous, detail-oriented, and people-focused company that strives for perfection.
- The entire product development process was researched and designed in depth, resulting in new insights and efficiencies without compromising quality. The company is committed to ongoing improvement and innovation. Gourmet Settings is not just flatware, it's a system and an attitude.

Today, of the 75 different flatware patterns on the Gourmet Settings web site, 44 can be ordered directly from the company. This is in addition to a variety of serving utensils and steak knives, plus a small collection of glassware, ceramic dinnerware and placemats. There are further patterns designed exclusively for retailers, like Mile High, which was originally sold alongside Non Stop at Target but is now distributed through Costco, or Easy sold through Canadian Tire, or patterns re-branded by companies like Loblaws or Nicole Miller for Bed Bath & Beyond. Gourmet Settings continues to manufacture many of the patterns and boxes first designed by Kerr + Company. The current packaging, promotional materials, and website, are

based largely on Hahn Smith's original work. When designer Johnny Lim moved from Kerr + Company to Gourmet Settings in 2013, the manufacturer began to design new patterns again.

There is a certain 'look' that ties Gourmet Settings patterns together, defined by clean lines and little decorative detailing—Abrams says proudly that there is “not a rosebud in sight.” Gourmet Settings classifies its patterns in five styles: Handmade, Classical, Continental, Modern, and Everyday. The case study object, the Non Stop pattern, belongs to Everyday (fig.74). Overall, the family of products presents a modern and restrained aesthetic that blends in almost anywhere. Their simplicity helps to explain their staying power. While the patterns may not appear revolutionary today, interviewees report that when Gourmet Settings entered the market, it looked nothing like the more elaborate Victorian styles in the same price range. The brand stood out even more with its cheerful packaging, boxes with bold type, bright colours and patterns.

Within the history of Gourmet Settings, Non Stop is interesting as a product that developed in tandem with the company. First created in 1999 as one of the original six patterns sold at Target, Non Stop is one of Gourmet Settings' longest and best selling patterns, and sales continue to grow.

3. Gourmet Settings – Actors

Gourmet Settings actors can be grouped along similar lines as those in the Mellow Walk case study. There are categories common to any mass-produced consumer good, like the historical actors that contributed to their formation (e.g. precedent objects, local manufacturing traditions, family histories, former companies, education, and training) and the broader contexts of markets, industries, histories of consumption, and the circulation of trends, ideas, and goods. There are actors required to bring a mass-produced object into existence (capital, manufacturers, designers, model makers, factory workers, raw materials, suppliers, shippers, regulations, standards, etc.) and those who frame the meanings of an object (manufacturer, designer, retailers, consumers, advertising, packaging, media, etc.). There are those who drive demand, including the retailers and consumers, and those who actually use the finished product. Often, actors fit in multiple groups.

Simply described, the Gourmet Settings chain has at various points included freelance and in-house product and packaging designers (Kerr + Company, Hahn Smith, Kerr Smith, and others) who work closely with the Gourmet Settings CEO (Hildy Abrams), the Operations Manager (Phyl Felice), and the agent and factory COO in China and Vietnam (Daniel Choi). Gourmet Settings senior management, and sometimes the designers, deal with retail buyers from around the world to secure orders and get input on design. That same Gourmet Settings management and design team, along with the agent, interact with the factories in China and Vietnam to place orders and manage production and elements of the design process. The agent and the factories deal with material suppliers, namely steel mills from China, Vietnam, Korea and Japan, and paper mills also in China and Vietnam. Third party logistics companies based in the US and Canada manage distribution to retailers on every continent, and directly to consumers via online orders filled by Gourmet Settings and sites like Amazon. A second-hand market is facilitated through sites like Ebay.

3.1 Production

Manufacturer

Gourmet Settings is both **manufacturer** and **design client** in this story. **Hildy Abrams** is a central figure as **President and CEO** of the company of **13 employees**. However, the roots of Gourmet Settings can be traced to Abrams' former **partners, Moss Kadey and Steve Barnes**, who launched **Trupco** four years before she joined them. In 2004, Abrams bought them out with **private equity**, well after the first wave of successful flatware had been launched.

Abrams' **family business, Murray Sales**, also played a formative role in Gourmet Settings, as a place where Abrams learned about housewares, importing, and selling to big retailers. Abrams is for many people the public face of the company, an integral part of the corporate image, a primary contact for customers and suppliers. Both the **buyer** (anonymous) and the agent, **Daniel Choi** (COO and President of Taeyang Vietnam Co., Ltd.), attribute design at least partially to her. Abrams is a very conscious intermediary, playing the roles of sales person, ambassador, facilitator, and relationship builder. She is focused on the quality of those relationships and establishing trust, part of her role "living the **philosophy of Gourmet Settings**," which she describes as operating with integrity, a value she believes is embodied in Gourmet Settings practices and in the flatware itself.⁵⁴⁸ In hindsight, Abrams sees her career as business owner as an extension of her **social work studies**; she deals with her customers as she would people she was counseling. Rather than telling customers what they need, Abrams describes sitting them down on one of her office or showroom couches and listening (fig. 87).⁵⁴⁹ Abrams explains the importance of conversation, whether she's working with her own staff, factory owners, retail buyers, or end-consumers. The New York buyer attributes Abrams' success to her ability to listen and to her attention to detail.

Despite the many actors between the manufacturer and its customers, Gourmet Settings maintains a direct connection to individual consumers. **Jane Evans**, in charge of **customer service**, is made personally accountable on the packaging and web site: "Ask for Jane. Don't be shy, she's very friendly. We'd love to hear from you!"⁵⁵⁰ Customers respond with "**love letters**," which Abrams acknowledges in a note included with the flatware:

Every day our customers write us letters or send us e-mails raving about our flatware. These letters mean so much to us because they speak to our passion. They show us that we've made a connection with what we're doing and what you want. We're invited into homes to meet family and friends and we're honoured. Really. - Hildy Abrams, President⁵⁵¹

⁵⁴⁸ In Abrams's opinion, the following are key to her role as CEO and to the Gourmet Settings ethos: sensible growth; learning; listening and discussing; being positive, patient, reasonable, accountable, responsible and imaginative; and living and doing what you say. Abrams seeks out "people who care as much" and who share the same concerns and values as Gourmet Settings. Abrams believes that these relationships are the only guarantee in business, and that Gourmet Settings gets business based on its reputation for delivering on its promises. This is a subject she speaks of often, and there have been ups and downs with past business relationships. Through the interviews, it became apparent how well respected and liked she is by those who have worked with her. Presidents of Enterprising Organizations, "Hildy Abrams | Part I – Career Path, Blog 4."

⁵⁴⁹ Presidents of Enterprising Organizations.

⁵⁵⁰ Gourmet Settings, "GS Insert. Brochure.," accessed December 14, 2015, www.gourmetsettings.com/gourmetsettings/content/pdfs/gs_insert.pdf.

⁵⁵¹ Gourmet Settings.

Abrams' emphasis on and aptitude for building relationships has several effects on the design process and design of the flatware. First, her priorities of listening to customers and working with retailers are in line with the philosophy of user-centred, collaborative design. In the early days of product development, Abrams' attitude and business practices facilitated the kind of work carried out by Kerr + Company. Abrams and **Helen Kerr** (designer, Co-president of Kerr Smith) both strive for "meaningful" products and processes, in the sense that they are well thought out and backed by research. Second, the idea that trust is key to these relationships gives the designers freedom. Kerr, **Nigel Smith** (designer, Co-president of Kerr Smith), and **Stéphane Monnet** (designer, President and Creative Director of Monnet Design) remarked that this makes Abrams a wonderful client ("a joy"). She gives them space to develop their ideas without imposing her own vision or micro managing the process. This trust has also led to long-standing relationships where many of the formalities (e.g. a design brief) have disappeared, and which have carried the design vision forward for the past 17 years. Third, Abrams' emphasis on shared values and caring is reflected in the final object in terms of quality and attention to detail, and in the messages conveyed by packaging and promotional materials.

Design

Design defined the Gourmet Settings story from the moment the Trupco partners decided to differentiate themselves in affordable cutlery. Gourmet Settings benefited from the **network of independent design studios** outlined below, which provided contract services as needed, and trained a group of young designers who later became Gourmet Settings employees. Abrams worked with international retailers, customers, and factories, but invested in local design relationships, tapping into a growing **design community in Toronto** and the more established **design network in New York**. These agencies represented **North American design culture**, but also brought a range of influences from clients and industries around the world. Gourmet Settings, together with (and because of) Kerr and her team, became part of networks of design associated with **design museums** like the Design Exchange (Toronto) and the Cooper Hewitt National Design Museum (New York), **design-led retailers** like Target and The Conran Shop, **design publications** featuring their work, and **design awards** programs. **Ideas of design** were also formative actors, circulating notions like "design strategy," "whole systems design" and "design-led company." The language used to describe design's role in defining Gourmet Settings, its processes and products, is still used by interviewees today.

The Trupco partners tried collaborating with a number of **design firms**, including graphic design firm Hambly and Woolley, before settling on Kerr + Company in 1998 and Hahn Smith

shortly after.⁵⁵² **Kerr + Company** was (is) marketed as using evidence-based research, where thorough investigation determines design direction (rather than the reverse which is reportedly more common). The studio's work is positioned as a combination of science, logic, emotion, and intuition, employing methods like ethnography, "experience prototyping," "foresight" and "backcasting."⁵⁵³ Kerr soon involved **Hahn Smith**, a graphic design and branding agency whose office was upstairs from hers at Adelaide and Spadina, a **Toronto neighbourhood** that has attracted a number of the city's design firms – location was fortuitous in the relationships that followed. The Gourmet Settings contract was a departure for Smith and his partner **Allison Hahn**. They had worked mainly for art, culture, architecture, and design clients, and had gained a reputation for exhibition and publication design.⁵⁵⁴ Hahn Smith designed the Gourmet Settings logo, graphics for the packaging, trade show booths, and New York showroom, as well as the web site and all the copywriting.

This early collaboration between Gourmet Settings, Kerr + Company, and Hahn Smith proved to be a "fulcrum moment" (Smith). It was the first time that Abrams hired designers and she, Kerr, and Smith went on to work closely for 13 years. Kerr's office became an extension of Gourmet Settings (the web site refers to "our designer Helen Kerr of Kerr & Co and her team").⁵⁵⁵ Kerr and Abrams bonded over their travels to China, visits to factories, meetings with retail chains, and discussions about what this new category of products could mean. Today, they reminisce about their shared experiences overseas – the jet lag, food, smoky offices, language barriers, negotiations with factories, and surprising conditions on factory floors. Abrams and Kerr developed a special partnership, still evident when listening to them speak about each other or the flatware. Smith describes two high-energy people who fed off each other, "a kind of cross pollination." For Kerr and Smith, their opportune encounter in the office elevator in 2000 led to their collaboration on Gourmet Settings, the first of many joint projects, and one they still talk about fondly. They married in 2010 and the two firms merged officially as **Kerr Smith** in 2012.

⁵⁵² Advertising and Design Club of Canada, "Silver Winner: New Media, Corporate Image Web Sites, Business to Consumer (without E-Commerce) Gourmet Settings," 2001, <http://archive.theadcc.ca/islandora/object/adcc%3A9661>. An early version of the Gourmet Settings web site won a silver New Media award from the Advertising and Design Club of Canada in 2001, designed by Barb Woolley, Dominic Ayre, Pete Paterson, Matt Carter and Norm Mayot from Hambly and Woolley.

⁵⁵³ Kerr Smith Studio, "Kerr Smith Design Capabilities," accessed July 11, 2016, <http://kerrsmithdesign.com/##about-us/capabilities>.

⁵⁵⁴ Hahn's name is not mentioned often in accounts of the Gourmet Settings project, likely because of the dissolution of Hahn Smith during the project.

⁵⁵⁵ Gourmet Settings, "The Design Process," accessed December 14, 2015, <http://www.gourmetsettings.com/design-process>.

Both Kerr and Smith employed **teams of designers** to work on Gourmet Settings. From Kerr's staff of 20, **Sam Kump, Johnny Lim, Thang Tran, Sophie Nicol, Leanna Moore, Graeme McMillan, Chloe Philip, Alex Lambert, Matt Hexemer, David Chan, and Fiona Ara** were involved (fig.75). Lim and Moore designed the box, while Kerr and Kump worked on Non Stop, and Lim and others helped with serving pieces. At Hahn Smith, partners Smith and Allison employed seven graphic designers, of whom two to four were dedicated to the Gourmet Settings project, including **Stéphane Monnet**.

Two generations of designers have worked on the case study object, flatware, and packaging, illustrating the impact of Gourmet Settings on their careers. Members of the original teams continue to carry the product design and process forward today. Kump, Tran, and Lim left **Kerr Smith** and went to work at Gourmet Settings. Lim is now the only designer there.⁵⁵⁶ Monnet, who worked for Hahn Smith extensively on the packaging, moved to the graphic design studio Concrete, but when Gourmet Settings asked if he would design its packaging independently, he opened his own firm (**Monnet Design**). Monnet employs up to five people in his office at Queen and Spadina, several of whom work on the Gourmet Settings account.

In 2007, Gourmet Settings made a further investment in design and attracted media attention for doing so. **Boym Partners Inc.**, a New York-based firm headed by Russian architect and product designer Constantin Boym and American designer Laurene Leon Boym, created seven lines of "occasional flatware" targeted to younger audiences.⁵⁵⁷ The firm is respected internationally, having worked for European clients such as Alessi, Swatch, Flos, and Vitra.⁵⁵⁸ Boym Partners were adventurous in their sources of inspiration, and their patterns stand out in the Gourmet Settings family of products – the Army line is a step-up from utilitarian government issue utensils, while the Goth and Colonial Ghost patterns transform historical silhouettes. These were recently displayed at the **Cooper Hewitt National Design Museum** in New York City.

In many respects, it is difficult to separate the history of the case study product from the history of Gourmet Settings, because the same group, led by Abrams, Kerr, and Smith, defined both. Even though the work was contracted out, the designers appear in promotional materials as if they were part of the company, and eventually a few did become Gourmet Settings employees. The designers were involved in organizing the entire production-circulation-

⁵⁵⁶ Kump was a designer at Kerr & Co. where he worked on Non Stop and other flatware patterns (2000 – 2001) and then as senior designer at Gourmet Settings (2012-13). https://ca.linkedin.com/in/sam-kump-1970061?trk=seokp-title_posts_secondary_cluster_res_author_name

⁵⁵⁷ Boym Partners, "Boym Partners Inc.," Boym Partners, 2007, <http://boym.com/bio.shtml>.

⁵⁵⁸ Boym Partners had just been nominated a finalist in the 2005 National Design Awards (US) and later won the award in 2009, a detail Gourmet Settings captures in online product descriptions.

consumption cycle, as well as the corporate strategy and identity. While Kerr had already been thinking in terms of systems design (which she attributes to her degree in Environmental Studies from the University of Waterloo before taking Industrial Design at the Ontario College of Art), the Gourmet Settings project was an opportunity to apply her holistic, non-linear, and human-centred methodology on a bigger scale as “integrated design strategy.” The results were convincing: one report indicated that Kerr + Company’s work increased sales at Gourmet Settings by 300% in ten years.⁵⁵⁹

Competition

When Trupco started repackaging imported flatware in the mid-1990s, it sought to compete with a number of well-established manufacturers with long histories and proud American pedigrees. Abrams identifies four competitors that continue to make this a tough market: **Oneida, Cambridge, Reed and Barton, and Hampton Forge**. Oneida and Cambridge dominate; Oneida was once the world’s largest flatware manufacturer, and in the 1980s, was selling more than half of all flatware purchased in the US.⁵⁶⁰ Both Oneida and Reed and Barton trace their histories back to the nineteenth century (1888 and 1824 respectively), while Cambridge traces its roots to the 1950s with the brand officially established in the 1990s.⁵⁶¹

When Gourmet Settings arrived on store shelves, these companies were selling what design historians Rachel Gotlieb and Cora Golden described in 2001 as “knock-offs of eighteenth-century designs and reissues of classic Georg Jensen patterns.”⁵⁶² This duality is still evident today, though the proliferation of patterns and brands indicates more diversity. There is currently a wide variety of textured handles that likely originated in the last three decades, as well as more recent innovations in colour-coated flatware made possible through physical vapor deposition (PVD). Some contemporary flatware was almost indistinguishable from patterns in Gourmet Settings’ Classical, Continental, and Everyday lines. There are also patterns identical across brands, like the ‘rope’ handles on Gourmet Settings’ Handmade Twist design, which appear in flatware by the American company William Sheppee, among others. However, attention to form rather than patterning and texture generally sets Gourmet Settings apart, and the company’s Modern lines are easiest to differentiate from the competition.

⁵⁵⁹ Design Exchange, “Canada By Design” (Design Exchange, 2008), 19, http://www.dx.org/site/design_exchange/assets/pdf/Design_Exchange_Design_Catalogue.pdf; Oneida, “The Oneida Story,” accessed July 7, 2016, <http://www.oneida.com/aboutoneida/the-oneida-story>.

⁵⁶⁰ Oneida, “The Oneida Story.”

⁵⁶¹ Oneida; Lenox, “Our History: Tableware, Gifts & Collectibles Since 1889,” Lenox, accessed July 7, 2016, <http://www.lenox.com/index.cfm?ss=services&cat=about&lp=history>; Cambridge, “About Us,” accessed July 7, 2016, http://www.cambridgesilversmiths.com/customer_care/aboutUs.php.

⁵⁶² Gotlieb and Golden, *Design in Canada*, 224.

The 2000s saw new challenges for the flatware market. Gourmet Settings' competitors were better placed with their American headquarters, international subsidiaries, and existing market share, although the increasing quantity and quality of imports led companies to downsize US operations and outsource. In some ways, this put Gourmet Settings on more equal footing, and the company likely benefited from the overall shift in manufacturing culture in Asia. Financial crises contributed to bankruptcies and mergers with other brands. Oneida reportedly lost \$25 million in sales after the World Trade Center attacks in 2001 because airlines banned metal flatware.⁵⁶³ In 2003, the company shut down factories in the United States, Italy, Mexico, and China to move from "fixed-cost factory-operations to variable-cost sourcing."⁵⁶⁴ This more flexible, low-risk model did not prevent them from declaring bankruptcy and being acquired by Monomoy Capital Partners in 2011, and later merging with other brands to form a new company, EveryWare Global.⁵⁶⁵ Reed and Barton went bankrupt in 2015 and was bought by Lenox, the American fine china company established in 1889.⁵⁶⁶ Lenox also acquired both Dansk and Gorham, strategically balancing its tableware collections with Scandinavian-inspired modern design, and the prestige of the American silver company founded in 1831 in Providence, Rhode Island (traded several times in the last half of the twentieth century before being acquired by Lenox in 2005).⁵⁶⁷ Through this process of acquisition and sub-branding, much of Gourmet Settings' competition is now stabilized by even larger sources of capital.

Abrams' observation that there are fewer players on the market today⁵⁶⁸ may not be apparent to consumers. The selection of flatware available online, through current and former distributors of Gourmet Settings, makes it appear as though there is an abundance of brands. The discount stores show less selection: Walmart.com offers 14 different brands of flatware and Target.com offers 16, while Bed Bath & Beyond, which is more focused on housewares and a slightly higher price point, carries no fewer than 50 brands and over 1,200 patterns, ranging

⁵⁶³ Oneida, "The Oneida Story."

⁵⁶⁴ Oneida.

⁵⁶⁵ Monomoy Capital Partners, "Monomoy Capital Partners Acquires Oneida Ltd.," November 2, 2011, <http://www.oneida.com/media/Documents/20111102.pdf>; Stacy Cowley, "Setting a Made-in-the-U.S.A. Table: Yes, Do Stick a Fork in It," *The New York Times*, October 21, 2015, <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/10/22/business/smallbusiness/setting-a-made-in-the-usa-table-yes-do-stick-a-fork-in-it.html>.

⁵⁶⁶ Lenox, "Our History: Tableware, Gifts & Collectibles Since 1889."

⁵⁶⁷ 925-1000.com, "Gorham Silver Marks & Dates," Encyclopedia of Silver Marks, Hallmarks & Makers' Marks, accessed July 7, 2016, http://www.925-1000.com/Gorham_Date_Code.html.

⁵⁶⁸ Presidents of Enterprising Organizations, "Hildy Abrams | Part II – Industry Perspective, Blog 5," April 17, 2014, <http://www.peo.net/Abrams-abrams-part-ii-industry-perspective-blog-5>.

from \$20 for an entire set to \$1,200 for one sterling silver place setting.⁵⁶⁹ On closer examination, the three stores carry many of the same brands, groups of which are owned or represented by parent companies. For example, Cambridge, a company that makes 250 lines of flatware and sells to a long list of department and discount stores, has added independent brands to its collection, including Fiesta, Farberware, and flatware designed by the British designer Robert Welch.⁵⁷⁰ Cambridge also makes the private label flatware for *Better Homes and Gardens* (the magazine and tv show), which is carried by Walmart. Lifetime Brands owns at least five of the flatware brands sold at Bed Bath & Beyond: Mikasa, Pfaltzgraff, Wallace, Towle, and International. Towle was established in 1690 in Massachusetts, and International was founded in 1898 as a group of independent silversmiths from New England.⁵⁷¹ There is value in keeping these old names alive; they help to differentiate products, and represent an era of American craftsmanship, quality, and small manufacturing that is no longer viable. Lifetime Brands, whose name is not included on the retailer's web site, started as a cutlery manufacturer in 1945 and is today a massive distributor of housewares with headquarters in Garden City, NY. The company aggressively acquires manufacturers and distributors around the world, with growing reach in North and South America, Europe, and Asia.⁵⁷² There are a number of foreign flatware companies that sell alongside Gourmet Settings at Bed Bath & Beyond, such as Noritake from Japan, Iitala from Finland, and Sambonet from Italy, as well as small to medium-sized American manufacturers and distributors like Nambe and Ginko.

The competition exists in such large numbers that Gourmet Settings disappears in a sea of choices. It does not have the name recognition, American history, or caché of being European or Japanese. Design and packaging becomes increasingly important in this context. Competitors influence design by offering products in relation to which Gourmet Settings can distance or associate itself; and by copying Gourmet Settings or leading innovation, both of which push Abrams and her team to decide whether to hold their ground or design new products. **Price**, the instantly understood differentiator, also takes on a more significant role. Choi, well aware of the costs of manufacturing from dealing with factories first hand, sees good value for customers in Gourmet Settings. He feels the retail price may actually be too low, and not reflective of the **true value of manufacturing**. This is a result of competition, in his opinion,

⁵⁶⁹ Based on a survey of flatware sold as of July 6, 2016, on walmart.com, target.com, and bedbathandbeyond.com.

⁵⁷⁰ Cambridge, "About Us."

⁵⁷¹ International Silver Company, "History and Marks," accessed July 7, 2016, <http://www.silvercollection.it/INTERNATIONALSILVERCO.html>.

⁵⁷² Lifetime Brands, "Company Timeline," accessed July 7, 2016, https://www.lifetimebrands.com/Company-Timeline/COMPANY_TIMELINE,default.pg.html.

which forces both Gourmet Settings and its suppliers to work “on a relatively **narrow margin**,” with direct implications for design and manufacturing.

Global Supply Chains

Where Gourmet Settings chooses to manufacture has a significant impact on the design and quality of the final product. The selection of **factory** and **location** is determined by such variables as quality of relationships, trustworthiness, factory ability and capacity, access to **materials**, **price**, **minimum orders**, and global trade and tax **regulations**. Each sector or product type has its own manufacturing requirements and each factory has its own way of operating. This can mean a learning curve for the designers every time a new factory is brought on board, and a period of adjustment as the factories and Gourmet Settings figure out how they will communicate, design, and manufacture together.

When they were first establishing Gourmet Settings’ systems of production and distribution, Kerr and Abrams visited **German factories** and an area in **South Korea** that once specialized in flatware, but settled on several **Chinese** and now **Vietnamese factories**. The first, and ongoing relationship, is with **TTX** in Tianjin, China (owned by a South Korean), which outsources **handwork** for the Handmade lines to local **cottage industries**. In 2004/5, Gourmet Settings started working with **TYV** (Tae Yang Vina) in Hanoi, Vietnam, and has since engaged a new factory north of Shanghai, as well as small factories in Ho Chi Minh. The boxes are also produced in Ho Chi Minh and Tianjin, close to the flatware factories to facilitate packing and shipping. Gourmet Settings has worked closely with **Hung Hing Printing**, with headquarters in Hong Kong and facilities on the mainland (Shenzhen, Heshan, Wuxi, and Zhongshan). Hung Hing not only produces specialty packaging and books, but also owns a paper plant (**Sung Hing**), is a global paper trader, and employs 11,000 people. Abrams and Felice prefer to maintain the known relationships, but shop around if new patterns or packaging have special requirements, or if the level of quality changes at a factory.

Shifts in regional and global economies underlie Gourmet Settings’ choices. While American manufacturers used to make locally, supported by subsidiary factories in other countries (as early as 1916, Oneida had its first international factory in Niagara Falls, Ontario, followed by branches in England by the 1930s), all but one American factory has been closed and the interviewees are unaware of any Canadian company with the capacity to produce flatware (though there exist a few small businesses that specialize in making knives). The last remaining factory in the US is located in the town of Sherrill, NY, once known as “Silver City”

and home to Oneida.⁵⁷³ The former Oneida factory is now run by ex-Oneida employees who have built a small but successful business as Liberty Tabletop, using American steel and leveraging the 'Made in America' movement.⁵⁷⁴ Today, the global model for Gourmet Settings' main American competitors appears to be: head office on the east coast, showroom in New York (in the same building as Gourmet Settings), distribution facilities on both coasts and possibly on other continents, an office in China (Oneida is in Guangzhou, Cambridge is in Tianjin), and factories across Asia (Cambridge reports working with 25 factories in Korea and China).⁵⁷⁵

In Europe, the picture is different. Germany still has a flatware industry, which in 2013 produced €146 million of flatware.⁵⁷⁶ France is the second largest European producer (at almost half Germany's output), followed by Italy, Spain, and the United Kingdom.⁵⁷⁷ Those countries are also the biggest consumers of flatware in that order.⁵⁷⁸ Further research might reveal how much, if any, of this product is made in Asia and packaged in Europe. Flatware exported from European countries largely serves other EU nations and the United States.⁵⁷⁹ The largest exporters of flatware to Europe are China with 41% of the market, and the balance is divided by Germany, Netherlands, Vietnam, and France.⁵⁸⁰ It is noted that China's share is decreasing while Vietnam's is growing.⁵⁸¹

Imports of flatware to Canada over the last twenty-five years trace the rise and fall of nations within the global flatware trade. South Korea was the lead producer of flatware for Canada up until the mid-1990s, after which China moved into and maintained first place. In 2015, Canada imported \$23,664,183 of non-precious metal flatware from China, representing 69% of the country's total flatware imports. Over the past decade, Vietnam has been the second largest producer of flatware for Canada. Korea, Japan, and Taiwan have all declined in importance, as have the European exporters to Canada (Italy, France, Germany, Netherlands),

⁵⁷³ Cowley, "Setting a Made-in-the-U.S.A. Table."

⁵⁷⁴ Localsyr.com, "Made in Central New York: A Manufacturer with a Big History in New York's Littlest City," LOCALSYR, May 14, 2015, <http://www.localsyr.com/news/made-in-cny/made-in-central-new-york-a-manufacturer-with-a-big-history-in-new-yorks-littlest-city>; Liberty Tabletop, "Made in the USA," *Liberty Tabletop* (blog), accessed July 8, 2016, <http://libertytabletop.com/liberty/made-usa/>.

⁵⁷⁵ Cambridge, "About Us"; Oneida, "Oneida International," accessed July 8, 2016, <http://www.oneida.com/international>.

⁵⁷⁶ CBI Market Information Database, "CBI Product Factsheet: Cutlery in Europe," 2014, <https://www.cbi.eu/sites/default/files/study/product-factsheet-cutlery-europe-home-decoration-textiles-2014.pdf>.

⁵⁷⁷ CBI Market Information Database.

⁵⁷⁸ CBI Market Information Database.

⁵⁷⁹ CBI Market Information Database.

⁵⁸⁰ CBI Market Information Database.

⁵⁸¹ CBI Market Information Database.

while Indonesia and India have gained significant market share. The US, as Canada's largest trading partner, has remained in third to fifth position, presumably re-exporting flatware manufactured overseas.⁵⁸²

These trends follow the larger movements of global production, and the shift of labour-intensive manufacturing from the 'Four Asian Tigers/Dragons' of South Korea, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Singapore in the 1970s, to China where cheaper labour conditions were made available starting in the 1980s.⁵⁸³ Many of those Chinese factories were run by firms outsourcing from the Four Dragon countries.⁵⁸⁴ Western clients are commonly represented in China by middlemen from those nations, which may be a carryover from past relationships, Korean middlemen in particular having experience working with Western firms (Silva). In the mid-2000s, when prices started to rise in China, Vietnam became a favoured centre for production. Choi, the COO of factory, exemplifies these transnational relationships. He is Korean and lives in Vietnam, where he manages quality control and scheduling for Chinese and Vietnamese factories on behalf of a Canadian client, Gourmet Settings, which serves a global market. It is worth noting that choosing where to manufacture is not based only on local conditions. The locations of Gourmet Settings' clients and the **shipping destinations** – potentially different places—also play a role in the context of international trade agreements. For example, Gourmet Settings' British and Canadian clients request products made in Vietnam to avoid the additional duty charged for products made in China.⁵⁸⁵

Some of the interviewees have noticed a change in what the **flatware factories** offer and how they work with foreign clients. Choi observes that whereas **tools** (dies, stamps, molds) were once made by the "hand sculpture of **skilled workmen**," they are now made using **CNC (computer numerically controlled) carving and milling machines**. He foresees that advances in automation will significantly change how flatware is manufactured in the near future. Lim also notes the factories' investment in CNC machines and **in-house designers**, which makes communication and production more straightforward, and minimizes error. **Sabrina Chen** (Owner and CEO of Spring Lotus Ltd.) predicts that increased standardization and technologies like 3-D printing will further help to close the gap between manufacturing and design, and shorten development times. Kerr observes that by demanding higher standards, big retailers have influenced factory conditions for the better (retailers want to ensure that their suppliers will not link them to factories with poor labour conditions

⁵⁸² Government of Canada, "Trade Data Online," home page; Navigation Pages; Home Pages; Landing Pages, January 24, 2013, <http://www.ic.gc.ca/eic/site/tdo-dcd.nsf/eng/Home>.

⁵⁸³ Anita Chan, ed., *Walmart in China* (Ithaca: ILR Press, 2011), 3.

⁵⁸⁴ Chan, 4.

⁵⁸⁵ Canadian clients pay an additional 3% duty for products made in China.

or environmentally unfriendly practices). Cleaner and safer manufacturing has an impact on production, which in turn, has implications for the design and quality of the final product.

It is a similar story for printing. Monnet senses that there is increasing choice in China and Vietnam, and that factories are improving production and quality to become more competitive. The **printing and packaging factories** are large, used to dealing with overseas clients, and have English speakers on staff. They have such a range of capabilities, can produce so reliably, cheaply, and quickly, that Monnet feels he can achieve any effect he wants. For example, **Hung Hing** provides a wide array of **finishes**, some of which are no longer available in Canada. **Techniques** offered by the factories also inspire design ideas for Monnet (he has not tried out the scratch and sniff or flocking but is impressed by the foils and embossing), and producing with Hung Hing allows interesting products to be created on a scale that would be impossible or too expensive in Canada today.

Raw Materials

Stainless steel plays a central role in this story. The quality of the raw material is crucial to the success of the flatware. Despite its name, stainless steel is not corrosion resistant. With the wrong composition, the steel will **rust**, which ruins the product and with it, Gourmet Settings' reputation. What the factories produce, and how seriously they take quality control, can make or break the manufacturer's relationship with retailers who are on the front lines of customer satisfaction.

Stainless steel is made primarily of **iron** and contains a minimum of 11.5% **chromium**. Gourmet Settings flatware contains at least 18% chromium (which is standard), and up to 10% **nickel**. This range of "ingredients" is guaranteed by the numbers stamped on the back of the flatware and packaging (18/0, 18/8, 18/10).⁵⁸⁶ Nickel increases rust resistance but the **price of nickel** jumped during product development, leaving Abrams and Kerr to reduce overall costs. They learned that 18/10 has far more nickel than necessary for flatware, and that if they processed the steel properly in the factory, they could get away with no nickel at all (18/0). Nevertheless, rusting and staining are two of the most common **consumer complaints** in online reviews of Non Stop and other Gourmet Settings flatware, with negative impact for the brand's reputation.⁵⁸⁷

⁵⁸⁶ Gourmet Settings, "Flatware 101," accessed December 14, 2015, <http://www.gourmetsettings.com/stainless-flatware-101>.

⁵⁸⁷ This is based on reading customer reviews of Gourmet Settings products on Amazon.com, Canadian Tire.ca, Reddit.com

Steel can differ substantially based on country of origin. When Abrams and Kerr were first sourcing the material, **German steel** was considered the best in the world (Kerr remembers someone in a German factory inspecting the metal with a magnifying glass and rejecting anything with the smallest defect). **Japanese steel** was also considered good quality, but the **Chinese steel** had sludge, which meant that it would rust and pit as soon as it went through the dishwasher. At one point, Gourmet Settings considered buying steel directly from suppliers, but this was too complicated for the small company. Today, Gourmet Settings relies on the factories to source from **steel mills** in Vietnam, Korea, Japan, and China.

The **cost of the flatware**, and whether it stays within the desired price range, is directly related to the amount of metal used and the global **steel market**, which has fluctuated greatly since Gourmet Settings went into production (global demand for steel increased with China and India's growth in the first half of the 2000s; today China is responsible for half of the world's production and is flooding global markets with cheap steel).⁵⁸⁸ Choi notes that Gourmet Settings' designs are heavier and larger than most, yet still offered at the same price point as other brands. His observation alludes to the pressure to remain competitive and suggests that Gourmet Settings has been effective at finding other cost efficiencies throughout the production chain.

Gourmet Settings uses its knowledge of stainless steel to signify its expertise and convince consumers of the quality and value of its products (the homepage states: "We learned how to use steel better, finish it better and waste less material").⁵⁸⁹ Gourmet Settings attempts to turn consumer questions about rust and cost to its advantage, by justifying the price of its flatware through a story of innovation: "Because of the recent spike in the price of nickel, we are currently working with metallurgists in Sheffield, England to develop affordable, nickel-free stainless steel of the finest and purest quality."⁵⁹⁰ How stainless steel is processed by the factories is a science, requiring precision and high levels of control over temperature and how the metal is worked. Each of these factors related to the raw material – its origin, makeup, processing, and cost—allows and constrains the product design, price, presentation, and use.

⁵⁸⁸ Sonja Elmquist, "Strong Dollar Hurting U.S. Steel Mills as Imports Flood Market," Bloomberg.com, accessed December 22, 2015, <http://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2015-03-25/strong-dollar-hurting-u-s-steel-mills-as-imports-flood-market>.

⁵⁸⁹ Gourmet Settings, "Gourmet Settings," n.d., <http://www.gourmetsettings.com/>.

⁵⁹⁰ Gourmet Settings, "Here We Are Now. Brochure.," accessed December 14, 2015, www.gourmetsettings.com/gourmetsettings/content/pdfs/g_s_herewearenow.pdf.

Agents and Intermediaries

Global manufacturing relies on in-house and independent agents who mediate relationships between actors in different countries. **Roger Hamby**, Choi, and Chen represent Gourmet Settings and similar companies in offshore manufacturing. Their jobs can include sales, coordination, communication, and quality control, but they also share expertise and business strategy, and interpret, negotiate, and act as ambassadors for their clients. Their positions show the need to have someone on the ground with in-depth knowledge of manufacturing and design, fluent in the **languages** spoken at the factories and by the client, and comfortable with the cultures they are navigating. These intermediaries help to make up for the physical and cultural distances between Toronto and parts of Asia.

As Abrams explored factories and resources in Asia, she realized that she needed a second, expert opinion to help her evaluate quality and establish standards and testing. She recruited Roger Hamby, Engineer and Director of Research at **CATRA** (formerly the Cutlery and Allied Trades Research Association), from **Sheffield, England**. This proved a valuable decision both in terms of the knowledge Hamby brought to the process, and the link it created between Gourmet Settings and a legacy of flatware manufacturing recognized the world over. As the *Globe and Mail* reported: “When Abrams first broke into the business in 1994, she reached back into the past to secure her future. For centuries, Sheffield England was the centre of high-quality stainless steel. During the 1950s, it was home to 250 flatware factories and steel mills, employing 30,000 skilled tradespeople. Nearly all those factories are now defunct.”⁵⁹¹ In the global history of cutlery design and manufacture, CATRA provided a bridge from old-world expertise and industrial prowess to a newer world of offshore manufacturing that lacked the tradition of Western flatware production. CATRA may be located in a “now defunct” centre of production, but it has built a reputation based on a tradition of research, development, and cutting-edge technology. Much of Gourmet Settings’ learning was undertaken in tandem with the Chinese factories because they too had little understanding of how to make flatware at that time. The Korean factory owners brought their own expertise in manufacturing,⁵⁹² and Hamby helped all parties to establish protocols for verifying the content and quality of the raw metal, and regulating temperatures for the heating and cooling of steel. Abrams recalls that there were no internationally-recognized standards for cutlery, so they used baby toys as a benchmark instead.

⁵⁹¹ Ramsay, “The World Is Flat(ware).”

⁵⁹² Ramsay.

Choi works for **Taeyang Vietnam Co., Ltd.**, a firm that specializes in stainless steel flatware manufacturing. As Gourmet Settings' representative in Asia, Choi manages local manufacturing and supply chains on its behalf, dealing most often with management (Abrams and Felice), and occasionally design (Lim). Sabrina Chen, the owner and CEO of **Spring Lotus Ltd.**, a sourcing agent and quality assurance consultant in Taipei, provides similar services.⁵⁹³ She works with North American and European “branded customers” in tableware, home decoration and lifestyle products, helping them source factories, control quality, and coordinate shipping, delivery, and payment.⁵⁹⁴ Sometimes she deals directly with the designers, from initial product brainstorming all the way through to production. Both Choi and Chen emphasize that a defining feature of any design is how it works in mass production. If the design has not been well thought-through, it may be too expensive or even impossible to make. Choi and Chen therefore play a crucial role in the design process, working with both sides to find a compromise that works for manufacturing.

Choi and Chen reiterate the importance of communication and “global perspective” in their positions. Despite the distances involved and the dependency on **digital communication**, global manufacturing still relies heavily on personal contact. When asked to describe the ideal working relationship between manufacturers and designers, Choi responded, “the closer the better” and underlined the importance of speaking the same **language** and meeting in person. Choi's fluency in English, Korean, and Chinese, along with his background in trading steel, make him well suited for dealing with the flatware factories. His knowledge of manufacturing processes means he can draw on the “invisible local skills and knowledge transmitted by...**Korean old boys (technicians)**,” suggesting **local expertise** and traditions of making play a role in offshore manufacturing and mass production.

3.2 Circulation

Communication and Promotion

Manufacturers and retailers guide consumers in their purchases through education on topics such as identifying and caring for stainless steel (avoiding certain foods, detergents, and cleaning practices in order to prevent stains, pitting, and corrosion), criteria for selecting a pattern, and instructions on how to collect the right serving pieces and set a table for various

⁵⁹³ Sabrina Chen is a business associate of Abrams's and has been observing Gourmet Settings' progress for many years. They haven't officially worked together yet.

⁵⁹⁴ Clients include Ralph Lauren and WWRD which represents Waterford, Wedgwood, Royal Doulton, Royal Albert and Rogaška WWRD was recently acquired by Fiskars.

occasions.⁵⁹⁵ There is an enormous industry of **home magazines, television shows**, and web sites that reinforce etiquette, decorating, cooking, and eating practices that involve cutlery. Furthermore, there is considerable consumer discussion online, and Gourmet Settings contributes to this dialogue by sharing media stories and **customer photos** of table settings on **Facebook**. The **Gourmet Settings web site** offers “Flatware 101,” a quick guide to helping customers decipher cutlery, essentially a check list of design considerations: gauge (thickness) which determines weight and price, grade of stainless steel (18/10, 18/8, 18/0), touch and feel, size, hollow handles, forged blades, polish, finish (matte or brushed), ergonomics, etiquette and how to hold cutlery.⁵⁹⁶ This ongoing discussion of what makes good flatware and how to use it reinforces consumption practices and demand for certain styles and characteristics.

Gourmet Settings does not invest in advertising but has benefited from **publicity** and recognition by the **popular press, design, and food industries**. The company was featured in newspapers including the *New York Times*, *Globe and Mail*, and *Toronto Star*, and in a long list of design, business, culinary, and lifestyle magazines. “Design strategy” was still a new term in the late 1990s, and the concept was picked up by business writers who wrote about the work of Gourmet Settings and Kerr + Company. The flatware has been featured on a number of cooking shows and even made an appearance on Dawson’s Creek.⁵⁹⁷ **Endorsements** have come from people like Art Smith (Oprah’s personal chef), who uses Gourmet Settings in his Chicago restaurant, and who featured the steak knives in *O Magazine*.⁵⁹⁸ In 2013, Gourmet Settings was named “official flatware purveyor of the James Beard Foundation,” a professional organization based in New York that promotes the culinary arts.⁵⁹⁹ **Museums** too have taken notice of Gourmet Settings. The flatware is included in the Design Exchange’s permanent collection in Toronto, and the Army and Hybrid lines and prototypes were featured in the Cooper Hewitt exhibition *Beautiful Users* in 2014-15. Gourmet Settings entered a variety of design **competitions**, an effective way to gain local and international exposure and add value to the

⁵⁹⁵ Gourmet Settings, “Use and Care,” n.d., <http://www.gourmetsettings.com/care-for-flatware> Bed Bath & Beyond provides guidelines on how to set a table for different occasions and gives suggestions like buying a second pattern for more formal occasions, or to match a second set of dinnerware. The retailer recommends buying enough cutlery for 12 people plus the “hostess” or “entertaining set,” “so you won’t have to stress about finding matching cutlery.” Bed Bath & Beyond, “Buying Guide to Flatware,” n.d., <http://www.bedbathandbeyond.ca/store/guide/buying-guide-to-flatware/dc11000031>.

⁵⁹⁶ Gourmet Settings, “Flatware 101,” accessed December 14, 2015, <http://www.gourmetsettings.com/stainless-flatware-101>.

⁵⁹⁷ Gourmet Settings, “Press & Media,” n.d., <http://www.gourmetsettings.com/press>.

⁵⁹⁸ Gourmet Settings, “Restaurant Packages.”

⁵⁹⁹ Food & Beverage Magazine, “Gourmet Settings Has Been Named the Official Flatware Purveyor for the James Beard Foundation,” Food & Beverage Magazine, September 2013, <https://www.fb101.com/2013/09/gourmet-settings-has-been-named-the-official-flatware-purveyor-for-the-james-beard-foundation/>.

flatware.⁶⁰⁰ These awards are listed on the Gourmet Settings website and the boxes of the award-winning patterns. Not only does the flatware look ‘designed’ but it is also certified as good design by third parties.

Trade Shows

At the **trade shows**, Abrams and Felice meet with buyers and other industry representatives. They display existing products and present new design concepts, seek feedback from buyers and peers, get people excited about new design directions, and learn what the rest of the industry is doing, all information that has an impact on design. Abrams and Felice attend four trade shows every year. The season begins in February in **Frankfurt** where Gourmet Settings joins 4,800 exhibitors at the **Ambiente** fair for “Dining, Giving and Living” products. They then move on to **Chicago** in March for the **International Home and Housewares Show**, followed by two **New York Tabletop Shows** in April and September/October, which take place at the **FortyOne Madison** building in Manhattan. The entire tower is dedicated to the sale of tableware, housewares, and gifts, with 23 floors of showrooms and over 80 manufacturers displaying their products, some of them year-round. The Gourmet Settings showroom (fig.87) is open only during the Tabletop Show, and is located on the 22nd floor with companies like Hermes, Puiforcat, and Ralph Lauren.⁶⁰¹ These international events position Gourmet Settings in relation to its competition, and the New York showroom in particular helps to add value through association with much higher-end brands.

Distribution

Part of Kerr’s “integrated design process” was determining the most efficient way to ship the flatware. Gourmet Settings promises a “hassle-free” service to retailers, including all

⁶⁰⁰ Most recently, Monnet Design won Silver in Package Design for dinnerware boxes in the 2014 Advertising and Design Club of Canada awards. (Stéphane Monnet, Agnes Wong and Linna Xu won Silver in Package Design for the Half Dozens boxes (plates, cups and bowls) in the 2014 Advertising and Design Club of Canada awards. Advertising and Design Club of Canada, “Silver Winner: Graphic Design, Package Design. Gourmet Settings,” 2014, <http://archive.theadcc.ca/islandora/object/adcc%3A22759>.) The web site has also been recognized: a silver New Media award from the Advertising and Design Club of Canada in 2001 (designed by Hambly and Wooley) (Advertising and Design Club of Canada, “Silver Winner: New Media, Corporate Image Web Sites, Business to Consumer (without E-Commerce) Gourmet Settings.”); and a later version won an Interactive Media Award from Applied Arts magazine in 2006 (designed by Hahn Smith). Credits for the web site: Art Direction: Alison Hahn, Nigel Smith Design: Brian Kroeker, Stéphane Monnet Flash Programming: Matt Burtch Writers: Alison Hahn, Brian Kroeker, Stéphane Monnet, Nigel Smith Programming: Matt Burtch Photography: Bob Gundu, Stéphane Monnet, Brian Sano Client: Hildy Abrams, Gourmet Settings Winning Company: Hahn Smith Design (Applied Arts, “Applied Arts Awards Winners Gallery. Gourmet Settings Website. Category: Business - Single.”, 2006, http://www.appliedartsmag.com/winners_details.php?id=392&year=2006&clip=1.)

⁶⁰¹ The FortyOneMadison building first opened in 1974 as the New York Merchandise Mart.

logistics around timely **order fulfillment** and **point-of-purchase displays**.⁶⁰² Boxes are typically made in separate facilities, then shipped to the flatware factories where the cutlery is packaged and shipped to the client. Gourmet Settings contracts two ‘3PL’ (**third-party logistics**) companies to manage transport, customs and distribution: **Norvanco** in **Seattle, Washington**, and **LEI** in **Brampton, Ontario**. Distribution imposes constraints on the design of the packaging (dimensions, weight, labelling, country of origin), so Gourmet Settings thought through the entire life of the packaging, developing boxes that could withstand some abuse and maximize space on **store shelves**, on **shipping pallets**, and in **shipping containers**.

Retail

The interviewees convey how much power the big retailers have, how much they influence the design of the product, packaging and store display, and how far companies like Gourmet Settings go to keep their business. Abrams jumped right into **big box retail**, and her first customers were the biggest of them all—“we lost our virginity at **Walmart** and **Target**” (Abrams). The list of clients quickly expanded. Some relationships did not endure (like Walmart and Target), but **Bed Bath & Beyond** and **Costco** have remained steady and lucrative accounts. Abrams seeks out retailers whose “values are in line” with Gourmet Settings, and whose “retail sensibilities” match her own. That list has included: **Loblaws** and **Canadian Tire** in Canada; **Crate & Barrel**, **Williams-Sonoma**, **Macy’s**, and **TJ Maxxx** in the US; **Sodimac** in South America; higher-end design stores like **Terence Conran** in Paris, London and New York; as well as smaller design stores like **Swipe** in Toronto. Gourmet Settings also sells through its own **web site**, on-line retailers, sites like MyRegistry.com, and ‘flash sales’ where independents launch short-lived web sites.

In each context, the product is presented differently and takes on new meaning. When the design team started work for Gourmet Settings, interviewees identified the **store shelf** as an important location and concept (priorities may have changed today with the growth of online sales). The shelf is where the flatware “lives,” to quote Abrams and Kerr, and this is where the original team of designers focused much of their research, studying the competition that shared the space, the **clerks** who stocked the shelves, and the **shoppers** who contemplated the

⁶⁰² Gourmet Settings, “Here We Are Now. Brochure.” “Working with us is hassle-free. Planning, logistics, and order fulfillment are integral to what we do. We design our packaging and shipping cartons to maximize shelf space and enhance their retail presentation in palettes. We manage a meticulous and efficient delivery system that monitors schedules, quantities, and quality to ensure that our flatware gets delivered on time and in perfect condition. We’ve created a series of innovative, customized point-of-purchase displays that make sales easy.”

packaging and flatware there. The shelf is where the product, **retailer**, and customer meet. It is the initial point of purchase.

Retailer decisions have serious consequences for the entire supply chain, especially for smaller players like Gourmet Settings who will not risk producing flatware without first getting a commitment to a pattern from a retailer. Abrams observes that retailers can seemingly change their minds on a whim: “they never hesitate to get rid of you.” When the flatware did not sell well at Walmart, Gourmet Settings was left with too much inventory. If customers find something wrong with the flatware, the retailer holds Gourmet Settings accountable. Retailers can give and take business from the manufacturer, playing a major role in the fate of individual flatware patterns, but also increasingly taking on the role of manufacturer themselves in order to cut costs and gain control of the supply chain.⁶⁰³ This can lead to companies like Gourmet Settings being cut out entirely. As was suggested by one of the interviewees, this approach may have led Target to discontinue Gourmet Settings in the early 2000s. Nowhere is this model more evident than in the case of Walmart, which has its own factories in China, making it (as of 2004) the world’s sixth largest exporter from China, a list it shares with other countries, not companies.⁶⁰⁴

Retailers offer private-label houseware brands including flatware (e.g. Walmart has Mainstays and Target has Threshold and Room Essentials), as well as other brands ‘exclusive’ to them (e.g. Walmart carries tv-based brands like Pioneer Woman and Better Homes and Gardens). The corporations behind the brands are not always transparent. Canadian Tire sells a variety of flatware brands presented as separate companies with no connection to the retailer, yet they are all imported and packaged by Trileaf, a subsidiary of Canadian Tire.⁶⁰⁵ This includes packaging that closely resembles that of Easy, an early Gourmet Settings line that Canadian Tire no longer carries (fig.76). The big retailers thus add to the diffusion, mixing, and copying of flatware designs, making it increasingly difficult to attribute any originality, authorship, or strong brand identity. Gourmet Settings both suffers and benefits in this scenario. When **President’s Choice**, one of the private labels of Canada’s largest retailer, **Loblaw Companies Limited**,⁶⁰⁶ wanted to brand the flatware, the order was big enough that the “GS” usually engraved on the back was replaced with the trademark “PC.” Some patterns become

⁶⁰³ Gerefii, Korzeniewicz, and Korzeniewicz, “Introduction: Global Commodity Chains,” 7, 11.

⁶⁰⁴ Chan, *Walmart in China*, 4.

⁶⁰⁵ Canadian Intellectual Property Office - Industry Canada, “Canadian Trade-Mark Data: 755617 - Canadian Trade-Marks Database - Intellectual Property and Copyright,” Form, accessed July 6, 2016, <http://www.ic.gc.ca/app/opic-cipo/trdmrks/srch/vwTrdmrk.do?lang=eng&fileNumber=755617>.

⁶⁰⁶ George Weston Ltd., “Loblaw Companies Limited,” accessed July 5, 2016, <http://www.weston.ca/en/Loblaw-Companies-Ltd.aspx>.

associated with certain retailers, like Gourmet Settings' **Windermere** which "belongs" to Bed Bath & Beyond. Gourmet Settings' loyalty and long-term relationship with this retailer makes it unlikely that they would sell the pattern to another client (Abrams).

Buyers for big chain stores have far-reaching influence—Abrams pointed out that they are the "arbiters of taste," responsible in many ways for what makes it to store shelves and into consumers' homes. In reference to Costco buyers in particular, Abrams was quoted: "They are extraordinary editors...They make a choice, they try to have broad appeal, and they buy it well."⁶⁰⁷ Those choices can determine the fate of a design: if they do not order it, it will not be produced. Depending on the scale of the order, retailers can exert more power by demanding patterns and packaging designed exclusively for them. For example, Costco can order 30,000 - 70,000 65-piece sets from Gourmet Settings for one season alone, and these orders often come with general direction about what seasonal packaging should look like.⁶⁰⁸

Abrams, Felice, and the designers deal directly with the retail buyers who represent the interests of both the corporation and their consumers. Each retail chain has a different concept of its target audience. In Kerr's experience, retailers have insights into their customer base but may not realize what information is relevant to the designer. The designer's research process therefore requires conversation as well as in-store observation. Today, Felice connects with buyers and relays their needs to Lim, who describes a process of compromise and interpretation where buyers offer a vague brief and Gourmet Settings puts "its own spin" on it. For example, Costco will ask for two sets of cutlery per season, and specify "something contemporary," or "one with square handles and one with round." Sometimes the retailers offer concrete design suggestions that make a difference. Both Kerr and Abrams remembered a buyer's recommendation for a tiny change to the size of the fork tines that had a big impact on sales. Buyers give direction on packaging, such as what colours are trendy (one chain ruled out purple for a number of years). What might seem like arbitrary design requests ("can you change the shape of this handle a bit?") can be very costly for the supplier but difficult to ignore. The buyer is shown samples and may provide feedback, which is taken with a certain amount of diplomacy and consideration for getting the sale, while still trying to maintain the original design vision. Gourmet Settings knows it has interpreted the buyer's vision successfully if they get the order. Thus, as Lim observed, "the buyer, instead of just selecting from what's out there, can also influence what they want to sell."

⁶⁰⁷ HFN Mag, "Gourmet Settings Nabs Design Award," 2007, hfnmag.com.

⁶⁰⁸ Ramsay, "The World Is Flat(ware)."

The buyer I interviewed has known Abrams for 25 years and was a client of Gourmet Settings' for at least ten. She has years of experience working for big retail chains across the United States, and extensive knowledge of competitor products, **merchandising**, and **consumer behaviour**. She is continually comparing what is available on the market, and what the competition is offering at what price, so that she can offer the same or better. This puts pressure on suppliers like Gourmet Settings to design something different at a lower cost. The buyer I interviewed considers the following when choosing new flatware: **pattern** and **finish** (the most important criteria); what it feels like in the hand; what stock she already has and what she needs to sell; how the new product will look next to existing **inventory**; **minimum quantities** requested by the supplier; and how many stores across the country will carry it. The buyer also shared design considerations for packaging. Buyers and merchandisers have to plan how much product they can fit in stores, and this depends on the sizes of the boxes. They want durable packaging that will continue to look good—customers have a tendency to squeeze the ends of boxes as they pull them off shelves, and damaged boxes do not sell. Windows on the boxes must show one of each utensil, and the packaging must convey basic information: materials used, number of pieces, if serving pieces are included, and instructions for cleaning and care.

Customers tend to shop by **price point**, and at Bed Bath & Beyond, **retail displays** are designed so that customers can instantly assess what is available in their budget and by size of set. The buyer's goal is to cover as many price points as possible and to offer a **selection** in each, ensuring that every price range has a frosted and polished option, as well as a variety of styles like basket weave, floral, and stand-up. Products that make it (i.e. are ordered by the retailer), do so partly because they fit these very particular "**shelf criteria**," which are in many ways outside of the designers' control. When Gourmet settings launched at Walmart, 'planograms' laid out exactly how Gourmet Settings products and their neighbours (Scooby Doo dishes and competitor flatware) should be displayed in each of the 1,600 American and 175 Canadian stores, then receiving 100 million customers a week.⁶⁰⁹ The eight patterns were separated into two rows, with Urban on top of Classic settings.⁶¹⁰ Today, when Monnet designs the boxes, he chooses where to place the logo and text depending on how the boxes will sit on the shelves.

3.3 Consumption

Even before people start buying Gourmet Settings products in stores, they influence design in the form of personas, fictitious consumers born from the designers' research and

⁶⁰⁹ Blum, "The Truth About Forks and Spoons. From Metropolis."

⁶¹⁰ Blum.

summarized in a handful of archetypes with their own names, lifestyles, and tastes. During the design process, these characters stand in for millions of real Gourmet Settings consumers; products are designed with their wants and needs in mind, an abstraction and “displacement” of the true target audience.⁶¹¹ The **consumers** who actually purchase the product have a direct impact on design later in the process, when they express their preferences through what they buy, and by sharing their dis/satisfaction through feedback channels. Retailers collect extensive quantitative data, and these **sales numbers** influence future product orders. Retailers also buy research from independent organizations like NPD Group, which conducts **market studies** comparing sales figures and shopping behaviours, among other factors.⁶¹² Retailers therefore approach product selection and design with a deep industry knowledge that is considerably different from the **qualitative information** designers gather through methods like ethnography and user-centred design. Based on the interviews, retailers do not systematically collect qualitative information about specific products beyond sales numbers, but buyers learn about customer tastes, and complaints in particular, through **anecdotes from sales staff**.

The buyer I interviewed described **typical customer behaviours** when shopping for flatware. Consumers tend to care about how the cutlery feels in their hands, equate heaviness with quality, and pick up the fork but never try the knife. They care about how it looks and if it fits their lifestyle – fancy entertaining is far less common now, practical considerations like ‘dishwasher safe’ are important, and price plays a major role. Gourmet Settings is unclear on how long customers keep a set of flatware, and how often they replace or purchase a second set. There was a time that people would buy or inherit cutlery for life, and while some still see the benefit of having a ‘better set’ in addition to their everyday utensils, Lim sees the lifespan of cutlery decreasing as the product design cycle speeds up. Rather than customers treasuring cutlery passed on through family, cutlery can be so inexpensive that people do not hesitate to abuse and discard it. At the same time, one of the primary reasons customers visit the Gourmet Settings web site is to replace missing pieces, and as the customer reaction to Non Stop demonstrates in the following object ethnography, many consumers still enjoy long-term relationships with their flatware. This suggests that there may be more demand for ‘classic’ patterns that will remain in style longer.

Though Gourmet Settings mass-produces cutlery, there exists customization on a number of levels in response to **local consumer tastes, customs, lifestyles, and foods**.

⁶¹¹ Callon, “Some Elements of a Sociology of Translation. Domestication of the Scallops and the Fishermen of St. Brieuc Bay,” 99.

⁶¹² Abrams recounted that the Walmart buyer had taken notice of Gourmet Settings’ success based on its position within the NPD report. www.npd.com

Gourmet Settings considers how **product terminology**, **etiquette**, and **table settings** in Europe, Asia, and South America differ from those in North America. Several factors vary based on culture and location, affecting the design: **language** of the packaging, **size of the cutlery**, which **individual utensils** are needed, and how the **sets** are combined for table settings appropriate to local practices.

Smith described Europeans as having a “more involved relationship with food” and more specific ideas about sizes and proportions (e.g. the British use fish knives more than others). European etiquette involves holding forks in the left hand with tines down, whereas North Americans tend to use forks with both left and right hands, often to scoop.⁶¹³ Gourmet Settings is sold in Asia where eating utensils are significantly different (Lim gave the examples of growing up in the Philippines where they used a big fork and spoon but no knife, or his observations on Korea where spoons and skinny, stainless steel chopsticks are standard). Larger cutlery is more popular in the United States where the servings are bigger. While Continental (European/French) flatware has traditionally been larger and is a source of design inspiration for Gourmet Settings, European customers prefer smaller flatware and Gourmet Settings has resized patterns as a result. Lim noted that the market dictates the size of the spoon more than Gourmet Settings does (in some countries, the company’s oversized teaspoons were considered too large). Lim has not observed anything in particular about South American preferences, but said that Costco Asia prefers European proportions.

The composition of the sets and which “**companion pieces**” are available (e.g. ladles, cake knives, slotted spoons, tongs, ice cream scoops, and even lasagna servers) change depending on country (the salad fork is often removed for European sets). Buyers will dictate sets, asking for certain combinations for their individual markets, and Gourmet Settings will in turn design appropriate packaging. Nowhere is this more evident than with the Windermere pattern, which is sold “**open stock**” at Bed Bath & Beyond. At the retailers’ request, Gourmet Settings created a display system (fig.77) where customers choose single utensils for \$1.99 and less. This was in response to requests from customers who wanted to compose their own sets as needed. The buyer credited Abrams with reinventing this category where Oneida and Cambridge had failed before.⁶¹⁴

⁶¹³ Marissa Ponikowski, “Lovin’ Spoonful. Flatware Designer Hildy Abrams Came to a Fork in the Road, and Took It.,” *The Costco Connection*, Autumn 2007, <http://www.gourmetsettings.com/gourmetsettings/content/pdfs/Costco%20connection.pdf>.

⁶¹⁴ Oneida and Cambridge had attempted open-stock at Bed Bath & Beyond but less successfully - they had difficulty meeting the price cap and their displays were messy and not as appealing as the Gourmet Settings system. This is an example of Gourmet Settings’ strength in integrated, systems design, but also

With open-stock sales, stores can tell immediately which pieces are most in demand, and what is missing from the collection. These “**field requests**” for new products are sent back to the manufacturers via the buyers. The buyer I interviewed provides two such examples for Gourmet Settings: the first based on a nation-wide trend for espressos when customers across the US were asking for demi-tasse spoons; and the second based on a regional food tradition that spread. Customers in New England asked for chowder spoons, which became a big seller across the country—a “really good SKU” (stock keeping unit).

The above is evidence of national and regional traditions and trends driving product design, and of consumption practices migrating through product design and retail distribution. On another scale, the buyer observed that there was greater difference between **urban and suburban populations** than between regions in the US, influenced by the fact that urban consumers have less space and are interested in smaller and more contemporary patterns. Consumers could also be broken down by **cultural groups** – Gourmet Settings is apparently popular with Latin Americans (Kerr).

Even across a city, the presentation of cutlery could be different. The same pattern can be repackaged and re-branded by different retailers, suggesting that consumer tastes are also related to their affiliation and loyalty to certain stores. Costco, for example, caters to customers who buy in bulk by offering larger sets that include all serving pieces. The retailer and customer are linked by a shared “**value system**,” a common understanding of the relationship between price and product. Abrams and Kerr agreed that in other retail contexts like big department stores and fine housewares stores, customers would not have hesitated to pay three times as much for the same flatware.

Gender too plays a role. Costco attracts more **male shoppers** than other housewares and grocery stores (Kerr). Because men generally have bigger hands, and because the Gourmet Settings flatware can be handled through the packaging, it was decided that larger cutlery (‘continental size’) would appeal to them more. As of May 2014, Lim was working on a new pattern, Stealth, inspired by the angles of a fighter jet and Lamborghini Aventador. The pattern leans more toward male customers, and the team debated larger proportions to suit men’s hands.

The following object ethnography brings together the actors described above through the various life stages and iterations of the case study object, the Non Stop pattern.

raises the question about why a smaller company can do this for less money than the flatware giants who surely had better economies of scale.

4. Case Study Two: Gourmet Settings – Object Ethnography

The following object ethnography presents the flatware pattern Non Stop as “moving project,” inspired by Bruno Latour’s and Alben Yaneva’s model of a static object “in flight,” by looking at multiple moments or “freeze-frames” in the “flow” of the object’s existence.⁶¹⁵ This case study illustrates how a product can evolve over time in relation to the production-circulation-consumption cycle. This includes changes to its physical form, to practices related to its manufacture and use, to how it is presented and perceived, and to how it ‘means.’ As a core Gourmet Settings product – one of the longest and best selling—Non Stop’s trajectory parallels the company’s history and the relationships between actors linked through and mobilized by the design of both the corporation and product. This “sociography” presents Non Stop as the embodiment of a multitude of human and non-human relationships, which Non Stop helps to configure and stabilize.⁶¹⁶ Surrounding Non Stop is a “cartography” of responsibilities, a map of actors contributing to Non Stop’s creation and consumption around the world.⁶¹⁷

The chapter is organized into “iterations” of the case study object, following the production-circulation-consumption model, introduced by precedent objects and followed by newer versions, spinoffs, and copies. In design, an iteration of a product could mean different drafts of the design in development (e.g. sketches, prototypes) or different versions (models) of the final product. Gourmet Settings’ strategy to stretch products across multiple channels makes it challenging to determine where one design ends and the other begins. Designs are perfected over time (Johnny Lim has changed details in Non Stop’s fork tines and slimmed down the knife); designs are updated and re-issued under new names and sold alongside the originals (e.g. Cruise, the shiny “cousin” of Non Stop); and patterns are re-contextualized through new arrangements (e.g. the 65-piece set of Non Stop for Costco), and new packaging (seasonal patterns, different languages and retailer requirements). Other iterations in Non Stop’s network are also considered, including flatware developed before and concurrently by Gourmet Settings and its contractors (design studios, factories), as well as by competitor companies. Each is part of the continuum of Non Stop’s existence, and to different degrees, versions of the case study product.

The ethnography considers different manifestations, habitats, and contexts of the object – what it means for Non Stop to be in a factory or in Target, to be part of a corporate brand, to

⁶¹⁵ Latour and Yaneva, “Give Me a Gun and I Will Make All Buildings Move: An ANT’s View of Architecture,” 80–81.

⁶¹⁶ Akrich, “The De-Description of Technical Objects,” 205–206.

⁶¹⁷ Latour, Maugin, and Teil, “A New Method to Trace the Path of Innovations. The ‘Socio-Technical Graph.’”

be an award winner, to be an object that rusts, or an object loved by consumers. Each further illustrates the network's "semiotic relationality," where elements define one another.⁶¹⁸ The ethnography shows how scripts change depending on circumstance and actors. Gourmet Settings and the designers "delegate" actions by "inscribing" desired outcomes in the flatware, but once outside of the creators' control, those scripts are only partly adhered to—they break down and "anti-programs" emerge, as seen in alternative interpretations of design drawings, alternative target audiences, different uses, allowances, and perceptions of the object.⁶¹⁹

Non Stop is aptly named. It continues to be redesigned, made in new factories, and sold in new contexts, reconfiguring the network around it. Non Stop's trajectory shows that design is continually on the move, and that 'the design' is difficult to pin down.

4.1 Precedent objects

4.1.1 Market Goods

Before CEO Hildy Abrams and her partners chose to design their own flatware, both Trupco and Abrams' family company, Murray Sales, dealt in "market goods" (Abrams). These objects are produced in Asia (presumably designed or copied in factories there) and then sold to importers who re-package them for North American distribution. Abrams described this in an interview with design magazine *Metropolis*: "You go to the Orient, scout out factories, and try and buy enough so that they just sell it to you...The added value was that we packaged it in a good way."⁶²⁰ This category of object is important for several reasons: it links the Trupco team to Asian factories before they started working on Non Stop; it demonstrates the kind of skill (manufacturing, engineering, craft and hand working metal, possibly design) that already existed in Asian factories, and which Gourmet Settings then built upon in the 1990s; it illustrates the power of packaging in differentiating mass-produced products for local markets (something Gourmet Settings would later become known for); and it represents a large segment of products from which Gourmet Settings tried to distance itself. Non Stop and the other early flatware lines were possible because they built on the production and distribution networks Gourmet Settings had already established, but new patterns were perceived as a departure and risk in terms of design, originality, and investment.

⁶¹⁸ Law, "Actor-Network Theory and Material Semiotics," 146.

⁶¹⁹ Akrich, "The De-Scripton of Technical Objects."

⁶²⁰ Hildy Abrams quote in Blum, "The Truth About Forks and Spoons. From *Metropolis*."

4.1.2 *Gourmet Settings' Handmade Line*

The Handmade line (fig.78), still popular today, has its roots in market goods. In fact, the Avalon pattern is Gourmet Settings' most popular seller, something of a paradox in comparison with the rest of the decoration-less designs that have come to characterize the brand. Kerr + Company was asked to update the existing Handmade patterns, but the textured handles are stylistically unlike Non Stop or any of the later lines created by the North American designers. Handmade represents Gourmet Settings' first (and ongoing) relationship with a Chinese factory, TTX, which is connected to a network of suppliers. Contrary to Gourmet Settings videos showing the science and precision of factory work, TTX outsources some of the production of Handmade to local cottage industries, where the handles are twisted and blackened by hand. Handmade is also significant because it represents the first time that Kerr + Company worked with an overseas factory to develop cutlery.

4.1.3 *Kitchenwares by Kerr + Company*

In the context of Kerr + Company's history, Non Stop was a further demonstration of designer Helen Kerr's expertise in kitchenware design, her interests in cooking and eating, as well as her knowledge of ergonomics and user-centred practice. Before working for Gourmet Settings, Kerr had designed many objects for Canadian manufacturers, including home accessories for Umbra, and a collection of over 200 products for kitchen tools producer Cuisipro (fig.79). In terms of flatware, Kerr had produced drawings for the American housewares company Dansk, but was not involved in their production.⁶²¹ The contract with Gourmet Settings was the first time she designed cutlery for manufacture, and Non Stop, along with other patterns designed simultaneously, marked the first time she designed goods specifically for stores like Target and Walmart.

4.1.4 *Early Attempts with Products and Packaging*

After adding to the Handmade lines, Kerr + Company worked on the redesign of a few other existing patterns and packaging. The evolution is evident from the original Gourmet Settings boxes (fig.80) to an early pattern called Easy in a new box for Canadian Tire (fig.81). The team then developed the Soshu collection (fig.82), which proved challenging and expensive to make. Non Stop followed soon after, a more successful next step in this learning and design process with a similarly modern look and clear-fronted packaging, but achieved at a reduced

⁶²¹ Lenox, "Dansk | Part of the Lenox Family of Brands," accessed July 7, 2016, <http://www.dansk.com/>; Margalit Fox, "Theodore Nierenberg, Founder of Dansk, Dies at 86," *The New York Times*, August 3, 2009, <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/08/04/arts/design/04nierenberg.html>.

price. In 1999, the initial lines designed by Kerr + Company were being produced in runs of up to 10,000, a small number by Gourmet Settings' standards today, but seen as an accomplishment for Canadian design at the time.⁶²²

4.1.5 Competitor Products

Gourmet Settings is a relatively new player in the mass retail market. When Non Stop and the other Get Set lines were introduced to Walmart and Target, the company had no brand recognition but nor was it burdened with a legacy of traditional patterns. According to interviewees, at the time, Oneida dominated the shelves with Victorian-inspired flatware, making Gourmet Settings the “contemporary” alternative that also delivered quality at a low price.⁶²³ Abrams explained their position in 2001:

In a way, we feel that we've raised the bar on the industry standard. We said to everybody else, 'You've been getting away with murder with all this cheap shit you've been producing and charging a lot of money for it. Shame! You're the bad guys!'⁶²⁴

From Gourmet Settings' perspective, Non Stop stood out from existing products, but over time, it can be seen as part of a continuum of styles, at first disrupting to the discount and big box market, but now blending with the competitors' selection of more modern patterns.

4.2 Production

4.2.1 As Business Concept

Non Stop as an initial business concept was a more conceptual iteration, consisting of the vision of Abrams, Kadey, and Barnes when they decided to pursue the affordable cutlery market. They set their sights on Target as their first retail partner, attracted to its “cheap and chic” mandate and its identity as a design-driven company (Abrams). In Target, they saw strong connections to what they wanted Gourmet Settings products to be, and the retailer in many ways helped to define Non Stop and the rest of the Get Set collection. Non Stop came to embody Gourmet Settings' idea of “disruptive” and “accessible” design, a concept they took to Target in 1998-99 (Walmart soon after). It was around the same time that the partners started talking with Kerr + Company. It took 18 months for Non Stop and the other five patterns to go from idea through product development to arrive on Target shelves in 2001.

⁶²² Gotlieb and Golden, *Design in Canada*, 224.

⁶²³ Blum, “The Truth About Forks and Spoons. From Metropolis.”

⁶²⁴ Blum.

Rather than sell existing patterns, the plan was to pitch new products to the retailers and involve them in development. Abrams described it as working backwards. Gourmet Settings' process of "enrolment"⁶²⁵ – identifying other actors that they wanted involved in the design – meant that instead of starting with the end-user (the individual consumer), they first identified a potential new customer (discount retail chains) and a gap in their market (affordable cutlery). Designer Nigel Smith described Abrams as the convener of this network—"what [Abrams] does so masterfully"—making distribution deals, figuring out who was going to sell the product and where, and "super energetically putting together all these elements." Abrams described it as an iterative approach, full of obstacles: "We struggled to get it off the ground, and to get acceptance for what we were doing. There was no magic to the whole process." Despite the challenges, this process became a selling feature for retailers interested in working with Gourmet Settings, as advertised on the company web site: "We partner with retailers to bring design-driven solutions to market,"⁶²⁶ and "our graphics are the result of active collaborations between retailers, product designers, graphic designers and writers."⁶²⁷ From the beginning, the flatware was intended not only as a consumer product, but also as a process that would mobilize and hopefully normalize relationships: the object-as-concept became the impetus to initiate relationships with retailers; the object-as-design-process was a way to involve the retailers and solidify the relationship; and the object-in-production became the motivation, commitment and focal point of the ongoing relationship with buyers.

4.2.2 As Research Concept

As a subject of research, and before taking on any physical form, Non Stop developed in relation to competitor products, retail locations, and consumer behaviour. The design came to life through discussions, notes, sketches, photographs, deconstruction of other brands, and reproduction of store environments in the Kerr + Company office.

The team started with what Kerr describes as evidence-based research. Abrams gave Kerr access to as much information and opportunity for research as possible. The deeper they went with their holistic and systems-based inquiry, the more they realized how many people were involved and how many aspects they needed to consider (or as Callon would say, how many more actors they needed to enroll⁶²⁸). Three principal areas of inquiry emerged: the customer (retailer), the consumer, and manufacturing. The team sought to determine how the

⁶²⁵ Callon, "Some Elements of a Sociology of Translation. Domestication of the Scallops and the Fishermen of St. Brieuc Bay."

⁶²⁶ Gourmet Settings, "Our Story," n.d., <http://www.gourmetsettings.com/high-quality-flatware>.

⁶²⁷ Gourmet Settings, "Packaging," n.d., <http://www.gourmetsettings.com/packaging>.

⁶²⁸ Law, "Actor-Network Theory and Material Semiotics."

retailers position themselves in the market, how people eat and shop, how the retailer and consumer intersect in the store, and the role played by flatware and packaging across each of these areas. The team's thinking about Non Stop and other Gourmet Settings patterns became intertwined with the locations and systems within which they would be sold. The designers soon realized that their work went far beyond the product and packaging—they could not ignore the shopping experience nor the industry competition. While these two aspects were in many ways out of their control, they knew that consumers would be faced with shelves full of different brands, and price would often be the determining factor.

They embarked on what Kerr referred to as “an anthropological study.” Abrams, Kerr, and Smith travelled to the nearest Target, which was in Buffalo, and unofficially observed what was happening on the store floor: how customers behaved, how they handled the packaging, and how they shopped. Sometimes they would stop customers and ask about the contents of their shopping carts. On occasion, they would even get kicked out. They also visited a simulated Walmart store at the company's headquarters on the outskirts of Bentonville, Arkansas, where the ‘planograms’ (the layout of the store shelves and products) are developed. To understand the “retail landscape”—how the product “lives on the shelf” and who it “lives” with—the team studied how displays were designed, the role of the shipping pallet, and how staff unloaded product and stocked shelves (Kerr remembered seeing a teenage stock clerk kicking boxes down the hall). They photographed and measured everything. They replicated the shelves in the design studio to make sure that the Gourmet Settings boxes would fit and to experiment with what they would look like in multiples (stacked, angled, etc.). Colours that fared well under fluorescent lights became important in a sea of more conservative boxes.

As a concept that developed through the research process, Non Stop was also imagined in terms of consumption after retail: who would buy it, how it would be used and where, and what it would mean to its owners. There was great discussion of how people eat and live, and how cutlery fits in homes and environments like restaurants. Kerr + Company staged events just to observe how people eat.⁶²⁹ The design team developed style boards and personas, giving lifestyles and names to archetypes of future consumers – imaginary people using an imaginary object yet to be given form. Abrams described the target audience as someone with contemporary taste who appreciates good design that is clean and ergonomic, and who recognizes good value for money. Everyone I interviewed was in agreement on who was intended to buy Non Stop and Gourmet Settings products generally when they were first

⁶²⁹ Lia Grainger, “Helen Kerr,” The Canadian Encyclopedia, September 2, 2014, <http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/helen-kerr/>.

designed: young- to middle-aged North American women, including “soccer moms,” and young couples who shopped at Target. The design team explored what it would mean to have your first home, or to start life over again, and what kind of cutlery would be appropriate in those scenarios. They were targeting someone without a lot of money, who was a “little bit more sophisticated” and “design aware” (Lim). This person placed importance on design, the objects in their home, and rituals around food and dining. Kerr described the ideal consumer as “somebody who really cared about setting their table,” who “thought of their flatware like jewellery on their table,” and who took “delight in the physical and delight in the visual.” The retail buyer I interviewed separated this world prescribed by the designers, from the actual world lived by the consumer. She explained that while the target audience is supposed to be urban and contemporary, Non Stop really sold to any of her customers. She confessed that buyers, like designers, develop ideas about the target audience, but consumers always prove them wrong.

4.2.3 *As Brand*

Non Stop expresses the Gourmet Settings brand, representing the values that permeate the production and circulation of the company’s products. As the product direction was established, so too was the corporate strategy and branding, made visible through the work of Hahn Smith—everything from the logo to the web site, photography, and importantly, the copywriting (figs.83, 84). Smith described the overall brand as a combination of high quality and “stylish effervescence” (“unique,” “contemporary,” “modern”). These messages are reinforced by actors such as the packaging, point of purchase displays, advertising, offices and show room, and in how Gourmet Settings employees, suppliers, and customers talk about the company (e.g. Daniel Choi, the agent and factory COO in Vietnam, used similar language: “young, sophisticated and practical,” a company that delivers “the amenities of home life for those who value [a] sophisticated lifestyle”). Gourmet Settings’ promise is summed up in this excerpt from a corporate brochure:

We use our imagination and experience to think about the way we set our tables and eat. We’ve thought about how people live, what they want and what they need when it comes to dining and hosting. We think we can bring style, quality and smarts to flatware and your table. We think we make it fun, zippy, less formal and more modern to fit in with your lifestyle. Our casual elegance will rejuvenate your kitchen, revitalize your dining room and renew your table!⁶³⁰

⁶³⁰ Gourmet Settings, “Here We Are Now. Brochure.”

The initial lines for Target and Walmart were brought together under the playful label of Get Set. The patterns and packaging were intended to convey difference from established brands, as well from Gourmet Settings' former identity (the company's original boxes were, to use Smith's description, "a kind of naïve, basic graphic design," possibly done by the factory that produced them (fig.80). Smith describes Hahn Smith's approach as cheeky and irreverent, an attitude intended to set them apart from the larger manufacturers who Smith perceived as "self-serious and dry."

Despite the effort invested in design strategy and creating cohesive families of patterns and packaging with a strong retail presence, the brand is one of the "scripts" that break down somewhere between the design team and the end-user. Kerr and Abrams expressed that customers have little knowledge of flatware – how it's made, what it's made of, how to identify quality, describe style, recognize patterns or brands. Both described that all cutlery "kind of looks the same," and this is certainly true in stores and online where there is an endless array of styles available. Abrams lamented that most people are not cutlery-literate, which she explained in comparison to how people "read" cars. Cars offer clues about the brand and the value of the vehicle beyond the logo and hood ornament. Many consumers are adept at reading the silhouettes, lines, and finishes of cars, and can identify the make and how it relates to previous models. In contrast, the provenance of flatware is more likely associated with the store where it is purchased than with the manufacturer. Packaging, markings on the cutlery, contexts of use, and publicity add to that provenance, but the corporate identity of most flatware manufacturers is not well known. Consumers may be able to compare Non Stop to another pattern and recognize differences in weight, sharpness, and feel, but for the most part, they are, according to Abrams, lacking the language of cutlery.

4.2.4 As Design Concept

Non Stop embodies the design philosophy formed by Kerr + Company, Hahn Smith, and Gourmet Settings, representing their holistic approach to production, circulation, and consumption, as well as a classic sense of "modern" design based on style, function, and good design for the masses. When introduced, the flatware did not look like the competitors' traditional patterns— decoration was abolished in favour of a smooth, frosted (brushed) finish, and a streamlined form "influenced by Scandinavian design" (Lim, Monnet). Non Stop is slightly oversized and curvy with a weight and thickness in places that makes it seem sturdier than most utensils. Within the context of other Gourmet Settings patterns, it is almost neutral, somewhere between angular patterns like Hotel, organic styles like Windermere, and more radical designs

like Colonial Ghost. Non Stop is classified in the “Everyday” collection, along with patterns described as “chic and yet casual.” The ambiguity of Non Stop, both playful and serious, contemporary and classical, leads Bed Bath & Beyond to promote it as a universally appealing and versatile product: “Simple enough for every day dining, yet with an elegance that carries over to more formal affairs, it is a stylish all-around set that works for nearly every taste” (Bed Bath & Beyond).

As Kerr relayed in a 2001 interview with *Metropolis*, there was a conscious alliance with postwar modernist values: “ ‘It’s about the bigger ideas of why I became a designer,’ she says. ‘I wanted to make stuff for real people. It’s the whole idea of being able to make fantastic stuff without a huge elitist price tag. If you really think about the materials and processes involved in it, you can mass produce things and make them available to everybody—which is kind of what the origins of Modernism were all about.’”⁶³¹ The packaging copy associates the Non Stop aesthetic with “modern life” through references to contemporary urban existence such as busyness, productivity, and continual movement; and through more aspirational references to a life of travel, escape, glamour, and care-free living. The Jet Settings collection (the sub-brand of Get Set designed for Target) was described as follows:

high design: First class flatware that moves meals from coach to class in supersonic style, Jet Settings by Get Set is your ticket to fabulous place settings. At home or on the fly, meals really go places with Get Set flatware!

low maintenance: Isn’t it great when you can walk off the plane and into the taxi without having to claim your baggage? Cleaning up with Get Set is just as effortless. No need to polish: just place Get Set in the dishwasher and move on.⁶³²

Functionality too played a strong role in Non Stop’s modern design, emphasizing the physical interaction between people, cutlery, and packaging. As Gourmet Settings is quick to point out, a utensil is an incredibly personal object: it is handled multiple times daily, it touches food, and goes in people’s mouths. The industrial designers expressed how much thought they put into the ergonomics and performance – how each piece sits on the plate and balances in the hand, how the knives cut, how the flatware feels in terms of weight and smooth edges, whether it is likely to fall over and clatter. The designers hoped that this focus on detail would bring “joy” and “delight” to the many small interactions consumers have with their cutlery (Abrams, Kerr).

⁶³¹ Blum, “The Truth About Forks and Spoons. From Metropolis.”

⁶³² cedarwholesalesupply, “New Gourmet Settings Jet Settings Mile High 20 Piece 4 Place Settings,” eBay, accessed January 10, 2016, <http://www.ebay.com/itm/New-Gourmet-Settings-Jet-Settings-Mile-High-20-Piece-4-Place-Settings-/121546565973>.

The buyer highlighted Non Stop's "squared off" design with "deep bowls" and "easy to hold" handles as distinguishing features. Customers may not be aware of these many design decisions, but Kerr conveyed that they contribute to the overall experience.

4.2.5 As Drawings and Models

The next iterations of Non Stop are what is traditionally presented as evidence of design development. Drawings of Non Stop were generated collaboratively by Kerr and Sam Kump, with original direction coming from Kerr who then provided Kump with detailed input. Kerr oversaw many patterns at once, giving specific guidance on elements like proportions, curves, historic references and 'mood' (Kerr). Sketches were made by hand and redrawn and refined on the computer (fig.85). These precise plans were then transformed into three-dimensional models, what Kerr described as combining art and technology. Tiny saws and knives were used to carve the models, first in pink insulation foam and then in balsa wood. The foam models provided a good sense of the overall form, how the curves worked, and how each utensil would sit in the hand. Once satisfied with the foam models (inexpensive and easy to carve), and possibly after further revisions to the design, they would move on to the wood models, carved and sanded until they were exact replicas of the final products (the wood is denser and more durable than the foam, and better for minute details) (fig.86). Throughout this process, dimensions and forms were tested and refined, millimetre by millimetre. With each new model, a new level of certainty in the design was achieved.⁶³³ The models were tested informally in the office by friends and employees, which allowed the designers to assess how the flatware would be used and held, and if the dimensions and proportions were right. This iteration was considered complete once the form was approved by Kerr + Company and Gourmet Settings.

4.2.6 As Sales Models

The models played an important role beyond determining and testing form. They became a mechanism through which to imagine and sell the final product before any investment in production, and they became objects of interest in their own right. Non Stop and other prototyped flatware and packaging were taken to meetings with buyers at Target, where they were the basis for Abrams and Kerr to present the "whole story," how the products would work for the retailers and their customers. Today, new prototypes are displayed next to the final versions of Non Stop and other patterns in the New York showroom and at trade shows (fig.87). The extreme lightness and warmth of the foam and wood are a sharp contrast to the weight and

⁶³³ Nathalie D'Souza and Pierre Gang, *Design en Cuisine (Interview with Helen Kerr)*, 2009, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bnR-F5H5_q4.

cold of stainless steel, and people are fascinated by the fine carving and the fact that they are hand made.

The sales models facilitated bringing the buyers into the design process, and connecting the retailers directly with the designer and company owner, a novelty when they were accustomed to dealing with salespeople. Abrams and Kerr met with Target often, but the company did not provide as much input as later customers like Costco, which was more “participatory” (Kerr). Once in the hands of the buyers, the prototypes evoked reactions and feedback, helping the team to understand if the design was on track. Abrams explained that these meetings were “where it starts to get decidedly un-sexy” – ensuing negotiations about costs and orders would take a toll on manufacturing and design, and the models might change as a result.

4.2.7 As Factory Samples

Factory samples represent another phase of negotiation and new relationships centred around the object, linking the designers, manufacturer, and factory employees. To ensure that these relationships were effective and sustainable, Abrams and Kerr set out to find the right factories with a number of criteria in mind: somewhere that could produce the desired quality within their budget, that could fill large orders on time, that could be trusted, and that shared Gourmet Settings’ values on topics like working conditions, environmental concerns, and “excellence.” They started with the existing relationship with TTX in Tianjin, China, and have since employed other factories to manufacture Non Stop.

Before the flatware goes into production, there is a process of translation where design drawings are communicated, interpreted, and transformed into the first samples, which are then checked and refined before the client signs off on the “golden sample,” the final prototype that should guarantee what the production sample or final product will look like. Kerr described the first time they went to a factory and reviewed samples based on Kerr + Company’s drawings:

Hildy brought me to the factory... I think we were both kind of delirious because we were so tired...we had arrived in Hong Kong, we had driven to the factory, we were tired, tired, tired, and we were in this place that was smoky and dirty... in this long, long meeting...they didn’t speak English, and we didn’t speak Chinese...And I had all these drawings of the way the pieces were supposed to be and I would say, ‘It’s not the same as the drawings,’ and they would say, ‘It’s the same!’ I’d say, ‘It’s not the same’...’It’s the same!’ On and on and on and on.

And they finally looked at me and said, 'but this is better, right?' And I thought, 'Oh I get it now, you don't *like* it.'

This anecdote illustrates how quickly design and its “script” can be lost, whether communicated through language, imagery, or demonstration. It shows how easily design can be modified in the factory, and how much trust and cooperation are required if the design drawings are to be followed faithfully or adapted to meet manufacturing requirements. In this case, the factory representatives felt that the design had been improved through their modifications, but Abrams and Kerr did not agree.

Kerr realized early on that she had much to learn from the factories. Understanding the complexities of manufacturing and the implications of every design decision takes time and often comes through trial and error. As with the prototyping and drawing phase at Kerr + Company, there is interplay between Non Stop as technical drawing and Non Stop as 3-D sample, both co-existing and continually being modified in relation to one another. Kerr's holistic process involved going to the factory floors and watching the workers, gaining empathy for what they were doing and an appreciation of how much work was behind each step. People on the production line were particularly valuable in explaining what could be done with the machines, what was realistic, and what would make the process simpler and faster. Kerr's role as designer involved weighing that advice against the goals of the original design and deciding when it was worth changing the drawing. She described long conversations with factory staff before concluding that a tiny change in a curve could mean two stages of production difference and consequently, a more expensive end-product. Seeing the bigger picture, the product as a small part of a complex global system, helped Kerr to keep perspective on the design: “I think a lot of people who are designers can be unnecessarily attached to something as an expression of themselves as opposed to understanding how that fits in with the global project.”

Kerr's account indicates an openness to learning from factory workers and managers, and some flexibility and responsiveness in the design. However, once the drawings are finalized, the factories are expected to adhere to them exactly, something that requires close monitoring. In 2001, Kerr reported that factory employees had nicknamed her “Dragon Lady” for her insistence that they follow the drawings down to the smallest detail.⁶³⁴ Kerr visited the factories multiple times and later sent two designers from her office, Lim and Sophie Nichol, to work alongside the factory employees as she had done. Abrams continued to visit the factories seven to eight times a year, but today the relationships are more stable and she and Felice

⁶³⁴ Blum, “The Truth About Forks and Spoons. From Metropolis.”

have reduced that number to two or three.⁶³⁵ The interviewees have more faith now that the factories will reproduce the designs as specified, though there are still instances when the factories surprise them with low-quality product (Abrams).

The continued production of Non Stop demonstrates how the “material durability” of the flatware “stabilizes” social relationships between actors who share the same standards throughout the production-circulation-consumption cycle.⁶³⁶ Once the object departs too much from those standards, the relationships are destabilized. For example, variation from the design drawings, changes in the level of hand finishing or in the composition of the steel resulting in rust, could lead Gourmet Settings to start working with another factory, retailer to discontinue the flatware, or a consumer to decide never to buy Non Stop again.

4.2.8 As Object in Production

Once the final sample is approved by Gourmet Settings, the flatware is put into production and transformed through 30 different steps, summarized by the company as (fig.88):

1. "Blanks" (the basic shapes) are stamped out of stainless steel sheets.
2. The functional end of the blanks, i.e. the wide forward section, is flattened by rolling.
3. These ends are then stamped to produce the eventual functional shape - tines for a fork and the bowl for a spoon.
4. Another pressing process further shapes the tines and bowls.
5. The handle is then carefully shaped.
6. The last step - our beautiful smooth, sealed surface finish is created through a number of meticulous grinding and polishing stages.⁶³⁷

Each iteration involves different roles within the factory, making the final object an assemblage of different practices, skill sets, equipment, and expertise that represent a mix of local and imported knowledge. Once the process is set in place, it took (as of 2007) three to four months for the factory to produce the four million units needed for a big box store order (65 piece sets, 70,000 boxes).⁶³⁸ At this stage, much attention is given to the object-as-material, evident in a short film where Abrams shares “insights of best practices in flatware manufacturing.” The video is devoted primarily to stainless steel and explains to consumers that “beauty is more than skin deep,” emphasizing both the polished finish and the careful mix of metals within. Gourmet

⁶³⁵ Ramsay, “The World Is Flat(ware).”

⁶³⁶ Law, “Actor-Network Theory and Material Semiotics,” 148; Akrich, “The De-Scripton of Technical Objects,” 148.

⁶³⁷ Gourmet Settings, “The Design Process.”

⁶³⁸ Ramsay, “The World Is Flat(ware).”

Settings reports devoting considerable energy to ensuring quality and consistency in the raw materials and treatment of the metal. The right proportions of iron, chromium, and nickel help to prevent rust, and resistance to corrosion increases with an oxide layer that forms during manufacturing. This self-repairing layer protects the metal from oxygen, salt, and water, which cause rust (fig.89).⁶³⁹ The flatware goes through several cycles of heating and cooling at specific temperatures and speeds, processes Gourmet Settings established with the assistance of Roger Hamby from CATRA in Sheffield, England (fig.90). Heating the metal allows patterns and forms to be stamped into the steel, and cooling creates the hardness desired in the sharp edges of knives. It is a fine balance—the closer the metal comes to 450 degrees Celsius, the more corrosion resistant it will be, but anything over 550 has the opposite effect.⁶⁴⁰ The labour intensive finishing processes help to harden the outer layer and remove imperfections from manufacturing, but care must be taken not to damage the cutlery or weaken the protective surface.⁶⁴¹ Even the surfaces between the tines of the fork have to be polished, a manual and time-consuming task. The more time is spent on this final step, the more the quality improves and the more the price goes up.⁶⁴²

Variances in manufacturing have an impact on the brand and perceptions of quality. Customers concerned with consistency (i.e. matching sets) also notice variations in the product, like the fact that Non Stop was first manufactured in 18/10 stainless and is now 18/chrome. At one point, despite assurances that the factory was using the best quality materials and quality control processes, Non Stop started rusting (one of the biggest crimes in cutlery production) and Gourmet Settings lost its place with Costco for several years as a result. Certain phases therefore receive closer scrutiny from actors within and outside the factory. Any staining, pitting, scratching or corrosion concerns the end-consumer, and complaints travel back through the production-circulation-consumption chain.

4.3 Circulation

4.3.1 As Packaging

The interviewees agreed that the packaging is an extension of the flatware and in many ways just as important—the box both sells and *is* the product. The packaging raises the overall

⁶³⁹ Gourmet Settings, *Gourmet Settings Flatware*, 2009, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aYk1HAVz7V0>.

⁶⁴⁰ Gourmet Settings.

⁶⁴¹ Gourmet Settings.

⁶⁴² Gourmet Settings, “Flatware 101,” accessed December 14, 2015, <http://www.gourmetsettings.com/stainless-flatware-101>.

value of the flatware and acts as ambassador for Gourmet Settings - it's what greets shoppers in the store, invites them to engage with the cutlery, and offers to connect them directly with the manufacturer. Together with the web site and text, the packaging frames and extends Non Stop's design, linking it to the consumer in a way that the flatware cannot do on its own. Kerr admitted that the packaging, which won design awards in its own right, may have been the most revolutionary part of their design work, and others agreed: "Helen was so instrumental in helping us grow into our own skin and become who we are, and integrate all the elements...like how the packaging meets the store, that was a key element of her contribution" (Abrams).

Smith explained that customers expect the presentation to be as good or better than the products themselves, and that many companies have built their brands around the packaging:⁶⁴³

What so much branding is about, is how does it differ and why would you want to pick up a Gourmet Settings product off the shelf and not somebody [else's product]? Packaging is so fascinating because it's one of those areas where the world of graphic design is so instantly rewarded because it's that decision moment when packaging is so influential. I mean there's obviously the price...but there were a number of examples where very simple packaging...made very extraordinary leaps in sales just because it looked more cohesive and simpler and clearer.

When Non Stop was introduced to Target, the packaging design was considered ground breaking. The competition had photographs of cutlery printed on closed boxes, or small windows that provided a glimpse of what was inside. Gourmet Settings introduced a completely clear cover with an opening that allowed customers to see and even touch the utensils. Some covers slid off without the need to remove them entirely. Previously, customers might have opened and damaged boxes, ruining merchandise in the process. Designed as a "set-up box" (cardboard that is stamped, cut, and folded before the graphics are printed on a separate sheet and glued to the box), it features a tray where one of each utensil is attached with twist ties and the rest of the set is stored beneath (figs.91, 92).

The boxes are intended to tell a story and add an element of fun, while still respecting the clean, modern styling of the flatware.⁶⁴⁴ They are warm and friendly, "bright and happy...they'll pop off the shelf pretty much anywhere"(Monnet). Bold, colourful images and patterns vary and

⁶⁴³ Packaging is something of a "conundrum" according to Smith. On the one hand, it seems wasteful and un-environmentally friendly to devote so much energy and material to something disposable (Monnet too feels some concern about the wastefulness of the boxes), but on the other hand, if the packaging is not sturdy enough, the box and product can be damaged and thrown out. Smith believes this will continue until there is a cultural shift toward more minimal packaging or none at all.

⁶⁴⁴ Gourmet Settings, "Packaging."

attract attention, while the white text, logo, symbols, and silhouettes of the cutlery, convey essential information and remain more or less consistent across Gourmet Settings packaging. The layout of the type, its neutral font, and discrete placement were one of Allison Hahn's contributions. The strategy was to let the flatware "speak clearly and speak for itself."⁶⁴⁵ The Jet Settings by Get Set collection for Target, appeared in boxes that were nearly identical (fig. 92). The colour palette of oranges, reds, and yellows varied in their combination of striped backgrounds, but the clear covers were consistent, emphasizing the family of products, and downplaying individual pattern names. In the buyer's opinion, design (referring here purely to "look") is what makes Gourmet Settings stand out. In hindsight, as much as the intention was to create playful designs, Smith observed a "restrained and refined look" that carried over from Hahn Smith's previous work for art and design clients. This aesthetic was second nature for the designers, but was certainly new on Walmart shelves and was only just being made popular in Target.

The packaging neither celebrates nor conceals Non Stop's origins. The emphasis on design is hinted at through the naming of the designers ("Designed exclusively for Gourmet Settings by Kerr + Company. Graphics by Hahn Smith.") and a sticker indicating that Non Stop won the American Culinary Award of Excellence. The box is the only place where country of origin and authorship are mentioned. The end of the box lists the company name and address in Richmond Hill, and below that, in smaller type, is "Made in China." The back of the flatware is stamped or etched with the Gourmet Settings logo and sometimes the metal content, but there is no indication of who designed it or where it is made, as there is on silver cutlery (fig.94). There is a disclaimer that the "pattern name, box design and the Gourmet Settings marks are the intellectual property of Gourmet Settings Inc." but the flatware itself has not been copyrighted.

4.3.2 *As Language*

Smith and his team developed a language and writing style appropriate to the brand. The tone is both straightforward and playful, while the content supports the scripts established by the designers and Gourmet Settings. Through the copy, Non Stop exists in written form, expressed in words just as much as it is in drawings and images in previous iterations. The entertaining on-line description brings the pattern to life:

Busy, Busy, Busy — that's the motto for our time poor lives. It's fast-paced. It's demanding. It's Non Stop. Knowing all this, we created Non Stop flatware. It's

⁶⁴⁵ Alison Hahn quoted in Blum, "The Truth About Forks and Spoons. From Metropolis."

flatware that makes your life easier because it keeps pace with you everyday. Pure ergonomic perfection — Non Stop stainless flatware is so perfectly balanced that you'll pause for just a moment to marvel at how it sits in your hand. Winner of the American Culinary Awards (2001), Non Stop flatware has a modern matte finish and a quality 3.0/2.8mm gauge to bring effortless style and class to your table. We know that you don't have time to hand wash dishes - that's why we made Non Stop flatware 100% dishwasher safe. We back our Non Stop flatware sets with a 25-year warranty because we've designed them with the lasting stamina we all wish we had day in day out. This place setting includes a 6 3/4" salad fork, 8" dinner fork, 9" dinner knife, 8" table spoon and 6 3/4" teaspoon.⁶⁴⁶

As Smith said, packaging is in part about capturing consumer aspiration. Who cannot identify as busy and who does not want a product that makes life easier and more stylish with no extra effort? While flatware may not be an obvious time-saving product, through the copy, Non Stop embodies the promise of all “stainless” steel, which alleviates the need to spend time polishing.

One of the goals of the packaging was to educate the consumer about what was included in the box, what the flatware was made of, and how to take care of it. The specifics of the language were important and attention was given to describing materials and conveying quality. “Continental size,” “hollow handles,” and “18/10” are examples of terms that were new to many consumers. Text in three languages - English, French, and Spanish - covered North and South American audiences as well as some of Europe. The summary text on the front and side of the Non Stop box gets directly to the point:

Looks great. Feels great.

18/chrome stainless steel.

Dishwasher safe.

25 year warranty.

Made with love.

The back of the box addresses the consumer directly, making a case for the importance of flatware and subtly providing cues for consumers to evaluate the product:

You deserve better.

Think about it: you use your utensils 365 days a year. Shouldn't they bring a smile to your lips? Our flatware cuts better, scoops better, balances better and feels great in your hand. Beautifully designed and crafted from premium-quality stainless steel, it is

⁶⁴⁶ Gourmet Settings, “Non Stop Flatware, Everyday Flatware - Gourmet Settings Flatware,” accessed December 2, 2015, [http://www.gourmetsettings.com/Non Stop](http://www.gourmetsettings.com/Non%20Stop).

guaranteed to last for years to come. Put it to the test: you can even scoop out hard ice cream without bending the spoon!

In smaller text below, Gourmet Settings offers a personal connection to the consumer:

You'll love it. We promise.

1 800 551 2649, ask for Jane.

This directive text provides the consumer with the designer's script, instructing people on how to use the flatware, what to notice about the design, and how they should feel about the product. Both retailers and consumers pick up on this script and integrate elements in product descriptions and reviews (the same humour can be found in Bed Bath & Beyond's web site: "Non-stop compliments are what you'll be getting when you set your table with this beautiful flatware"⁶⁴⁷).

Smith gave his voice to the flatware through copywriting, one of his strengths and what others remember him for when they describe the packaging. Not afraid to experiment with language and humour, Smith explained that they "used to write a lot of copy that was kind of cheeky, and a little bit irreverent, because I mean, for goodness sake, it's just flatware." Smith remembered having to pull back on text that had perhaps gone a little too far (the Cruise pattern is an example of the more outlandish copy: "Set sail on a journey to a table where the polished finish of Cruise flatware glistens in the afternoon sun. Where your food is swept off its plate by a perfectly proportioned fork and your knife glides through your cuisine like a dolphin through the ocean waves"). He also noted that while this tone is common in marketing today, it was quite new at the time. Smith's "found-its," literally "inside" jokes that customers would discover when they opened the box flaps, were intended to convey some personality and communicate directly with the consumer in a fun and intimate way. While still funny, they are perhaps a bit obtuse for some audiences ("Get packing, get in line, get on board, get out of town" and "Get ready, get set, go. Get a grip on a Get Set"), and have not made it to the current generation of boxes (fig.95). Humour can be culturally-specific and alliterations like "slowly slide sleeve sideways to feel fantastic flatware finish" might be lost in translation.

4.3.3 *In the News*

Non Stop's identity is bolstered by the publicity received by Gourmet Settings. The press tended to reiterate messages about quality, design, research, and low cost, traits applied broadly to Gourmet Settings products. In respect to the company itself, the stories highlighted a small firm competing against the big players, headed by a business-savvy, female CEO who

⁶⁴⁷ Bed Bath & Beyond, "Gourmet Settings Non Stop Flatware," accessed December 15, 2015, <http://www.bedbathandbeyond.ca/store/product/gourmet-settings-Non-Stop-flatware/114681>.

had aligned herself with leading designers. The Canadian press emphasized that this was a national success story, a local company that had navigated offshore manufacturing and the cutthroat industry of big box retail. The narratives of innovation, globalization, and cost efficiencies were especially compelling in the early-mid 2000s when overseas production was increasingly the norm. While the pattern itself has not received close attention in the press, Non Stop did receive an American Cutlery Award in 2001, along with others in the Get Set collection. The award is still celebrated on Non Stop's packaging and the pattern benefits from being sold alongside award winning styles on the Gourmet Settings web site, as well as those that have been included in museum collections.

4.3.4 As Retail Product

4.3.4.1 At Target

Eight patterns were released at Walmart, and six, as described in *Metropolis* as "a bit savvier, a bit hipper," were then introduced at Target, including Non Stop, Mile High, and Carry On.⁶⁴⁸ Both retail collections were positioned as "Get Set by Gourmet Settings," with sub-brands of Urban and Classic at Walmart, and Jet Settings at Target (figs.93, 96). An interesting "material-semiotic" relationship developed between Gourmet Settings products and concepts of "design" and "democracy" within these two stores.⁶⁴⁹

When Non Stop was launched, design was perceived as a novelty for mass-produced goods in discount stores, and it gave manufacturers a competitive edge. Gourmet Settings benefited from being in Target when the store was pushing its design agenda, and picked up meaning and value from being linked to Target's brand and the designers it worked with, including Isaac Mizrahi, Philippe Starck, and Todd Oldham. Non Stop was in Target at the same time as Michael Graves' Spinning Whistle Kettle (2002), a \$25 iconic object that strongly resembled the \$200 Bird Whistle Kettle he had designed for Alessi in 1985 (both in museum collections).⁶⁵⁰ Target "democratized" Graves' face and products in Super Bowl ads and on Manhattan buses.⁶⁵¹ This was design for the masses and Gourmet Settings was well placed.

Non Stop and the other Get Set patterns forced producers, distributors, and consumers to reconsider concepts of value. By assuming that the Gourmet Settings customer would

⁶⁴⁸ Other lines released at Walmart then included Oxford, Savoy, Metro, and Loft. Blum, "The Truth About Forks and Spoons. From Metropolis."

⁶⁴⁹ Law, "Actor-Network Theory and Material Semiotics."

⁶⁵⁰ The date of design varies - some sources say 1999, the Brooklyn Museum says 2002. Brooklyn Museum, "'Spinning Whistle' Tea Kettle with Lid," Brooklyn Museum, accessed December 30, 2015, https://www.brooklynmuseum.org/opencollection/objects/2664/Spinning_Whistle_Tea_Kettle_with_Lid.

⁶⁵¹ Pallavi Gogoi, "Michael Graves: Beyond Kettles," BloombergView, August 17, 2005, <http://www.bloomberg.com/bw/stories/2005-08-17/michael-graves-beyond-kettles>.

prioritize design and bring a higher level of care to their table settings, the team narrowed in on who they were addressing and rationalized a slightly higher price point. They recognized that there were customers who would be persuaded by the lowest price on the shelf, but they hoped that Gourmet Settings would win over a segment of the audience with design. The 20-piece set of Non Stop was sold at Target and now at Bed Bath & Beyond for \$30 - \$40 (USD), still inexpensive in the flatware market, but still more than the \$10 - \$20 sets available at Walmart and Ikea. The higher price point could be seen as a positive differentiator, part of the argument that the cutlery was worth more than the competition.

Non Stop is described as “accessible,” a word that means different things in the contexts of discount stores and the democratization of design. Kerr and Abrams still talk about the clash of “value systems” they encountered when developing flatware for Walmart and Target, suggesting that this was a major hurdle. “Value systems” is an ambiguous concept that could refer to corporate values (e.g. sustainability, ethical manufacturing), or to how people determine the monetary worth of an object, and how much they are willing to pay. The language used to describe price in discount stores is diplomatic: Walmart professes to “bring value” to customers; and the buyer I interviewed explained that the industry term “moderate customer” does not mean “cheap,” but rather represents a vision shared by retailers and manufacturers that everyone should have access to good quality products at a price they can afford.

Kerr and Abrams had to confront their own value systems and ideas about the democratization of design. With the Gourmet Settings contract, Kerr realized she was embarking on an entirely new type of project, and one that matched her own interests in making design accessible. She later admitted that she had low expectations of the design she would find in Walmart, and had preconceptions about a “typical Walmart shopper.”⁶⁵² The team’s hunch that Target and Walmart patrons would welcome better designed, slightly more expensive flatware, was only partially correct. Walmart buyer Bruce Gillespie commented in 2001:

I believe the customers for this product are more fashion conscious than what is assumed to be our typical customer. [...] They have a true appreciation for strength in design but can’t afford to pay the premium that specialty and department stores have often expected for goods of this type.⁶⁵³

In the end, neither Walmart nor Target continued selling Get Set patterns for different reasons. The “anti-program,” how the objects were reinterpreted once released into the world, revealed a

⁶⁵² Blum, “The Truth About Forks and Spoons. From Metropolis.”

⁶⁵³ Quoted in Blum.

different sense of value among store patrons. The price point turned out to be slightly too high for Walmart shoppers. Non Stop, along with the Carry On pattern, sold well for three or four years, until Target started making flatware under its own label and discontinued Gourmet Settings products. Interestingly, Target is now selling a variety of Gourmet Settings patterns again online, including some of the earliest patterns and Chelsea, the latest version of Non Stop.⁶⁵⁴

4.3.4.2 At Bed Bath & Beyond

After leaving Target, Gourmet Settings saw an opportunity to shift Non Stop to Bed Bath & Beyond where, 13 years later, it continues to be one of the retailer's top selling patterns, with an average of 1,200 sets sold per month. In its current home, Non Stop has taken on new meaning in relation to its surroundings. Bed Bath & Beyond competes with other discount superstores with products priced lower than in department stores. However, Bed Bath & Beyond positions itself as a specialty retailer. Referred to as a "category killer," in line with Office Depot and Toys 'R Us, it offers far more variety in its product offerings than the universal big box stores.⁶⁵⁵ Unlike many other chains, each store has some freedom in configuring the layout and ordering its own inventory in response to local demand (managers choose up to 70% of stock).⁶⁵⁶ Gourmet Settings is therefore continually filling requests for Non Stop from individual stores rather than through a central ordering system for Bed Bath & Beyond (Abrams).⁶⁵⁷

It was not easy to find Non Stop when I visited the crowded Bed Bath & Beyond at Broadway and West 64th in New York. The chain's retail design, with products stacked to the ceiling, ties stores together across the continent but must be adapted to individual locations. The Manhattan store has a small footprint, and is squeezed into a subterranean space, a jumble of levels and rooms that are difficult to navigate. Here, Non Stop, the globally distributed, mass-produced object, lands in a local setting where space is at a premium and heavy traffic means the shelves are never that organized. Bed Bath & Beyond is one of the few stores that exhibits cutlery in its "natural environment" (buyer)—all patterns are removed from their boxes and displayed on angled shelves in locked cabinets, with the full packaged sets stored in open shelves below (fig.97). This may be "natural" in that the consumer can see all patterns at once

⁶⁵⁴ Target.com currently sells the following Gourmet Settings patterns: Balance, Strand, Twist, Goddess, Old World, Chute, Chelsea, Anise, Hotel, and Loft. http://intl.target.com/p/gourmet-settings-chelsea-flatware-set-45pc/-/A-51021981#prodSlot=medium_1_8

⁶⁵⁵ FundingUniverse, "History of Bed Bath & Beyond Inc.," accessed July 10, 2016, <http://www.fundinguniverse.com/company-histories/bed-bath-beyond-inc-history/>.

⁶⁵⁶ Nanette Byrnes, "What's Beyond for Bed Bath & Beyond?," Bloomberg.com, January 19, 2004, <http://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2004-01-18/whats-beyond-for-bed-bath-and-beyond>.

⁶⁵⁷ FundingUniverse, "History of Bed Bath & Beyond Inc."

as entire place settings on a neutral background free from packaging, but the glass wall cabinets are much more museum-like than dining table, arguably an unnatural setting for lower-priced flatware, but a display tactic that is effective in raising the perceived value of the objects. Non Stop is grouped with other patterns and brands in the \$40 - \$50 range, far from the wall of more expensive and recognizable brand names and wedding registry sets over \$100. No longer part of the Jet Settings family, Non Stop is the sole Gourmet Settings representative in this busy and chaotic housewares chain, with the exception of Windermere which sells in a separate, specially designed, open-stock display, and a selection of other Gourmet Settings patterns sold on the store's web site.⁶⁵⁸

4.3.4.3 At Costco

Non Stop has also cycled in and out of Costco, most recently in the form of a custom 65-piece set including serving pieces (fig.98). This version of Non Stop "in bulk" builds on a history of large format, stacked box displays designed specifically for the warehouse retailer. In 2007, Gourmet Settings and Kerr + Company won a prestigious gold IDSA award (Industrial Designers Society of America) based on packaging designed for display on shipping pallets. Costco had contracted Gourmet Settings to create exclusive flatware in sets of 52 – 65 pieces, which required a new box that took into consideration the "unguided" Costco environment, where customers are left to fend for themselves.⁶⁵⁹ Costco uses forklifts to move pallets of product to the store floor. Other than removing the plastic wrap, the pallet stays as the manufacturer packed it, and customers have little opportunity to really see or touch what they are buying. The challenge was to make the flatware stand out in a huge shopping space (Costco stores are an average of 140,000 square feet).⁶⁶⁰ After some in-store observation, the team designed alternating rows of trays that grouped boxes on their sides (fig.99). The pallet itself, which is an internationally standardized size, became a giant Gourmet Settings "self-merchandising" platform that also maximized shipping.⁶⁶¹

⁶⁵⁸ Online, Bed Bath & Beyond sells a large variety of Gourmet Settings patterns: Twist 'n Shout, Marina, Avalon, Treble Clef, Tristan, Exotique, Gala, Cami, Old World, Montana, Cabaret and Symphony. The store I visited in New York City had Non Stop and Windermere only, but selection may vary across the country since each store makes its own orders.

⁶⁵⁹ HFN Mag, "Gourmet Settings Nabs Design Award."

⁶⁶⁰ Jana and Cham Yu, "Online Extra."

⁶⁶¹ Industrial Designers Society of America, "Gourmet Settings at Costco," Industrial Designers Society of America - IDSA, 2007, <http://www.idsa.org/awards/idea/design-strategy/gourmet-settings-costco>.

4.4 Consumption

4.4.1 At the moment of purchase

Non Stop is transformed when the shopper decides to buy it. It changes ownership at the moment of purchase, leaving the highly controlled environment of the store and entering a series of more chaotic and unpredictable (for the producers and distributors) settings where it is personalized and given new meaning through domestic use and display.

Kerr, Abrams, and the former buyer I interviewed, described a two-part sales process. First, the packaging attracts consumers and sells the product in stores. The cutlery cannot be “tried on” before taking it home, so the packaging steps in to help customers “read” the cutlery. However, it is not until consumers have unpacked it, eaten and cooked with it, laid a table and hosted a meal with it, and finally cleaned it and put it away, that they are able to decide how they feel about the product. In this sense, the packaging makes the first sales pitch and the cutlery must sell itself after purchase.

Customer reviews demonstrate how their relationship to the product changes after use. These can be positive experiences, like confirming expectations that Non Stop really does match the square plates at home, or new realizations, like the shape makes it “easy to use especially for my husband's arthritic fingers.” Consumers who complain about rust have no way to predict this based on the packaging and flatware in the store: “This set looks beautiful when you take it out of the box, but as soon as you begin to use them you will notice that no matter how well you clean them, they always look dirty, they rust, and scratches will show up all over them.”⁶⁶²

4.4.2 At Home

Once in the home, Non Stop assumes a more permanent position, though it is difficult to say just how long is the average stay in a household. Cutlery is usually attributed a seven-year lifespan, but Abrams’ impression is that consumers must be buying flatware more often. While Smith described Non Stop as everyday cutlery, he also viewed the product as beautiful enough for people to keep long-term, and to consider passing on to someone else, closer to an heirloom and associated with a bigger financial investment. Kerr wanted consumers to “invite [the flatware] into their life and...keep it for a very long time.” Despite trends toward faster product development cycles and a growing culture of cheap and disposable goods, the consumer reviews of Non Stop suggest that people do develop longer relationships with the pattern.

⁶⁶² Customer reviews of Non Stop have been summarized from Bedbathandbeyond.com and Amazon.com.

Based on anecdotal evidence, it seems that consumers also value the packaging enough to keep it (Smith and Kerr have held on to their Non Stop box for over 10 years). The boxes may not be practical for storing the cutlery, but people find alternative uses (Monnet's mother keeps her jewellery in them).

4.4.3 As Bridge between Manufacturer and Consumer

At this phase of the object's life, Gourmet Settings focuses attention away from factories and retailers to its relationship with end-users. Non Stop, and any problems associated with it, become the mechanisms by which the consumer engages in conversation with the manufacturer. Gourmet Settings is known for its customer service, and there is a personal touch and direct connection that is valued by consumers. Abrams sees a customer complaint as "an opportunity to touch people."⁶⁶³ Jane, whose name and contact information are listed on the box, is a real person who has been employed at Gourmet Settings since the late 1990s. Jane answers emails and phone calls, helps find replacements for lost pieces, and writes lovely apology notes. Her emails are so appreciated that customers have published lengthy blog posts in praise of Gourmet Settings customer service.⁶⁶⁴ Jane funnels the information she receives from consumers back into the product design cycle in various ways. This is not an organized process per se, but Jane filters comments into conversations with Lim, Felice, and Abrams who can then choose what to take into consideration for design. Similar to Kerr's anthropological study of consumers in retail settings, this feedback loop brings the voices of real people and real experiences with the final product back into the design process. In this way, Gourmet Settings can learn about how the original design script has broken down – where things have not gone as planned – and then try to rebuild the script through customer service and the re-design of products.

The correspondence from Gourmet Settings customers has somewhat jokingly been referred to as "love letters." This positivity is borne out on the Gourmet Settings web site where eight reviews of Non Stop from 2013 to 2015 give an overall rating of 4.8 out five. The primary concern in these letters is how long the pattern will be available. Five people had purchased Non Stop many years ago and were happy to find that they could still buy it online to create larger table settings or to replace lost pieces. Four mentioned having purchased the flatware at Target ten years before and having been concerned when they found it was no longer

⁶⁶³ Presidents of Enterprising Organizations, "Hildy Abrams | Part II – Industry Perspective, Blog 5."

⁶⁶⁴ CareyGB, "Gourmet Settings: 'We're Only Selling Knives And Forks - How Hard Can It Be To Make Sure Our Customers Are Happy?,'" *Consumerist* (blog), August 8, 2010, <http://consumerist.com/2010/08/08/gourmet-settings-were-only-selling-knives-and-forks-how-hard-can-it-be-to-make-sure-our-customers/>.

distributed through the store. Irene from Las Vegas, Nevada, shared: “breathing sigh of relief as I place these in my wish list and will be ordering at least two sets – if not more. Don’t ever want to run short again.” Brian in Fayetteville, North Carolina, wrote: “I expect to be passing these down to my grand children.”⁶⁶⁵

4.4.4 As Subject of Customer Reviews

A broader and more balanced perspective on consumption practices and priorities is conveyed in close to 100 consumer reviews of Non Stop on Amazon.com and Bedbathandbeyond.com from 2002 to the present. This iteration of Non Stop is a virtual representation of the physical product, tied to lived experience. It is conveyed through personal testimonies and conversations, a few photographs, and standardized ratings. It exists in an online environment moderated by global retailers, which is nevertheless mostly unedited dialogue between consumers who care enough to share their opinions.

Overall, Non Stop gets top marks with 64% of people rating it at five stars, and 21% giving it three or four stars out of five.⁶⁶⁶ Positive comments relate to style, function, lifestyle, and affirmation from others. Most statements on aesthetics resemble the designers’ description of the pattern, with words like “modern/contemporary,” “simple/not too fancy,” and “unique/different,” while some are more impassioned: “absolutely splendid,” “gorgeous/beautiful/elegant,” “fabulous,” “cute/adorable,” and “fun.” A few make a connection to “Scandinavian” design and several complimented the Gourmet Settings design team directly for their “unusual and thought-provoking” work, calling Non Stop “art you can eat with!” The matte finish, weight, and squared spoons are popular features. Weight is used as a point of comparison with other flatware and as an indication of value for money (they “feel like the more expensive sets”). Consumers look for approval from others, including the opinions of family and spouses (“They are big and heavy, which my husband loves. Personally I don’t care about that, but compared to these, he thinks all other silverware feels cheap”), and compliments from friends and guests. Some purchased Non Stop because their friends already owned the pattern.

The comments give some insight into use, from the generic (“they work wonderfully” and “very user friendly”) to the specifics of being sturdy, strong enough to scoop ice cream without bending (as promised by the packaging), and effective at scraping out bowls and jars because of the squared tips. There were also a number of comments related to ergonomics – Non Stop

⁶⁶⁵ Gourmet Settings, “Non Stop Flatware, Everyday Flatware - Gourmet Settings Flatware.”

⁶⁶⁶ Gourmet Settings, *Gourmet Settings Non Stop 20-Piece Flatware Set, Service for 4* (Amazon, n.d.), http://www.amazon.com/Gourmet-Settings-20-Piece-Flatware-Service/dp/B000063D4W/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1451712746&sr=8-1&keywords=gourmet+settings+non+stop.

is comfortable and easy to grip, especially for arthritic fingers, but too heavy for young children. Some find the knives and teaspoons too big. One reported that the square spoons do not cut inside the mouth while another complained that the spoons had in fact left a big scratch inside her cheek.

Customers have opinions about whom the flatware is for and in what contexts Non Stop is appropriate, revealing how the cutlery is valued in juxtaposition with other actors (people, contexts, events, other products). These comments are remarkably similar to how the designers describe the target audience. Some consumers see Non Stop for certain phases of life and for younger audiences such as families with kids, newlyweds (many had received the flatware through their wedding registries), and college students (parents purchased it for their children). Others have used it for ten years (since buying it at Target) and intend to keep using it for as long as they can. It is considered versatile, suitable for both everyday and formal dining (“adds class to any table”), and, according to reviews, looks just as good with fine china as it does with paper plates. In some households, there is a hierarchy to the flatware: the mother’s wedding silverware is never used; the owner’s high-end stainless flatware received at their wedding is used at family events and supplemented with Non Stop; and other “ultra-cheap flatware” is used every day. That Non Stop matches the consumers’ own tableware (plates and other flatware) was mentioned by only a few, suggesting that style and how the flatware fits with domestic interiors may be less important than anticipated by the designers. One reviewer believes that the flatware matches her personality: “Their unique design fits me to a T.”

Within these online reviews, Non Stop exists both as a consumer-approved object whose positive value is confirmed from many perspectives and in relation to other people, objects, and settings, and as a damaged good that is the subject of passionate complaints. The biggest point of contention is rust. Many consumers are disappointed by how quickly the flatware corrodes after just one use or several months of use, and some complain that it scratches easily and looks dirty. Several reviewers posted pictures of the rusting (fig.100) and consumer-made videos on this topic can be found on Amazon and YouTube.⁶⁶⁷ For many, the rust is intolerable (“down right embarrassing”) and they returned the sets or contacted Gourmet Settings directly. Some are happy with their replacements, but some swear they will never buy Gourmet Settings again. Other customers have no problem at all with rusting or spotting, and defend the flatware. Some address other reviewers directly, giving advice on how to care for their flatware (avoiding certain detergents, drying by hand, using sandpaper on a deep scratch, etc.), or even suggesting that a cheap dishwasher might be to blame. There is debate about

⁶⁶⁷ *Gourmet Settings*.

whether stainless steel should stain, and whether customers should be expected to put so much care into their flatware to keep it spotless. Non Stop is, after all, for those too busy to polish their cutlery. Comparisons are made to other products they own (“My old silverware lasted 20 years with no rust,” “You can bet not every single plate or pan you put into your dishwasher comes out perfect”). Rusting is also connected to commentary about customer service and the warranty. Some people obtain instant gratification by contacting Gourmet Settings, while others experience long waits and are frustrated by lack of communication.

Many feel they have been tricked by “false advertising.” In some cases, the boxes say 18/10 but the flatware is stamped 18/8, or the web site says 18/10 but what they received is 18/0. Others notice discrepancies between the 25-year warranty on the packaging and the 50-year warranty on the Gourmet Settings web site. One customer reports being told by Gourmet Settings that the factory had etched the wrong chrome/nickel stamp on the back. Other discrepancies surfaced too. One person received a box with seven forks and only one soup spoon, and someone else received forks with bent tines. Some customers feel the flatware is good value, but others feel the price is too good to be true – the labelling promises something it cannot deliver (18/10), and all of the rusting and additional care required is not worth the amount paid.

For those who are satisfied with the flatware, their relationship to the product will seemingly last forever. Many report using it everyday for ten years with no problem. One family left their wedding flatware behind in favour of keeping Non Stop when they moved across the country. Those who love Non Stop hope that Gourmet Settings will never discontinue the pattern, and bought second and third sets because of growing families, and to ensure they will always have enough in case of lost pieces.

Customers really notice differences in the newer Non Stop sets, such as: the spoon is larger; the knife is thinner or more ergonomic; the shape is slightly different, not as thick or heavy; and the old set is shinier (“I am happy that my flatware all matches but I am not excited about how the new set feels lighter, a little skimpier in quality, even though it's supposed to be the same product”). These changes may have taken place over time in the factories, or they may be design updates that Lim has made.

Despite the highly precise design drawings, exacting molds, factory visits and quality assurance measures, there are evidently inconsistencies in the makeup of the steel and the form of the tools. This leads to variety in the final product and consumer experience, from instant rusting to never rusting, from easily scratching to no scratches, to discrepancies in labelling and mistakes in how the sets are assembled. All of these variations over the 12-year

period covered by the reviews illustrate how much manufacturing affects quality and alters consumer perception of the design and corporate brand. The extent of the reviews and the effort put into documenting rust, indicate how invested consumers can be in the products they own. Comments by people who purchased Non Stop ten years ago illustrate the commitments people make to their flatware, and how that relationship can change through use and comparison with other products.

4.5 Continuation and Revival

Non Stop's life has been extended and transformed in a variety of ways. It was one of Gourmet Settings' earliest patterns, and it continues to be produced and sold in packaging almost identical to the original, in addition to sets and packaging that were reconfigured for different locations. Smith described how "quirky" design can be—some of the earliest patterns have lasted the longest, while others stopped selling for no apparent reason. Despite the research and design in response to retailer needs, there are no guarantees about which products will sell well and where. Given cultural differences in eating habits and changing tastes, Kerr never anticipated that Non Stop would be so popular around the world nor be on the market for so long. She now believes there is something universally appealing about the pattern. For Abrams, Non Stop is a classic pattern and a consistent seller. In this vein, she now refers to the flatware designed by Kerr's team as her "diamonds," alluding to their value as commodities and as intellectual property, an investment in design that has not depreciated over time.

4.5.1 As Refined Object

The version of Non Stop sold today is not entirely identical to the original, but rather an "improvement" on the old pattern. It is evidence of the next generation of designers, their own processes, aesthetic sensibilities, and understandings of the market. Even though Gourmet Settings was a major part of Lim's work at Kerr + Company for 13 years, he did not work on Non Stop until he became the senior designer at Gourmet Settings in early 2013. He has since modified the pattern to make it, in his opinion, more ergonomic and functional (figs.101, 102). The original fork design was rounder and Lim felt the tines were too close together, which meant they were not as effective at piercing food. The current version is more elongated and the tines are further apart. The knife received a more radical update when Lim made it less "blobby" and more "sleek," giving it what he labelled a "Scandinavian" or "European" feel. The new knife spreads better too. Three serving pieces and steak knives help to make Non Stop successful

by expanding how it can be used (e.g. to host a dinner where everything matches) (Lim) (fig.103).

Stéphane Monnet has taken on the design of all Gourmet Settings packaging and signage (in-store displays, trade shows, etc.), and Smith's sense was that he has stayed faithful to the original vision. Monnet agreed that the early work (of which he was a part) has remained effective and he saw no need to change the form of the boxes or transparent covers. Monnet noted that there is little consistency for the brand – the logo alternates between the “gs” word mark and the name spelled out in full; the type design and placement are generally the same, but the colours and patterns change all the time. It is the overall impression of “contemporary” that remains consistent, even though it is a concept that changes with time. It is reflected in the use of colour, vibrancy, simplicity, and cleanliness, combined with the clear cover and white type. Monnet explained that he enjoys the spontaneity and freedom this system allows him. He has refined the design, “toned down” the copywriting, and said that he can see his own style in the final product.

Non Stop and its presentation are continually refined in response to the world it encounters. It is easier to make new packaging than new cutlery, and Gourmet Settings re-packages the same flatware in seasonal colours, and in response to retailer requests. Non Stop recently got a new box for Costco (fig.98). Monnet and his team developed the packaging for a 65-piece set (12 place settings of five utensils, plus five serving pieces). There is no patterning, only bold, red and white type on a black/clear background, and all pieces are clearly visible (none are buried in a second layer). One of the main design improvements was the use of fewer and easier-to-release cable ties in response to customer complaints that they were having difficulty removing the cutlery.

4.5.2 As ‘Family Member’

Non Stop's role as part of a collection of patterns has evolved – it has been reassigned to other “families” and other versions (“cousins”) have been developed. The “Jet Settings” label disappeared with the end of the Target contract, but the individual patterns continue to be sold, and today, Non Stop is grouped with other “Everyday” styles on the Gourmet Settings web site.

The company advertises that its “range of stainless steel flatware patterns is unique,”⁶⁶⁸ and while there is undoubtedly variety, many styles are variations of other patterns under different names—similar forms in the handles, blades, tines, and bowls are mixed and matched (fig.74). Some are updates of older designs with slightly modified forms, and some are identical

⁶⁶⁸ Gourmet Settings, “Place Settings,” n.d., <http://www.gourmetsettings.com/place-settings>.

with different finishes. Some have evolved over time in manufacturing because of changes in raw materials, or relocation to another factory with different production methods. Within a setting, each utensil is itself a design variation of the others, serving different functions but visually and ergonomically related through design.⁶⁶⁹ Each pattern has a character expressed through its design, name, packaging and description. Together, these patterns define the Gourmet Settings brand and each other.

Additional iterations of Non Stop can be found under different names. The Cruise pattern is a polished version of Non Stop, and the Chelsea features similarly squared-off spoons (fig.102). The strategy behind these extensions is to offer something new without starting from scratch. The rationale, as explained by Abrams, is that in other product categories, customers will buy multiple versions of the same thing (e.g. consumers do not have a problem owning a white t-shirt with a v-neck, a round neck, a pocket, etc.), and this may work for flatware as well. The endless choice found with more disposable products is now appearing in categories of more durable objects, like cutlery. The redesigns are often so close to the originals, that customers may not recognize them as different (though some customer reviews indicate otherwise). Because customers generally have less brand loyalty for flatware than for products like clothing and cars, Abrams doubted that they search for or recognize Gourmet Settings in a store, but she proposed they may be attracted to a design that is similar to what they have purchased in the past.

4.5.3 *As Copy*

The “moving project” of Non Stop includes the competition, and the many, many styles on the market that resemble its squared spoons, rounded forks, and wide knife blades. This is where the “cutlery illiteracy” described by Abrams and Kerr comes into play, where the customer’s lack of knowledge or brand loyalty means that shoppers do not distinguish between Gourmet Settings’ Non Stop and other products of similar appearance. They are buying into a style rather than a specific pedigree, and Non Stop is just one option in the endless choices of “modern” looking flatware. Gourmet Settings arguably takes advantage of this ambiguity. The market is so flooded by variations on flatware patterns, that it would likely be difficult to track down and defend any original design.

While the flatware is not copyright protected, the packaging is. According to Gourmet Settings, it was the first company to introduce the clear-fronted box with an opening for customers to touch the flatware. This has become a generally accepted truth, although the

⁶⁶⁹ Patterns typically include a salad and dinner fork, knife, soup and teaspoon.

buyer I interviewed is unsure that Gourmet Settings was in fact the originator. Nevertheless, the packaging was almost instantly replicated in various forms by the competition, and today it is impossible to find a box of flatware that does not have a window showing an entire place setting. The issue does not concern Abrams and Kerr who believed that the competition will never capture the “essence” of Gourmet Settings (the detail and depth of the overall, integrated design strategy). In fact, Gourmet Settings plays up the issue on its web site: “inspiring knock-offs (imitation is a form of flattery, right?).”⁶⁷⁰ Regardless of the increasingly rapid product cycle, Abrams debated the value of continual innovation. Some boxes merit minor adjustments but not a complete re-design. Too many changes are likely to frustrate customers who go looking for its products, and maybe the company has done the most it can with certain designs—“you have to plant your flag and let it stand” (Abrams).

4.5.4 As Preserver of Relationships and Practices

The latest iteration of Non Stop reveals how actors have been reconfigured around the object, and how, at the same time, the object has preserved some past relationships and an evolution in practices. Following is a description of the current design and manufacturing process used to create the updated Non Stop pattern. It is worth noting that many of the processes remain the same or are similar to what was established by Kerr, Smith, and Abrams in the early 2000s, but the actors have changed, processes have been streamlined, and the product development cycle has been shortened. New actors in Asia have been brought in to the network, including more factories, along with Choi who acts on Gourmet Settings’ behalf. Lim’s description of the current design process is somewhat more detailed than the original account because the information is more current and more easily recalled.

The group of young designers who worked under Kerr and Smith have moved into lead design positions. This next generation has continued the Gourmet Settings aesthetic they established at Kerr + Company and Hahn Smith, using the general box structure and modifying existing flatware patterns. Gourmet Settings has explored other box formats, including hanging pouches for Loblaw’s, a fully plastic box for Costco, and a recent experiment with a reusable box, but variations of Kerr + Company’s original design persist because they are successful.

Kerr’s systems approach, and Abrams’ investment in this way of doing things, was often referred to by interviewees who recognized it as unique to Gourmet Settings, but also part of their normal procedures. From Kerr’s perspective, the core of the design is the same today, but the influence of new designers and factories is visible in the product and packaging; she said

⁶⁷⁰ Gourmet Settings, “Packaging.”

the “intellectual property bundle is slightly different.” While there is respect for the process that Kerr and Abrams set up 17 years ago, and elements of it remain (the “feel,” the way prototypes are made, some of the factory and buyer relationships, the general design of the family of products including the packaging), the investment in research has changed. Whereas the original team spent considerable time documenting how the flatware “lives” in the store, there does not seem to be such an organized and concerted effort to study consumers and retail experience, even though both have likely changed since the original “anthropological study.” Lim’s research consists of a review of current trends and styles in product design. Monnet has done some consumer research on his own and consults with friends. He is interested in how people shop and what they are attracted to, and will occasionally go to big box stores when he travels, especially when he can visit American chains. The big picture, holistic research that Kerr first defined for Gourmet Settings is no longer part of the formal process, and maybe it was no longer necessary once Non Stop and its contemporaries reached store shelves. There are new flows of information from buyers through Abrams and Felice. At the same time, the kind of innovation that Kerr + Company’s research made possible has, as Smith described it, balanced out in the market—the competition has caught up.

Gourmet Settings now has a set routine for dealing with buyers. Some work with Gourmet Settings on an ongoing basis and give general design direction for new patterns. Lim does some research online to see “what’s out there,” and generates design ideas based on that. Lim’s process seems intuitive and responsive to buyer needs, though he also brings his own design process, and is currently working on new flatware designs that depart from the Gourmet Settings look.⁶⁷¹ His design inspiration is varied and comes from what seem unlikely places. He looks at old and new flatware design, but also at jewellery, which uses materials and a level of detail similar to what is required for flatware. He looks at the automotive industry, which he considers to be at the leading edge of product design, and even at the design of fighter jets.

There are certain design considerations Lim takes into account as he tries to predict how people will use the flatware. He aims to create an intuitive, user-friendly experience, where the flatware does not draw attention to itself. Knives that do not cut or spread well, oversized

⁶⁷¹ Lim is currently working on a line of flatware that stands up when the tip of the handle is rested in a small stand resembling a pebble. He describes the flatware with excitement: “it’s supposed to make you feel like you know what you’re looking at, like you know how to use it. It’s a very primitive instinct, what you see. It stems from tools, from branches for example. If you’re somewhere out in the wild, and you need to find something that almost looks like a fork, you would go off and pick up this branch and maybe use it... The knife looks like a blade of grass. It’s really skinny. And the spoon looks like a petal on a flower.”

teaspoons that give you more sugar than you expect in your coffee, forks that do not pierce food, spoons that do not fit comfortably in your mouth, cutlery that is awkward to hold or “jumps off the plate,” can all lead to irritating experiences even when users may not be conscious of what is bothering them. Lim emphasized that the look of the cutlery has to reinforce friendliness to instill confidence in the user: it “has to be useable. It can’t be scary. It should be natural...and look like it’s going to work. A fork...should look like it’s not going to injure you.” Even though most consumers generally know how to use cutlery, the design of the flatware conveys more specific messages about function. For example, is the bowl of the spoon too deep and will it prevent you from getting all the soup from the bottom?

Gourmet Settings now produces eight to ten new patterns a year. It takes only a few months for the pattern to go from Lim’s initial drawings to store shelves. This includes two to four weeks to design a pattern, make a wooden model, show the model to buyers and refine the design. After the drawings are sent to the factory, it takes two weeks for the factory to provide samples of the mold and product.

Both Felice and Abrams are involved because their knowledge and exposure to the flatware industry are essential. They give Lim direction based on what they have seen in the market, what is selling, and what buyers have requested. Lim will ask for specific feedback to help move the design forward. He creates many, many iterations with tiny, very precise changes (millimetres of difference) to curves, centre points, thickness, feel, shape, etc., and then asks for Abrams’ and Felice’s opinions.

Lim’s experience, along with current technology, has played a role in streamlining the design process. Now he can do things more quickly and make decisions faster. There is “no usual process,” according to Lim. He goes back and forth between hand and computer-assisted drawing—when he feels the need to express himself by hand, he will. He often starts with a CAD drawing to establish specifications like overall dimensions. He prints that layout and uses tracing paper to sketch over top. He then photographs that drawing with his phone, emails it to himself so that he can open it in the CAD program, and digitally renders the line he just drew by hand. Designers at Kerr + Company used to carve the first prototypes in pink foam before moving to wood. Lim now has the confidence to go straight to the wooden model, which takes him about two hours per utensil. The foam costs less and was appropriate for junior designers who were more likely to make mistakes. Sometimes, Lim sends the drawings to prototype at a 3-D printing facility in Toronto.

As of 2014, the flatware manufacturing takes place in three locations: Tianjin (China), Ho Chi Minh and Hanoi (Vietnam). New factories in Ho Chi Minh and north of Shanghai were also

being tested. Lim sends detailed CAD drawings to the factories and to Choi, a new addition to the team since Non Stop was first manufactured. Sometimes the factories re-draw the drawings, not to make changes, but to go through a process of internalizing and fully understanding the design. Lim then verifies those drawings to make sure they look exactly like what he sent. Lim felt that they have worked together long enough that the communication is efficient, with no back and forth needed to refine the design or correct misinterpretations of the drawings.

Once Choi receives the final two or three-dimensional drawings and mock-ups from Lim, the tooling and samples are made by TYV in Vietnam. Two weeks later, a sample of the mold and the flatware in stainless steel are sent to Toronto by FedEx for Lim to review. Lim pointed out that this time frame is incredibly short, especially given that someone in the factory must polish the steel mold with a hand file. Lim measures the samples with calipers to ensure they are to his specifications. If there is any variance, the factory must make changes to the “failed samples,” and the factory may have to take responsibility for the costs of creating a new mold. Gourmet Settings shows the final golden samples to buyers to confirm their orders, after which TYV makes steel molds and tools for mass production.

Choi stays involved with manufacturing and ensures quality control. Once the pattern goes into production, the factory can run three shifts a day and the order can be completed in as little as a week. Meanwhile, the production of boxes must be coordinated somewhere else (sometimes in another city) and timed to coincide for packing and shipping.

The relationship between the industrial and graphic designers is similar today in that Lim develops the three-dimensional box and Monnet creates the graphics. Lim provides digital drawings, showing die lines and components (outer box, inner tray), thicknesses and folding instructions. It takes Monnet’s office a few weeks to turn around a new packaging design including approvals, while more fundamental changes to the box form can take months. Monnet receives direction from Felice, who relays requests from buyers for new patterns or specific colours. Monnet, or one or two of his staff, will develop several ideas for them to choose from. There may be some back and forth with Gourmet Settings before and after the designs are shown to buyers, but Gourmet Settings generally gives Monnet Design creative freedom. The box shape is fairly standard, and Monnet will involve Lim if necessary to talk about the die line, construction, and positions of the flatware. Monnet Design will occasionally create a mini mock-up for review. Once the design is approved, Monnet’s office prepares the final art for whichever printer gets the job, either in China or Vietnam. The printer may ship a printed proof or mockup of the entire box to Toronto, or Monnet may sign off online without ever seeing a hardcopy. The

box maker will usually adjust the die lines, and occasionally the proof will be slightly off. Monnet communicates what needs to be fixed by emailing a picture marked up with changes.

4.5.5 As Manufactured Object

The updated Non Stop represents a shift in the relationship between the designers and the factories. There seems to be a greater disconnect today, but this may be because Choi has adopted much of the negotiation work that Kerr would have undertaken at the beginning. Today, Non Stop and the other Gourmet Settings patterns are still at the centre of a cross-cultural exchange, where the designers' instructions are to some extent reinterpreted and the knowledge and will of the makers still hold some sway.

The global supply chain is managed by Gourmet Settings, with Felice in Toronto and Choi in Vietnam. From Choi's perspective, design is the responsibility of Gourmet Settings' in-house designers and CEO, though he also recognized that other actors (sales and marketing, retail buyers, the competition) have influence as well. Choi described his company's role as "realiz[ing] the design when developing the tools and samples." According to Choi, he enters the process when the design is more or less complete, and represents Gourmet Settings in the factories to ensure precision and quality consistent with Gourmet Settings standards. There are still major challenges in this task, especially in guaranteeing quality assurance across a number of sites, and despite the many years Abrams and Felice have invested in factory relations.⁶⁷²

There are varying opinions among the interviewees as to the influence of the factories on design, between the "world inscribed in the object" where design drawings predict a situation where the object is executed without variation or compromise, and the "world described by its displacement" where the realities of manufacturing, including local expertise, are brought to bear on the object.⁶⁷³ Abrams and Felice described the factories' main contribution as their knowledge of how to make things better and more easily. While Kerr perceived the process as a negotiation, Lim and Monnet portrayed it as more of a one-way communication (Lim has visited the factories but Monnet has not). Lim described a period of adjustment as the factories learn to read the designer's drawings and while communication practices are established. In his experience, new factories will often assume they have more experience and try to change the design, even though Gourmet Settings has been making cutlery for close to 20 years. Monnet underlines that all design work for the packaging is done in Toronto. The factories are expected

⁶⁷² At my first meeting with Abrams and Kerr, Abrams spoke about having recently sent a new pattern to two factories. The factory they had come to rely on produced flatware "with no definition" after two attempts, but the factory they considered less capable produced flatware that "will make you cry how beautiful it is" (Abrams).

⁶⁷³ Akrich, "The De-Scripton of Technical Objects," 209.

to execute the design exactly as Lim and Monnet specify it. Based on Choi's account, however, there is more back and forth between the factories and the designer/manufacturer, each one pushing the other's limits. Abrams describes the "conversation" that takes place, and her own push for quality upfront so that she does not have to deal with the repercussions of poor quality later.⁶⁷⁴

Choi educates his clients about how flatware is mass-produced, and negotiates with the designers when modifications are required because their designs are too difficult, complicated, or expensive for mass production. This variety in perspectives of the same design is illustrative of Latour et al.'s concept of a project in motion, represented as points along a curve, where the same idea might be considered realistic or unrealistic (among other adjectives) at various stages of development and by different actors.⁶⁷⁵ While the Canadian designers believed that all design is done in Toronto, that they have more experience, and produce designs that should not be changed by the factories, Choi's comments suggested that this is not always the case. Choi noted that one of the exciting things about working with Gourmet Settings was the sometimes "impractical design of flatware." One of the areas of push back is how much the design will cost to produce, which depends on how labour intensive the pattern is, how much metal is required, and the current price of steel. Choi's description of the flatware connected his focus on manufacturing to the design: "unique and creative...[Gourmet Settings] designers seem to make the products as big and heavy as possible within [the] limitation[s] of cost." The design challenges the factory to stretch the budget to accommodate more metal. When asked what he has learned from Gourmet Settings and vice versa, his answers were the same: "nothing is impossible." In other words, this is not a one-way transfer of final drawings for execution by the factories, but rather both sides challenging the other to go beyond what they normally do.

⁶⁷⁴ Ramsay, "The World Is Flat(ware)."

⁶⁷⁵ Latour, Maugin, and Teil, "A New Method to Trace the Path of Innovations. The 'Socio-Technical Graph,'" 27.

5 Gourmet Settings – Interviewee Biographies

Fig.106



Hildy Abrams, CEO and Owner, Gourmet Settings, Toronto⁶⁷⁶

“There’s a certain process of design...why are we doing something in the first place, why are we doing it in this particular material...who are we trying to talk to, and what’s going to resonate with them in terms of their sensibility, and then how do you make it function at the right price? All those questions need to be answered and to me that’s a process called design. And we do that. One of the things I’ve learned is that it’s a very elusive process.”

Born: Montreal

Languages: English, some French and Hebrew

Lived in: Montreal, Toronto, New York

History and Role with Gourmet Settings: Abrams joined the housewares company Trupco (short for “truly unique product company”) in 1994 as VP of sales and marketing. Trupco was founded in 1990 by partners Moss Kadey and Steve Barnes. In 1997, the company’s name was changed to Gourmet Settings. In 2004, Abrams bought out the two partners with private equity and in 2009, she bought out the private equity to become sole owner.

Abrams is the public face of Gourmet Settings. She worked closely with Helen Kerr and Nigel Smith to develop the Gourmet Settings strategy, brand, and product. At the time of the interview, Abrams oversees the company and the 13 staff who report to her. Her primary responsibilities include building relationships with retailers and suppliers, travelling extensively to visit factories, buyers, and tradeshow. Abrams is focused on how the company operates and on ensuring that the client and customer experience is positive (“what do we need to do to fulfill the orders now”). She is also focused on where they want the company to go (“the business we have to grow into” / “who we need to grow up to be”). Abrams sees the following as key to her role as CEO and to the Gourmet Settings ethos: sensible growth; learning; being positive, patient, reasonable, accountable, responsible and imaginative; listening and discussion; living and doing what you say. She recently hired her daughter to work on growing business with restaurants.

Education: Undergraduate degree (McGill University, Montreal), Masters of Social Work (Wurzeiler School of Social Work, Yeshiva University, New York, 1980).

Work experience: In 1987, Abrams began working with her father and brother for the family business, Murray Sales, a company that sells kitchen gadgets and some flatware out of Montreal. She expanded operations to Toronto, where she opened an office in her basement and focused on sales. She opened accounts with Sears, Bed Bath & Beyond, and Zellers before leaving the family business for Trupco.

Related experience: Abrams’ father, brother, and other family members are business owners, some of them in housewares.

Interests: Reading, business, world affairs...everything.

⁶⁷⁶ Interview with the author, August 2014.

Presidents of Enterprising Organizations. “Hildy Abrams | Part I – Career Path, Blog 1,” April 17, 2014. <http://www.peo.net/hildy-abrams-part-i-career-path-blog-1>.

Fig.107



Helen Kerr, Co-President, Kerr Smith, Toronto⁶⁷⁷

"I've always thought about myself as a problem solver, and never thought of myself as an artist...Part of problem solving...is understanding whole systems. In many ways I think of myself as a systems analyst more than a designer."

Born: Montreal

Languages: English, French

Lived in: Montreal, Toronto

History and Role with Gourmet Settings: When Kerr first started working with Gourmet Settings in 1998, she was known foremost as an industrial designer, but she describes her work as only partly about product design. Much of the Gourmet Settings contract was about understanding the whole system in which the cutlery fit. She helped Abrams to redefine Gourmet Settings through a complete overhaul of packaging and flatware. Abrams first hired her to update the Handmade pattern, but this soon became a much larger project. Kerr and her team at Kerr + Company designed many patterns of flatware, new packaging, retail displays, the New York showroom, and trade show materials. Kerr brought in Hahn Smith and worked closely with Nigel Smith and his team.

Role at Kerr Smith: While Kerr Smith will still take on product design, Kerr's focus has turned to leading complex systems design, insight, and innovation projects. The execution of projects is still a service they offer, but they are better known as systems analysts and design strategists. Kerr identifies herself as a problem-solver first and designer second, never as an artist.

Education: Environmental Studies (University of Waterloo, 1982), Industrial Design (Ontario College of Art and Design, Toronto, 1988)

Work experience: Kerr founded Kerr Keller with her former partner Miles Keller in 1989. She then established Kerr & Co. on her own in 1996. In 2000, Kerr started working with Smith on the Gourmet Settings project, the first of many collaborations. In 2012, Smith became a partner and the company was re-named Kerr Smith. Today Kerr teaches in the Strategic Foresight and Innovation master's program at OCAD U. She holds 40 patents in the United States and Canada.⁶⁷⁸ In 2006, Kerr became Director of K3Source, a company that specialized in sourcing manufacturing around the world.⁶⁷⁹

Related experience and interests: Kerr's father owned a printing company where she was exposed to creative people growing up. Kerr is a serious cook and uses Gourmet Settings cutlery at home.

⁶⁷⁷ Interview with the author, May 2014.

"Helen Kerr," *LinkedIn*, accessed January 19, 2016, <https://ca.linkedin.com/in/helen-kerr-438b158>. "Helen Kerr."

⁶⁷⁸ Grainger, "Helen Kerr."

⁶⁷⁹ Design Exchange, "Canada By Design," 19.

Fig.108



Nigel Smith, Co-President, Kerr Smith, Toronto⁶⁸⁰

"What we do here is much more involved... it's theoretical and practical and written, as much words and planning as it is about formal positioning of things on the page. ...What's the larger strategic imperative, where are we going, who could we talk to and why? But what it should look like is, I guess, the package. It's very important and I love that. It's a very thoughtful process."

Born: Canada

Languages: English, some Italian and French

Lived in: Toronto, London, Milan

History and Role with Gourmet Settings: Smith was brought on to the Gourmet Settings project in 2000 by

Kerr, whose office was downstairs from his. With Allison Hahn, he led a team of graphic designers on branding, packaging, promotional materials, displays, web site, and copywriting.

Role at Kerr Smith: Smith is a graphic designer and strategist, in addition to running the company with Kerr, a job he describes as similar to that of a symphony conductor. He shares management of the design firm, which includes a long list of responsibilities such as: long-term planning, strategy, brand development, marketing and sales, operations, financial management, research and development, human resources, and communications. In terms of graphic design services, he, like Smith, sees their work as much more thoughtful and complex than the "sense of surface" often associated with design. The "look" is the overall package, but the projects go much deeper into strategy and theory. They spend just as much time on words and planning as they do on formal composition.

Education: Photography, graphic design, art history at the Ontario College of Art.

Work experience: Smith was CEO and Creative Director at Hahn Smith Design Inc. from 1995 to 2012. He took over the partnership in 2008. He was an adjunct associate professor in the Harvard University Graduate School of Design from 1996 to 2003. In 2012 he became a partner of Kerr + Smith.

Related experience: Smith's skills in art, design and writing can be attributed to the early influences of his parents. His mother was an art teacher. He remembers many trips to European museums as a child, and being "unusually receptive" with a "keen visual memory." He did well in art and art history classes when other subjects were more challenging. Smith's father was a journalist and writer, which encouraged Smith to pursue writing too.

Interests: Smith's hobbies include photography, sculpture and other artistic explorations.

⁶⁸⁰ Interview with the author, April 2014.

"Nigel Smith," *LinkedIn*, accessed January 19, 2016, <https://ca.linkedin.com/in/nigel-smith-89996316>

Johnny Lim, Senior Designer, Gourmet Settings⁶⁸¹

“Bad design is more apparent than good design. Good design, it’s just natural. You don’t think about it.”

Born: Cebu City, Philippines

Languages: English, Fujian, Visayan, Cebuano

Lived in: Philippines, Canada

History and Role with Gourmet Settings: Lim worked at Kerr + Company for 13 years, where much of his time was devoted to the Gourmet Settings contract. In early 2013, he became an in-house designer at Gourmet Settings where he oversees all product and packaging design. He believes the most important aspect of his job is problem solving, and the most important skill is technical creativity.

Education: Lim studied Industrial Design at the Ontario College of Art (1991), his interest having first been piqued in general art classes at Jarvis Collegiate high school after his family emigrated to Toronto when he was 17 years old. He credits the jewellery classes he took at OCA with sparking his love of small, detailed work, which defines his work in cutlery.

Work experience: Lim has extensive experience in furniture and product design. He worked as an industrial designer at Teknion for three years, as a systems furniture designer at Crinion Associates for one year, as a designer at Kerr and Company for 13 years, in addition to several years working for smaller design firms (IC Design for two years consulting on industrial design & manufacturing, one year at Keith Muller & Associates, and three months as a footwear designer at Robin 360). This variety of experience gives him many points of reference for his current work.

Related experience: As a child, Lim drew cars for fun, but there were no art or design courses available to him until he enrolled at OCA in Toronto. His father owned a general merchandise shop in the Philippines with multiple other partners, and they sold housewares, clothing, and food. Lim’s brother studied architecture in the Philippines. Lim grew up in a Chinese community where they used chopsticks, spoons and forks, but no knives.

Interests: Lim jokes that he tries to avoid making stuff outside of work, though he admits to designing and doing his own renovations. He prefers hobbies like windsurfing and dj-ing.

⁶⁸¹ Advance questionnaire and interview with the author, May 2014.

“Johnny Lim,” *LinkedIn*, accessed January 19, 2016, <https://ca.linkedin.com/in/johnny-lim-b00b3a14>.

Fig.109 Photograph by Jim Ryce. © Monnet Design. Use of this material is by permission of the copyright holder.



Stéphane Monnet, President and Creative Director, Monnet Design⁶⁸²

"[Design is] the act of presenting information in a clear and pleasing way," "something that attracts attention and conveys a message."

Born: Ottawa

Languages: English, French

Lived in: Ottawa, Montreal, Stratford, Toronto, France

History and Role with Gourmet Settings: Monnet worked on the original Gourmet Settings boxes while employed at Hahn Smith from 2006 to 2008.

He later established his own firm, Monnet Design, after being asked by Gourmet Settings if he would take on their packaging and marketing materials in 2009. Today Monnet and his staff continue to design boxes, displays and other promotional materials in their contract work for Gourmet Settings.

Role at Monnet Design: At Monnet Design, Monnet divides his time between managing the company and projects, liaising with clients, and creative direction, art direction, design, and illustration. The most important thing he brings to the job is a unique style that combines visually playful with smart, funny, and elegant.

Education: Graphic Design, Algonquin College (Ottawa, 1999).

Work experience: Monnet opened Monnet Design in February 2009. The firm works with a number of cultural clients, especially in theatre. Prior to this, he worked at Concrete Design Communications, Hahn Smith for two years, GWP Brand Engineering, Pivot Design Communications, and Sychowski Communications.

Related experience: After school, Monnet moved to Montreal where his partner was studying at the National Theatre School. He worked for a year and half at a small agency before they moved to Stratford, Ontario, where he ran a freelance business. Toronto followed and then a year in France. When he returned to Toronto, he was hired by Hahn Smith. He later left to work at Concrete before starting his own business.

Interests: As a teenager, Monnet learned Corel Draw and completed a few co-op placements related to graphic design. Most of his design education has been on the job. Monnet was influenced by his mother's interest in art. His past hobbies have included photography and wire sculpture.

⁶⁸² Advance questionnaire and interview with the author, June 2014.

"Stephane Monnet," *LinkedIn*, accessed January 8, 2015, <https://ca.linkedin.com/in/stephanemonnet>.

Daniel Choi, COO and President, Taeyang Vietnam Co., Ltd.⁶⁸³

“From the manufacturer’s point of view, [design] means ‘easy or hard to realize in mass production,’ or ‘low or high in material and production cost.’ From the supplier’s point of view, [design] means ‘if it’s successful in the marketplace.’ [...] To make a killer design, [the designer] must have the sense of balance between his/her own creative idea and feasibility in mass production.”

Born: Seoul, Korea

Languages: Korean, Chinese, English

Lived in: Seoul, Hong Kong, Beijing, Ho Chi Minh City, Hanoi

History and Role with Gourmet Settings: Choi is referred to as a Gourmet Settings employee, but he is an agent who manages manufacturing for multiple companies like Gourmet Settings. He represents Gourmet Settings in Vietnam and China, liaising with factories, managing production, scheduling, and quality assurance.

Role at Taeyang Vietnam Co., Ltd: Choi’s company manufactures stainless steel flatware for customers like Gourmet Settings. Choi describes his job as managing operations including sales and marketing, production, quality, human resources, and profit and loss. He makes decisions about whether or not to pursue new business opportunities and clients, when to make investments, how to improve problems in efficiency and quality assurance, and how to deal with increased automation in manufacturing. His job requires judgment, decisiveness, and communication. He works most closely with heads of companies and departments including CEOs, and managing and purchasing directors who buy Taeyang’s products. He consults with designers when plans need to be modified for manufacturing.

Education: BA in Chinese and Economics (Hankuk University of Foreign Studies, Seoul)

Work experience: Choi has worked for Taeyang for 10 years and reports to the CEO and Board of Directors. Prior to this position, he was involved in the international trade of steel, stainless steel, and petrochemicals.

⁶⁸³ Email questionnaire completed in Hanoi, Vietnam, August 2014.

Anonymous, Former Buyer, Major retail chain, USA⁶⁸⁴

“Design is what makes Gourmet Settings stand out...other companies have standard shapes, but Hildy takes it that one extra step with the look. They really listen to the buyers and their feedback on customer preference and what’s working in the store. This makes Hildy’s product better and differentiates her from other manufacturers.”

Born: USA

Languages: English

Lived in: USA

History and Role with Gourmet Settings: As a buyer, the interviewee purchased Gourmet Settings for a major retail chain in North America. She worked with Gourmet Settings on creating a new display system, and on design modifications and new pieces for certain patterns. She first met Hildy almost 25 years ago while working at a big department store in Manhattan. They became good friends and continued to meet at Gourmet Settings’ New York showroom during the Tabletop Show.

Role as a retail buyer: As a buyer, she finds products and suppliers for department and discount stores. She deals directly with the suppliers. She provides input on design when possible, and filters customer feedback from sales associates back to suppliers.

Work experience: She spent much of her career as a sales manager for a variety of American department stores. She was a buyer for housewares, especially tabletop products. She has a great deal of knowledge about trends in housewares, merchandising, what sells, and how to sell it on the store floor.

⁶⁸⁴ Interview with the author, July 2014.

Sabrina Chen, Owner and CEO, Spring Lotus Ltd.⁶⁸⁵

“Design means... to create a new and nice looking thing [that] function[s well] and [works] in mass [production] eventually.”

Born: Taiwan

Languages: Mandarin, English

Lived in: Taipei, Taiwan

History with Gourmet Settings: Chen is a sourcing agent and quality assurance consultant. She works with the tableware, home decoration, and lifestyle sectors and helps companies source factories, control quality, and coordinate shipping, delivery, and payment. Chen has been a friend of Abrams' since 2010 and has been observing Gourmet Settings' progress. They have explored working together and may do so in the future.

Role as Sourcing Agent: Chen's company offers services as a sourcing agent and quality assurance consultant in Taipei. She works with what she refers to as “branded customers” in the tableware, home decoration and lifestyle sectors in Canada, the USA, and Europe. Clients include Ralph Lauren and the WWRD Group (Waterford, Wedgwood, Royal Doulton, Royal Albert and Rogaška – WWRD was recently acquired by Fiskars). Sometimes those companies work with well-known designers to co-brand new products, and Chen works directly with those designers, from initial brainstorming all the way through to production. Her firm offers more than just coordination and communication. She provides business expertise and helps clients to structure their businesses, find efficiencies, and navigate global systems.

Education: Executive MBA (National Chengchi University, Taipei)

Work experience: Chen has owned Spring Lotus for 21 years. Before that, she worked in the industry for nine years.

Interests: Chen sees a connection between her hobbies (reading, watching films, hiking, playing piano, fine dining, and cooking) and the industries she serves (lifestyle, tableware, home decoration), because they help her to understand consumer needs.

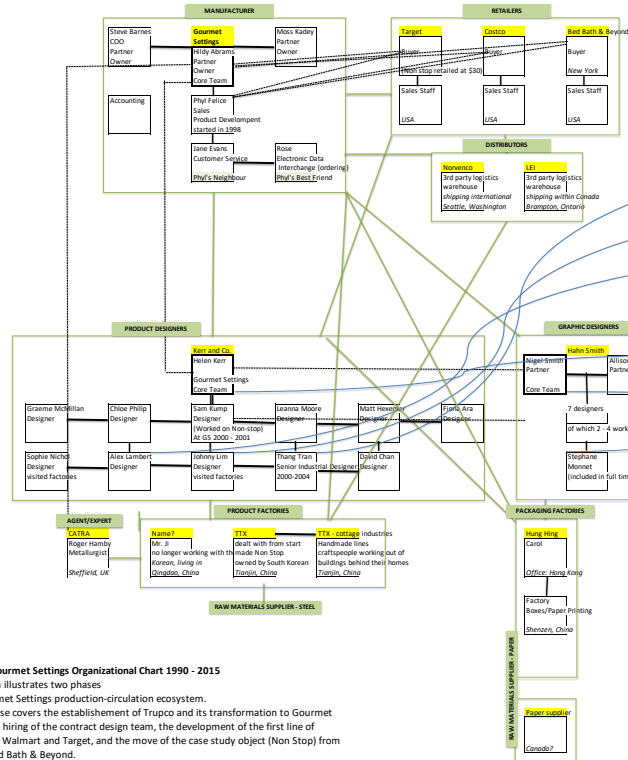
⁶⁸⁵ Advance questionnaire and interview with the author, January 2014.

ORGANIZATIONAL CHART PHASE 1 - 1990 - 2004

1990 - Trupco founded
1997 - Trupco renamed Gourmet Settings
1998/1999 - Non Stop designed

2000/2001 - Non Stop launched at Target

2004 - Abrams buys out company with private equity
2004/5 - Non Stop moves to Bed Bath & Beyond



ORGANIZATIONAL CHART PHASE 2 - 2005 - 2015

2009 - Abrams buys out private equity and becomes sole owner

2014 - Non Stop cousin (Chelsea) is designed to be sold at Costco

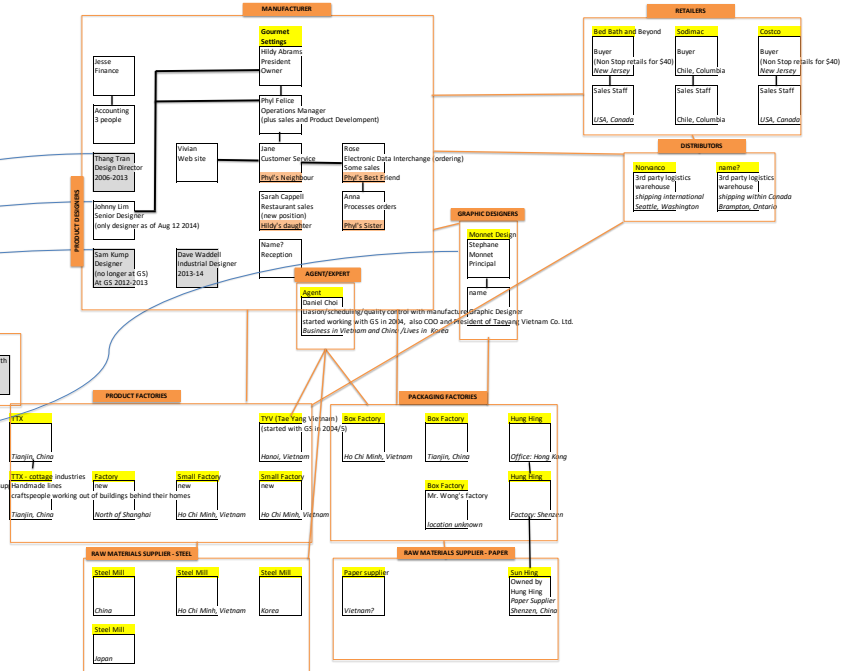


Figure 71 Gourmet Settings Organizational Chart 1990 - 2015

This diagram illustrates two phases of the Gourmet Settings production-circulation ecosystem.

The first phase covers the establishment of Trupco and its transformation to Gourmet Settings, the hiring of the contract design team, the development of the first line of products for Walmart and Target, and the move of the case study object (Non Stop) from Target to Bed Bath & Beyond.

The second phase covers Hildy Abrams becoming sole owner and CEO of Gourmet Settings, and spin offs of the the case study object.

The first phase shows a smaller network and contracted industrial and graphic designers. In the second phase, the two design firms merge and the contract with Gourmet Settings comes to an end. The next generation of designers leaves KerrSmith and goes to work inhouse at Gourmet Settings or through the establishment of a new design firm. More factories and suppliers join the network, and an agent in Asia represents Gourmet Settings in production. Retail relationships also change from Phase 1 to 2.



Figure 72 Non Stop, designed 1999/2000, launched at Target in 2000.

Gourmet Settings. "Non Stop Flatware, Everyday Flatware - Gourmet Settings Flatware." Accessed December 2, 2015. <http://www.gourmetsettings.com/non-stop>.
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Figure 73 Non Stop flatware set purchased at Bed Bath & Beyond in packaging almost identical to the original, 2015.

- home
- products
- place settings
- award winning
- classical
- continental
- everyday
- handmade
- modern
- view all
- new items promo
- serving pieces
- steak knives
- dinnerware **new**
- glassware **new**
- placemats **new**
- deals **new**
- use & care

home : products : place settings : **everyday**

everyday

"Everyday" are contemporary designs, chic and yet casual. These place settings are all exclusively designed with rigorous attention to detail.



beam

(2 reviews)

25% off hostess set



carry on

(8 reviews)

25% off hostess set



cruise

(3 reviews)



hotel



lance matte



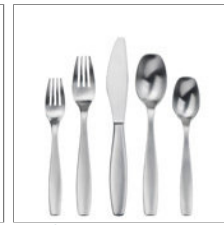
lance polished

(1 reviews)



loft

(8 reviews)



non stop

(8 reviews)

\$10 off - Limited time



strand

(5 reviews)



studio

(1 reviews)



vault

(3 reviews)



windermere

(15 reviews)

25% off hostess set

Figure 74 Everyday collection which includes Non Stop, one of five collections offered by Gourmet Settings.

Gourmet Settings. "Everyday Flatware Patterns - Gourmet Settings Flatware." Accessed December 9, 2015. <http://www.gourmetsettings.com/everyday-flatware>.

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Figure 75 From left: Thang Tran, Helen Kerr, Alex Lambert, and Sam Kump at the Kerr & Co. studio. This photograph has been used in Gourmet Settings and Kerr & Co. promotional materials to represent process and team work.

Gourmet Settings. "Here We Are Now. Brochure." Accessed December 14, 2015. www.gourmetsettings.com/gourmetsettings/content/pdfs/gs_herewearenow.pdf.

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Figure 76 Top: Recent packaging by Monnet Design for Easy, one of the earliest patterns Gourmet Settings designed and sold through Canadian Tire. Left: 8 piece set. Right: 20 piece pulp packaging.

Monnet Design. "Gourmet Settings - Monnet Design." Accessed December 11, 2015. <http://www.monnet.ca/?client=gourmet-settings>. © Monnet Design. Use of this material is by permission of the copyright holder. © Gourmet Settings Inc. Use of this material is by permission of the copyright holder.

Bottom: In this photograph, the Canadian Tire in-house brand (labelled as Trileaf) is packaged in a cardboard box very similar to the original Easy boxes above. Canadian Tire now carries a different Gourmet Settings pattern in stores (not pictured). Photographed in Kingston, Ontario, December, 2015.



Figure 77 This “open stock” display has made the Windermere pattern the best selling line for Gourmet Settings, exclusive to Bed Bath & Beyond. Customers can pick and choose which pieces they wish to purchase. Photographed at Bed Bath & Beyond, New York City, 2014.



Figure 78 Three patterns in the Handmade line, from top left: Avalon, Twist, Treble Clef. These early patterns were among the first that Kerr & Co. worked on., using designs already in production, sourced from a Chinese factory in Tianjin with handwork outsourced to local cottage industries. The Avalon remains Gourmet Settings' best selling pattern.

Gourmet Settings. "Avalon Flatware, Stainless Steel Handmade Flatware - Gourmet Settings Flatware." Accessed December 9, 2015. <http://www.gourmetsettings.com/avalon>; Gourmet Settings. "Twist Flatware, Handmade Flatware - Gourmet Settings Flatware." Accessed December 9, 2015. <http://www.gourmetsettings.com/twist>; Gourmet Settings. "Treble Clef Flatware, Handmade Flatware - Gourmet Settings Flatware." Accessed December 9, 2015. <http://www.gourmetsettings.com/treble-clef>.

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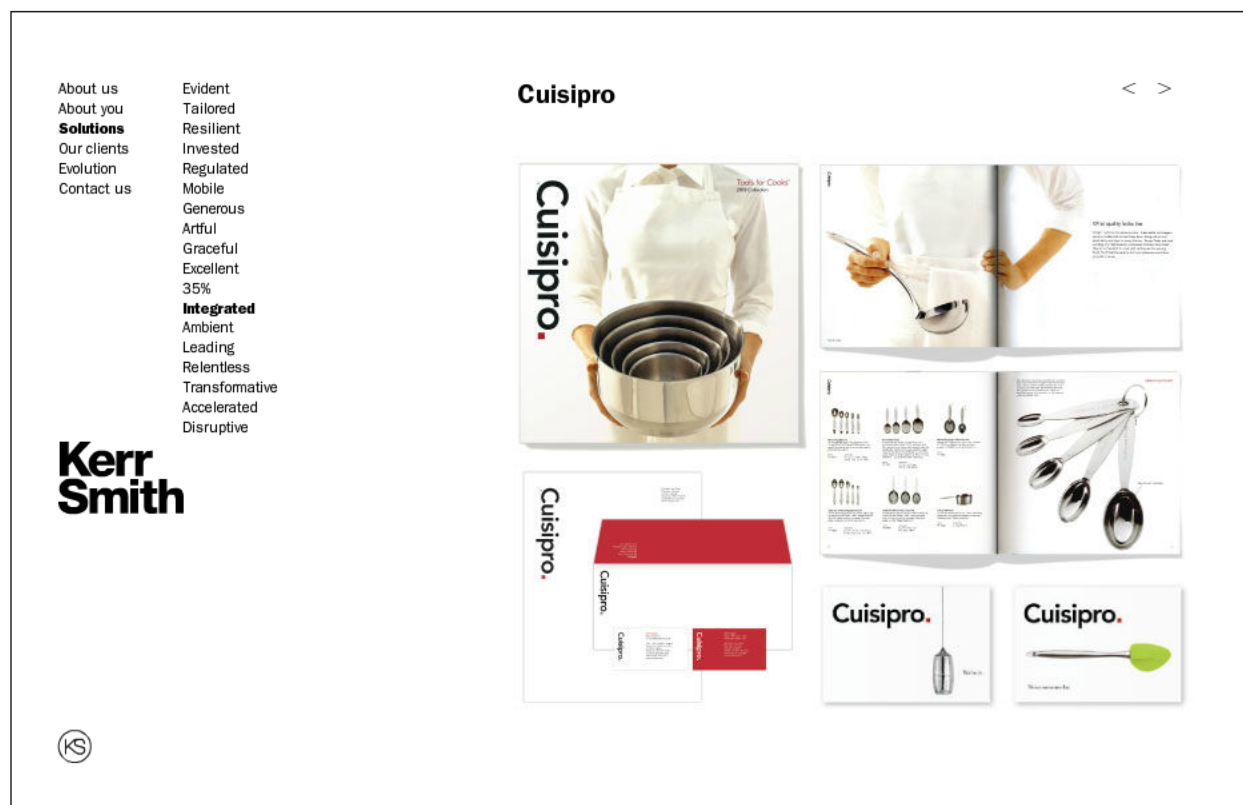


Figure 79 Kerr & Co. designed over 200 objects for Canadian kitchenwares manufacturer Cuisipro, overlapping with the early work done for Gourmet Settings.

KerrSmith Studio. "Cuisipro." Accessed December 11, 2015. <http://kerrsmithdesign.com/#/solutions/integrated/8>
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Figure 80 Original Gourmet Settings boxes before Kerr & Co. and Hahn Smith were hired, photographed at the KerrSmith office, April 15, 2014.



Figure 81 This Easy Settings box shows some of the first packaging designed by Kerr & Co and Hahn Smith with the clear front, and the Get Set brand that was also distributed at Walmart and Target. Photographed at the KerrSmith office, April 15, 2014.

Figure 82 The Soshu flatware was one of the first lines designed by Kerr & Co., which proved too expensive and difficult to make.

Ebay.com. Accessed December 29, 2015.



Figure 83 Sales materials developed by Hahn Smith integrated messages about the design process.

KerrSmith Studio. "Gourmet Settings." Accessed December 11, 2015. <http://kerrsmithdesign.com>
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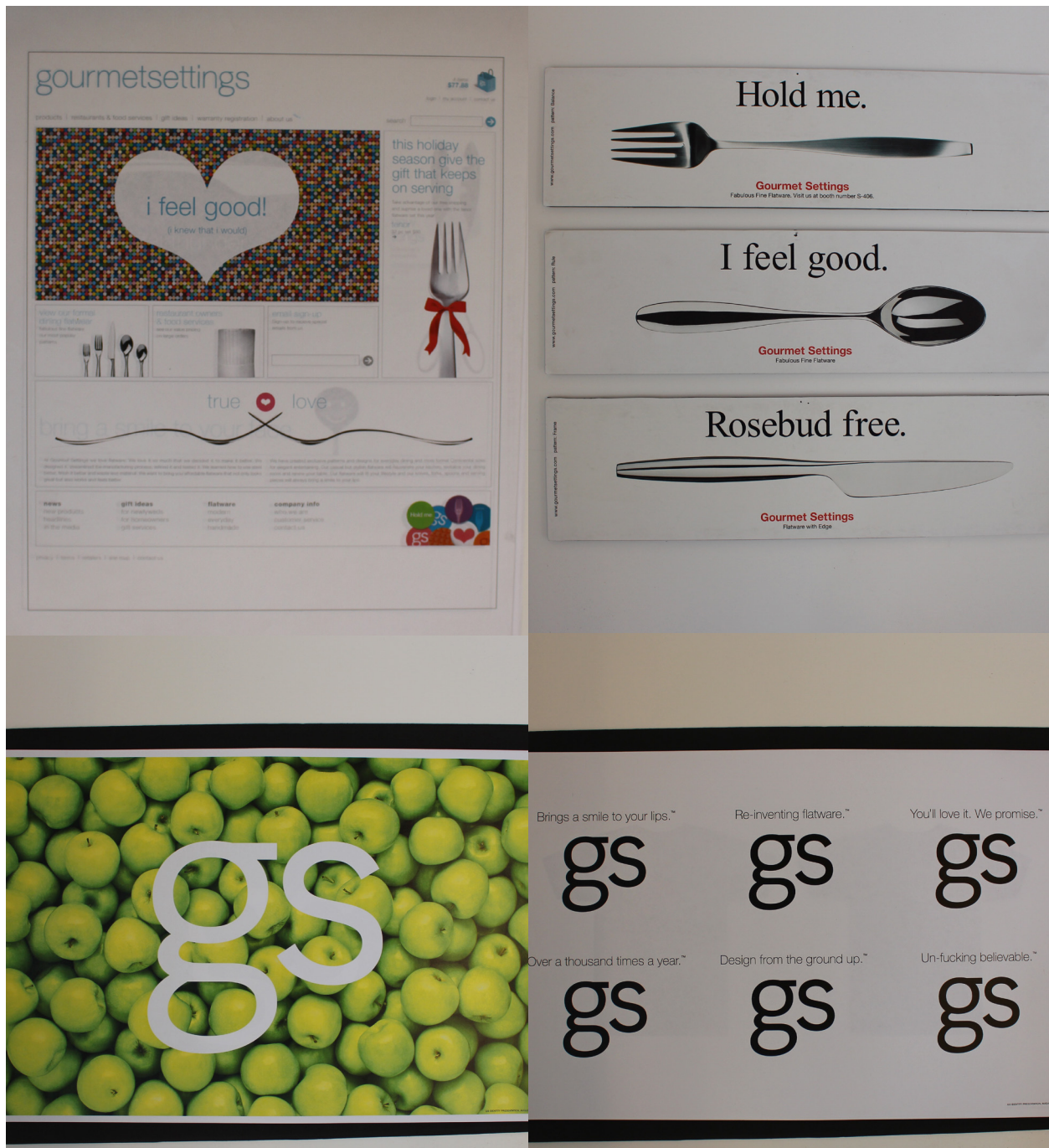


Figure 84 Top: Draft of web page design and trade show signage demonstrating the “cheeky” and “irreverent” tone of Hahn Smith’s work. Photographed at the KerrSmith office, April 15, 2014.

Bottom: Gourmet Settings logo tested on different backgrounds and defined with different draft value statements. Photographed at the KerrSmith office, April 15, 2014.

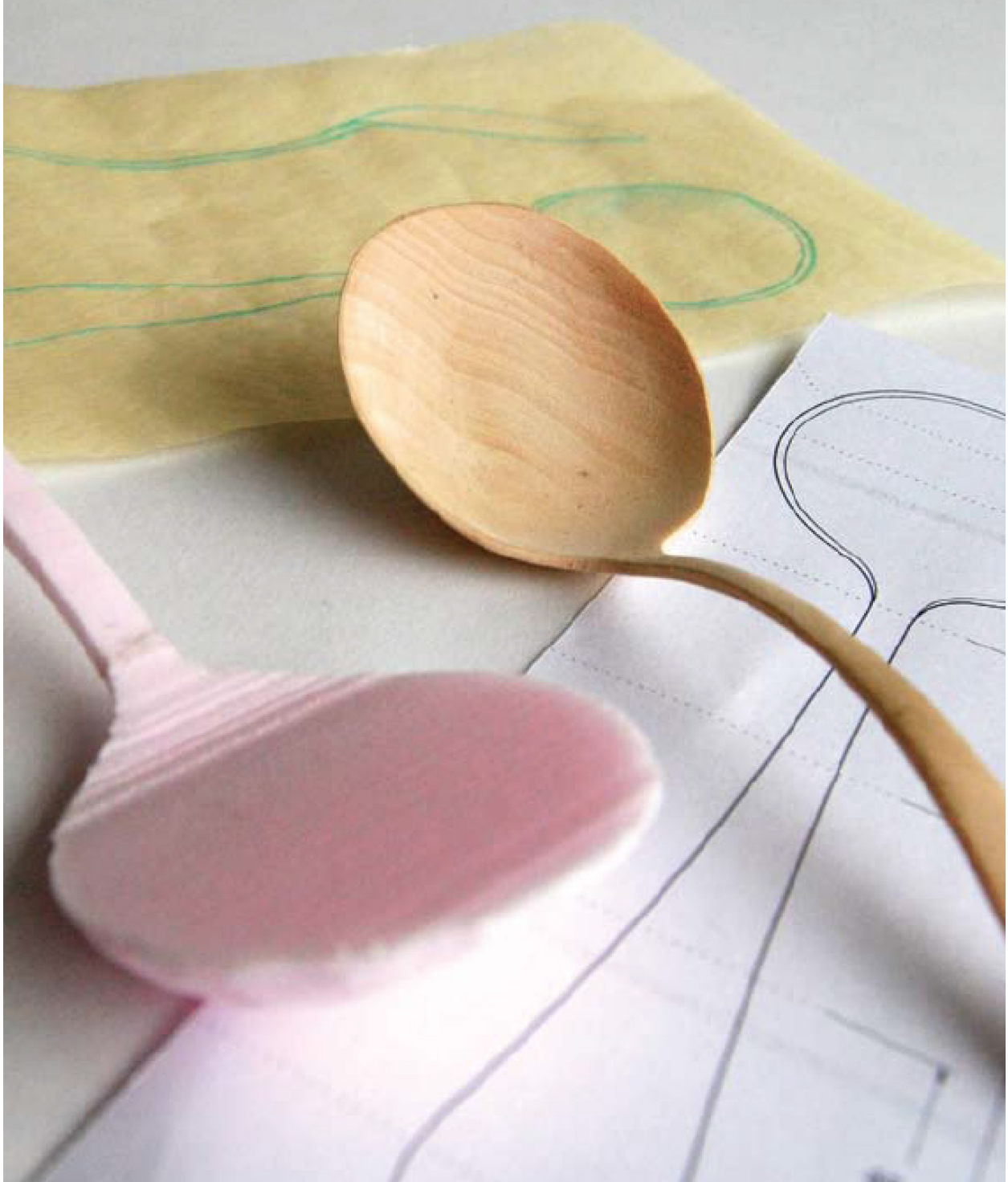


Figure 85 The design process included hand drawings, CAD drawings, and hand-carved foam and wooden models. Each step helped the designers to further refine and test the design.

Gourmet Settings. "The Design Process." Accessed December 14, 2015. <http://www.gourmetsettings.com/design-process>.

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Figure 86 Wooden models of new patterns are shown alongside patterns in production in the New York showroom and used at sales meetings. Photographed at the Gourmet Settings showroom during the New York Tabletop Show, Fall 2013.



Figure 87 Gourmet Settings showroom, photographed during the 2013 Fall Table Top Show, FortyOneMadison, New York City. This space was redesigned three times, this time by Sam Kump in 2012. The room features a central island of drawers of flatware and a display space for table settings and wood models in front of a wall showcasing packaged flatware. Felt light shades, wood finishes, and bright seating areas make this a much warmer space than the other showrooms, and reflects the company's welcoming and personal approach. Non Stop appears in the boxes hanging on the wall and in the display drawers below.

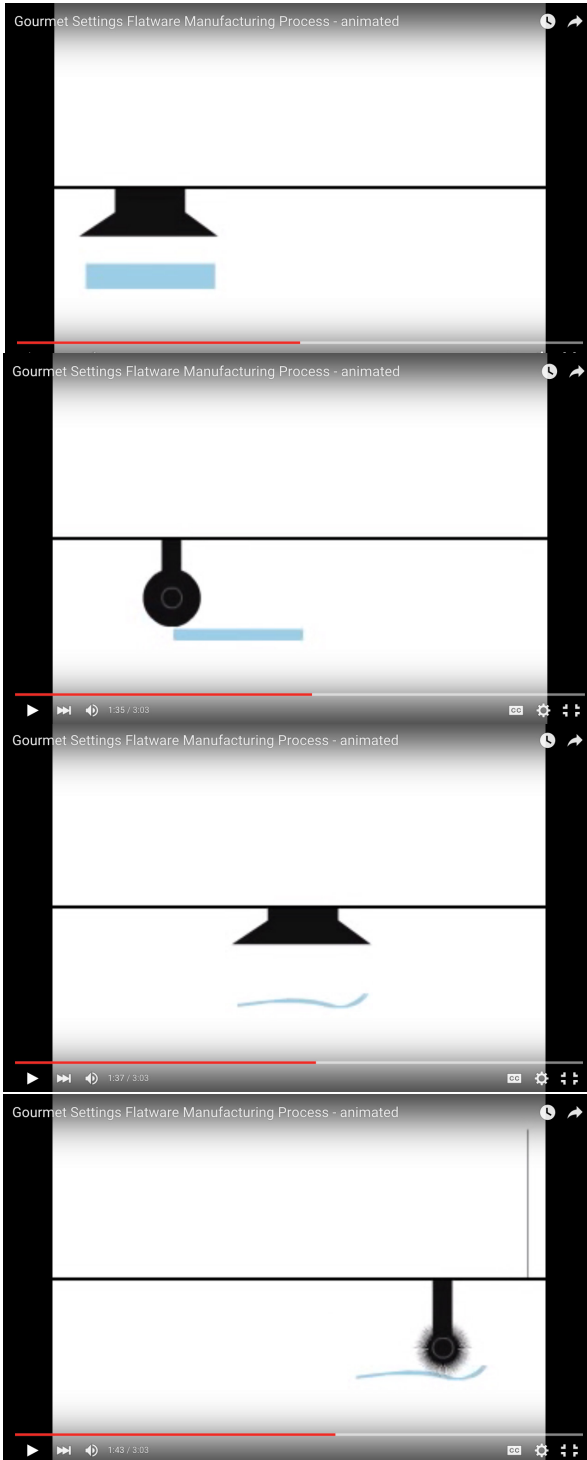


Figure 88 Phases of manufacturing flatware, from top: blanks are cut from stainless steel sheets; the functional ends of the cutlery are flattened; the ends are stamped to create functional shapes; the handle is shaped; the flatware is polished.

Left: Gourmet Settings Flatware Manufacturing Process - Animated, 2010. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m-FXzlyoAL60>.

Right: Gourmet Settings. Gourmet Settings Flatware, 2009. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aYk1HAVz7V0>.

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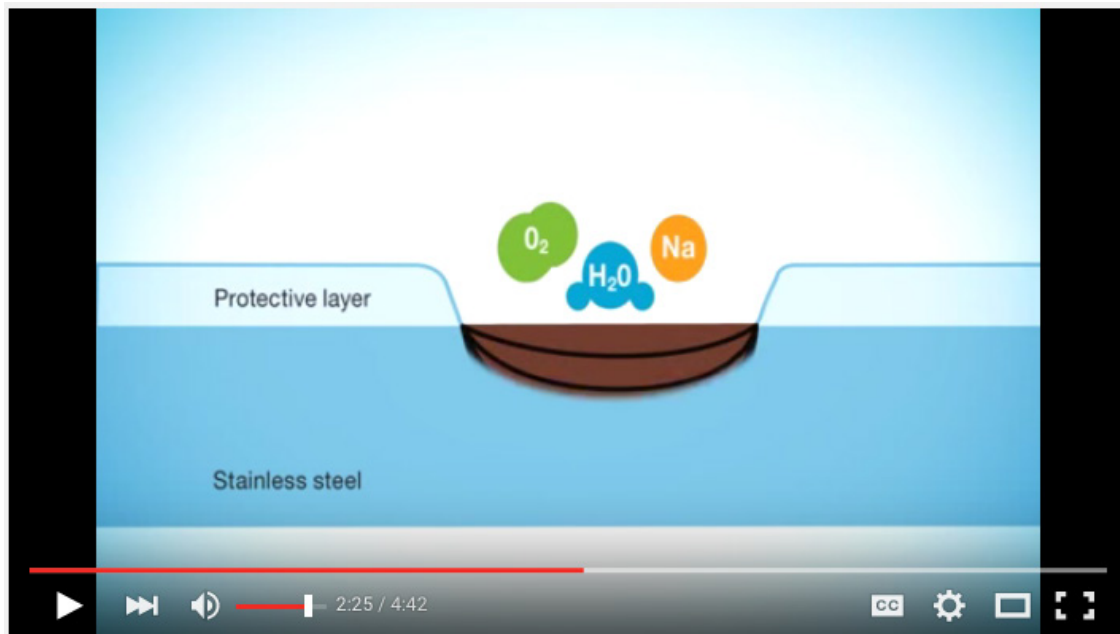


Figure 89 Gourmet Settings explains the chemistry of rust to customers.

Gourmet Settings. Gourmet Settings Flatware, 2009. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aYk1HAVz7V0>.

Figure 90 Roger Hamby from CATRA (Sheffield, England), helped Gourmet Settings and the factories they work with to establish best practices regarding raw materials and production processes.

Gourmet Settings. Gourmet Settings Flatware, 2009. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aYk1HAVz7V0>.
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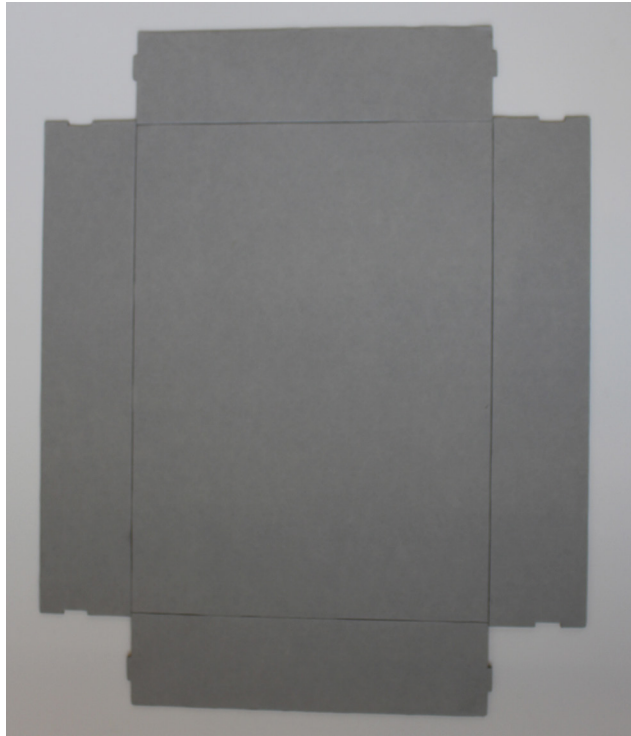


Figure 91 Top: The “set-up” box is first cut in cardboard and a separate print of the graphics is glued on. Photographed at the KerrSmith office, April 15, 2014.
Bottom: Mock-ups printed in-house. Photographed at the KerrSmith office, April 15, 2014.



Figure 92 Non Stop set unpacked to reveal back of the tray and flatware beneath. Purchased at Bed Bath & Beyond, photographed in 2016.



Figure 93 These two patterns were launched at Target along with Non Stop. Patterns were sub-branded under “Jet Settings” and “Get Set,” a label that was also used on the Canadian Tire pattern.

Top: Carry On. Photographed at the KerrSmith office, April 15, 2014.

Bottom: Mile High.

Ebay.com. Accessed January 9, 2016.



Figure 94 The Gourmet Settings word mark and metal content engraved on the back of Non Stop. Purchased at Bed Bath & Beyond, photographed in 2016.



Figure 95 Examples of the “found-its” hiding on and inside the boxes, a demonstration of the level of detail and connection to consumers the team felt was important. Photographed at the Kerr Smith office, April 15, 2014.



Figure 96 These three patterns were among the eight that were launched at Walmart in 2000, just before Non Stop was launched at Target.

Top: Loft.

Bottom: Metro and Oxford.

Gourmet Settings. "Loft Flatware, Everyday Flatware - Gourmet Settings Flatware." Accessed December 9, 2015. <http://www.gourmetsettings.com/loft>; Gourmet Settings. "Metro Flatware, Modern Flatware - Gourmet Settings Flatware." Accessed December 9, 2015. <http://www.gourmetsettings.com/metro>; Gourmet Settings. "Oxford Flatware, Classical Flatware - Gourmet Settings Flatware." Accessed December 9, 2015. <http://www.gourmetsettings.com/oxford>.

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Figure 97 Bed Bath & Beyond, New York City, photographed October 17, 2013. Bed Bath & Beyond is the only retailer to show flatware in its “natural environment” by removing it from its packaging. Here, Non Stop is displayed with other flatware in the same price range. The red Gourmet Settings boxes are seen stacked on the shelves below. The original packaging still stands out in comparison to the competition.



Figure 98 Monnet Design designed this box for Non Stop (original pattern) in a 65-piece set created especially for Costco.

Monnet Design. "Gourmet Settings – Packaging for Costco." Accessed December 11, 2015. <http://www.monnet.ca/?project=gs-flatware-service-for-8>.

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Figure 99 Packaging project for Costco, demonstrating how the standard shipping pallet can be turned into a point of purchase display. Gourmet Settings, Kerr & Co., and Hahn Smith won Gold at the 2007 IDEA awards for this project.

Jana, Reena, and Michelle Cham Yu. "Online Extra: Case Study: Costco." BloombergView, June 29, 2007. <http://www.bloomberg.com/bw/stories/2007-07-29/online-extra-case-study-costco>.

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Figure 100 Photograph by a customer showing rust marks and scratches on Non Stop flatware. Published with a customer review on Amazon.com.

Amazonian. "Gourmet Settings Non Stop 20-Piece Flatware Set, Service for 4. Too Much Rust for the Cost.," August 12, 2015. https://www.amazon.com/Gourmet-Settings-20-Piece-Flatware-Service/dp/B000063D4W/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1451712746&sr=8-1&keywords=gourmet+settings+non+stop.



Figure 101 Johnny Lim demonstrates the changes he made to the Non Stop pattern (original pattern on the left, updated pattern on the right). The revised version will be sold at Costco. The wooden models represent the updated pattern. Photographed at Gourmet Settings, Richmond Hill, May 27, 2014.



Figure 102 Top: The original Non Stop pattern.

Bottom left: The Cruise pattern is the “shinier” cousin of Non Stop., exactly the same form but with a polished finish.

Bottom right: The Chelsea is the updated Non Stop pattern with a polished finish.

Gourmet Settings. “Non Stop Flatware, Everyday Flatware - Gourmet Settings Flatware.” Accessed December 2, 2015. <http://www.gourmetsettings.com/non-stop>; Gourmet Settings. “Cruise Flatware, Everyday Flatware - Gourmet Settings Flatware.” Accessed December 2, 2015. <http://www.gourmetsettings.com/cruise>; Gourmet Settings. “Chelsea Flatware, Continental Flatware - Gourmet Settings Flatware.” Accessed December 2, 2015. <http://www.gourmetsettings.com/chelsea>.

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Figure 103 The Non Stop pattern is extended through three serving utensils and steak knives.

Gourmet Settings. "Non Stop Serving Fork." Accessed December 12, 2015. www.gourmetsettings.com/nonstop-servingfork.jpg; Gourmet Settings. "Non Stop Serving Spoon." Accessed December 12, 2015. www.gourmetsettings.com/nonstop servingspoon36-620_full.jpg; Gourmet Settings. "Non Stop Slotted Spoon." Accessed December 12, 2015. www.gourmetsettings.com/nonstop slottedspoon.jpg.

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villa65design

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69 likes

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villa65design Happy Sunday! Holidays almost over... Back to work soon! Thanks to my sister wannabe "chefEM" who made poached eggs for us this morning. #sundaymorning #breakfast #gourmetsettings #villa65loves



ramiro0110
Pearland, Texas

Follow

26 likes

7w

ramiro0110 Zuppa Toscana!!! Olive Garden has nothing on me... 🤤🤤🤤🤤 #zuppatoscana #soup #delicious #dinner #kale #breadsticks #gourmetsettings #ralphlauren

la_mariposa_lucy Omg!! I want to make this soup!! You need to make it again for the Martinez's

atouchhofdesign 🍷

Figure 104 "Happy Sunday!" with Gourmet Settings flatware by @villa65design on Instagram in Birmingham/Dubai, September 20, 2015. <https://www.instagram.com/p/73M9OZzNnD/>
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Figure 105 "Zuppa Toscana" with Gourmet Settings flatware by @ramsaave on Instagram in Pearland, Texas, October 22, 2016. <https://www.instagram.com/p/BL4x5eElnCk/>
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Chapter 8 – Distributed Authorship in the Mellow Walk and Gourmet Settings Case Studies

The Vanessa boots and Non Stop flatware case studies offer evidence of networks of design practice that span continents and generations, and of types of design work not typically represented in accounts of design practice. Looking closely at the production, circulation, and consumption of these two everyday, mass-produced goods reveals a global division of design labour. My case studies demonstrate that design practice is more accurately discussed as distributed authorship rather than the work of individuals. Building on the criteria of design and creative activity presented in Chapters 2 and 4, I propose that there are different degrees of design contributions apparent in the work of retailers and end-users, just as much as in the work of producers. Furthermore, within manufacturing, the division of labour premised on the separation of cognitive and manual labour is blurred. Design is still very much tied to practices of making and craft continues to play a valued role in mass production. Nevertheless, manufacturers and their employees uphold long-standing perceptions of the division of labour, designers, and design practices, and these limit the recognition of creativity in certain actors. In this chapter, I employ concepts from Actor Network Theory (ANT) to see beyond these hierarchies in design.

In the following analysis, I identify the less visible forms of design work, often in unexpected places. To do this, I use criteria for design, design thinking, and creativity established by practitioners and academics (outlined in Chapter 4), but I also argue that other forms of design activity exist in making and consuming, which fall outside of the traditionally conceived intellectual work of design. Computer scientist Herbert Simon's definition of a designer (anyone who creates and undertakes plans to improve a situation⁶⁸⁶) and design critic Victor Papanek's belief that "all men are designers"⁶⁸⁷ open up the discussion to those who are not trained or officially acknowledged as designers. However, the differentiation between professional and amateur is too simple. Studies of creativity, defined as creating something tangible or intangible that is both new (original) and useful ("task appropriate"),⁶⁸⁸ go further with

⁶⁸⁶ Simon, H. A. "The Science of Design: Creating the Artificial." In *The Sciences of the Artificial*. 111-139. Originally published 1969. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1996.

⁶⁸⁷ Papanek, *Design for the Real World*, 3.

⁶⁸⁸ Reiter-Palmon, Beghetto, and Kaufman, J.C., "Looking at Creativity through a Business-Psychology-Education (BPE) Lens: The Challenge and Benefits of Listening to Each Other," 12.

'levels' of creativity dependent on context.⁶⁸⁹ This is beneficial to my project because case study actors exhibited varying degrees of impact on design.

I therefore propose four degrees of design activity in the discussions below of production, circulation, and consumption. The first degree is closest to 'craft' in the traditional sense that the actor owns the means of production and both conceives of and creates the entire object. However, I did not observe this in the case studies.⁶⁹⁰ The second is 'sole authorship,' based on traditional definitions of design, in which one person conceives of the product and delegates execution to others. The third is 'active design:' the actors actively shape design through creative problem solving that affects form, manufacture, use, and representation (meaning). These are the "actants" in ANT who "shift actions."⁶⁹¹ The fourth category is 'passive design,' in which actors indirectly shape design by providing the allowances and constraints (e.g. conventions, regulations, tools and technologies, budgets), conditions that facilitate or limit the existence of the case study objects and that are often pre-determined before design begins.

1 Creative Production

Using data from my case studies, I show that the work of design is distributed across actors within production and can be understood from four different perspectives. I begin with my own observations of human and non-human actors and the variety of ways that they contributed to design. I then look at how the actors themselves perceived design and creativity in their own roles and in those of their peers, and how relations of production served to bias their views. I then turn to the case study objects and how the work of design can be found in the interactions between human and non-human actors by examining changes in the digital and material evidence of the products in development. Throughout, I use concepts of Actor Network Theory (ANT) to explain how design is inscribed in the object and re-inscribed by other actors. I conclude Creative Production with an examination of the separation of head and hand work to illustrate that, contrary to traditional definitions of the division of labour, design and craft are in fact intertwined across manufacturing.

1.1 Degrees of Design Activity

Based on materials published by the two manufacturers, this project could easily reiterate established understandings of design as sole authorship. Indeed, the traditional role of

⁶⁸⁹ "Creative Cognition in Design II: Creative Strategies" Chapter 5 in Cross, *Designerly Ways of Knowing*; Tan, "Creativity in Cross-Disciplinary Research," 73.

⁶⁹⁰ For an example that illustrates the challenges of designing and manufacturing a consumer good from scratch in today's economy, see Thwaites, *The Toaster Project*.

⁶⁹¹ Akrich and Latour, "A Summary of a Convenient Vocabulary for the Semiotics of Human and Nonhuman Assemblies," 259.

the designer is present in both case studies, particularly in the corporate narratives of Mellow Walk and Gourmet Settings—the creative vision originates with a few for others to carry out. The Gourmet Settings designers insist that design happens in Toronto only, that their drawings are followed precisely in the factories in Asia, and that they alone plan how the product is packaged, shipped, and presented in stores around the world. At Mellow Walk, Nelson Silva, as Footwear Design Director, generates images that are translated to patterns that delegate actions to others. Silva provides instruction in person as the samples are made, and continues to organize production indirectly through the pattern. Manuel Boita, who works as Sole Layer in the Lasting department at Mellow Walk, supports this perspective from the factory floor. Boita explained that he does not contribute to design—he is an executor, not a creator, and someone else hands him the design to complete. This logic separates everyone but the designer from the thinking behind the product, and this division arguably exists throughout production, circulation, and consumption. All actors are given a version of the design to ‘execute’ in reaction to the designer’s script, whether their role is to make, sell, buy, use, etc. In this scenario, actors take direction and enable the designer to achieve their vision.

In what I refer to as ‘passive’ design, actors “permit” or “prescribe” certain activities for other actors, facilitating or limiting their ability to design.⁶⁹² Networks of non-human actors clearly guide the design of both the Vanessas and Non Stop. Examples include the simple plastic and cardboard templates that dictate Silva’s pattern lines with shapes specific to shoes. These forms, some of which he received at Ars Sutoria in Milan, and which represent a shared understanding of ergonomics built up over millennia, guide his hand and permit him to draw patterns quickly and with confidence that they will fit the human foot. These tools are so ingrained in Silva’s practice that the curves are now second nature to him and he can reproduce them freehand. Materials too play a defining role in design for both Mellow Walk and Gourmet Settings, leather and stainless steel becoming measures of ‘quality.’ Materials inform processes and elicit specific reactions from other actors. Mellow Walk factory workers must respond to the stretch and thickness of the leather in order to use the hide effectively and avoid imperfections in the shoe. In turn, the give of the leather compensates for human-made gaps between the pattern and the last, creating a smoother looking shoe. At Gourmet Settings, the limitations of stainless steel led the team to spend considerable time researching and developing strict recipes and guidelines to control and maximize the material’s allowances. Inconsistencies in the metal had significant impact on the reception of the final product.

⁶⁹² Akrich and Latour, “A Summary of a Convenient Vocabulary for the Semiotics of Human and Nonhuman Assemblies.”

Just as the designers considered how to “enroll” materials and tools, they also considered how to maximize human labour to achieve their vision.⁶⁹³ Silva took into account constraints posed by workers’ skills as well as inevitable variances in production due to human and machine error. Gourmet Settings designers travelled to Asia to study flatware factories and consequently adjusted patterns to accommodate what was realistic within a certain price point. By demonstrating to designer Helen Kerr that certain tasks take more time, the Chinese factory workers helped her to revise the design to be simpler and less costly, meeting requirements for affordable, minimalist patterns. Craft historian Glenn Adamson writes that, “Whenever artists depend on the hands of others to make their work, those hands become part of the meaning of that work, like it or not, as surely as the specific resistances of wood or stone or clay limit the possible forms of a carving.”⁶⁹⁴ Adamson suggests here that it is both the author and supporting makers who generate meaning, but he also equates human ability to the potential inherent in materials, incapable of independent thought, subject to and limiting the artist’s plans. This perspective moves beyond factory workers as simple machine operators or ‘cogs in the wheel,’ but acknowledges only limited agency for those human actors.

Negative inputs also inform the design in a passive but constructive way. In response to customers being rough with packaging, Kerr and graphic designer Nigel Smith designed sturdier containers with clear covers to prevent shoppers from opening and ruining boxes in the store, a decision that changed how the entire industry presented flatware. It was the limitations of Costco’s floorplan and lack of sales staff that led to the innovative packaging of large sets within the dimensions of the globally standardized shipping container and pallet, a strategy that won a prestigious gold IDSA award in 2007.⁶⁹⁵ In both case studies, retailers rejected certain models and customers complained about quality and style. Each of these events forced the producers to re-evaluate and improve design.

‘Active design’ is visible in demonstrations of independent thought and original, creative problem solving by non-designers using concepts from studies of design thinking and creativity. To begin, different degrees of creativity are distinguishable among factory workers. The first is “mini-c” creativity in the sense that their jobs require choices to be made repeatedly.⁶⁹⁶ Carol Padda, in her role as Supervisor of Cutting at Mellow Walk, demonstrates “creativity for self-transformation and informal learning” as she deals with each unique hide, becoming faster and

⁶⁹³ Callon, “Some Elements of a Sociology of Translation. Domestication of the Scallops and the Fishermen of St. Brieuc Bay.”

⁶⁹⁴ Adamson, *The Invention of Craft*, 43.

⁶⁹⁵ HFN Mag, “Gourmet Settings Nabs Design Award.”

⁶⁹⁶ Tan, “Creativity in Cross-Disciplinary Research.”

more precise with decisions.⁶⁹⁷ The factory workers also engage in “little-c” creativity as they improve processes, making tasks easier, faster, or less wasteful, and sometimes they improve the pattern, all of which affect product design. As sample makers, Supervisor of Fitting, Teresa Torres and sewing machine operator, Arminda Romeiro, see their biggest opportunity for input and problem solving when working on new styles, when they can suggest how to alter the pattern. This kind of incremental, “little-c” creativity is more formal in that others have to agree on their decisions and they have impact within Mellow Walk, contributing to overall efficiency and product quality, and sometimes to product appearance.⁶⁹⁸

“Little” and “professional-c” creativity are seen at the level of management and the institution’s role within its ecosystem. At Mellow Walk, Silva and Plant Manager Diana Sullivan make bigger scale, more radical decisions like improving overall operations, selecting equipment and material suppliers, expanding the premises, and defining the brand and new product concepts. These are “little-c” in that they make a difference within the context of Mellow Walk but they are also “professional-c” (“domain relevant innovation and invention”) in the sense that their leadership at one of the few Canadian shoe manufacturers is creating a business model for others to learn from.⁶⁹⁹ They are establishing new supply chains, relationships, and modes of working, in addition to creating innovative products in the safety shoe market. At Gourmet Settings, Daniel Choi, the agent and factory COO in Vietnam, does not see his work as creative, but believes he is responsible for making serious decisions and solving important problems, such as which clients to take on, which investments to make, and how to improve efficiency and quality assurance. For CEO and owner, Hildy Abrams, creativity is a balance between taking risks and being practical in the context of industry. Kerr’s and Abrams’ early work in applying a holistic design strategy to the brand and systems of production and distribution, as well as their success in winning awards and getting Canadian-designed products into multinational stores, could also be considered “professional-c” because they helped to lead the way for other Canadian designers and manufacturers to enter the global market. They changed industry and consumer expectations for affordable housewares.

Although acts of creativity by non-designers are evident in my analyses of the case studies, their contributions to design are not recognized by other actors. They are often unsolicited by the manufacturer and the actors are not compensated for their design work. Their creative labour is usually invisible to those who are several steps removed, and is generally

⁶⁹⁷ Tan, 73.

⁶⁹⁸ Tan, 73.

⁶⁹⁹ Tan, 73.

ignored or re-labelled in official narratives of innovation.⁷⁰⁰ This makes it more difficult to identify, complicated by the fact that the words ‘creativity’ and ‘design’ are loaded with meanings reflective of relationships of production. Definitions of creative and design processes (see Chapter 4) are almost interchangeable, with nearly identical problem solving steps, but the terms are not used equally in practice. I found that creativity is more readily attributed to non-designers as a concept that easily crosses professional boundaries. In my case studies, people in lower positions were ready to recognize their own work as creative, but less inclined to identify it as design in deference to the designer. At the same time, there is a caché associated with being creative, and managers were eager to claim creativity in their own roles.⁷⁰¹ This corresponds to the growing appreciation of design as a form of business strategy, which places design at the level of senior decision makers. Creativity is therefore a useful term in identifying design activity but is also biased by official hierarchies in production, as seen below.

1.2 Design Activity as Seen by the Actors

Hierarchies in the division of labour and creative classes appear as actors in the case studies. They are explicit in official company structures, but also present in culturally held views of the designer as a creative thinker above makers. There is an overall impression that design comes from the top, but also a lack of understanding of what design entails – most interviewees could not explain what Silva does beyond using the words “design” and “style” (there was a general awareness of his sketches, perhaps because they are sometimes visible from the factory floor, but little knowledge of what goes into the sketches or how they evolve into patterns).⁷⁰² The Mellow Walk web site indicates that design is the responsibility of “leadership.” Andrew Violi is officially ‘President’ but describes himself as “footwear product developer” in the

⁷⁰⁰ Akrich, Callon, and Latour, “The Key to Success in Innovation Part 1: The Art of Interesement,” 194.

⁷⁰¹ Managers I interviewed prefer to associate themselves with design rather than with the ‘numbers people’ (accountants, buyers, people who know how to use spreadsheets).

⁷⁰² This ambiguity about what design means reflects the fact that no matter where they are in the corporate or creative hierarchy, actors are most aware of the design phases with which they are most closely associated. Interviewees did not mention the majority of tasks Silva listed for himself (design, pattern technician, sourcing, quality control, sample coordination, brand direction, research, and development) and could not explain what Silva does beyond using the words “design” and “style,” and describing how they work with him. There was a general awareness of his sketches, perhaps because they are sometimes visible from the factory floor, but there seemed to be little knowledge of what goes into the sketches, or how they evolve into patterns (Sullivan described Silva’s process: “So first thing is obviously, Silva doing his idea. He will do some pictures”). Managers were more specific about Silva’s role but demonstrated knowledge of only a portion of his duties. Violi highlighted two of Silva’s essential responsibilities as designer and pattern technician (someone who can sketch and identify materials is a “designer” versus someone who can produce technical drawings and patterns who is a “pattern technician,” but indicated that Silva offered both). Sullivan credits Silva with the ideas (i.e. the appearance of the shoe) and managing the first trials process, but she credits the factory workers with the knowledge required to actually make the shoes.

company blog, and Silva is positioned as part of management, the only employee to be grouped with the three family owners, while the Plant Manager is excluded.⁷⁰³ Other stereotypes reinforce a classification of roles. Several of the Mellow Walk factory workers believe that Canadians would never dream of their children becoming shoemakers, pointing to the undesirability of factory work and one of the reasons why it is difficult for Mellow Walk to fill manufacturing jobs. In contrast, in the fashion world, shoe designer is a highly respected title and Violi is proud to have input into this role.⁷⁰⁴

These types of understandings reflect relations of power, and influence how actors view themselves and others. The two lead designers, Silva and Kerr, embrace the idea of distributed authorship, but this does not mean that other actors are willing to accept any role in design or acknowledge it in their peers. Julier's critique of design historians – that they identify “designeriness” based on cultural capital – applies to other actors as well.⁷⁰⁵ Traditional characteristics of the designer impede the identification of design activity elsewhere: pay, title, and education reinforce classifications of roles in practice.⁷⁰⁶ There is a division between those who have formal training and those who learn on the job, even though apprenticeship is common in manufacturing.

It is remarkable how clearly the actors can be seen to fit urbanist Richard Florida's creative class system, where the working class typically has less autonomy and flexibility and the designers represent the “super creative core,” a group “whose economic function is to create new ideas, new technology and/or new creative content.”⁷⁰⁷ Silva and Kerr's training and job descriptions are explicitly about design and creativity, whereas the line workers' positions are explicitly about making, quality, repetition, and speed. As an in-house designer, Silva has a flexible schedule, including travel and working from home. His salary is higher than most of the

⁷⁰³ Mellow Walk, “About Our Team.”

⁷⁰⁴ According to Boita, in Portugal, shoemakers are associated with an antiquated understanding of cobblers, and the expression, “a shoemaker could have done that,” refers to a job poorly done, though Boita is quick to defend the precision and care required to be a shoemaker. Boita provided this anecdote about the unique skills required to make one shoe and then mirror it precisely, by eye and by hand: Fonseca, a gentleman from Boita's town, was having a building made. When he ran into Boita, he told him this story: One day, he showed up to the building site and the bricklayers were putting up a wall. The wall was crooked so Fonseca told them to stop. The person building the wall accused Fonseca of not understanding construction: “you're like a shoemaker, you don't know about these things.” Fonseca replied, “you guys wish you were shoemakers. They make two identical shoes without using any tools like a level. You have all these devices and you still make a totally crooked wall.”

⁷⁰⁵ Julier, *The Culture of Design*, 40.

⁷⁰⁶ Of everyone's training, Silva's course in shoe pattern making at the Ars Sutoria in Milan, and Boita's course in quality control in Portugal, and Padda's training on the CAD cutting machine, are the most directly relevant to their jobs, although Boita can only apply a fraction of his knowledge in his current position.

⁷⁰⁷ Florida, *The Rise of the Creative Class*, 8.

employees and he is paid and recognized for creating new ideas. For Kerr, problem solving is the defining element of her job; it is what she excels at and why people hire her.

At both Mellow Walk and Gourmet Settings, the division of labour encourages creativity at the top while making it more difficult at the bottom. For managers and designers like Violi, Silva, Abrams, and Kerr, the full range of creative activity from free association to focused knowledge generation is built into their roles. For example, “divergent production” occurs when they conduct research or travel for inspiration, exposing themselves to new ideas and enabling them to think more broadly; “convergent production” is seen in processes of integration, as they absorb new influences and take into account numerous factors based on existing constraints imposed by retailers and manufacturing; and “emergent production” is evident as they transform that knowledge into new product concepts.⁷⁰⁸ However, on the factory line at Mellow Walk, there is less opportunity for divergent or other forms of creative thinking – the majority of the staff is responding to equipment and materials that are more or less unchanging and to a pattern that has largely been determined before they see it. They are confined by daily schedules documented by punch cards with regimented start, finish, and break times, and by production goals monitored on pacer boards, all of which limit them to their work stations without much interaction with colleagues. The jobs require such focus that there is little time for daydreaming let alone research or brainstorming. The most common source of inspiration for creative thinking on the factory floor appears to be previous experience, like when Torres combined her prior knowledge making cowboy boots at another factory with the process of making Vanessa samples to help Silva solve the curling strap problem.

However, both of my case studies illustrate that designers are not truly at the top of the creative class hierarchy, but instead are positioned in the middle, responding to different forms of creativity enacted by senior management and makers, and depending on their managers for permission to be creative. Abrams’ creativity extends to deciding when to encourage creativity in others (e.g. giving Senior Designer Johnny Lim permission to develop his new cutlery proposal). Similarly, Violi has power over whether Silva’s concepts are developed, while Silva and Sullivan choose when to solicit and listen to opinions from factory staff.

The diversity in responsibility, power, and identity among those officially recognized as ‘designer’ is particularly evident in the Non Stop case study.⁷⁰⁹ Gourmet Settings publicizes individual designers, but in practice it is a fluid role that involves teams, multiple generations of designers, and strong design direction from management. The Senior Designer at Gourmet

⁷⁰⁸ Tan, “Creativity in Cross-Disciplinary Research,” 71.

⁷⁰⁹ Julier, *Economies of Design*, 38.

Settings is Lim, yet he is the only in-house designer and to some extent, he works in the shadow of Kerr and Smith who are still celebrated as the originators even though they no longer work for Gourmet Settings.⁷¹⁰ While the current generation of designers (including Stéphane Monnet, President and Creative Director of Monnet Design, to whom Gourmet Settings contracts graphic design) has a great deal of esteem for their early design work, they are not afraid to assert their own vision. Lim and Monnet now recognize each other as lead designers.⁷¹¹ At the same time, upper management is still seen as creating “the spirit of the pieces” (Lim)—Abrams and Felice provide direction based on their exposure to the market and retailers, and even design some of the patterns (the buyer I interviewed credits Abrams with design, Lim refers to lines “designed by Phyl [Felice],” and Choi believes the core design team consists of Lim, the sales team, and management). From her central position dealing with suppliers and distributors, Felice appears to have a great deal of say over design, sometimes overruling what Lim and the buyers might propose.

The notion of “bottom-up” creativity is absent at both companies – there appears to be no interest, beyond Silva and Kerr’s consultation with factory workers, to explore anything like the Japanese Kaizen or hundred-headed brain approaches described in Chapter 4.⁷¹² Just as Mellow Walk interviewees could not articulate what the designer does, managers have little awareness of (or do not wish to see) design work in the lower echelons of production, and there is reluctance among the Gourmet Settings interviewees to acknowledge the influence of offshore producers on design. At Mellow Walk, when asked how a shoe goes from idea to consumer, Violi described concept development in detail and barely mentioned manufacturing. As production manager, Sullivan sees no place for design on the factory floor, and views any influence of the factory workers on design as the result of working through the manufacturing details rather than creative problem solving. Sullivan respects the workers because they have more knowledge about making, but rather than consulting them, she is interested in how she can implement processes to make them more efficient (e.g. financial incentives for surpassing targets).

⁷¹⁰ Abrams identifies specific areas of specialization and processes that are Lim’s responsibility: he follows particular steps, such as thinking something through, addressing who the product is for and why they are designing it, materials, ergonomics, price, and design “sensibility” (aesthetic).

⁷¹¹ Lim designs cutlery and boxes, and differentiates himself from junior designers and their skillsets; and Stéphane Monnet (President and Creative Director of Monnet Design) designs the graphics and delegates to employees in his studio.

⁷¹² Hall, “The Role of Creativity within Best Practice Manufacturing,” 119; Schroeder and Robinson, “America’s Most Successful Export to Japan,” 5.

At Mellow Walk, the line workers have not been given permission to think about design. They do it nonetheless and without the label, but their positions in the creative class system do not allow them the confidence to take risks or rebel in a way that is seen as characteristic of creativity. Psychology and creativity researchers Reiter-Palmon et al., in their study of creativity in business, explain this phenomenon: “in the world of work, where the focus is typically on finding a workable solution (focus on quality), it is likely that employees need to be told that they are expected to also think about original ideas or solutions.”⁷¹³ This is reflected in comments from line workers at Mellow Walk who are reluctant to claim credit for any part in design if someone with more seniority is seen as responsible for that task. Even though Romeiro helped to rethink the heel of the Vanessa boot, she is adamant that she is not creative enough to design. When interviewees were asked open-ended questions about what they would re-design if given the opportunity, only the consumer offered confident suggestions. Romeiro said she had never even thought about it.

Despite reluctance to take responsibility for particular elements of design, Mellow Walk factory workers still agree that everyone contributes to design. From Boita's perspective on the factory floor, design is a collaborative activity, and more opinions and ranges of experience will result in a better product and process. Silva asks for their thoughts on samples and no one is shy to react, to share if they think the soles match the uppers, or if they like the materials and colours, the size of the heel, and so on. Silva listens to Boita who offers critiques and suggests how proportions, balance, construction, and ergonomics can be improved, input that would typically come from the designer. A more established consultation process takes place when employees are selected to “wear-test” new models.⁷¹⁴ Staff members keep the shoes and provide opinions on comfort, fit, and wear over time.⁷¹⁵ These controlled channels for staff to participate in discussions about product design make them feel that their contributions are valued. Silva takes the anecdotal information seriously and several staff members were pleased to note that their suggestions had been implemented. As one of the regular wear-testers, Sullivan separates expert knowledge and consumer opinion, distinguishing between Silva's

⁷¹³ Reiter-Palmon, Beghetto, and Kaufman, J.C., “Looking at Creativity through a Business-Psychology-Education (BPE) Lens: The Challenge and Benefits of Listening to Each Other,” 23.

⁷¹⁴ This is a common practice in the tech industry called “dogfooding,” which allows staff to beta-test products before they are released.

⁷¹⁵ Staff is further involved when Silva custom designs shoes for individual employees, like wider-fitting shoes for Barreto, or the red and green brogues that match the elf costume Bob wears to the factory at Christmas.

informed perspective and the personal tastes and preferences of herself and the line workers, which she considers subjective.⁷¹⁶

While Florida asserts that the creative economy can erase divisions between traditional white and blue collar jobs, my case studies suggest that centuries-old legacies of divided labour and the more recently labelled creative class system are powerful actors that make it difficult for interviewees to see beyond these structures.⁷¹⁷ Furthermore, recognizing contributions to design outside those of management and designers has risks. Creative ideas may fail, waste time and resources, and lead to frustration.⁷¹⁸ It might change the balance of power if someone on the production line stops to think and act differently, and increased creative responsibility might require an increase in compensation. In the Gourmet Settings case study, it became apparent that producers also fear losing control of design. The company promotes consultation, but the designers and management are cautious of “watering down” their designs (Smith) by giving too much weight to the opinions of others.

1.3 Objects as Evidence of Distributed Authorship

Through the lens of ANT, the case study objects provide a different perspective on where and how design work takes place. The range of physical and digital evidence in the object ethnographies makes it possible to de-centre the designer and find authorship distributed in the details of production, proof of both individual and collective creativity and design labour. This is particularly evident in the production of the Vanessa boots because I could follow their development closely.

The case study objects demonstrate that design is not a top-down, one-way process. There are moments of disruption, negotiation, and co-creation that change the course of design. Sociologist Madeleine Akrich’s interpretation of “scripts” is useful in understanding this process.⁷¹⁹ The designer is typically depicted as developing plans for others to execute, usually in the form of drawings, or other plans. In the language of ANT, these are scripts that can break down, revealing a gap between what the designer prescribed (what they wanted to happen, how they envisioned the end product and its context of use), and how others ascribed to that vision (contesting, customizing, and appropriating the script).⁷²⁰ As I documented in the case studies,

⁷¹⁶ Sullivan feels confident in her personal opinion of comfort and fit, but looks to Silva as the ‘expert’ in fashion and developing “looks.”

⁷¹⁷ Florida, *The Rise of the Creative Class*, 70.

⁷¹⁸ Farida Rasulzada, “Creativity at Work and Its Relation to Well-Being,” in *Creativity Research: An Inter-Disciplinary and Multi-Disciplinary Research Handbook*, ed. Eric Shiu (UK: Routledge, 2014), 171.

⁷¹⁹ Akrich, “The De-Description of Technical Objects.”

⁷²⁰ Akrich.

objects are inscribed with actions to “delegate” to others.⁷²¹ Each iteration of the Vanessas and Non Stop is embedded in its own network of actors that play a role in design, and as a result, each iteration embodies design scripts from a variety of sources, intended for a variety of audiences. The case study objects therefore gain agency as “mediators” and messengers.⁷²² They demand certain responses and pass on instructions that lead to new courses of action, but they are also transformed at each stage as different people, tools, and processes interject and alter their design scripts. By analyzing iterations of the objects, and tracing how the scripts they embody evolve as they come into contact with other actors, a more complete picture of design activity emerges.

In the fuller picture of production, circulation, and consumption offered by the case studies, the design drawing becomes just one of many iterations of the object and one of many types of scripts.⁷²³ Historically, the design drawing has been referenced to distinguish roles in production – it represents the designer’s ability to think creatively and abstractly, to conceive of a three-dimensional object in two dimensions, and to create drawings that direct others in production.⁷²⁴ The drawing divides the skillsets and is seen as a tool and symbol of planning, control, reproduction, and instruction. However, I argue that the significance given to the designer’s sketches in design history, museums, and representations of the design process is disproportionate to the role they play in the design process and production. Silva’s concept sketches and hand-drawn colour renderings are important, but as one of many types of design scripts. Silva’s images serve to communicate with upper management and retailers, to evoke reactions, and establish if everyone is in agreement on design direction. They are a preliminary synthesis of a great deal of information, including Silva’s personal experiences and research, as well as the knowledge and assumptions of a number of other people. They are a tangible demonstration of abduction, the ‘magic’ of design, the ability to assess random information, see patterns, and reframe an open-ended problem.⁷²⁵ They “translate” (which is not direct but rather involves some slippage from the original intention) research, inspiration, and verbal conversation into visual representations of possible future shoe styles, but they are not

⁷²¹ Akrich, 207.

⁷²² Akrich and Latour, “A Summary of a Convenient Vocabulary for the Semiotics of Human and Nonhuman Assemblies,” 259; Yaneva, “Making the Social Hold: Towards an Actor-Network Theory of Design,” 276.

⁷²³ Adamson, *The Invention of Craft*, 17.

⁷²⁴ Julier, *The Culture of Design*, 41.

⁷²⁵ Bauer and Eagen, “Design Thinking — Epistemic Plurality in Management and Organization”; Lawson, *How Designers Think: The Design Process Demystified*.

instructions for the producers.⁷²⁶ “Nelson’s designs” is how some employees refer to his concept sketches, but his ability to draw and the existence of the renderings is not what defines him as the designer. They are rarely seen and have little impact on the factory floor. Silva’s sketches do inform the pattern, which is a series of technical drawings that are revised until they pass safety testing, sales samples, fit trials, and first production. The initial paper, tape, and tissue patterns represent Silva’s own process of refinement, but it is not until he transfers those into the software that the pattern as instruction comes to life. Silva’s hand drawings are first translated through the Wacom tablet, which digitizes his gestures. Silva delegates the precision drawing and grading (sizing) to the Caligola software, though he prints and refines those lines by hand. The digital drawings have a short lifespan as they move from his office computer to the leather cutter in the factory, where they start to become the real ‘instructions’ for the factory workers. Before this script reaches full production, however, it is debated and revised by Silva with the plant manager and her assistant, the sample makers, and other line workers. Each of these actors engages in the design discussion.

The object in its various iterations becomes the central text around which all actors gather to negotiate and manipulate form, material, and process. Akrich describes that “technical objects contain and produce a specific geography of responsibilities, or more generally, of causes.”⁷²⁷ The regions of responsibility can quite literally be mapped to the Mellow Walk floor plan along with sociologist Paul du Gay’s related “maps of meaning,” that is, the shared understandings of objects within the sub-cultures of departments in production.⁷²⁸ As soon as the files hit the factory floor and the design is expressed as cut leather pieces, they “mobilize” an entirely different set of actors.⁷²⁹ “Competences and performances” are “redistributed” as this iteration of the design changes location and becomes subject to interpretation by the equipment and factory workers.⁷³⁰ The power balance shifts—the factory workers offer more knowledge and start to have more input, and the expertise embodied in the machinery exerts its own influence. Silva’s pattern is translated for Padda on the Comelz cutting machine screen, which reads, mediates, and displays the files in a new format. Padda controls how she places the pattern on the leather, and here the hide comes into focus as it delivers unpredictable flaws and

⁷²⁶ Latour, Maugin, and Teil, “A New Method to Trace the Path of Innovations. The ‘Socio-Technical Graph.’”

⁷²⁷ Akrich, “The De-Description of Technical Objects,” 207.

⁷²⁸ Du Gay et al., *Doing Cultural Studies*, 8.

⁷²⁹ Callon, “Some Elements of a Sociology of Translation. Domestication of the Scallops and the Fishermen of St. Brieuc Bay.”

⁷³⁰ Akrich and Latour, “A Summary of a Convenient Vocabulary for the Semiotics of Human and Nonhuman Assemblies.”

variable thicknesses for Padda to work around, its last act before being dismantled. The cutting machine and pattern also give Padda direction: she is forced to react quickly as the pieces are projected on the moving hide. Once the pattern reaches Fitting/Sewing, it has been transformed once again. No longer digital, the pattern appears as cut leather pieces, on which elements of the pattern markers are printed. Now each leather piece offers instructions to the sewers. During the sample phase, Torres and Romeiro challenge the script, suggesting changes to the pattern and working closely with Silva on revisions like Romeiro's alternative heel construction designed so that the tight curves of the boot can still be sewn using Mellow Walk's machines. As the Vanessa sample takes form, the pattern as a set of instructions relies less on two-dimensional drawing, and more on its readability as a three-dimensional object, complimented by tracking sheets that follow the boot or shoe through the factory, specifying components to be integrated. In Lasting, the script is disputed twice more. Katarina plays with the heel and the counter (stiffener), deciding that the boot may require a new counter shape and die. Lasting also reveals that the boot requires a zipper or it will not easily be removed from the last or the consumer's foot. Fit trials and first production offer further tweaks to the pattern to increase efficiency and quality control. The final pattern organizes manufacturing and directs the factory workers when the Vanessa reaches full production.

The working prototype in all its variations or "freeze-frames" – the platform, the safety testing models, the sales and wear testing samples, the fit and first production trials – consists of "instructions" that are continually updated in consultation with those who will buy and those who will make the footwear and oversee production.⁷³¹ The concept drawing is important at the beginning as Silva communicates a vision, but the final technical drawing that initiates production is the culmination of many voices and changes expressed through the manipulation of physical prototypes. Boita described this eloquently as the merging of two states, or a transformation between two extremes, the abstract design represented as a drawing and the tangible product represented in the shoe. He sees them as parts of a living whole and dependent on each other, reminiscent of Latour's description of one idea as multiple "points along a curve," perceived differently by different actors at different moments.⁷³² For Boita, design is a sequence of events and elements: the success of the molds, models, and production directly reflects how well the design was scripted at the beginning. Based on my observation, the designer is present throughout this process, consulting with suppliers, sample makers,

⁷³¹ Latour and Yaneva, "Give Me a Gun and I Will Make All Buildings Move: An ANT's View of Architecture," 80–81.

⁷³² Latour, Maugin, and Teil, "A New Method to Trace the Path of Innovations. The 'Socio-Technical Graph,'" 27.

managers, and retail buyers, and even helping to fabricate the prototypes himself. Silva is still the designer, and the hierarchy still exists, but the final design is less his personal vision than it is the embodiment of a team effort.

For Gourmet Settings too, while there is fluidity in the generation of the script and the dialogue it engenders, the enrolment of other actors and the permission they are given to challenge the script is more limited. In the early phases, the designer has more control over the physical object – Lim takes direction and gathers input from many sources, but the labour of physically and creatively producing the sketches, drawings, foam, and wooden models is largely his own, mediated and enhanced through the technologies and tools outlined in the case study. When it comes to drawing, Lim has created a process of transferral and translation similar to Silva's. Lim draws patterns by hand, transforms them into digital images by photographing them on his phone and emailing them to himself, makes them technical drawings by tracing over the photographs in CAD, then reverts to hard copy by printing the files and hand sketching on top. In both case studies, there is an interplay between technology and the human hand, each offering a different kind of precision and visualization, and both improving on the other in different ways. The foam and wooden models are used to work out the tiny details, balance, and feel. They mobilize the design team, management, and buyers around design decisions based on their form. In keeping with the discussion by Latour et al. that actors are more visible at points depending on how attached they are to a "program of action," these prototypes are most visible at certain moments of the object ethnography: at the beginning of the design process, in sales meetings, at trade shows, and later in exhibitions.⁷³³ Like the concept sketches, they do not have a direct role in production, and they do not communicate design or delegate instruction to the makers, but they do come to signify the design process for many actors.

At Gourmet Settings, the technical drawing embodies a higher level of risk and plays a more formal role in negotiating relationships. The designer controls the technical drawing and expects the drawing to transmit his vision precisely during the making of the mold and in production. Any interpretation or de-inscription of the plans at the factories is perceived negatively. The decades of experience accumulated by Gourmet Settings mean that Lim designs with confidence about what the offshore factories can achieve. Once the technical drawings leave his office and are emailed to Choi in Vietnam, the design becomes closed to negotiation and input, at least from the Gourmet Settings' point of view. To confirm that they have understood the design drawings exactly, the factories often re-draw the flatware and send the files back to Toronto to be checked by Lim. In the process, the final drawings, along with the

⁷³³ Latour, Maugin, and Teil, 6.

technical specifications and the “golden sample,” stabilize social relations, as Akrich describes.⁷³⁴ They become the contract between client and supplier on opposite sides of the world, with seemingly no room for translation or slippage. While Lim’s design drawing clearly delineates the designer’s role from that of the maker, Choi suggests that the factories have more influence than Gourmet Settings staff acknowledges. Choi has a part in problem solving and acts as mediator, evaluating when designs are unrealistic for manufacturing and working with the factories to propose alternatives. In contrast to Mellow Walk, Gourmet Settings seems to have moved away from its early model of research and collaboration with factories, to treating them more as suppliers, paid to carry out instructions.

When the object ethnographies are assessed within actor networks that span greater distances and periods of time, other types of collaborative design work emerge, three of which are highlighted here. The first is the distributed authorship embodied in machinery, software, and processes. Mellow Walk offers many examples of anonymous technicians and engineers who design systems of production, contributing greatly to product design and practices. The precision and complexity of technology on the factory floor delivers exact forms that the designer must respond to, like the backpart molding machine that sets the perfect curve and rigidity for the heel and back of the boot. The automated levers and rollers of the lasting machines ensure the smooth form desired by the designer – they pull the leather taut, set the glues, and form the leather more precisely than any human hand could do. These machines represent networks of expertise from many companies and countries including Italy, Germany, Japan, Taiwan, and the United States. As Silva attests, it is the technicians travelling to factories around the world who spread knowledge and show the designers, factory managers, and workers what is possible with these tools.

The evolution of design over time is a second type of extended collaboration. As “objects in flight,” the Vanessa boots and Non Stop knives and forks represent an accumulation of knowledge and distributed authorship. Footwear and flatware have been refined over thousands of years, embodying generations of expertise and practices related to materials, form, ergonomics, production, and consumption. The knowledge on the factory floor that influences Silva’s work is the result of several decades, and in some cases, generations of shoemakers who have come together from across the city and from other countries. Most recently, Silva’s work builds on the legacy of the former Mellow Walk designer through adjustments and

⁷³⁴ Akrich, “The De-Description of Technical Objects.”

improvements to existing styles.⁷³⁵ The Gourmet Settings case study represents a 15-year trajectory for the Non Stop flatware pattern, and thus multiple designers and other contributors have made an impact. The foundational work by Kerr and her team from the late 1990s is still evident, but so too is the work of the next generation of designers who have modified their work. Smith's voice is still present throughout the web site and in promotional materials, both in terms of the branding and very clearly in the copywriting and sense of humour it expresses.⁷³⁶ New, post-Smith product descriptions stand out for their lack of wordplay. The current designers, Lim and Monnet, believe there is a direct link between their work and the latest form of Non Stop: Lim has refined original patterns with a more "European" style, and Monnet's firm has put its "mark on it," in part by "ton[ing] down" the copy. Identifying sole authorship is impossible in this context. The designers themselves had difficulty parsing where their work ended and another's began.

A third form of collaboration in the larger contexts of the object ethnographies is authorship distributed over space. Post-Fordism, as described by Julier, is demonstrated in "concurrent" and "just-in-time" design,⁷³⁷ which involve multiple design teams working in various locations, contributing to the same project at once. This is seen in the way that iterations of Non Stop are developed simultaneously. Lim designs the Gourmet Settings boxes and flatware at the same time that Monnet is assigned the graphic design for the packaging. Shared files facilitate communication between the designers, each iteration building off the other's work and direction from Gourmet Setting management. In the Mellow Walk case study, concurrent design is more serendipitous, made evident in shoe components from multiple suppliers who do not know exactly where their products will go or how they will contribute to the final consumer product. The design labour is still divided over multiple places and groups of actors, who are not considered designers, and at the time of design, they are unlikely to be in communication with each other. They all work toward the goal of creating footwear, but the brand, manufacturer, location, audience, or overall design in to which the components will fit, have yet to be specified. The German lasts, the Italian outsoles, the Brazilian steel toes, the Mexican leather and fittings, and the American insoles may arrive at Linea Pelle in Milan at the same time, ready to be selected by Silva, Violi, and others. The components later reconvene at the Mellow Walk

⁷³⁵ John Colantonio, Managing Director of Mister Safety, recalls, "I think that they were fortunate that their previous designer was really a shoe guy. He was a shoe guy, a factory guy, a design guy. He built the last and as far as I know, he was really instrumental in launching them on the right platform. And he had really good designs that, I mean, they're still the number one sellers."

⁷³⁶ For example, Gourmet Settings banner ads still use lines like "Serves you right" and the corporate branding still integrates phrases like "It's pure gs".

⁷³⁷ Julier, *The Culture of Design*, 33.

Factory in greater quantities to be integrated in the overall design of the Vanessa. This is 'just-in-time' manufacturing but it is uncoordinated by one manufacturer. The co-existence and availability of all these pieces on the market mean that the designer becomes an expert in pulling from multiple sources and authors at once to suit the needs of specific projects.

1.4 Craft in Design and Manufacturing

Contrary to the divisions of labour traditionally depicted in mass production, analysis of the case studies reveals that craft not only exists in manufacturing, but that there is also an interdependency between design and craft. Rather than design being 'master' of technology and craft being threatened by automation, both craft and design rely on technology and manual labour to bring value to manufacturing. Recognizing craft in production helps to bring 'head' work back into focus on the assembly line and to question assumptions about autonomy and creativity among factory workers. Furthermore, the grounding of design in material, often repetitive, practices brings the 'hand' work of design to the fore, challenging depictions of design in post-industrial economies as intellectual, digital, and distanced from manufacturing.

First, it is important to note that design's relationship to making extends throughout manufacturing. Design work is not only found in the pre-production, conceptualization, and planning phases. The significance of this is apparent at Mellow Walk, where Silva starts thinking about execution as he conceives of the footwear pattern. From the beginning, designing something that will work well in production is of key concern. As illustrated above, there is a continuous back and forth with factory management and employees to refine the design for manufacturing. Starting with the first models for certification and sales, the Mellow Walk team, including Silva, is 'practicing' manufacturing. They are prototyping not only the product, but the making process itself and revising the design as a result. The designer then stays involved during full production to monitor quality. The hand-off of a completed design for execution is not a clear-cut event but rather a long process of exchange and approvals about making in relation to design.

This means that the designer's role as an intermediary between actors *within* production is at least equal in value to the designer's traditionally defined role as an intermediary between producers and consumers.⁷³⁸ Factory employees represent one of the designer's main target audiences, and the interviews reflect this. Padda, who operates the CNC cutter at Mellow Walk, maintains that footwear design must be functional for both wear and for manufacturing. Shoes must be designed to be safe and comfortable, but also production-ready. Choi offers these

⁷³⁸ Du Gay et al., *Doing Cultural Studies*.

perspectives in the interview questionnaire: “From the manufacturer’s point of view, [design] means ‘easy or hard to realize in mass production,’ or ‘low or high in material and production cost;’ and from the supplier’s point of view, [design] means ‘if it’s successful in the marketplace.’” With Choi’s explanation, the true measures of good design are performance in the factory and consumer reception.

The designers in both case studies are proficient and involved in making, despite how their roles have been depicted in the division of labour.⁷³⁹ While craftspeople have been described as helping to fill the gap between sketch and product, it is the designers at Mellow Walk and Gourmet Settings who are responsible for pattern making and prototyping (when asked about the most important tools he uses, Silva’s first response was his hands).⁷⁴⁰ Kerr and Silva pay close attention to the factory workers and learn from makers in order to inform design. Kerr went to the factories to understand how things are fabricated. Silva collaborates with the sample makers and interjects in the assembly line where he knows how to operate many of the machines.⁷⁴¹ In these contexts, designers *can* make.

The case studies confirm one of the traditional ways to identify craft in manufacturing, which is through handwork: making prototypes (e.g. footwear samples, wooden flatware) and molds (e.g. shoe lasts, flatware molds and dies), and finishing products (e.g. polishing shoes and flatware).⁷⁴² Indeed, it is apparent in my case studies that handwork continues to be necessary and valuable in mass production, and despite standardization, evidence of the makers’ hands is visible in the variation of mass-produced goods.⁷⁴³ The footwear industry in particular has been slow to mechanize because the complexity of shoe construction and

⁷³⁹ Sparke, *Consultant Design*, 1.

⁷⁴⁰ Adamson, *The Invention of Craft*, 18.

⁷⁴¹ There was nevertheless evidence that the design profession and education system have established more arms-length relationships with mass production, a barrier that Kerr and Silva have sought to overcome. Kerr described a previous contract designing cutlery patterns for housewares manufacturer Dansk. As the consultant, she was expected to deliver design drawings without any real knowledge of production. Learning the complexities of manufacturing for Gourmet Settings changed how she looked at flatware design. Silva’s example of Ars Sutoria, the Milanese footwear school he attended, has traditionally been a school for pattern makers, but the organization now trains more students with design backgrounds who wish to learn how footwear is made. This additional education was important to Silva who realized, after working for a running shoe company for many years, that he had little knowledge of how shoes are actually constructed.

⁷⁴² Adamson, *The Invention of Craft*, 168; Adamson, Cooke, and Harrod, “Editorial Introduction,” 6.

⁷⁴³ Adamson, *The Invention of Craft*, 144; In a recent study of toilet makers at the Kohler factory in Wisconsin, it was revealed that each toilet—though mass produced - is different because of the hand of the maker. Ethan W. Lasser, “Factory Craft: Art and Industry in Conversation,” *The Journal of Modern Craft* 6, no. 3 (November 1, 2013): 315–20, <https://doi.org/10.2752/174967813X13806265666771> Every Mellow Walk shoe is slightly different because of the leather and how the pattern pieces are sewn, glued, stretched and set, all with the potential for minor disparities and mistakes.

inconsistency of materials makes it difficult to automate.⁷⁴⁴ Violi writes that, “Even with the benefit of smart machines, it still takes forty pairs of hands to make a single pair of Mellow Walks.”⁷⁴⁵ ⁷⁴⁶ In the factories contracted by Gourmet Settings, handwork improves on what the equipment can do: hand polishing actually corrects the imperfections of manufacturing, an expensive process that leads to a more valuable product. For this reason, sourcing agent Sabrina Chen explains that it is important to choose a factory with capacity for “workmanship.”

Less discussed but inferred through promotional materials, is the craft of highly skilled work and the mastery of tools and materials. Adamson et al. suggest that manufacturing may appear to have de-skilled craft, but it has also allowed new skills to develop.⁷⁴⁷ This is apparent on the factory floor where Everard exhibits mastery of the operation and repair of complex lasting machines, and Padda impresses Comelz, the company that fabricates the leather cutter, with her speed and accuracy.⁷⁴⁸ Her knowledge of leathers from decades in the industry allow her to judge quality, predict how the leathers will perform, and manipulate hides no matter what tools she employs.

Analysis of the case studies also provides insight into the nature of repetitive work in manufacturing and its connection to cognitive labour. Interviewees at Mellow Walk and Gourmet Settings would agree with Adamson that craft can be tacit, instinctual, and unthinking, but also valuable for the level of skill, precision, and quality it exhibits.⁷⁴⁹ Gourmet Settings managers and designers count on offshore factory workers for repetitive work and value the consistency and quality those workers offer. However, they do not expect (or want) them to contribute creatively, though Choi indicated that factory workers play an important role in problem-solving. Choi’s comment was reinforced at Mellow Walk where I observed roles that appeared to be skilled and mindless, but also thoughtful – Boita places a single shoe in the pneumatic sole press 800 times a day, yet he is always trouble shooting and providing feedback on the design. In other words, he can better critique the design because of his repeated physical connection to the product, which allows him to learn its form, weighting, ergonomics, and more.

⁷⁴⁴ Whitten and Whitten, *Handbook of American Business History*, 220.

⁷⁴⁵ Andrew Violi, “Lasting Department: Skilled Hands and State-of-the-Art Technology,” Mellow Walk, December 18, 2014, <http://www.mellowwalk.com/posts/lasting-department-skilled-hands-and-state-of-the-art-technology/>.

⁷⁴⁶ Boita’s vacuum sole-attaching machine does most of the physical labour and exerts extreme pressure beyond what the human body can provide, but the precise placement of the sole on the upper is done by hand and comes from years of practice and Boita’s ‘sense’ of fit. He can feel if the two components are aligned, the kind of tacit knowledge that is crucial: if they are off by a few millimetres, the balance of the shoe will be upset and the wearer will eventually realize that something is wrong (Boita, Silva).

⁷⁴⁷ Adamson, Cooke, and Harrod, “Editorial Introduction.”

⁷⁴⁸ Violi, “Blog » Leather Cutting.”

⁷⁴⁹ Adamson, *The Invention of Craft*, 171.

There was evidence of creativity in the repetitive tasks that I documented in both the work of the designers and the factory employees. It is through the repetition of form, including the carving, digitization, and re-drawing of the flatware, that Lim experiments with minute variances to arrive at the design drawings he sends to the factories. Adamson extends the discussion of repetition to prototypes, asserting that they “are not copies, strictly speaking, but they are mimetic objects, in which craft skill is tested not on the basis of originality, but by its ability to approximate an external ideal.”⁷⁵⁰ Silva engages in something closer to mimesis when he replicates the forms of the lasts to create paper patterns that precisely fit the German-made lasts. When contributing to the samples, it is the factory workers who move beyond “approximat[ing]” the “external ideal” expressed by Silva’s pattern, to offering new solutions to form and the practices required to make it.

Intrinsic motivation (e.g. the joy in labour described by Morris, or Sennett’s “desire to do a job well for its own sake”) is further evidence that the workers are not entirely alienated from the products they create.⁷⁵¹ The interviewees whose jobs are repetitive and assumed to be less mentally stimulating, are the ones who most confidently declared how much they love their jobs. Each of the factory workers at Mellow Walk described the intense focus required to perform their roles. Padda was explicit in her connection between thinking and focus at the cutting machine, a mentally and physically demanding job in which she is never bored (she reports being so immersed that she cannot easily switch back to everyday conversation). Torres and Romeiro complained that the level of concentration required to make new designs gave them a headache.

With respect to the debate about whether machinery substitutes or augments human action (embodying human labour as “dead labour” or allowing workers to do more⁷⁵²), interviewees showed no nostalgia for ways of making displaced by machinery, and instead embraced new technologies for their speed and efficiency. Mellow Walk employees expressed no concern about jobs being eliminated by machines, despite the fact that many have witnessed downsizing, closures, and offshoring in Toronto’s footwear industry. They are convinced that faster production means more shoes, more sales, and a financially healthier company in which their own personal success is invested. Neither case study uncovered any discussion about change in quality or aesthetics tied to a reduction in handwork, but rather the opposite. For example, where tools were once made by the “hand sculpture of skilled workmen,” today they

⁷⁵⁰ Adamson, 146.

⁷⁵¹ Richard Sennett, *The Craftsman*, First edition (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), 9.

⁷⁵² Braverman, *Labor and Monopoly Capital: The Degradation of Work in the Twentieth Century*, 195–202.

are made more precisely by CNC carving and milling machines (Choi). The Mellow Walk facility is a practical blend of old and new technologies, a reflection of the capital required for new equipment and the fact that handwork and some analog machines still do a better job.⁷⁵³ When Mellow Walk was established in 1993, the company purchased many of the machines from Toronto factories that were closing, and now invests in new technology when it can afford to do so. Sewers are just as adept at using a skiving machine from the 1950s as a computerized sewing machine from this decade, illustrating how skills shaped by machines from the last century, along with a legacy of shoemaking equipment designed to mimic handwork, continue to inform practice today.⁷⁵⁴

'Quality' ties together design, craft, and authorship through its implied meaning of control. Throughout the interviews and promotional materials, 'quality' surfaced as a more common measure of success than 'good design,' though the two are related. A direct line can be traced from design as a form of planning and control over production, to craft as the level of control maintained in execution, to the quality of the final product. Lack of quality – whether defined as a defective object, poor workmanship, faulty materials, or lack of durability – comes from a lack of control over the process of making or deviating too far from the original plan. At Mellow Walk, interviewees take pride in delivering a high level of quality, emphasizing the importance of their own role, and perceiving their step in the chain of production as essential to the outcome. They explained that their tasks require being precise, consistent, and thorough so that the next person does not inherit problems as the product moves down the line. Through 'quality,' they have a sense of responsibility and ownership over the final product. This challenges the idea of alienated labour and frames each person on the assembly line as an 'author' of a phase or component of production.

⁷⁵³ Like footwear, flatware production at the Gourmet Settings factories is a mix of heavy equipment and labour-intensive processes (sheets of metal and individual utensil blanks are fed by hand through machines that can easily stamp, roll, cut, heat and cool). By contrast, other factories, like Liberty Flatware in Oneida, use more automated systems where machines move and feed the individual utensils. Liberty Flatware makes an interesting contrast to Gourmet Settings. It is the last company to manufacture flatware in North America because it runs the most automated flatware factory in the world. With only 35 employees, the output is far smaller than Oneida, which occupied the factory in its heyday with 2500 employees, but it is financially sustainable because of the reduced labour costs. Localsyr.com, "Made in Central New York."

⁷⁵⁴ While no longer cutting-edge, older equipment still performs unique tasks and Mellow Walk staff members look for secondhand machines in nearby markets like Montreal. At the time of her interview, Sullivan was hoping to find a "cobbler," an old sewing machine with a small post that allows for awkward repairs. It will save more shoes from being thrown out. There are also new additions to the factory floor. There was big excitement, including a video on YouTube, when the new two-in-one rougher cementer machine arrived from Italy in 2011, prompting Mellow Walk to advertise that it was the only company in North America to own one. Violi, "Mellow Walk Oohs and Ahhs over New Cerim Rougher/Cementer"; Swann, *Shoemaking*, 155.

2 Creative Circulation

Retailers play a significant role in the design of the Vanessa boots and Non Stop flatware, beyond simply circulating meanings generated by other actors. They demonstrate ‘active’ design in their contributions to form and function, and in the creation of meaning and facilitation of practices of consumption. They wield enough financial power that their choices have significant impact on which products make it to market and what they look like. They re-write manufacturer scripts and add new significance to objects. The contexts of consumption and networks of goods they generate then influence whether those products succeed. Furthermore, retailers play instrumental roles in the development of the manufacturers by influencing their corporate values and product offerings. Each of these activities is creative and demonstrates why retailers should be considered actors in the distributed authorship of design.

Retailers employ processes of assembly and association to situate products in relation to others on the market. As Douglas and Isherwood explain, “all goods carry meaning, but none by itself,” or in the language of ANT, goods define one another through “semiotic relationality.”⁷⁵⁵ For the retailer, this means understanding how new styles will compare to the competition, and how they can position and redefine goods relative to what exists. Abductive thinking is observable in how they reframe the problem – unlike the manufacturer, they are not motivated to design a new product that responds to specific user needs, but focus instead on generating a selection of products from multiple manufacturers and creating a distinctive shopping experience that appeals to their own target audiences.⁷⁵⁶ To do this, retailers create collections, or as Ingram et. al. describe, “lifestyle packages” and “systems or networks of interdependence” in which “compatible” objects support each others’ existence (e.g. someone who needs safety boots likely requires a hard hat and reflective vest).⁷⁵⁷ Competitor products must share shelf and web site space in a way that makes sense to the consumer, and each product should therefore be read as integrated in the “complex product ecologies” that give it meaning and value (Non Stop is one of 1,200 patterns sold online by Bed Bath & Beyond).⁷⁵⁸

The language of assembly is used to describe the actions of designers, manufacturers, and consumers, but it is the retailers in the case studies who exhibit more mastery in this domain.⁷⁵⁹ They exhibit abductive thinking in how they identify patterns (trends) in a sea of “disconnected data” (e.g. the endless variations of consumer products, the continually evolving

⁷⁵⁵ Mary Douglas and Baron Isherwood, *The World of Goods: Towards an Anthropology of Consumption* (London: Allen Lane, 1979), 72; Law, “Actor-Network Theory and Material Semiotics,” 146.

⁷⁵⁶ Bauer and Eagen, “Design Thinking — Epistemic Plurality in Management and Organization.”

⁷⁵⁷ Ingram, Shove, and Watson, “Products and Practices,” 11–12.

⁷⁵⁸ Ingram, Shove, and Watson, 12.

⁷⁵⁹ Ingram, Shove, and Watson, “Products and Practices.”

and highly competitive landscape of retail) but they also rely on inductive analysis, that is the “determinacy” of data and previous experience to inform decisions.⁷⁶⁰ Retailers have access to information that the designers and manufacturers do not, and this insight influences their calculated purchases and retail design. They filter sales figures, consumer trends, customer behaviour, and feedback, which allows them to identify gaps in product offerings, gauge whether a new design will appeal to their audience, and eventually, this drives the production of some designs over others.

A collaborative, co-scripting of design takes place between the manufacturers and retailers in both case studies. For Mellow Walk and Gourmet Settings, retailers provide direct input on sales samples, ranging from affirming or rejecting new product ideas, to providing detailed suggestions on how to modify designs. Violi explained that for the retailers, “it gives them a chance to influence the product that’s going on their shelf, and I think they value that. Everybody likes to be part of the process. And so we really listen to what they have to say.” For Gourmet Settings, the relationship with retailers is a selling feature, as stated on the company website: “We partner with retailers to bring design-driven solutions to market.”⁷⁶¹ Lim went so far as to describe a design process centred around the buyers: “we work quite closely with the buyers...if we interpret what the buyer wants successfully, it means we will get the order.” For Gourmet Settings products, the retailer’s impact on design is clear and involves both little- and professional-c creativity, from feedback on samples, suggestions for seasonal styles and colours, requests for certain types of flatware (e.g. chowder spoons), and modifications to existing patterns (e.g. more space between fork tines), to collaboration on developing point-of-purchase displays. This design activity reflects an understanding of end-users and practices of consumption that differs from the manufacturer’s, and which allows the retailers to actively contribute to defining the brief and form of the objects.

The retailers’ influence extends even further to the design of the manufacturers as organizations—their formation, mission, product direction, and more. The manufacturers were shaped by certain retailers early in their histories, having collaborated to create products appropriate to their stores. This power dynamic is characteristic of global supply chains controlled by big retailers, and echoed in the way that the manufacturers often prioritize the retailers’ needs over the consumers’ (as alluded to in Lim’s comment about how crucial it is to

⁷⁶⁰ Bauer and Eagen, “Design Thinking — Epistemic Plurality in Management and Organization”; Buchanan, “Wicked Problems in Design Thinking.”

⁷⁶¹ Gourmet Settings, “Our Story.”

interpret what the buyer wants).⁷⁶² According to John Colantonio at Mister Safety Shoes, it was advice from the retailer that led to Mellow Walk's shift from fabricating orthotics and comfort shoes for other companies, to designing its own brand of casual safety wear in the 1990s, similar to the American products that had just arrived in Canada. At Gourmet Settings, retailers are celebrated as part of its corporate history. The Get Set line of patterns, which included Non Stop, were largely a response to the design ethos of big box retailer Target, and it was based on orders from Target and Walmart that the first patterns went into production. The Gourmet Settings brand, quite small in comparison to that of the retail chains, picked up value in relation to Target's push for "Design for All," aiming to "democratize" design with big name designers creating more affordable products. Gourmet Settings had established a similar goal independently but found validation through association with the world-renowned retailer. Target ad copy like "Bringing great design to every home is a big mission. . . . Our designers know how to create products you'll love to live with, at low prices you can't live without," reinforced Gourmet Settings' messages of affordability through good design.⁷⁶³ Conversely, Non Stop and the other patterns picked up further value in differentiation to the "basically cheap shit," Victorian-style patterns and the "blaring, blabbering boxes of the competition" that had been the norm until the arrival of Gourmet Settings.⁷⁶⁴

Retailers absorb and supersede the manufacturers' identities in both case studies. As the objects circulate outside of the manufacturers' control, the objects' networks and maps of meaning expand, and new actors come into focus, with the "geography of responsibilities" shifting, giving the retailers a more visible role in this phase of the object's life.⁷⁶⁵ The manufacturers do their best to inscribe the objects and promotional materials with intended messages before they leave their sphere of influence. The work of guiding retailers and consumers on how to use, understand, and make meaning of the object is delegated by the manufacturer to images, texts, labelling, packaging, displays, web sites, and more. Retailer creativity is evident in how they contest and re-configure the manufacturer's scripts by re-contextualizing the objects in stores and on-line. They integrate products from multiple suppliers into one seamless customer experience that bears their own brand, often stripping away indicators of individual brands so that they appear more homogenous. Mark's removes the leather maple leaves and "Made in Canada" labels featuring pictures of Mellow Walk

⁷⁶² Gereffi, "Beyond the Producer-driven/Buyer-Driven Dichotomy: The Evolution of Global Value Chains in the Internet Era."

⁷⁶³ Target quoted in Christine Harold, "On Target: Aura, Affect, and the Rhetoric of 'Design Democracy,'" *Public Culture* 21, no. 3 (September 21, 2009): 604, <https://doi.org/10.1215/08992363-2009-010>.

⁷⁶⁴ Abrams, Blum, quoted in Blum, "The Truth About Forks and Spoons. From Metropolis."

⁷⁶⁵ Akrich, "The De-Scriptio of Technical Objects," 207.

employees, leaving the unpackaged Vanessas in a jumble of footwear on open shelves, and leaving the shopper to discover these brand representatives if they choose to open a box. Bed Bath & Beyond removes the Non Stop flatware from its packaging and displays it behind glass, next to similar-looking patterns by competitors. The Gourmet Settings boxes are stacked below with the clear fronts, one of the biggest design innovations, almost invisible to the shopper and the copywriting too small to read. With less emphasis on individual product brands, consumers may identify more with the store, as the buyer I interviewed suggested, to the point that the product brand may be irrelevant to the consumer (Bonnie McCabe wore her Vanessa boots to her interview with me, but could not remember the brand name or having noticed it when shopping). This illustrates the power of the retailers to not only challenge the script but to impose their own (in her mind, McCabe took home boots from Mark's, not Mellow Walk). The producer's script is still present in that design features help to sell the product, but authorship has been re-attributed.

Retailers help to design scripts related to function and use by facilitating networks of objects, people, and institutions, becoming "carriers of practice" (what Ingram et. al. define as "certain routinized ways of doing, understanding, knowing, and desiring").⁷⁶⁶ As intermediaries between production and consumption, retailers translate information and create conditions that stabilize relationships centered on the case study objects. By considering the retailer to be an actor in design, Akrich's concept of the "world inscribed in the object" (assumed to be the responsibility of the designer and manufacturer) is blurred with the "world described by its displacement," different from the "chaos" of consumption because it is intentionally inscribed by the retailer.⁷⁶⁷

In the case of the flatware, the form of the utensils helps to perpetuate certain behaviours, part of the "practical knowledge [...] embedded in material objects:" how cutlery is held and how food is consumed is somewhat intuitive based on cutlery ergonomics, but the broader network of practices and customs around eating, preparing food, and setting a table, equally inform the design of the flatware.⁷⁶⁸ Retailers both reflect and lead consumer trends in housewares, including instructions on how to care for stainless steel cutlery, collect the correct pieces, lay a table, and carry out practices that require the flatware, such as giving the appropriate gift, serving food, and entertaining. The retailers create imagery of aspirational table

⁷⁶⁶ Ingram, Shove, and Watson, "Products and Practices," 14.

⁷⁶⁷ Akrich, "The De-Scripton of Technical Objects," 209.

⁷⁶⁸ Ingram, Shove, and Watson, "Products and Practices," 14.

settings, repost consumer displays of flatware in social media (figs.104, 105), and partner with home decorating 'stars' who model domestic practices.

The significance of the safety boots as “constituents of practice, and as entities through which knowledge and social order are carried and reproduced”⁷⁶⁹ is evident within the networks of intermediary actors including regulatory bodies, unions, work cultures, and sites of exchange. Safety footwear was once optional, uncommon, and poorer quality, but it has become normalized as production, circulation, and consumption have evolved in sophistication and appropriateness to a variety of types of work since the mid-twentieth century. Consumer awareness and the systems for acquiring safety boots have become standardized (e.g. mobile stores that visit work sites at the request of the employer, rebates from unions on steel-toe footwear purchases). As a retailer, Mister Safety has contributed to this phenomenon, particularly in Toronto. Colantonio sees his stores as the continuation of his father’s fight for safer construction sites through the unions, the Italian Immigrant Aid Society, the Construction Safety Association, and eventually through the sale of safety wear.⁷⁷⁰ In this case, the retailer largely dictated what the market offered: Colantonio’s father helped to create the demand through organized labour and the creation of new safety practices. In turn, his stores facilitated those practices by becoming the distribution point where consumers find knowledgeable staff and products they can trust to meet regulations. ANT considers objects better at maintaining “social arrangements” because of their “material durability” in comparison to human-human relationships (e.g. steel-toe boots continue to do their part in upholding safety rules even when safety supervisors are absent),⁷⁷¹ but it is the complete network of humans and non-humans that ensures the boots are made according to regulation, purchased, and worn properly. Production and consumption are indeed mutually constitutive here – in the words of Ingram et. al., the safety boots “bind human actors and participate in developing specific forms of social order because they allow for common practices to develop.”⁷⁷² The practices and social norms Colantonio’s father helped to establish are made material through the Vanessa. The boots allow certain behaviours and further normalize practices that drive demand for more and better boots.

⁷⁶⁹ Ingram, Shove, and Watson, 15.

⁷⁷⁰ John Colantonio, “History,” Mister Safety Shoes | The Best Work Boots, Safety Footwear, High Visibility Workwear, Personal Protection Equipment with Onsite Mobile Service & 16 Retail Locations in Ontario & Alberta., accessed October 4, 2015, <http://www.mistersafetyshoes.com/history/>.

⁷⁷¹ Law, “Actor-Network Theory and Material Semiotics,” 148.

⁷⁷² Ingram, Shove, and Watson, “Products and Practices,” 14.

3 Creative Consumption

The case studies affirm the interconnectedness of production and consumption, illustrated in the ways that actors communicate and move between the phases of production, circulation, and consumption, taking on different positions of power to influence design. Considering consumption as productive work (or productive leisure) positions the consumer as a producer, as an agent of design. It values consumers' creativity, product knowledge, and ability to contest the producer's script or propose alternatives. As described in Chapter 4, this creative labour includes not only generating meaning (using objects to construct identity, status, and taste in relation to other objects), but also the rational decision-making related to use and exchange value. Consumers appropriate products, adapting them to new uses and contexts, and products reflect and reproduce consumer behaviours, knowledge, and social structures as "constituents of practice."⁷⁷³ Consumers participate in the 'active' redesign of objects through use, modification, and assignment of meaning, creating unique artifacts reflective of their own practices and contexts. Consumption is chaotic and difficult to track, but manufacturers and retailers are collecting data, information they have become more adept at recognizing than design historians and others studying design processes. Consumption is not all passive - consumers do have agency—and manufacturers are happy to encourage and capitalize on that design thinking.

3.1 Producer as Consumer

Before the case study objects ever reach store shelves, they have already been tested by 'consumers.' In both case studies, producers take on the role of end-users. Whether this is done intentionally through organized research or indirectly through regular use, producers generate knowledge as consumers and this in turn influences design. With both the Vanessas and Non Stop, the manufacturers engaged in participatory research. As outlined above with 'wear-testing,' Mellow Walk uses its own staff as a representative group of consumers, requesting that employees, friends, and family provide feedback on prototypes and final products. Factory workers move beyond research subjects to become a real-life target audience when they choose to wear the shoes in order to meet safety requirements on the job. At Gourmet Settings, Toronto-based staff, friends, and family went to the Kerr Smith studio to be observed testing the cutlery in development, giving opinions on ergonomics, feel, and performance. Outside of these more official activities, the designers and managers I interviewed also use Non Stop and other Gourmet Settings patterns as their everyday flatware both in the

⁷⁷³ Ingram, Shove, and Watson, 14.

office and at home, gaining first-hand consumer knowledge, which inevitably becomes part of the designer's "schema," as Lawson refers to it, mental images of past experiences that bias design.⁷⁷⁴ This blurring of producers as consumers raises questions about the designer's relationship to the target audience and suggests that designers are (perhaps unconsciously) designing for themselves.

3.2 Design through Use

Once in the hands of consumers, new iterations of the case study products emerged. In comparing the prescription and de-inscription of the boots and flatware, it is not surprising that the "projected users," as envisioned by the designers, manufacturers, and retailers, do not match the "real users" who both comply with and diverge from the producers' intentions.⁷⁷⁵ The following discussion demonstrates through concrete examples how consumers redesign products in three ways: function (including practice), form, and meaning. Each is evidence of consumer creativity and the freedom to develop new scripts, including positive and negative portrayals of the case study products irrespective of the producer's intentions.⁷⁷⁶

3.2.1 Use Reveals New Contexts, Practices, and Functions

Consumers in the case studies ascribe to producer intentions in varying degrees, from literally reproducing designer scripts to developing 'anti-programs' of new uses and contexts of meaning.⁷⁷⁷ At one end, the objects and promotional materials successfully "delegate" the manufacturer's vision when customers reiterate almost verbatim the qualities the designers set out to embody in the product.⁷⁷⁸ At the other end, customers contest the script by translating these messages in their own terms or simply ignoring company and product narratives entirely. The Gourmet Settings' packaging relies partly on text to express the designer's script, illustrating the power of words in instructing the consumer. The flatware boxes highlight features and practices like how to care for the cutlery, and describe the intended "scenario" of use, that is, the consumer's own lifestyle.⁷⁷⁹ Consumers employ these "pre-ferred" meanings, to use Hall's term, in their reviews (e.g. describing Non Stop as "modern" and "contemporary"), and

⁷⁷⁴ Lawson, *How Designers Think: The Design Process Demystified*, 132–136.

⁷⁷⁵ Akrich, "The De-Scripton of Technical Objects," 209; Ingram, Shove, and Watson, "Products and Practices."

⁷⁷⁶ The script of global, modern living still dominates with Non Stop and it can be difficult to pinpoint what these images and flatware say in particular about their owners. Abrams suggests that some categories of objects are more prominent in signifying types of consumers and that it is easier to identify someone based on their music collection than their cutlery, for example. In her opinion, flatware has yet to reach the same level of status symbol (or has lost the status it once had).

⁷⁷⁷ Ingram, Shove, and Watson, "Products and Practices," 10.

⁷⁷⁸ Yaneva, "Making the Social Hold: Towards an Actor-Network Theory of Design," 276.

⁷⁷⁹ Akrich, "The De-Scripton of Technical Objects," 208.

they repeat manufacturer promises about function as if they had discovered these features themselves (e.g. scooping ice cream without bending the spoon).⁷⁸⁰ The script falls apart when consumers feel they have been deceived, tricked by the “false advertising” of “stainless” steel and discrepancies in the warranty or the metal content. At the core of the Non Stop promise is the idea that the user is too busy to hand wash or polish their flatware, yet this is exactly what consumers must do if the set rusts. The “moment of crisis” (discovery of rust) leads to an alternative script where Non Stop becomes an object that is damaged, poor quality, unattractive (lacking its smooth finish), and not worth the price.

The consumer’s work in generating new practices and scenarios involves experiencing use and re-writing narratives of function. The design of the Vanessa boots “permits” certain actions and conditions to which consumers react.⁷⁸¹ The design is intended to allow the wearer to work safely and to access worksites where the law mandates steel-toe footwear, “affording” the owner the possibility of employment.⁷⁸² In McCabe’s case, safety boots are optional, but the protection they offer allows her to work with greater peace of mind. Wearing Vanessas becomes a form of protest, a statement on a lax work environment where McCabe needs to take care of her own well-being. Instead of indicating compliance, the boots draw attention to the lack of regulation. Appadurai’s concept of “paths and diversions” is another way to consider consumer appropriation where moments of “crisis” divert objects from their original path and give them new status.⁷⁸³ For Penny, her un-scuffed Vanessa boots play a central role in her motorcycle-riding outfit, the toughness of the steel toes appropriate with her immaculate black leather jacket and jeans, worn while she is atop a shiny blue Harley Davidson (fig.61). While the diversion from the original script may not seem radical – Penny adheres quite literally to the signifier “motorcycle”—the shift in function from work to biking boots represents a moment of creativity unanticipated by the producers.

Mellow Walk has capitalized on consumer appropriation and creativity through use with the design and marketing of the Vanessa. The Mellow Walk staff has long observed people wearing their products when and where they were not supposed to: at the bakery, at the mall, on a Sunday, and elsewhere outside of work. It is unclear which came first, the manufacturer suggesting that the shoes were fashionable enough for street wear, or customers doing this on

⁷⁸⁰ Stuart Hall, “Encoding/Decoding,” in *Culture, Media and Language*, ed. Stuart Hall et al. (London: Hutchinson, 1973), 128–38.

⁷⁸¹ Akrich and Latour, “A Summary of a Convenient Vocabulary for the Semiotics of Human and Nonhuman Assemblies,” 261.

⁷⁸² Fallan, *Design History: Understanding Theory and Method.*, 84–85.

⁷⁸³ Appadurai, “Introduction: Commodities and the Politics of Value,” 26–28; Akrich and Latour, “A Summary of a Convenient Vocabulary for the Semiotics of Human and Nonhuman Assemblies,” 261.

their own, but it exemplifies how consumers create needs, an area that Ingram et al. claim has not been addressed sufficiently in design literature.⁷⁸⁴ The response from Mellow Walk has been to intentionally blur the line between functions with more open-ended scripts related to the style of the Vanessa, inviting fashion-conscious consumers to blend their safety footwear with casual and work clothing in and outside the office. Consumers suggest that the script is working as intended: “As an office worker in a factory it is great to have a dressy safety shoe,” wrote Choile; “The shoes fit really nicely and look great in a manufacturing environment,” wrote another.⁷⁸⁵ For McCabe, style was one of the most important scripts. The design references to motorcycle boots, and Frye in particular, were significant because they allowed her to continue her “boyo chic” look on set instead of settling for Aussie boots or worse. This co-scripting of safety footwear by the consumers and producer responds to a question posed by Ingram et al.: “could the ambition of making things that are ‘fit for purpose’ be elaborated so as to take note of the point that things also make the purposes for which they are fit?”⁷⁸⁶

3.2.2 Use Leads to New Forms

The case study objects are important as physical artifacts of daily use. The extent to which consumers alter their forms reflects the openness of the producer’s script. Mellow Walk products come to reflect wearers’ movements, body shapes, local conditions, and practices, as well as how they maintain and intentionally alter the shoes through care and adaptation. McCabe’s boots look almost nothing like the original Vanessas (fig.60). The leather has softened over time, sagged, conformed to her body, and wrinkled where she bends her feet and ankles. The insoles and midsoles are likely compressed where she puts her weight as she stands all day, while the soles are in good condition, evidence that she only wears them inside. She never cleans or protects the leather, meaning the boots have faded and are now covered with layers of paint, dye splatters, and other spills on the job.

Consumer adaptation of Non Stop is slightly less obvious, reflecting the durability of the materials and suggesting a different power balance in the script. The flatware shows scratches and sometimes rusts, evidence of daily wear and tear, if the person is left or right-handed, how the utensils are held, all acts beyond the control or foresight of the designers. “Moments of crisis” occur when consumers abandon cutlery because it is too sharp, heavy, or difficult to hold. For those who “de-inscribe” by ignoring manufacturer directions, the flatware may exhibit

⁷⁸⁴ Ingram, Shove, and Watson, “Products and Practices,” 7.

⁷⁸⁵ Violi, “Vanessa 402109 (In Stock).”

⁷⁸⁶ Ingram, Shove, and Watson, “Products and Practices,” 15.

dishwasher use or soaking for long periods.⁷⁸⁷ For the most part, the producer script predominates. Instances of the flatware being repurposed beyond tools for eating are not easy to find.

3.2.3 Use Leads to New Meaning and Value

Through “semiotic relationality,” actors define one another and generate new significance for the case study objects.⁷⁸⁸ New contexts for appreciation include the studio where McCabe works, both a physical space and “myth place” where the Vanessas gain new meaning based on the caché of the film industry and the arts.⁷⁸⁹ The boots, in combination with McCabe’s baggy overalls or leggings and old t-shirts, rubber gloves, masks, paintbrushes, and other tools, and set within the breakdown lab of worktables, vats of dyes, and racks of costumes, become an integral part of the professional artist’s wardrobe and studio, illustrating how “objects and users configure each other.”⁷⁹⁰ The patina on McCabe’s Mellow Walks legitimates her creative labour, authenticating her identity as a serious artist whose job is risky enough to require steel toes and cool enough to warrant motorcycle boots.⁷⁹¹ The Vanessas were re-defined in relation to existing “maps of meaning” understood by McCabe and her co-workers: their commonly understood messages of safety, comfort, style (read Frye), and attitude (read “motorcycle boot”) were easily normalized and overlaid within the particular environment (read “art,” “creative,” “fast-paced,” “tough”).⁷⁹² At least three of McCabe’s colleagues followed her lead and purchased the same boots, evidence of “social comparison” as a motivator for acquisition.⁷⁹³ The footwear can therefore be seen as stabilizing social relations, as objects that make concrete a shared understanding of the identity of a film breakdown artist through the mediation of style, comfort, and safety.

Similarly, households represent customized environments where global products are given new meaning through domestication. On-line, individual users share how they integrate Non Stop in domestic settings, showing how they value the flatware in relation to other objects, and expanding the “sociography” of Non Stop to include competitor goods, along with tableware they already own.⁷⁹⁴ Each of these consumer-generated scenes appropriates meanings of

⁷⁸⁷ Akrich, “The De-Description of Technical Objects.”

⁷⁸⁸ Law, “Actor-Network Theory and Material Semiotics,” 146.

⁷⁸⁹ Reimer and Leslie, “Design, National Imaginaries, and the Home Furnishings Commodity Chain.”

⁷⁹⁰ Ingram, Shove, and Watson, “Products and Practices,” 10.

⁷⁹¹ Grant David McCracken, *Culture and Consumption: New Approaches to the Symbolic Character of Consumer Goods and Activities*, Reprint edition (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990).

⁷⁹² Du Gay et al., *Doing Cultural Studies*, 8.

⁷⁹³ Ingram, Shove, and Watson, “Products and Practices,” 6.

⁷⁹⁴ Akrich, “The De-Description of Technical Objects,” 205–6.

craftsmanship, quality, care, and modern living as encoded by the producers, but the “geography of responsibilities” has shifted to the household, where consumers control signification and use.⁷⁹⁵ On social media, consumers offer glimpses of the hyper-local, tagging Gourmet Settings in photographs of their dining tables, of the flatware still in the box, or unpacked in their kitchen drawers. Instagram user @Sheilaabott mixed her Gourmet Settings Handmade flatware with traditional looking knives and forks, while @Foundbyjune combined her cutlery with vintage green plates, and @shelbyscarlett matched their knives and forks to black Fiestaware. Most common are pictures of the flatware in relation to food the owners have proudly prepared, deliberately arranged with special attention to lighting, table decoration, or details of the flatware pattern (figs.104, 105). Kerr and Abrams intended Gourmet Settings products for people who cared about their homes – people who would treat the cutlery as “jewellery” for their table (Kerr) – and the images suggest that their imagined personas (projected users) are in part accurate. Nevertheless, there are consumers who turn this script on its head with pictures and videos of rusting Non Stop utensils, showing them in an unflattering light, closely cropped, and focusing on blemishes and pitting (fig.100).

3.2.4 *Design as a Result of Use*

Product design influences consumption practices, and in turn, consumers reveal new product opportunities through use.⁷⁹⁶ How producers take this information into account (or “transform creativity into resource deployment”⁷⁹⁷) is important, and Ingram et al. suggest that reacting to consumer practices may be more common than producers formally defining their own design problems.⁷⁹⁸ Violi remarked that Mellow Walk is good at interpreting signals from customers, which lead to new niche market products. This challenges the idea of designers as originators, but reinforces the notion of user-centred design.

The case study objects represent shared value in that both consumers and manufacturers want the products to meet the expectations inscribed by the producer. When products deviate from the script, consumers communicate their disappointment directly with retailers and the manufacturers who react to that feedback. An online community of Gourmet Settings consumers offers support through reviews and advice on caring for and sourcing the

⁷⁹⁵ Hebidge, “Object as Image: The Italian Scooter Cycle”; Akrich, “The De-Scripton of Technical Objects,” 207.

⁷⁹⁶ Ingram, Shove, and Watson, “Products and Practices.”

⁷⁹⁷ YoungJoong Chang, Jaibeom Kim, and Jaewoo Joo, “An Exploratory Study on the Evolution of Design Thinking: Comparison of Apple and Samsung,” *Design Management Journal* 8, no. 1 (October 1, 2013): 210–211, <https://doi.org/10.1111/dmj.12001>.

⁷⁹⁸ Ingram, Shove, and Watson, “Products and Practices,” 3.

desired patterns. Their observations suggest they have a deep appreciation for the design. They examine pieces closely and report variations, demonstrating product knowledge and providing a form of quality control. This is partly how Gourmet Settings discovers defects, problems with the composition of the metal, and mis-packaged sets. Use also highlights absence of the product. Customers who want to replace lost knives and forks or expand their collections, are often faced with the frustration of patterns that are no longer available or re-issued in a different form. Customers go even further and identify products yet to be designed, like the addition of espresso and chowder spoons at Bed Bath & Beyond, or serving pieces for larger Non Stop sets. Consumer demand has driven the continued production of Non Stop, making the end-user partly responsible for nearly two decades of refinement.⁷⁹⁹

Customer complaints come to the forefront as actors in both case studies. They translate practices and lived experiences into new design problems that, as Callon describes, “enroll” actors in their resolution.⁸⁰⁰ Customers clearly provide new impetus for design by interjecting unexpectedly in the objects’ lifecycles, starting a chain reaction within distribution and production. As Akrich argues, innovation is unpredictable.⁸⁰¹ These negotiations between producer and consumer are sometimes welcome and have influence even if they are not part of the official, linear narrative of design. Mellow Walk consumers discuss problems and offer solutions to Violi, ranging from improvements to gaps in the market and new opportunities. Examples include long-time customers observing a different fit in repeat purchases of their favourite models, and Silva trying to find the source of that variation within production. Others reported that a new foot bed was uncomfortable so Mellow Walk staff tested more insoles until they found the right one, which is now used in all models. Similarly, Violi received a complaint about shoelaces, tried them himself, agreed with the customer, and had them all replaced.

Non Stop offers an interesting study in the gaps between inscription and subscription and their impact on the design of the case study object and its networks. The “world[s] inscribed in the object” include how the producers envision both contexts of consumption and manufacture. Despite careful research and planning about the optimal mix of metals and exacting production processes, in the “world described by [the flatware’s] displacement,” both makers and consumers did not act as planned— factory compromises on consistency and

⁷⁹⁹ It was easier to trace the history of Non Stop’s design evolution and global distribution in the on-line commentary than in manufacturer materials and interviews.

⁸⁰⁰ Callon, “Some Elements of a Sociology of Translation. Domestication of the Scallops and the Fishermen of St. Briec Bay.”

⁸⁰¹ Akrich, Callon, and Latour, “The Key to Success in Innovation Part 1: The Art of Interesement,” 189; Akrich, Callon, and Latour, “The Key to Success in Innovation Part 2: The Art of Choosing Good Spokespersons,” 212–214.

quality were compounded by how users treated the flatware. What happened as a result is described by Latour et al. as the speaker's statement or "program" becoming more complicated in response to the "anti-program," "what successive listeners do with the statement."⁸⁰² When the factories issued flatware that rusted and pitted, a cycle of negative reviews followed, showing that many customers leave flatware to soak in the sink, they cannot be bothered to hand dry or polish, and they disagree with the script – their interpretation of "stainless" steel is quite literal. The consumer complaints then translated "quality" to "poor quality" and "defective" online. This led Gourmet Settings to issue more complex statements to the factories to ensure that the "quality script" was transmitted and received, and to further clarify the definition of "stainless" for consumers through videos about manufacturing processes, supported by warranties and time invested in one-to-one customer service.

The friction between the consumer and producer over the design of the product is explained in part by Akrich when she discusses how objects configure social relationships: when objects are used to allocate roles and responsibilities, there are inevitably "accusations and trials"⁸⁰³—manufacturers say a product failed technically because it was "misused (socially)" and users say that if it fails socially, it was "misconceived technically," highlighting the "lack of a relationship...between designers and users" through the object.⁸⁰⁴ This is certainly true in consumer reviews blaming Gourmet Settings for the rust. The lack of relationship is made worse by the absence of any discussion between the consumer and producer about the relationship of 'quality' to 'value.' It is apparent in the reviews that consumers take 'value' (i.e. low cost) for granted. However, quality is affected when 'value' is achieved by streamlining production and pressuring factories to do more for less. In these public conversations, the offshore factories are almost invisible and have no voice, despite their important role. Akrich notes that a few "deviants" cannot undo the network, but in the case of Gourmet Settings, the failure of the product and ensuing user feedback had significant impact. The flatware was discontinued for several years by Costco and Gourmet Settings was forced to reconfigure relationships with its suppliers and customers.

As the above demonstrates, consumers play an active role in design through the development of alternative scripts, manifested in new forms and meanings that reflect practices of use and signification. Both consumers and producers are adept at recognizing new design

⁸⁰² Latour, Maugin, and Teil, "A New Method to Trace the Path of Innovations. The 'Socio-Technical Graph,'" 3–4.

⁸⁰³ Akrich, "The De-Description of Technical Objects," 219.

⁸⁰⁴ Akrich, 220.

opportunities in these acts of creativity, particularly when they take the form of complaints to the manufacturer.

Conclusion

This chapter has examined how design and creative labour are actually divided, represented, and fed back through the production-circulation-consumption circuit. It demonstrates that there are different types of design labour made visible depending on how the story is told. The manufacturers present design as a more traditional, top-down activity, attributable to the designer as sole author and creative genius who delegates execution to others. I added two other 'degrees' of design: 'passive' design by actors that provide allowances and constraints, and 'active' design by those engaged in creative problem solving that affects the product's form, manufacture, use, or representation. Furthermore, the case studies include evidence of both individual and collective design labour. They illustrate that design work is delegated in the scripting of objects and in how it is received or re-inscribed within manufacturing, as well as by retailers and consumers.

Employing Actor Network Theory helped to 'flatten' and make visible relations of design, while revealing that hierarchies exist in practice as actors in their own right, influencing how people perceive themselves and others. Even if these hierarchies are not explicit, it is evident that the designer is seen to have a position of power within the division of labour and the creative class, resulting in struggles over who is 'permitted' to design and whose creative labour is valued.

Through my case studies, I was able to identify relations of design that challenge traditional depictions of the division of labour within manufacturing and show the importance of craft and repetitive, skilled handwork not only on the factory floor but also in the designer's studio. This more nuanced perception of the separation of cognitive and manual labour in mass production, and the grounding of design in material practices, contests the depiction of design in post-industrial economies as increasingly intellectual and distanced from manufacturing. It reinforces the idea that craft has not been lost in manufacturing, and that creativity exists in production roles outside of the designer.

Lived design practices fit the models outlined in Chapters 2 to 4 to some extent but there are gaps in academic representations of the design process, and in understandings of where creative labour originates. Furthermore, qualities thought to be fundamental to design practice, such as originality, planning, intellectual work, and concern for the end-user, are countered in my project by the realities of manufacturing and conducting business in a global marketplace. This includes design work that is monotonous and operates within financial and other

constraints on creativity. I also observed that design targeted to other actors within production, or responding to direction from retailers, takes precedence over consumer needs. However, the companies I studied continue to fetishize design through the use of traditional depictions of design as an intellectual activity valued for its artistry and use in strategic planning. The representation of the designer as a heroic, creative genius, or magician, in marketing materials is emphasized in contrast to the 'other' embodied by the traditional craftsperson who is celebrated at Mellow Walk and referred to abstractly at Gourmet Settings. The case study objects themselves are further fetishized as evidence of the value of design.

Chapter 9: Spatial Distribution of Design – Place-based Identities and the Fragmentation of Production in the Mellow Walk and Gourmet Settings Case Studies

*“It was eerie being there at the source of all those millions of forks....And here in a low, featureless building on a street of low, featureless buildings was one of those distant home offices, the place where the 800-number rings, and the orders are given that march the forks from the factory in Southeastern China, to the shelves of a thousand Wal-Marts, to the mouths of millions. I suspect they make measuring cups down the block, and plastic flowers across the street—not the name-brand Nikes, Sonys, or General Electrics of the world, but the vast undertow of stuff that doesn’t seem to really come from anywhere, but really comes from here—Richmond Hill, Dayton, or Fort Worth—the very same places that Wal-Marts sprout from the ground.”⁸⁰⁵ (Andrew Blum for *Metropolis*, on having visited the Gourmet Settings head office in Richmond Hill, Ontario)*

In this chapter, I examine how the global division of design labour takes shape in the case studies – where the work of design and manufacturing occurs, and which locations are celebrated as authors of consumer goods. I argue that place-based identities are used to negotiate understandings of global production, circulation, and consumption, and that the Vanessa boots and Non Stop flatware are both forms of vernacular design and the global homogenization of consumer goods. Mapping relationships linked to the case study objects makes visible the spatial distribution of design work and reveals areas of concentrated activity at the level of cities, regions, nations, and beyond. Both manufacturers feel that they have no choice but to operate within global commodity chains, while they also rely heavily on local communities for specific types of labour and expertise.

There is a sense of movement in the spatial distribution of design work. This includes global flows of goods, ideas, images, and people, but also regions of knowledge. The ‘core’ is ‘splintering’ and being repositioned, with expertise consolidated and exported from the West, while other areas of expertise are surfacing in ‘periphery’ locations.⁸⁰⁶ These shifts are evident in the Vanessa and Non Stop commodity chains, which illustrate that there are multiple sources of power over the design process at different points and locations. Capital, labour, and

⁸⁰⁵ Blum, “The Truth About Forks and Spoons. From *Metropolis*.”

⁸⁰⁶ Gereffi, “Outsourcing and Changing Patterns of International Competition in the Apparel Commodity Chain,” 16.

knowledge are transferred between post-industrial and industrial sites as Canada joins Italy and Mexico, and Britain, China, and Korea, in commodity chains dedicated to the design and manufacture of footwear and flatware. Mellow Walk and Gourmet Settings nevertheless employ local design services, in keeping with the idea of the “intangibles,” the more expensive, intellectual property-related activities, remaining in the ‘core’ where they control the “tangible” activities of production in the ‘periphery.’⁸⁰⁷

Like the hierarchies that appeared within sites of production, hierarchies of nations persist in conceptions of the division of labour within and between post-industrial and industrializing nations. These hierarchies define the relationships between actors and notions of place and identity. Actors use design to characterize the local relative to the global ‘other,’ forming imagined communities around ‘place-images’ of Toronto and Canada. The case study objects play a role in this by embodying national and other identities and circulating ideas of ‘myth places.’ Similarly, the two manufacturers conceal and exploit locations of production to create brands that highlight select producers and re-inscribe objects with new provenance. Mellow Walk’s corporate identity is based on national pride and local manufacturing resulting in a ‘Made-in-Canada’ product by local ‘shoemakers,’ while Gourmet Settings produces offshore and pays almost no attention to location in its marketing materials, creating a universally appealing, almost place-less product, the identity of which relies more on shared values of ‘modern’ and ‘design.’

Lastly, while the case study objects reflect their specific local circumstances, their provenance can be difficult to distinguish from among the vast number of competitor goods. A ‘global language of design’ exists in part because of the fluidity and ease of transmission of ideas and images, and in part because of financial constraints for manufacturers of a certain scale. Homogenization is facilitated by the global fragmentation of production, which allows for existing components to be assembled rather than created new, and by the lack of intellectual property protection, which has contributed to a market where copying is accepted.

1. The Scales and Structures of Global Design

A multi-layered and multi-scalar understanding of design is possible when considering how the local, regional, national, and global intersect in the case studies.⁸⁰⁸ Mellow Walk and Gourmet Settings run producer-driven commodity chains in that they generate their own intellectual property, produce original products, employ in-house designers, and Mellow Walk controls its own production. As such, both manufacturers are seen as sources of design.

⁸⁰⁷ Gereffi et al., “Introduction: Globalisation, Value Chains and Development,” 6.

⁸⁰⁸ Fallan and Lees-Maffei, “Introduction: National Design Histories in an Age of Globalization,” 8.

However, their small scale means that they have minimal power in the global commodity chains where they supply retailers, and in fact there are moments in the case studies when the two manufacturers seem to work for the stores. In the buyer-driven chains, Gereffi describes large retailers relying on middlemen and service providers like designers to link to offshore factories.⁸⁰⁹ If Mellow Walk and Gourmet Settings are framed as contracted intermediaries between retail and production, this shifts the source of power behind design to the retailers. Gereffi defines a third model, the Internet-driven commodity chain, which reflects the transfer in power from producers, to retailers, to consumers.⁸¹⁰ Internet-driven allows for direct sales between manufacturers and consumers, and in the case studies, online communication allows the consumer's voice to be heard in the design process (i.e. the quantity of online customer reviews, the collection of sales data and its impact on product decisions, and the rapid fulfillment of custom orders).

There are further divisions of labour not included in this project due to lack of information and access (for me). They represent the multiple layers of innovation and networks concealed within commodity chains. Most factories likely have large networks of suppliers 'downstream.' Designer Helen Kerr visited some of these locations, but the main factory acts as an intermediary and Gourmet Settings is generally left out of these interactions. For example, one of the factories in China outsources work to local cottage industries (locations unknown to the interviewees) to produce the Handmade flatware pattern, but that labour is invisible to many within that commodity chain. It is certainly invisible to customers, despite Gourmet Settings' efforts to link the makers and end-users through messaging about "artisanal" and "meticulous" "craftsmanship" made personally for the consumer.⁸¹¹

Sites of 'convergence' appear in different forms throughout the case studies. Tony Fry discusses convergence at the level of the nation, showing Australia as a repository for multiple global influences.⁸¹² The same applies to locations like the industry trade shows in Germany and Italy, or the factories in Mexico and Vietnam, which are meeting places for actors from throughout the supply chains (designers, manufacturers, technicians, suppliers, etc.). Both the Mellow Walk factory and those contracted by Gourmet Settings contain a blend of knowledge

⁸⁰⁹ Gereffi, "Outsourcing and Changing Patterns of International Competition in the Apparel Commodity Chain," 2–3.

⁸¹⁰ Gereffi, "Beyond the Producer-driven/Buyer-Driven Dichotomy: The Evolution of Global Value Chains in the Internet Era."

⁸¹¹ Gourmet Settings describes the pattern in this way: "Handmade flatware gives you that feeling that your flatware was designed especially for you. Personal, unique, warm and charming" Gourmet Settings, "Handmade Flatware Pattern," accessed January 15, 2017, <http://www.gourmetsettings.com/handmade-flatware>.

⁸¹² Fry, "A Geography of Power."

adapted from other manufacturers, international equipment suppliers, and centuries of expertise in the history of shoe and flatware production. The Vanessa boots and Non Stop cutlery embody those collective memories of making, which are tied to specific geographies, inherited, and transformed through new projects, technologies, and contexts.⁸¹³

When asked about identity in connection to the case study products, most interviewees did not speak in terms of national identity, ethnicity, or culture. Rather, corporate and consumer culture came up in relation to the brand story, what it means to be an employee, and how the management of the company affects products. This underlines that actors in global production, circulation, and consumption belong to many types and scales of overlapping, imagined communities, tied to different iterations of the objects and corresponding myth-places.⁸¹⁴ For example, most Mellow Walk factory employees consider themselves members of local communities of immigrants, of people who hold similar jobs within and outside of Mellow Walk, as part of the Canadian workforce and industry, and as part of a global community of shoe manufacturers. Gourmet Settings managers belong to, among other groups, international communities of manufacturers, buyers, and sellers who convene several times a year at major trade shows around the world, brought together through shared business interests and competition. Consumers too form different imagined communities, like those who show allegiance to certain retailers, or the loyal Mellow Walkers and Gourmet Settings fans who communicate about their consumption online, leading them to bond over shared tastes, senses of value, similar jobs (for safety footwear) or stages of life (when it's appropriate to buy mid-range flatware). The Vanessa boots and Non Stop flatware reflect and circulate those identities to other producers and consumers, contributing to ideas of place.⁸¹⁵

The case studies illustrate that proximity and local relationships still matter despite access to global commodity chains and customers. Being close to people who are doing the same thing makes a difference.⁸¹⁶ This is seen in the productive collaborations between designer Nelson Silva and the line workers, in the close relationship of President and CEO Hildy Abrams and Kerr, and the later transfer of designers from Kerr Smith to become employees of

⁸¹³ Adamson, *The Invention of Craft*, xxiii.

⁸¹⁴ Reimer and Leslie, "Design, National Imaginaries, and the Home Furnishings Commodity Chain."

⁸¹⁵ Reimer and Leslie, 147.

⁸¹⁶ The global networks of immigrant labour and local production come full circle. Silva lives in the west end of Toronto, near Jitterbug, a workshop specializing in custom handmade footwear for dance, theatre, circus, and film productions around the world. Silva is friends with the owner and occasionally uses the workshop to make his own handmade shoe line there. Their mutual friend, Jeff Brodawka, runs a clothing and accessories store not far away on Queen Street West. Silva connected Brodawka with Boita, who works in lasting at Mellow Walk, who in turn, introduced Brodawka to his cousin in Portugal. Boita's cousin now produces small runs of shoes designed by Brodawka and sold in his Toronto store.

Gourmet Settings. The two manufacturers are located in clusters of similarly scaled businesses, just as the designers are situated in neighbourhoods of advertising agencies, tech start ups, and design studios. Gourmet Settings might not have been so successful had Kerr and Nigel Smith not shared an elevator.⁸¹⁷ The case study objects were well received by consumers because the producers were themselves immersed in or representative of the target markets. This is the spatial distribution expected in global design, with designers located near the consumer audiences they are designing for.

While Mellow Walk and Gourmet Settings benefit from their local networks, they are also limited by being in Toronto and Canada, where manufacturing networks are small or non-existent in their sectors. Sullivan has witnessed changes in the Canadian shoe industry over the past 25 years that have, in her opinion, forced Mellow Walk “to become global on buying because there’s no place else.” The idea that there is nowhere other than global, that local is no longer a place, is in line with narratives of globalization as inevitable and the findings of trade economists that we are only at the beginning of the “internationalisation of economic activity.”⁸¹⁸ Sullivan recalls a time when there were 30 shoe manufacturers near Mellow Walk, when there was more exchange between like-minded businesses, and materials and equipment could be sourced in Canada.⁸¹⁹ Similarly, Silva describes being the last shoe factory in the city as equivalent to operating on an island. He contrasted it with his experience of Leon, the shoe city in Mexico, where knowledge is shared between factories, people learn from each other, and developments in technology and manufacturing occur more quickly because there are so many people doing similar work. Because Silva has no one to consult nearby, he relies on trial and error to solve problems and on opportunities to consult his peers at international trade shows and factories. In Mellow Walk’s neighbourhood, the one remaining, related company is Roots, with a small facility producing some of its leather goods. There have been occasions when Mellow Walk has loaned Roots a machine, a simple exchange that helps to further relationships and knowledge. Silva wishes there was more of this because it would help local manufacturing to “evolve, get deeper.”

⁸¹⁷ They have since combined offices and moved to an up-and-coming design district in the east end of the city.

⁸¹⁸ Gasiorrek and Lopez-Gonzalez, “China-EU Global Value Chains: Who Creates Value, How and Where? Growing Linkages and Opportunities,” 8–9.

⁸¹⁹ Sullivan had been employed by another footwear company that changed drastically after the recession of 2008, transforming itself from a family-based company to a corporate model with a greater focus on profit. The firm wanted to remain Canadian-made, but had to shut one of its two factories and import much of its product.

Offshore manufacturing and sourcing are often attributed to cheap labour, but the Mellow Walk case study shows that the globalization of production is also motivated by a lack of local resources and expertise. Factories in other countries offer conditions, equipment, and knowledge that are no longer available in North America. Silva has proven this in his efforts to source components and materials locally. He has spent months looking for Canadian suppliers but finds nothing he can use – the leather is of poor quality, the buckles have to be ordered in unreasonable quantities, there are no suppliers for the lasts and other pieces he needs. With the disappearance of Canada's shoe industry, Silva must look to other areas of the world that now specialize in shoe production. In one of the ironies of the 'Made in Canada' branding, it is almost impossible for Mellow Walk to support other Canadian manufacturers.

For Gourmet Settings, the prospect of local manufacturing is even less likely. Kerr points out that cutlery *could* be made anywhere in the world, yet Liberty Tabletop, in the former Oneida factory in upstate New York, is the last place producing flatware in North America. It is similar in scale and approach to Mellow Walk with its small production runs proudly sold under a "Made in the USA" label. However, Gourmet Settings chose to take advantage of global production from the start. Offshore manufacturing allowed the company to achieve the quantities required for large retail orders and to keep prices low, but it also required establishing their own supply chains, sourcing steel from multiple countries and expertise from England, Korea, China, Vietnam, and Taiwan. Like Sullivan, Daniel Choi, the Gourmet Settings' agent and factory COO in Vietnam, talks about global manufacturing as unchangeable. His interview responses convey a sense of inevitability, where design, marketing, and manufacturing must continue to adapt in order to stay in the global market or risk being left behind.

2 Shifting 'Territories' and 'Myth-Places' of Design and Manufacturing

Nations are real and perceived sources of design in the case studies. The case studies expose hierarchies within the global division of labour as well as perceptions about the strengths and weaknesses of Canadian design and manufacturing in relation to other countries. Actors share similar attitudes about who can be creative and contribute to design, and about which nations specialize in certain aspects of production. In general, the 'myth-places' described by interviewees reflect the same hierarchies of 'design-led' and 'heritage' countries present in theories of industrial progress and upgrading.⁸²⁰ Geographic distance also played a role in their responses, with interviewees being quicker to dismiss and anonymize actors on the other side

⁸²⁰ Margolin, "Design for Development"; Solca, "The 'Made In' Dilemma."

of the world (or known only through online communication), and to see them as receivers and executors of design direction rather than acknowledge them as individual contributors.

2.1 Shoe Countries and Cities

There is an unofficial ranking of 'shoe countries' and 'shoe cities' apparent in the Mellow Walk case studies. Nations with long-standing footwear industries topped interviewee lists of those with the best reputations for shoe design: Italy, Spain, France, and Portugal. These are the "heritage" countries with which brands wish to be associated.⁸²¹ For example, Maria Barreto, the Supervisor in Finishing, distinguishes between shoes made in Italy and Portugal ("special shoes"), those made in Canada ("good ones"), and shoes from countries like Mexico and Brazil ("cheap"). The level of specialization in Portugal, for example, is evident in that there are multiple 'shoe cities' with different reputations – Boita reported three shoe capitals in Portugal alone, including his hometown, Benedita. Sullivan points to Western Europe, China, and the Pacific Rim as regions strong in shoe manufacturing, but no one mentioned Eastern Europe, Southeast Asia, Brazil, or India as important sources, despite their representation in the top ten countries exporting footwear to Canada as of 2014.⁸²² This suggests that certain national brands have yet to gain respect in proportion to their share of the market. Silva adds Mexico to the list, explaining that manufacturing there, as in China, is more advanced and could be considered on par with Italy.⁸²³

Shifting regions of design are visible in how traditional 'shoe countries' are repositioning their role to maintain positions of power within global commodity chains. Italy remains a world leader despite its declining position in manufacturing (in 1990, Canada imported more shoes from Italy than anywhere else in the world, but by 2014, Italy had fallen from first to third place below China and Vietnam).⁸²⁴ Italy is respected instead for its research and development, its leadership in technologies, processes, automation, and shoe making equipment (Silva). This expertise is circulated globally by Italian technicians who are considered the best in the industry. Silva explains that many now live in China and that he encounters them on factory floors in Mexico (grumbling about the quality of the local pasta). Italy therefore still plays a central role in

⁸²¹ Solca, "The 'Made In' Dilemma."

⁸²² As of 2014, the top ten exporters of footwear to Canada were, from largest to smallest: China, Vietnam, Italy, Indonesia, Cambodia, United States, Portugal, Spain, India, and Romania. Innovation Government of Canada, "Canadian Industry Statistics - Home," home page; Navigation Pages; Home Pages; Reports; Landing Pages; Statistical Reports, accessed July 10, 2016, <https://www.ic.gc.ca/eic/site/cis-sic.nsf/eng/home>.

⁸²³ While China is known for producing large quantities for others rather than originating new shoe knowledge, Silva points out that China's factories are in fact quite advanced in part because they pick up knowledge from foreign companies that manufacture there (like industry leader Nike).

⁸²⁴ Government of Canada, "Canadian Industry Statistics - Home."

convening and directing the global shoe industry. Silva and Andrew Violi attend Linea Pelle, the annual leather, footwear, and accessories trade show in Milan, to connect with suppliers and gain exposure to new trends from around the world. Similarly, Silva attended Arsutoria, the school in Milan recognized as a leader in shoe design education. There he met shoemakers from other countries and connected with Italians who had visited foreign factories. All of this reinforces the extent to which networks of Italian design continue to influence international shoe production, and how Italy is capitalizing on its legacy as a 'core' shoe nation by exporting knowledge.

Italy's far-reaching footwear design and manufacturing networks illustrate how industrializing economies benefit from foreign investment to gain new expertise and in the process, can surpass advanced economies. The rise of Mexican shoe manufacturing is linked to Italian companies opening factories there to access cheaper labour and North American consumers (Silva). The country has its own long history of leather goods production, as well as state-of-the-art sewing factories, the latest equipment, and efficient processes. It offers a greater variety of materials and components than anywhere in Canada. The rise of Mexico as a centre of expertise for shoe making has benefited Mellow Walk. The shoe city of Leon has become a source for many of the Vanessa components and Mellow Walk has an agent there who deals with local suppliers on its behalf. The scale of Mexican manufacturing is also more appropriate for Canadian manufacturers who do not require the large minimum orders from China. In Silva's observation, 'Made in Mexico' deserves more respect, and aspects of Mexico's manufacturing reputation are indeed changing. Mellow Walk is one of a long list of North American brands, including major automotive companies, that are proud to associate themselves with Lefarc, a tannery that emphasizes innovation, environmentally friendly practices, and efficiency. The leather is a defining feature of the 'quality' of the Made-in-Canada footwear.

Other shifts in power are evident in the sourcing of shoe-making equipment. As described in the case study, Mellow Walk's machines have traditionally come from Europe and now Asia, but not North America. As manufacturing has moved offshore, the companies that make the factory equipment have followed, reinforcing the strength of those local manufacturing ecosystems. Sullivan deals with a variety of suppliers, primarily from Germany (Schoen, Pfaff, Adler), Italy (Comelz, Ormac, Elettrotecnica), Japan (Juki), and Taiwan (Chenfeng), plus a software company in Montreal (Jonar). At the time of the interview, Sullivan was considering

(with some reluctance) a machine from the Taiwanese supplier, who quoted less than one third the price of its Italian counterpart and under half the price of the equivalent German machine.⁸²⁵

2.1.1 *Made in Canada*

Mellow Walk inserts Canada in the global hierarchy of shoe countries, spinning the unique conditions of local manufacturing into added value for its customers. By reifying the footwear as Canadian and focusing all attention on local conditions and employees, the fact that the majority of materials and components are sourced overseas, disappears. Its image as a Made-in-Canada, family business is partly based on branding and partly a reflection of the realities of production and the company's place in the global market.

From within industry, there is a perception of Canada as a manufacturing nation left behind. Other countries have the infrastructure and new technology required for manufacturing, while Canada has become, in the opinion of interviewees, an "island" or "orphan" where it is difficult to operate in isolation, and where there is little support for research and innovation (Silva, Sullivan, Colantonio). Both Violi and Silva view Mellow Walk's model as a medium-sized company to be sustainable in its current form. However, it was an anomaly made possible by the conditions in which it was created, when other factories were closing and the labour and equipment were available locally (Silva). Silva explains that the Mellow Walk model is unlikely to be recreated in Canada because opening a new shoe manufacturing facility would require substantial capital, and would either mean going much bigger with more automation to achieve cost efficiencies, or smaller with new custom technologies that allow for production of higher-end products at an elevated price point. These same barriers affect manufacturing in other industries, which has further impact on the size of Mellow Walk's market. Canada is unlikely to be a "net gainer of manufacturing jobs" (Violi), and as Ontario's automotive manufacturing sector shrinks, so does the number of people who need to buy steel-toe boots (though other manufacturing industries are growing in the province).⁸²⁶ As a result, Mellow Walk is now looking for new markets outside of North America with growing success in the Middle East (Dubai) and Caribbean (Trinidad and Puerto Rico).

⁸²⁵ Further change is visible at the level of local distribution: some Canadian suppliers used to manufacture machinery but have turned to selling European and Asian equipment only (Sullivan). The United Shoe Machinery Corporations (known as USM Americas today), a historically important institution that was founded in 1899 so that shoe manufacturers could afford to lease machinery in the UK and US, then centres of global shoe production, now represents equipment from Austria, Brazil, Britain, China, Italy, Germany and Taiwan. Whitten and Whitten, *Handbook of American Business History*, 222; Swann, *Shoemaking*, 25.

⁸²⁶ Statistics Canada Government of Canada, "The Daily — Study: Manufacturing: The Year 2017 in Review," April 9, 2018, <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/180409/dq180409a-eng.htm>.

Mellow Walk uses its scale to its advantage, positioning itself as agile, responsive, and innovative in comparison to large Chinese manufacturers. Small companies have almost no leverage in China, according to Violi, as factories there require large minimum orders of several thousand pairs per colour and style; more money upfront; longer lead times and international shipping (manufacturing time plus five weeks to cross the ocean); and there is the risk of sitting on stock that does not sell quickly enough, or running out of a specific size and having to order an entire container load. Making in Canada allows Mellow Walk to deliver smaller orders (minimum 36 pairs) for specific styles and sizes in as little as five to six weeks (Sullivan). It also allows Mellow Walk to design for niche markets. The company can test new designs in small quantities, and wait several years to see if sales pick up, filling orders as they come in rather than investing in large orders upfront (Violi). For Boita, the time and money saved on shipping, local prototyping, and getting the desired quality from the start (rather than sending drawings to China, being displeased with the samples that are sent back, and ultimately unhappy with the quality of the final product) makes local production more attractive.

In its branding, Mellow Walk combines this narrative of successfully navigating global production with a nostalgia for local manufacturing. This strategy works well because, as Fallan explains, “products clearly identified with national industrial heritage have become increasingly important identity markers in our time of ‘liquid modernity’, and their capacity to convey and evoke memories of *temps perdu* is more significant than ever.”⁸²⁷ Indeed, the factory is celebrated for its link to the past and the novelty of being the last remaining shoe factory in the province. Mellow Walk capitalizes on images of craft and its model as a family-owned company to further drive links to local, traditional ways of manufacturing.⁸²⁸ The factory workers are made celebrities, their images used at opportune moments to sell shoes.⁸²⁹ They are the only employees named and pictured on product labels featuring individual “shoemakers” (fig.52), and they are described as having “100s of years of experience” and “the skill[s] of an old-school

⁸²⁷ Fallan (2013, p.81), as quoted in Fallan and Lees-Maffei, “Introduction: National Design Histories in an Age of Globalization,” 10.

⁸²⁸ A painting of co-founder Gino Mellozzi (1944-2001) shows him as a shoemaker, using a needle, thread, hammer, and last, with a roll of leather beside him. Mellow Walk, “Our Twentieth Anniversary Year”; Anthony Mellozzi, Gino’s son, now owns his own business, Mellozzi Footwear. Referring to himself as a third generation shoemaker, he states that he learned everything from his father who taught him to sew moccasins by hand. Mellozzi Footwear, “Mellozzi Creates Footwear for the Style of Every Man’s Life,” accessed August 18, 2015, <http://mellozzi.com/>.

⁸²⁹ When government delegates like former federal Minister of Finance, Jim Flaherty, visit Mellow Walk, they are photographed with the shoemakers, not the designer (Mellow Walk Facebook).

shoemaker.”⁸³⁰ Photographs of senior employees, especially in sepia tone, evoke an old-world feel, as does the video Violi shared of a modern-day last maker’s workshop, in which someone hand carves wooden forms as he looks out onto a European street.⁸³¹ This presentation of labour is typical of leather footwear industries, and reflects a sector that has been slow to automate, carrying forward stereotypes of the cobbler and handwork.⁸³²

Local manufacturing is subsumed under national identity in Mellow Walk’s “Made in Canada” labelling. National identity functions not only as a sales tactic, but as a defining value of Mellow Walk’s corporate culture and by extension, its employees and products. ‘Made in Canada’ has become synonymous at Mellow Walk with attributes like: family, quality, value, safety, comfort, hard work, and authenticity. The footwear is seen as reasonably and respectably priced (mid-range, middle class), trustworthy, and attractive but not high fashion, qualities that are easily transposed to the Mellow Walk worker and consumer in sectors like construction, nursing, and manufacturing. In Silva’s view, “it’s not a showy company. It’s not trying to dazzle and dazzle people with all kinds technologies that aren’t going to help them in their shoes. So in that way, it has more integrity.” While there is nothing particularly ‘Canadian’ or cutting-edge about these individual values, when combined as a “set of national characteristics,” they support the reification of Canada as stable, safe, reliable, and accessible.⁸³³

How Canadian-ness is embodied in the Vanessa boots and other Mellow Walk products emerges in comparison with footwear from other nations. There was no shortage of opinions among the interviewees about what makes a Mellow Walk shoe unique in relation to imports, quality being the most important characteristic. China was the most common comparator rather than nations perceived as higher in the ranking of shoe countries, claiming Canada’s place in the middle – not a ‘shoe country,’ but not a source of inexpensive, mass-produced goods either. Interviewees agreed that quality is embodied in the leather, described as a good quality, real leather (the fact that it comes from Mexico seems irrelevant in these conversations), and importantly, not cheap “plasticky leather” or vinyl, like shoes from China (Romeiro, Torres,

⁸³⁰ Andrew Violi, “Making a Leather Upper: Step 2 in a Great Pair of Safety Shoes,” Mellow Walk, November 13, 2014, <http://www.mellowwalk.com/posts/making-a-leather-upper-step-2-in-a-great-pair-of-safety-shoes/>.

⁸³¹ Mellow Walk, *A Last Makers Workshop.*, accessed August 31, 2015, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dMxwNDY5Muw>.

⁸³² La Canadienne, manufacturer of winter boots in Montreal, launched an ad campaign in 2012 focusing on making: boots next to beaten up, traditional hand tools, old workstations with flaking paint and worn furniture, and delicate shoes held in the dirty hands of a shoemaker. Krashinsky, “Give ‘Em the Boot.” The American company Frye, whose Veronica boot inspired the Vanessa, also constructs product identities around local manufacturing and skilled artisans.

⁸³³ Edensor, *National Identity, Popular Culture and Everyday Life*, 1.

Padda). Sullivan can “smell” quality and observes that all Chinese shoes (“anything that comes over”), along with the stores that sell them, have a distinctive “plasticky” odour that may come from the cement they use. The Mellow Walk shoes have their own odour that likely comes from the cream they apply in Finishing, but Sullivan thinks this almost smells like leather and is therefore a “good smell.” She can also “feel” quality based on weight (Mellow Walk shoes have the right heft but Chinese shoes feel too light, flimsy, thin and insubstantial). They are comfortable all day, in contrast to the less comfortable but beautiful dress shoes found in Portugal (Barreto, Romeiro, Torres), though Padda believes that the Mellow Walk styles are attractive and stand out. Sullivan sees Canadian-ness in the Vanessa style – substantial but still feminine without being pointed, petite, or “little girly.”

Mellow Walk’s higher price is an important differentiator, and here, ‘Made in Canada’ gains meaning in relation to local labour versus less expensive imports. Part of the buy/make local argument hinges on the belief that cheaper, overseas labour produces lower quality goods, and that an investment in local design leads to higher quality and a competitive edge over imports.⁸³⁴ Indeed, the interviewees justify the higher cost because Mellow Walk does not cut corners on production processes and wages. In their opinion, if the price was lower (the “Chinese price” - Sullivan), the quality would be suspect and the shoes would not last as long (“You buy cheap and you have to buy two times” – Barreto). Romeiro sees a difference in how they are made: Mellow Walk puts more detail and time into the shoes whereas offshore manufacturers rush to save money and the final product is not as “perfect.”⁸³⁵ Sullivan recalls a trip to Chinese factories in the mid-1990s: “I looked at them and their answer to everything is throw people at it. Right? Where they would have five people doing something that we might only have one person doing.” The idea that Canadian companies work ‘smarter’ and treat their employees more fairly is reflected in the tone of Mellow Walk promotional materials — consumers are investing in local jobs when they purchase the shoes.⁸³⁶ At the same time, Mellow Walk products are relatively inexpensive given that they are made in Canada, and they sell at competitive prices in mid-range stores like Mark’s. The manufacturer is able to achieve

⁸³⁴ Goodison, “The Crafts & Their Industrial Future,” 101.

⁸³⁵ Padda supports this view in an anecdote about shopping for dress shoes. When she asked the shop owner why they were so expensive, he replied that it was because of all the work that went into the shoes, but Padda recognized that they were synthetic, and told him there was not that much work in them, and that the leather was fake.

⁸³⁶ On his blog, Violi shares a story of a Chinese supplier that makes shoes for Nine West and Guess. The Chinese manufacturer outsourced to factories in Ethiopia where wages were less than 10% of those paid in China. Anthony Dipaola, “Ethiopia Becomes China’s China in Search for Cheap Labor,” Bloomberg.com, accessed August 31, 2015, <http://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2014-07-22/ethiopia-becomes-china-s-china-in-search-for-cheap-labor>.

this in part because of global fragmentation and the savings gained by working with sub-contractors downstream in the commodity chain.⁸³⁷ Many of the Vanessa components come from countries where labour is cheaper, but once the products of that labour are incorporated within the whole shoe, their work becomes invisible, subsumed under the 'value' of 'Made in Canada.'

The uncertainty of labouring in a fluid global economy leads people to look for security tied to place.⁸³⁸ Workers at Mellow Walk seek this reassurance – the presence of the factory at Keele and Lawrence, and the shipments of real shoes to local stores and customers, offer concrete evidence of Canada's role as a manufacturer and contributor to the global economy with an edge over China. The importance of provenance is reflected in Romeiro's comment that the imported shoes seem different simply because they are not made "here," and that "here" has value. Padda inadvertently offers this sales pitch for local manufacturing: we can say (and others cannot) that we know how these are made, where they are made, and who is making them; we can say that it is all done here. It is because of local production that Mellow Walk can control quality and maintain personal relationships with the makers. Padda conveys the importance of a sense of familiarity and security in knowing that the products you use, and especially something that needs to be trustworthy like safety shoes, comes from your own home, from a place you know.⁸³⁹

For consumers, the value of 'Made in Canada' varies. Both the end-consumer, Bonnie McCabe, and the Managing Director of Mister Safety Shoes, John Colantonio, confirmed that features like style, comfort, and price take precedence over country of origin in the mind of the Canadian buyer, while Violi believes that supporting Canadian jobs is important to those working in sectors like manufacturing. However, Violi observes that consumers in the Middle East and Caribbean see value in 'Made-in-Canada' shoes in a way that Canadians see value in Made in Italy footwear. He attributes this to a global 'aspirational' need: "people outside of the Western world are becoming wealthier and richer and they have aspirations to succeed. So for them, to be able to say that they've bought a shoe that's made in Canada, helps feed that

⁸³⁷ Dedrick, Kraemer, and Linden, "Who Profits from Innovation in Global Value Chains? A Study of the iPod and Notebook PCs."

⁸³⁸ Edensor, *National Identity, Popular Culture and Everyday Life*, 28.

⁸³⁹ McCabe, the only customer I interviewed, could not define a Canadian look, but compared a Chinese aesthetic with what she discovered making textiles in Bali: "One thing about China is that everything looks pre-fab. You lose that funky look [that you find in Bali]. They're just so precise. Everything looks the same. You lose that hand-done feeling. I did a lot of beaded t-shirts [in Bali]. They're all the same but it doesn't look like pre-packaged beading. You can tell that it's hand done. In the making, like even these [Vanessa] boots, they look very...like they're very well made, but there's something that doesn't read China about them. Now that I'm thinking about them being made in Canada, I'm thinking wow...there is something really nice about the way they're made. But China can also copy that too."

aspirational need. It's not Made in India or China, it's Made in Canada or the United States. [...] there's a certain mindset that you're buying something that's of Western value or quality, or standards." Consumers too see national identity embodied in material goods, and the perception of a global hierarchy of 'shoe countries' outweighs the sophistication of manufacturing in places like China and Mexico.

2.1.2 *Made in Toronto*

Made in Toronto might be a more accurate label for Mellow Walk products as many of their defining "place qualities" originate at the level of the city.⁸⁴⁰ The "texture and experience of the local" embodied in the Vanessas can be traced to Toronto's multicultural history and its once thriving shoe manufacturing industry.⁸⁴¹ Circumstances particular to Toronto in the early 1990s allowed Mellow Walk to recruit shoemakers left unemployed by the downsizing, closures, and offshoring of other local shoe factories. Many of those employees had immigrated to Toronto from Italy and Portugal in the 1970s and took jobs not based on previous experience (despite coming from 'shoe countries'), but because of newspaper ads and personal networks where friends, family, and neighbours connected them to entry-level positions.

Familial and cultural networks have helped to sustain Mellow Walk and to keep Toronto's remaining shoe industry within first and second-generation Italian and Portuguese communities. Several employees spoke with great reverence for Aldo Violi, one of the original founders (Padda knew him for 37 years). They recalled needing a job in Canada and never being without thanks to him — they followed him from factory to factory as they closed across Toronto. Barreto spoke fondly of Gino Melozzi, the other founding partner, pictures of whom whose pictures she still had posted in her workspace. Barreto had worked at Melozzi's previous company, Ritter Shoes, until it also closed down. She remembers Melozzi and his wife visiting her home and asking her to work at Mellow Walk. A connection formed by Violi's and Colantonio's fathers illustrates the importance for Mellow Walk of Toronto's large Italian population and its role in the construction industry. Mister Safety still supports Mellow Walk by channeling information from job sites about shoe design, and by carrying its footwear (Colantonio).⁸⁴²

⁸⁴⁰ Harvey Molotch, *Where Stuff Comes From: How Toasters, Toilets, Cars, Computers and Many Other Things Come To Be As They Are*, 1 edition (New York, NY: Routledge, 2005).

⁸⁴¹ Fiss, "Design in a Global Context," 7.

⁸⁴² Frank Colantonio, founder of Mister Safety stores, became a construction worker when he arrived in Canada in the early 1950s, and went on to become a respected leader in organizing labour and safety standards on worksites. In 1972, he and his wife Nella decided to transition the family shoe business she had been running into a safety equipment store. Colantonio became friends with the owners of Mellow

The manufacturer continues to benefit from a labour force made possible by national immigration policy and Toronto's long history of attracting newcomers. Violi can see waves of immigration reflected in his staff – first Italian, then Portuguese and Spanish speaking, now more Vietnamese. Without these communities, Violi believes there would not be enough people to fill manufacturing jobs. Other interviewees noted a shortage of young people willing to take jobs in manufacturing or to commit to one company for long periods. Fewer skilled workers, whether due to a lack of trade schools or lack of interest in jobs perceived as monotonous and inflexible, is characteristic of the creative economy and a symptom of Toronto's reduced manufacturing sector.⁸⁴³

Mellow Walk celebrates the diversity of its employees, part of the extended family in a family-run company staffed by dedicated, hardworking Canadians. At the entrance to the factory floor are flags representing their home countries, including Canada, Italy, Portugal, Vietnam, China, Mexico, Colombia, Chile, Peru, Russia, India, and the Philippines. The final Mellow Walk product also represents another type of international diversity, but it is ignored in Mellow Walk's brand story. Almost all Mellow Walk components and materials are made outside of Canada. The only components that are truly Canadian – the thread and the glue – are the elements that hold the rest of the Vanessa boots together.

2.2 Placeless Flatware and Offshore Manufacturing

The story of Non Stop covers almost every continent, yet, contrary to Mellow Walk, the concept of place is noticeably absent in Gourmet Settings promotional materials, save for the packaging that indicates it is a Canadian company manufacturing in China. Gourmet Settings deals with a scale and price point that can only be achieved in Asia but Abrams chooses to reframe the discussion of origin in terms of individual relationships:

Countries tend to get a good or bad review, and when people ask me where I make something, generally the answer is, *who* I make it with, which is different to me than *where* I make it. Because I'm producing some goods in China, but the people who are producing [them] are so passionate and so committed about getting it right, they could be in Switzerland. (Abrams)⁸⁴⁴

Walk, laying the foundations for his son, John, to continue the close connection between Mister Safety and the Violis. Colantonio, "History."

⁸⁴³ Florida, *The Rise of the Creative Class*, 85–86 According to Sullivan, training happens increasingly within the factory, something she expected when she worked in Northern Ontario, but not in Toronto where, she presumes, "cultures" with the right skills already exist. The need for training is further evidence of the diminished workforce and interest in manufacturing.

⁸⁴⁴ The Non Stop packaging states in small type that the Gourmet Settings head office is in Richmond Hill, Ontario, that the flatware is designed by Kerr & Co. and the packaging by Hahn Smith, and that the

Non Stop came into existence when relationships between Western manufacturers and Chinese factories were still relatively new, and Abrams and Kerr describe how challenging this was for both sides as the Chinese factories became more accustomed to dealing with Western clients and vice versa. Abrams' emphasis on relationships illustrates how personal these transnational networks are and underlines what Gereffi describes as "performance trust among numerous contractors," a defining characteristic of buyer-driven GVCs.⁸⁴⁵

How Kerr and Abrams determined which factories and retailers to work with has become a story of adventure, travel, and entrepreneurship, a story that reproduces place-images characteristic of the global division of labour. The two immersed themselves in local production cultures where they were confronted with unfamiliar languages, conditions, and ways of doing business. They compared materials and facilities in Japan, Korea, China, and Germany (and now Vietnam) and found that Germany and Japan offered "beautiful" steel (each with a distinctive odour) (Kerr). In contrast, Chinese steel was poor quality; it contained sludge leading to pitting and rusting. The factories followed suit: German facilities were precise and spotless ("you could eat off the floor"- Kerr), with high standards and rigorous inspection; and Chinese factories were organized to varying degrees, and left an overall impression of being polluted, dirty, smelling bad, and offering less than ideal working conditions (Kerr). Choi adds to these observations that some countries are more attractive to work with, like Vietnam, which has a government friendly to foreign direct investment and people who are "self-motivated, smart, hardworking." Choi further connects culture and work ethic in his belief that Confucianism has helped to create a "hardworking and persevering culture...favorable to manufacturing, especially when it's labor intensive." These associations between countries, cultures, and the process and materials of production influence relationships in commodity chains and perceptions of national identities tied to consumer goods.

Kerr and Abrams witnessed global shifts in manufacturing in the late 1990s that led to the redistribution of knowledge and evolution of flatware production networks. Kerr visited an area of South Korea dedicated solely to flatware production, evidence of a regional knowledge base and the nation's dominance in manufacturing before Chinese pricing undercut South Korea's position in the value chain.⁸⁴⁶ Both countries had already started taking market share

cutlery is made in China (or Vietnam). The authorship is clearly attributed to the designers who are named, and the manufacturer is given a specific location in North America, but the factories and those who work there are anonymous.

⁸⁴⁵ Gereffi, "Beyond the Producer-driven/Buyer-Driven Dichotomy: The Evolution of Global Value Chains in the Internet Era," 33.

⁸⁴⁶ McKinsey and Company, "South Korea: Finding Its Place on the World Stage," accessed November 22, 2015,

from the US as early as 1978, as recorded in an ominous report by the US government that American industry was being “seriously injured by imports of stainless steel table flatware” from Japan and the Republics of Korea and China.⁸⁴⁷ Many South Korean factory owners and agents have since moved their manufacturing to other countries where costs are lower, still keeping activity within regional commodity chains and ‘Factory Asia.’⁸⁴⁸ They act as intermediaries for Western companies because of their expertise and cultural connections with both parties — South Korea has a longer history working with foreign (Western) manufacturers, and deep connections in China as well as facility with the language. Many of the new factories in Vietnam are owned by Koreans and Taiwanese (Lim).

It is unclear from the case studies if cheap labour is the differentiator between these locations. Designer Johnny Lim remarked that rising labour costs in China are leading factories to move to Vietnam and third world countries, and Lim, Choi, and Sabrina Chen all believe that the primary advantage of manufacturing in Asia is lower wages. However, Choi’s comment that his job is changing “from a bona fide manager to an innovator who has to reform the manufacturing system [with] more automation and less labor,” suggests that the factories he deals with are becoming more technologically advanced or that labour costs are rising and automation is required to offset those costs. This supports Gereffi’s observation that as developing economies “have moved to more technology- and skill-intensive exports, it has become clear that ‘cheap labour’ alone is no longer an adequate explanation for Third World industrialization.”⁸⁴⁹ Through industrial upgrading, workers are supposed to move “upstream.”⁸⁵⁰ It was difficult to determine in the case studies what the skill-intensive exports might be due to lack of information and opportunity for observation. However, both Lim and Choi pointed to higher-level skills in the factories. Lim has seen increased technical and design capacity in the sense that the factories now exchange and interpret drawings accurately and create precise molds, and Choi mentioned problem solving and the expertise of technicians (“many invisible local skills and knowledge [are] transmitted by...Korean old boys (technicians) [that] can make Gourmet Settings flatware look outstanding”). These observations suggest that the factories

http://www.mckinsey.com/insights/winning_in_emerging_markets/south_korea_finding_its_place_on_the_world_stage.

⁸⁴⁷ United States International Trade Commission, “Certain Stainless Steel Flatware” (Washington, D.C.: United States International Trade Commission, 1978), <https://www.usitc.gov/publications/safeguards/pub884.pdf>.

⁸⁴⁸ Gasiorrek and Lopez-Gonzalez, “China-EU Global Value Chains: Who Creates Value, How and Where? Growing Linkages and Opportunities,” 8.

⁸⁴⁹ Gereffi, “Beyond the Producer-driven/Buyer-Driven Dichotomy: The Evolution of Global Value Chains in the Internet Era,” 31.

⁸⁵⁰ Timmer et al., “Slicing Up Global Value Chains,” 116.

Gourmet Settings works with are reaching the last of Gui Bonsiepe's five stages of development in design, with "designers working in industrial enterprises."⁸⁵¹

Gourmet Settings' promotional materials present a highly simplified version of manufacturing in which offshore production is downplayed and individual factories are never named. Collaboration is emphasized among the designers, and with retailers and customers, but the relationship to manufacturing appears to be more about control: "Our team has a thorough knowledge of all the manufacturing processes involved in making an idea a reality... Along the way, we obsessively check these processes to ensure the best results are achieved."⁸⁵² Gourmet Settings staff are portrayed as experts who re-thought, streamlined, and improved production processes by bringing knowledge about materials, chemistry, and engineering processes to the factories in Asia, as represented by the British expert Roger Hamby and Kerr and Abrams from Toronto. Evidence of design work is shown in details of sketches and prototypes, while videos of the 30 steps of manufacturing abbreviate phases of production through animations of factory equipment absent of human operators. Real footage of the factories in Asia focus on the hands of the makers and their backs with the exception of Hamby, who faces the camera and explains the process to the viewer and factory workers. No acknowledgement is made of expertise from individual workers or the factories as a collective base of knowledge.

Gourmet Settings has focused its origin story on design to such an extent that there is little room to question what happens elsewhere in production. The company presents itself as a design-led organization, fetishizing the designers, their process, and award-winning products as the embodiment of their approach to business and lifestyle. "Design is everything," states an early promotional brochure. While Kerr no longer provides design services to Gourmet Settings, her 'designeriness' as an esteemed designer and strategist continues to add value to the flatware and meaning to the corporate identity. The other designers, along with the Gourmet Settings staff, retail buyers, factory employees, and suppliers, are subsumed in a shifting depiction of "our team" and ambiguous statements about "we:" "We love flatware. So we decided to make it better."⁸⁵³ With Kerr and Smith's help, Abrams presented Gourmet Settings as the epitome of what design could achieve. Early marketing materials boldly claimed that they were leading "a tabletop revolution," comparing what Gourmet Settings was doing for affordable

⁸⁵¹ Gui Bonsiepe cited in Margolin, "Design for Development" (Gui Bonsiepe, "Developing Countries: Awareness of Design and the Peripheral Condition," in *History of Industrial Design: 1919-1990 The Dominion of Design*, ed. Carlo Pirovano (Milan, Italy: Electa, 1991)).

⁸⁵² Gourmet Settings, "The Design Process."

⁸⁵³ Gourmet Settings, "Reinventing Flatware," n.d., <http://www.gourmetsettings.com/reinventing-flatware>.

flatware to the disruption and democratization of the American automotive industry by Honda and Toyota in the 1970s, and even more relevant in the 1990s, the redesign of the personal computer by Apple.⁸⁵⁴

Even though so much attention has been given to the flatware's creation, little is said about the locations where the flatware is conceived and made. Solca describes this as the selective disclosure of origin, when brands choose to associate themselves with "heritage countries" and omit connections to places with cheaper labour.⁸⁵⁵ In addition to Non Stop's branding as generically, globally modern, it appropriates two place-images, combining European design pedigree with the home of mass-consumption and value for money: "with looks to make a Scandinavian country blush, and price tags to make corporate America proud."⁸⁵⁶ Manufacturers and designers count on the consumer being able to understand the hegemonic language of these signifiers, in terms of associating both aesthetics and meanings with national identity and the overarching value and origins of design.⁸⁵⁷

It is difficult for interviewees to pinpoint anything Canadian about Non Stop – the "national characteristics [...] elude capture and dissection."⁸⁵⁸ Kerr feels too close to Non Stop to attribute any national identity, and according to Choi and Monnet, there is nothing about it that "says Canada." For Smith, the cutlery is Canadian because of the sense of humour conveyed in the packaging, and because of the balancing act it plays between American tastes for large flatware and European and Scandinavian design influences. Lim added what might seem a very Canadian caveat to his definition of design: "if it can't offend anybody, then that means it's good design." According to Abrams, it is the Canadians driving the process and the design thinking who have given the flatware its 'Canadian values' like ethical and legal production. The people behind Gourmet Settings represent the cultural diversity Canada is known for (employees are Jewish, Italian, Chinese, and Filipino). Even if designers cannot see the cultural references in their work, creating something that is "culture-free"⁸⁵⁹ is still a conscious decision that involves erasing or re-framing provenance, and re-inscribing the object with new meaning. It requires selecting which places to be associated with, like Scandinavia, or the world capitals referenced in building silhouettes on some packaging. Kerr wonders if consumers care about where the

⁸⁵⁴ The brochure states "We started with the basic concept of asking you what you wanted and then we used your feedback. We worked with the best designers and sought out the best suppliers. We went to the factories. We streamlined, designed and refined, tested and figured it out. How did Apple do it with the PC? We did it the same way." Gourmet Settings, "This Is Just a Fork," n.d.

⁸⁵⁵ Solca, "The 'Made In' Dilemma."

⁸⁵⁶ Gourmet Settings, "Reinventing Flatware."

⁸⁵⁷ Appadurai, *Modernity At Large*, 42.

⁸⁵⁸ Aldersey-Williams, *World Design*, 6.

⁸⁵⁹ Aldersey-Williams, 6.

cutlery comes from or if they are drawn to the flatware because it feels like it belongs to them as individuals.

Like Mellow Walk, the success of Gourmet Settings is partly attributable to Toronto place qualities. The company's origins fit within what Gotlieb and Golden describe as a post-recession "design resurgence in the nineties," where Canadian manufacturers like Toronto-based Umbra introduced affordable housewares to great success (including products designed by Kerr with Miles Keller).⁸⁶⁰ In 1993, the establishment of the Design Exchange, a national design museum and convenor of business and design, contributed to the momentum behind design and became one of the vehicles that helped to promote Gourmet Settings flatware through exhibitions and awards. The design community grew steadily through that decade, making Toronto the third largest centre for design in North America by 2004.⁸⁶¹ Furthermore, the city is ideally situated near the American market, and with Abrams' ties to US chains like Sears and Bed Bath & Beyond, it was easier for her to identify new opportunities, like the 'democratization' of design in discount stores. The proximity also allowed Abrams, Kerr, and Smith to travel to Buffalo to observe consumer practices in Walmart, which opened its first stores in Canada in 1994.

2.3 Repositioning the Core

The Gourmet Settings and Mellow Walk global commodity chains document the erosion of the 'cores' of their industries in Europe and North America. Global manufacturing is dissolving core and periphery, according to the WTO.⁸⁶² As manufacturing has moved to Asia, it has taken with it the management of production, the translation of design through prototyping, production, and quality control, and the manufacturing of the machines that influence production capabilities and thus design. This has left fewer core jobs in their original locations and a higher concentration of expertise in those positions — core companies have shifted from "high volume to high-value production."⁸⁶³ Furthermore, as the case studies show, core positions have become more mobile and more responsive to opportunities in previously 'peripheral' regions.

Told from a Western perspective, this trajectory illustrates how design and manufacturing knowledge from advanced economies improves production in nations lower on the scale of industrial upgrading. As the *Globe and Mail* reported in 2007, Abrams had to "reach[...] back into the past to secure her future" by seeking expertise in Sheffield, England,

⁸⁶⁰ Gotlieb and Golden, *Design in Canada*, 51.

⁸⁶¹ Design Industry Advisory Committee, "Design Matters DIAC Design Industry Study Executive Report," October 2004, 7, <http://www.diac.on.ca/wp-content/uploads/2010/04/1ExecutiveReport.pdf>.

⁸⁶² Jara, "Keynote Speech to the World Input-Output Database Conference in Vienna."

⁸⁶³ Gereffi, "Beyond the Producer-driven/Buyer-Driven Dichotomy: The Evolution of Global Value Chains in the Internet Era," 32.

former world leader in stainless steel.⁸⁶⁴ After Abrams found Roger Hamby, Engineer and Director of Research at CATRA (formerly the Cutlery and Allied Trades Research Association), they travelled to China where they “quickly realized that the quality of manufacturing was low there simply because many Chinese manufacturers did not understand the complex science of making flatware.”⁸⁶⁵ Hamby then worked with Gourmet Settings and the factories to set standards and train employees. This “transition narrative” divides ‘Western head’ and ‘Eastern hand’ and highlights how an industrializing economy advances by following the European example⁸⁶⁶ — British expertise in metallurgy and engineering directs Chinese capacity to produce “high-quality flatware, in large numbers, with great consistency.”⁸⁶⁷ A small credit goes to the Korean factory owners’ expertise, but local traditions and systems of manufacture are not given much attention in this account.

Britain’s colonial, industrial legacy as the ‘workshop of the world’ is kept alive in places like Sheffield where Roger Hamby and CATRA sell the region’s expertise in stainless steel production to other nations. His role as intermediary links the former centre of the 700-year old cutlery industry to the factory floors of China and Vietnam, via Toronto. In the process, there is a transfer of knowledge between sites of production, influenced by local and national cultures. CATRA’s own history follows the ups and downs of the cutlery sector in the last half of the twentieth century.⁸⁶⁸ The association of engineers and scientists once shared its research only with British companies in order to protect national interests. As manufacturing has moved offshore, however, CATRA has found new business in consulting for international companies who wish to test the quality of products made in “low wage cost countries.” CATRA sees this as part of its original mandate because it protects British consumers from low quality goods: “Honest testing of these cheaper imports is however a real service to UK consumer protection. And the fact that it is done by CATRA reinforces Sheffield’s long established technical leadership in the cutlery world.”⁸⁶⁹ In this way, CATRA attempts to maintain its position in the hierarchy of manufacturing nations by reminding the public of the threat of cheap imports.

The CSA Group (the Canadian organization that tests Mellow Walk footwear) has also moved beyond, and capitalized on, its national identity and origins in a post-industrial nation to create a global brand. It no longer uses its full name (Canadian Standards Association), but

⁸⁶⁴ Ramsay, “The World Is Flat(ware).”

⁸⁶⁵ Ramsay.

⁸⁶⁶ Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe*, 31.

⁸⁶⁷ Ramsay, “The World Is Flat(ware).”

⁸⁶⁸ Ramsay.

⁸⁶⁹ CATRA, “62 Years of Technological Research in Sheffield,” accessed November 20, 2015, <http://www.catra.org/pages/about/years.htm>.

nevertheless sells itself on its North American roots as upholder of quality and safety, now serving customers through its labs in Europe and Asia. Seeing new opportunities (and survival) in opening up their services to international clients, both CSA Group and CATRA have exploited their positions as experts in research, development, manufacturing, and testing. Through interaction with international clients, the two professional associations have entered new industries and broadened their areas of speciality.

3 Originality and authorship in global design

'Vernacular' mass production is arguably visible in the specific local conditions that differentiate the Vanessas and Non Stop, but the two products are also examples of global homogenization, which makes provenance and authorship difficult to determine. A unified 'global language of design' may be strategic in appealing to a broad consumer base (as outlined in Chapter 3), however the case studies show that homogenization is less the result of an intentional marketing plan and more due to conditions of production.⁸⁷⁰ Finding design references online is faster than ever and it is now more acceptable to borrow those ideas and even imitate competitors' designs with little chance of repercussion (Smith). Moreover, the increasing fragmentation of production means that products can be composed of 'intermediates' (components traded throughout the supply chain) from multiple locations, resulting in a bricolage of parts designed by others.⁸⁷¹ Adamson summarizes this phenomenon:

We are all familiar with this experience of constant displacement through browsing the web or engaging in a social network like Facebook. But the same dynamic also occurs in the context of production. With the help of digital technology, commodities are more and more easily synthesized from components built in disparate places, ideas formulated in different contexts.

Objects are increasingly brought into being through disconnection, not despite of it.⁸⁷²

In anthropology and cultural studies, bricolage has tended to refer to the use of images and signs, and the circulation and blending of design 'looks,' but in the case studies, bricolage involves compiling physical things. A 'global language' of design is therefore just as much about understanding signifiers as it is about the materials of design coming together in cohesive wholes.⁸⁷³ Consumers are sold a single object, but when the Vanessa boots and Non Stop

⁸⁷⁰ Du Gay et al., *Doing Cultural Studies*, 74; Kimbell, "Rethinking Design Thinking," November 1, 2011, 288; Appadurai, *Modernity At Large*, 42; Fiss, "Design in a Global Context," 3.

⁸⁷¹ Timmer et al., "Slicing Up Global Value Chains."

⁸⁷² Adamson, *The Invention of Craft*, 166.

⁸⁷³ Du Gay et al., *Doing Cultural Studies*, 74.

flatware are more closely examined, the work of multiple authors in multiple locations is revealed (the lining in some Mellow Walk shoes can literally be peeled back to reveal the 'Mexico' stamp on the leather).

3.1 Bricolage

The Vanessa case study shows a spectrum of creativity and originality reflective of the conditions of global manufacturing and fashion. For Mellow Walk, the constraints of local production, countered by the wealth of resources made available through global networks, have led to a kind of bricolage, an expert assembly and customization of existing components and styles designed by others around the world. Though the Vanessa boot and shoe appear to be two quite different products, their core elements are identical and sourced internationally. They are presented under a corporate brand and identity based in domestic manufacturing and national identity, yet both are assemblages of foreign materials and components. In this light, the Vanessa line could be perceived as less original, less 'designed,' because it includes parts conceived and made by others outside of Mellow Walk and not specifically for the Vanessa.

This process of design by 'synthesis' reflects the global fragmentation of production and a multi-sited market. The case studies show that a significant part of design practice is global sourcing and consumption before the elements are combined into a new entity for sale to the retailer and consumer. It involves searching, selecting, acquiring, modifying, and assembling existing materials with great precision to create a new whole. When Silva describes how he and Violi walk the aisles of the Linea Pelle tradeshow in Milan, finding and fitting together components from all over the world (outsole, steel toe, and last), while connecting with agents, suppliers, and online catalogues to access even more components (midsole, insole, leather, lining, and metal fittings), it sounds similar to shopping.

The term bricolage has described in a positive way how consumers create new meanings and identities by bringing together goods in new combinations, "literally the activity of self-consciously mixing and matching any disparate elements that may be to hand."⁸⁷⁴ However, bricolage can have a negative connotation in design because it implies less originality. Levi-Strauss described the bricoleur's only resources as what is available to him, a closed repertoire of tools and materials from previous projects, already imbued with meaning and purpose. They are somewhat interchangeable but also somewhat limiting because they are designed for other applications. The "bricoleur" is contrasted with the "engineer" who thinks

⁸⁷⁴ Du Gay et al., 104.

more abstractly and has greater command of resources.⁸⁷⁵ The engineer creates tools and new ways of adapting raw materials, creating original processes and objects suited to their purpose.⁸⁷⁶ The bricoleur has less agency and is trapped by his circumstances, while the engineer has more command over resources and is able to think abstractly rather than being tied to existing things and meanings.⁸⁷⁷

Silva's work demonstrates that designers in industry must work at both extremes of the engineer-bricoleur spectrum, and most often, in the middle. As the "engineer," Silva thinks conceptually and originally, creating drawings and plans for a new object designed for a specific purpose, but Silva is at the mercy of global chains of production and what is available for Mellow Walk's budget and scale. Sourcing pre-made components up-front requires less investment, work, and risk, but also limits what Silva and the factory can accomplish. This means compromises and less freedom to create new styles. For example, with the Vanessa, Silva used one last for both the shoes and boots, and had a reduced range of steel toe sizes for the full spectrum of shoe sizes. Silva sees what he refers to as "integration" – making all of the pre-existing pieces fit together — as one of the biggest design challenges in his job.

As "bricoleur," Silva assembles tools and intermediates that represent other people's design work, and he composes a "set" of off-the-shelf components destined for multiple uses.⁸⁷⁸ The only raw material, the leather, has been heavily processed by the tannery for a variety of product applications, just one of which is footwear. The lasts, outsoles, and their molds, are the result of a significant investment in design by someone else. The steel toecaps are usually 'open-mold,' meaning that anyone can use these components without infringing on a patent. The soles could be either 'open' or 'branded,' meaning a supplier custom-makes them for the manufacturer, which is why it is common to see the same or similar soles used by competitors with their own logos. The designer juggles all of these inputs to create a cohesive whole.

Inspiration from other designers and manufacturers is another element of global bricolage. The fashion industry is guided by trend forecasting institutions that determine which colours, materials, and silhouettes will be popular in a given season. Arsutoria, the school in Milan where Silva studied, issues several guides each year on shoe trends, including themes,

⁸⁷⁵ Design critic Reyner Banham protested how far the bricoleur/engineer metaphor was pushed to describe design practice, but its use represents a long-standing and polarizing design discourse. "Bricologues a la Lanterne" in Reyner Banham and Mary Banham, *A Critic Writes: Essays by Reyner Banham* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), 197; Panagiotis Louridas, "Design as Bricolage: Anthropology Meets Design Thinking," *Design Studies* 20, no. 6 (n.d.): 517–35.

⁸⁷⁶ Claude Levi-Strauss, *The Savage Mind*, trans. Weidenfield and Nicholson Ltd., Originally published in French, 1962., The Nature of Human Society Series (University of Chicago Press, 1966).

⁸⁷⁷ Levi-Strauss.

⁸⁷⁸ Levi-Strauss.

mood boards, “structures” (shoe concepts and shapes), and sketches by Italian designers, all for other designers and manufacturers to use.⁸⁷⁹ This system of forecasting institutionalizes the ‘borrowing’ and following of trends that is normal in fashion and shoe design. Mellow Walk’s Vanessa is strikingly close to the black Frye boot, Veronica, but there are many brands that carry similar models in the ‘engineer’ and ‘motorcycle’ categories, including the steel-toe Moxie Trades Side-Zipper Motorcycle Boot, which is closest to the Vanessa in the safety market (fig.53). The Vanessa shoe has origins in Mellow Walk’s own discontinued Pauline line and the current competitor, the Hush Puppies’ steel-toe pump (fig.54).⁸⁸⁰ In the context of other safety boots, the Vanessa stands out but also blends with mainstream motorcycle boots. The innovation is in camouflaging the steel toe and outsole, not the ‘look.’

As in the realm of consumption, there is art and intention in the “ways of making do.”⁸⁸¹ Silva is constrained by the “set” he works with but there is still room for design vision. There is significant variance between the Vanessa shoe and boot despite the fact that their base and core are identical. To the consumer, the end products are unified wholes and the bricolage is seamless and invisible. This is especially true in comparison to some of the competitors’ shoes, which are more obviously ill-fitting kits of parts. So much work and creative problem solving go into the bigger vision of the Vanessa line, the careful selection of the components, the refining of the last shape, the creation of the pattern, and the many, many adjustments to “make stuff fit.” As Louridas concludes, the bricoleur’s solution is never perfect, but it is nevertheless unique.⁸⁸²

3.2 Imitation

In the case of Gourmet Settings, homogenization was the result of endless imitation and a market flooded with products that reference each other and dilute Kerr and Smith’s original work. The Gourmet Settings packaging was clearly different when introduced, but the competition was quick to copy, and the clear window and ability to touch the cutlery have since become industry standards. Smith could see elements of the design — typography, icons, flatware patterns — picked up by competitors in the months following the launch, while Kerr believes that manufacturers literally replicated the packaging, likely taking it apart and tracing it

⁸⁷⁹ Arsutoria, “Arsutoria Sketch & Style,” Arsutoria Magazine, accessed December 27, 2016, <http://arsutoriamagazine.com/product/arsutoria-sketch-styles/>.

⁸⁸⁰ A Korean company is selling “Mellow Walk” shoes online, which appears to be brand infringement, though of little consequence to the Mellow Walk owners in Canada Junny Kim, *Mellow Walk* 천연고무바닥 슈즈, accessed December 27, 2016, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=el42rY4ojjA>.

I shared this video with Mellow Walk in Toronto but the colourful loafers under the same name did not seem to pose any threat.

⁸⁸¹ de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, xv, xvii.

⁸⁸² Louridas, “Design as Bricolage,” 519–520.

to create identical die lines. Some bigger companies tried to duplicate the entire product, packaging and cutlery included. It was even rumoured that Target itself had knocked off the packaging for their own line of cutlery, effectively pushing Gourmet Settings off their shelves. Smith observed that the market leveled out after a few years: everyone's products started to look similar and it became more challenging to stand out. Flatware displays at Canadian Tire (fig.76) show the extent of that homogenization today. A few feet away, a Canadian Tire brand is sold in brown cardboard boxes with open fronts and simple black type, almost identical to the Easy packaging by Gourmet Settings for the retailer in the 1990s, which sold there until recently.⁸⁸³

Gourmet Settings interviewees argue that being original is more difficult than copying, equating authorship with creating the “essence” of a product, an ambiguous term that also hints at the ‘magic’ of design. They maintain that despite how closely others recreated the details, they were never able to capture the “essence” or reproduce the “cohesion” that resulted from Kerr’s holistic design and in-depth research process combined with Gourmet Settings’ corporate values and attitude. In Kerr’s opinion, even though many of their design decisions and processes may be hidden from view, the overall effect of Gourmet Settings products is different. As someone who invests in design services, Abrams values what designers do, recognizing the amount of work and creativity in product development. Copying, in her opinion, is easy in comparison: “you don’t have to be a genius to knock something off.” Financial investment in design is worthwhile for the manufacturer at a number of levels, but it also has benefits for the competition. Abrams notes that copiers pick up on the success of Gourmet Settings’ designs without the same level of risk and investment.

The speed of design and innovation have changed since Gourmet Settings launched Non Stop (Smith). Gourmet Settings was able to maintain its position as an innovator for several years before the competition caught up.⁸⁸⁴ While Gourmet Settings and the designers felt the pressure to produce something new and stay ahead, Smith sees today’s context quite differently. The rapidity with which images circulate and the ease with which images can be copied and manipulated have changed how designers conduct research and visualize ideas —

⁸⁸³ Gourmet Settings puts a positive spin on being copied, making it a selling point on the web site: “inspiring knock-offs (imitation is a form of flattery, right?)” Gourmet Settings, “Packaging”; Abrams believes that the copying is evidence of the industry improving based on Gourmet Settings’ intervention in the market: “We know our packaging inspired a lot of companies to copy us...and I think what happened is a lot of people got better after we got into the game...There’s no question that we raised the bar, but what other companies are missing is our passion and the essence that makes us unique.” Hildy Abrams as quoted in Ponikowski, “Lovin’ Spoonful. Flatware Designer Hildy Abrams Came to a Fork in the Road, and Took It.”

⁸⁸⁴ The time period varies depending on interviewee.

cutting and pasting digital images is far easier than drawing something from scratch (Smith). Smith notes that because the Internet makes these processes more impersonal, a designer may never come face-to-face with the original author and there is less of a sense of 'stealing.' Smith sees this phenomenon increasing exponentially, leading to a cultural shift that affects design and the culture of copying, which he describes as inseparable from an "insatiable desire for newness and consumption," which "spirals those things at a ferocious rate." Gourmet Settings protects only elements of its products, a reflection of how difficult and expensive it is to enforce intellectual property rights (for industrial designs or patents in Canada), especially for something as ubiquitous as flatware shapes.⁸⁸⁵ Kerr questions who can really own something today, especially when work is collaborative across companies and countries.

Conclusion

There is a tension between the local and global in the case studies, revealed in the practices of design and representations of global production. Design labour is distributed throughout production and consumption, but the complexities and fragmentation of commodity chains make it difficult to determine authorship and provenance. Origin is further obscured by both manufacturers when they employ strategies that exemplify Appadurai's concepts of "production fetishism" and the "spectacle of the local."⁸⁸⁶ Mellow Walk markets the work of the individual 'shoemakers' and the factory as a microcosm of local production and Canadian values, while Gourmet Settings promotes the design work of Kerr and others in a Western, urban centre. The diversity of Mellow Walk's employees is celebrated to support ideals of a family company and Canadian national identity, but the offshore labour that contributes the majority of work in the materials and components is ignored. Likewise, Kerr and Smith's design 'genius' is fetishized and any discussion of manufacturing is abstracted and framed as improved and controlled by design from the Western core. In corporate narratives, the manufacturers have mastered global production, but within global commodity chains, the retailers, and to some extent the consumers, have more power.

It is in the sites of 'convergence' and the shifting 'territories of design' that the global flows of design practice are made visible. The contributions of actors across commodity chains, from designers and manufacturers, to equipment and component suppliers, to sources of labour and capital, combine to create new practices and new 'geographies of responsibility.'

⁸⁸⁵ The intellectual property statement on the packaging protects the design of the box, the name of the flatware, and the GS trademarks, but not the cutlery design itself. Innovation Government of Canada, "Protect Your Innovation," Reports, accessed January 24, 2017, http://www.ic.gc.ca/eic/site/cipointernet-internetopic.nsf/eng/wr03586.html?Open&wt_src=cipo-ip-main.

⁸⁸⁶ Appadurai, *Modernity At Large*.

Nevertheless, the old divisions continue to be seen in perceived hierarchies of nations as sources of design and manufacturing, reinforcing the core-periphery and industrial upgrading models. This is reflected in the interviewees' opinions about what makes a 'Canadian' boot or a 'Canadian' knife and fork, or the conditions that characterize offshore manufacturing. They illustrate that individual, corporate, and place-based identities are both consciously constructed and visceral reactions to the design of the objects and their physical properties, linked to ideas of places both imagined and real.

Chapter 10: Conclusion

The goal of this dissertation was to document and assess how the real work of product design is distributed in the twenty-first century global economy. I undertook the detailed study of two mass-produced consumer goods, ostensibly designed in Canada, in order to demystify the designer as sole author, the design object as icon, and the design process as an intellectual practice divorced from the materiality of production. I conducted two ‘object ethnographies’ following the development of the Vanessa steel-toe boot by Mellow Walk and the Non Stop flatware by Gourmet Settings. I gathered a multitude of perspectives on design and the relations of production from primary research including interviews, observations of environments and practices, and the analysis of material evidence. I contextualized this with secondary research about the footwear, flatware, and related industries. This process uncovered many iterations of the case study objects, each with their own networks of actors that influence design to varying degrees. By mapping connections between them and tracing their global networks, I was able to identify patterns of design activity and shifting locations of design. This allowed me to formulate a new understanding of authorship in global design and to gain insight into two different models of production, circulation, and consumption—one ‘local’ and one ‘global.’ The two everyday objects revealed much about the relations of power within global commodity chains, how actors perceive their own agency in design compared to others, and how identities are formulated relative to consumer products and places. The most significant observations are summarized here.

A Note on Method

Seeing beyond the fetishism of design in official, corporate narratives and media accounts was challenging for several reasons. From the scholar’s perspective, Actor Network Theory (ANT) allows for the ‘flattening’ of relations of power by making all actors equal within the network.⁸⁸⁷ Instead of looking for pre-existing social structures, the ANT researcher documents relations as they unfold. This means that a parallel narrative can evolve that differs from the actors’ understanding of those relations. The official hierarchies, as seen in professional roles and organizational structures, and less overtly in flows of capital (who is paid more, who is contracted by another actor) and in the broader cultural understandings of where design and creativity originate (with the designer, at the top of the company, in certain countries), influenced how the actors perceived themselves. The hierarchies of production, which continue to be based in nineteenth-century concepts of the division of labour, along with

⁸⁸⁷ Latour, *Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-Network-Theory*.

current understandings of “designeriness,” support the fetishism of design as an elite activity that takes place within certain ‘creative classes’ and advanced economies.⁸⁸⁸ These understandings of power and authorship are reiterated by the actors when describing their own work or what they allow or expect others to do, and in their reluctance or enthusiasm to claim a part in design. These conventions are often unspoken, but they are reproduced in practices and embodied in the objects. Actors like the CEOs, designers, and sales staff employ certain tactics to mask real conditions, creating ‘myths’ of design and provenance to add value to the products and brand. Whether constructed for public consumption or to organize production, these perceptions of design are difficult to separate from lived experiences and need to be considered as actors in their own right.

ANT reinforced the value of non-human actors and their agency in design. By balancing the voices of designers and non-designers, combined with the practices and the digital and physical evidence of design, a new picture of design activity emerged. The case study objects in their various iterations became key in negotiating relationships (e.g. the technical drawing and golden sample become a contract between Gourmet Settings and factories on the other side of the world, a non-verbal form of communication that solidified shared understanding of design). The objects were revealed as “carriers” or “constituents of practice” that maintain social relationships (e.g. the safety boots perpetuate understandings of job site regulation and the protection of workers linked to organized labour and Italian communities in Toronto).⁸⁸⁹

Notions of scripting were particularly valuable in understanding the nuances of design as a form of instruction and how plans are delegated to and by human and non-human actors. It is in the details of iterations of the Vanessa boots that the translation of ideas occurs. The changing “geographies of responsibility” are made clear as the objects migrate from the designer’s desk and sales office to specific regions on the factory floor.⁸⁹⁰ Inscription, ascription, and de- or re-inscription indicate the extent to which actors contribute to the design, and how open or closed the script is from the start.⁸⁹¹ In both case studies, some consumers followed the script closely, performing as expected by the producers, and in others, the consumers demonstrated considerable creativity in their reinterpretation of the object’s significance and use. The comparison of the “worlds inscribed in the object” with the “worlds described by their displacement” showed that the producers had a defined vision of their target audiences (“projected users”) based on their own personal experiences and networks of

⁸⁸⁸ Julier, *The Culture of Design*, 40.

⁸⁸⁹ Ingram, Shove, and Watson, “Products and Practices,” 14–15.

⁸⁹⁰ Akrich, “The De-Description of Technical Objects,” 207.

⁸⁹¹ Akrich, 209.

consumption.⁸⁹² However, it was the retailers and the online communities of consumers that offered a more extensive and nuanced sense of the “real users,” their preferences, and behaviours.

Distributed Authorship

By de-centering the designer, it was possible to consider what distributed authorship looks like and what constitutes ‘design work.’ This dissertation has shown that the dichotomy between the professional designer (someone who is trained, highly-skilled, selling design services) and amateur designer (anyone who undertakes open-ended problem-solving and implements solutions) is overly simplified. It is more productive to consider degrees of influence on design and to include non-human actors, that is any actor that has an impact on a physical, representational, or conceptual iteration of a design. Inspired by “levels of creativity” and based on my categorization of the actors and practices I observed, I proposed four degrees of design activity: ‘craft’ in which the author conceives of and produces the entire object; ‘sole authorship’ in which one person conceives of the product and delegates execution to others; ‘active design’ in which the actors take a role in shaping design through creative problem solving that affects form, manufacture, use, and representation (meaning); and ‘passive design’ in which actors provide the allowances and constraints (e.g. conventions, regulations, tools and technologies, budgets) that facilitate or limit design.⁸⁹³

By considering contexts of production, circulation, and consumption that extend beyond the actors closest to the case study objects, it is possible to see the design influence of global systems of production (e.g. trade, the design embedded in factory floor plans, and the complex machinery of mass production). Design authorship is further distributed over time and space. Both case study objects represent knowledge accumulated over millennia, but most visibly, over several generations of products and designers from within the same firms. The retailers demonstrate considerable influence over design because of their power within global commodity chains. The buyers filter consumer feedback and sales data, leading to a process of co-scripting with the manufacturer in which the retailers critique and request new products, forms, and colours. Once the products leave the control of the producer, the retailer plays a significant role in creating new meaning, effectively replacing much of the manufacturer’s script with their own brand and shopping experience, and by assembling networks of related objects. Retailers further perpetuate and encourage new practices of consumption. This dissertation also shows that consumers not only create new meaning, but generate new functions and even alter the

⁸⁹² Akrich, 209.

⁸⁹³ Tan, “Creativity in Cross-Disciplinary Research.”

form of the objects through use. The role of consumer complaints and their power to change design and production was remarkable in both case studies. Consumer feedback about rust had a major impact on Gourmet Settings' relationships with retailers and factories, and for Mellow Walk, complaints and new practices were translated into design solutions (new foot beds) and opportunities (e.g. steel-toe footwear appropriate for work and social settings).

While designers are perceived as holding positions of authority at the top of the creative class or production hierarchies, I conclude that their roles are more accurately understood as intermediaries in the global production, circulation, and consumption of the two case study products. Furthermore, there is diversity within the role of designer in terms of power, representation, and distribution of work. Nelson Silva, Helen Kerr, and now Johnny Lim, juggle a vast number of inputs and external sources of influence over design. Kerr intentionally set out to create a holistic, integrated system of production and distribution, developing relationships with factories and retailers together with Abrams. Lim balances generating new design ideas with taking creative direction from the Operations Manager at Gourmet Settings and the clients, represented by the retail buyers. Silva takes on a spectrum of roles ranging from engineer to bricoleur as he generates new concepts on the one hand, while "integrating" pre-designed components from around the world to create a cohesive whole on the other. He deals with agents and suppliers from multiple continents as he sources and then fits together these 'intermediates' of global trade. Given the designer's crucial role *within* production, a 'maker-centred' (rather than 'user-centred') model of design study would be a productive area to pursue.

This dissertation illustrates that manufacturers, and sometimes the designers themselves, distort the designer's role by exploiting ideas of "designeriness" in order to add value to products and brands.⁸⁹⁴ Kerr, who comes to stand in for the entire design process and the collaboration of a design team that receives little credit, is presented as a strategist who has mastered systems of production, making design a defining feature of the Gourmet Settings corporate identity. Silva, by contrast, is presented as an artist, his drawings proof of his artistry, which he translates for the 'shoemakers' in the factory.⁸⁹⁵ By contrasting design and craft, Mellow Walk reinforces its image as a company that is both innovative and tied to traditional, local manufacturing.

It is important to not only look for the invisible aspects of design work but also to look for the actors and structures that are preventing that work from being seen or from existing in the

⁸⁹⁴ Julier, *The Culture of Design*, 40.

⁸⁹⁵ Mellow Walk, "Nelson Silva."

first place. This project has shown that relations of production do not encourage creativity among certain groups of actors. Factory workers are not given permission to be creative, and their time is structured in such a way that it reduces the possibility to think abductively (like a designer). While most interviewees claimed some form of creativity or problem-solving in their work, for many in the lower creative classes, there was no official recognition or valuing of that work. Rather, their images are exploited in order to convey quality and consistency (videos of factory workers in Asia) or to convey craft and tradition (workers at Mellow Walk).

This dissertation has called into question perceptions of design as immaterial and distanced from manufacturing, to show that making informs and grounds design. Manufacturing is a priority from the moment the design of a new product begins. In fact, this dissertation has shown that in the case of mass production, design is largely about planning for manufacturing (as opposed to consumption). Furthermore, craft has not been eliminated from production. Rather, cognitive and manual labour are intertwined throughout. Both design and craft are valued by industry, each combining repetitive, manual labour and intellectual, highly-skilled work to deliver 'quality,' a concept that unites design and craft in a shared desire for control over manufacturing processes. In fact, hand work is valuable because it can accomplish certain tasks that automation cannot, even improving on what the machine creates. Ironically, while design and craft historians have only just started to understand craft's role in contemporary manufacturing, companies and advertisers are adept at giving craft a place in manufacturing, using the values associated with craft to sell products.

Design in Motion

The object ethnographies underline the fluidity of the design process and the movement inherent in globally produced, circulated, and consumed products. Despite the photographs of hundreds of Vanessa boots coming off the assembly line, and the stacks of identical Gourmet Settings boxes in stores, it is challenging to identify one single, complete design. 'The design' as a final, static object is but one of many iterations of the same concept. This opens up a number of lines of inquiry for writing design history.

There is no neat start and finish to the production-circulation-consumption model that emerged with the Vanessa boots and Non Stop flatware. In comparison, existing models of the design process and design thinking offer one-size-fits-all diagrams that are helpful in conveying important phases, but promote an overly simplistic, sequential three-step model of analysis/understanding, evaluation/dreaming, and problem-solving/building. One of the most significant gaps in those models is a result of their focus on front-end research and conceptualization. They overlook implementation and the ongoing design work during

production and use. The design solution is often shown as the end of the process, when in fact design work continues throughout manufacturing, and continues even further through circulation and consumption. New inputs into design are continuous, from information required to solve problems encountered in manufacturing, to feedback from retailers and consumers. Scripts break down, revealing moments of disruption, co-creation, negotiation, crisis, and diversion. However, all of the experimentation and iteration are consolidated and streamlined in the final object, which tells a clearer, more confident story about its design and purpose, erasing much of the creative labour that went into its creation.⁸⁹⁶ Focusing only on the front-end of design and the final product presents an abbreviated version of the design process, one that highlights where the designer has the most control.

‘Design in motion’ appears throughout the case studies in the evolution of the boots and flatware. Both manufacturers copy themselves, repeating forms and extending the design of certain elements across patterns. At Mellow Walk, aspects of design are repurposed in future shoes; models in production are refined based on quality issues or customer complaints; and shoes are redesigned or slightly modified and re-issued under new names. A brogue shoe can be turned into a boot and look significantly different, but the original ‘platform’ (outsole, insole, toe), remains identical. Gourmet Settings creates ‘families’ of products, slightly modifying or mixing elements and finishes from previous patterns to create ‘exclusive’ lines for retailers and to maintain a cycle of rapid product development. Patterns are tweaked every few years; smaller details like stamping or etching the word mark and metal content on the back of the utensils vary; and the packaging changes substantially for the same pattern re-sold in different stores under different names and branding. In even broader contexts, these everyday objects are continuations of other footwear styles (motorcycle and safety boots) and flatware designs (stainless steel and modern, Scandinavian utensils). As an elusive, always changing subject of research, design, as presented in the case studies, offers new opportunities and challenges for its study.

By showing that design appears in many forms and iterations, this dissertation has decentred one of the most prominent signifiers of design practice. The design drawing has traditionally been used as proof of authorship and delegation by the designer, in addition to being valued for its artistry. In the case studies, the drawing is revealed to be one of multiple types of scripts that deliver design instruction. Its role within production is limited to expressing a concept in order to gain buy-in from other actors like managers, sales representatives, and retailers, but it does not in fact serve to direct other actors for the purposes of executing the

⁸⁹⁶ Akrich, Callon, and Latour, “The Key to Success in Innovation Part 1: The Art of Interressement,” 194.

design. The prototypes, particularly Lim's cutlery carved of balsa wood, are even more effective at conveying the design for the purpose of obtaining retail orders.

Global Design

One of the intentions behind this project was to expose how the work of design is distributed globally, in particular where design work takes place, and whether innovation in product design has shifted away from the traditionally recognized design centres of the West. While I expected to be able to show the movement of materials and actors from one part of the world to another, I was also able to detect patterns of activity in micro-sites where global flows converge and in the reconfiguration of "territories of design."⁸⁹⁷ This mapping showed that global design practices are also 'in motion' with political and economic consequences reflected in place-based identities and actors' perceptions of themselves in relation to others that share similar commodity chains.

The core is splintering. This project documents the transitions currently taking place as design and manufacturing knowledge migrates from former 'cores' like Sheffield, England, and Milan, Italy, to previously 'peripheral' nations like Vietnam and Mexico. The "transition narrative," told from a Western perspective, indicates that developing nations learn from this kind of foreign investment and follow a predetermined path of industrial development.⁸⁹⁸ Processes are seen to be improved through Western intervention, but little is said about what local knowledge existed before the exchange. What bears further investigation is how the movement of knowledge is changing capacity on either side. More research would be productive into how Italy directs the global shoe industry through its export of fashion trends and manufacturing technologies, and its ability to convene global actors through trade shows and educational institutions. Likewise, there is much to understand about Leon as a place of global convergence, where Italian technologists join Mexican manufacturers, an established leather industry, and clients from around the world to produce footwear in a manufacturing ecosystem more sophisticated than in many advanced economies, including Canada's. The object ethnography model, with the careful documentation of the provenance of components, materials, and expertise, draws attention to sites where manufacturing is thought to have disappeared, to reveal that places like Sheffield hold on to a new type of 'core' role in the knowledge economy, one that is based on centuries of manufacturing experience. The messaging tying place to expertise is carefully constructed in that instance. However, what remain less transparent and deserving of more attention are the current sites of production in 'developing' economies, and

⁸⁹⁷ Julier, *Economies of Design*, 6.

⁸⁹⁸ Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe*, 31.

the international exchanges occurring in places like Vietnamese and Mexican factories and their supply chains.

My dissertation underlines the tension between global and local in where the manufacturers source services, labour, materials, components, and equipment. On the one hand, both manufacturers felt that they had no choice but to operate within the global market, not only in terms of who they are selling to, but more significantly, where they find the resources required for production. Both companies agreed that it would be impossible to find the necessary suppliers in Canada, not only because they would be too expensive, but because they just do not exist. The manufacturing ecosystem is so diminished in the case of footwear and non-existent in the case of flatware, that the manufacturers turn to other nations where they find entire cities and regions dedicated to producing what they need. This observation reaffirms that the globalization of production is not necessarily based on cheaper labour, but is motivated by a lack of resources locally. However, both Gourmet Settings and Mellow Walk choose to engage local designers, following the pattern of the more highly valued 'intangible' services being kept in the core where they control the less-expensive 'tangibles' in the periphery. As the third largest centre of design in North America, Toronto offers a healthy design community from which to draw. However, the extent of that design can be questioned in both cases. Mellow Walk relies heavily on pre-designed components from other countries, and Gourmet Settings works with factories where the staff is increasingly conversant in design and able to solve problems that arise in realizing the technical drawings sent from Canada. As the global fragmentation of production expands, and as developing nations offer more skilled labour and services, design work itself will also become more fragmented and distributed.

My project has demonstrated that by tracing sources of design, mass-produced goods can reveal much about their specific places of origin and about global systems of production and flows of design. There is a global design language in which forms, parts, materials, and labour from around the world congeal in products that become homogeneous over time. My analysis showed that while designers and manufacturers may strive for original products that stand out on store shelves, in fact there is a continual mixing of globally sourced components and inspiration that leads to a 'watering down' of design. The borrowing of design in this way is not only accepted, but is facilitated through global commodity chains and in sites of convergence, like trade shows and in factories in China, where numerous manufacturers use the same suppliers (Kerr). Today, the Vanessa boots and Non Stop flatware do not stand out as wholly original; they blend in to the sea of products in their categories. This can be desirable because a product that is too different can be intimidating—the Vanessas attract attention

because consumers can read 'Frye' and 'motorcycle boot' in their design. While the borrowing brings into question the originality of the design, there are nevertheless layers of original thinking and complex decision making behind their current forms.

This melding of global influences and resources makes it challenging to identify the authorship and origins of mass-produced goods, yet by investigating local contexts of production, I bring into focus a type of vernacular mass production. Mellow Walk was founded at a particular moment of Toronto's industrial history when shoe factories were closing, allowing the manufacturer to accumulate equipment and employees from other companies that went bankrupt or moved production offshore. This resulted in a unique blend of technologies and the expertise of several generations of immigrants that continue to be bound by social and familial networks. They have established practices that are embodied in small runs of niche products for the safety market. The Gourmet Settings flatware represents the blending of British and Korean knowledge of stainless steel production with Chinese materials, skills, and labour, managed by a Korean agent, and all brought together by a Canadian manufacturer and designers. The resulting processes and standards are made concrete in the quality of the flatware that defines Gourmet Settings. As the Non Stop case study illustrated, these particular, local circumstances can also be seen in product defects that had great impact throughout the rest of the commodity chain.

One of the challenges of identifying provenance in mass-produced goods is seeing beyond the corporate narratives and promotional materials that rely on 'myth-places' and national brands. However, these carefully constructed origin stories can also be revealing about the value placed on certain types of labour and locations. The reification of the nation as an author of consumer goods is seen in the 'made in' labelling and the "spectacle of the local" generated by Mellow Walk.⁸⁹⁹ The company builds on the Canadian brand, leveraging nostalgia for a manufacturing sector that has largely disappeared. Through the Mellow Walk narrative, the company is both innovative as the only footwear factory left in Ontario, and tied to tradition through the representation of factory workers as 'shoemakers' and craftspeople. Mellow Walk turns the limitations of manufacturing in Canada into a story of agile, quality production. Even though all of the materials and components in the Vanessa are sourced overseas with the exception of the glue and the thread, the design and manufacturing labour that occur in Toronto displace any mention of the offshore manufacturing that makes the product affordable. While Mellow Walk fetishizes the Toronto factory and employees using tropes of craft, family, hard

⁸⁹⁹ Arjun Appadurai, ed., *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective* (Cambridge [Cambridgeshire]: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 41–42.

work, and Canada, Gourmet Settings presents a simplified explanation of offshore manufacturing in which 'design' is the featured actor. In the Gourmet Settings origin story, Canadian and British experts navigate and improve Asian production processes and product quality. However, the company avoids being associated with specific places, instead adding vague references to locations like Scandinavia in order to appeal to consumers through associations with 'good design.' This is in part a reflection of Gourmet Settings' globally dispersed operations, but also the perceived lowering in value that comes with 'Made in China.'

My research has shown that the traditional perceptions of design-led nations and industrializing countries continue to play a role in how producers and consumers navigate the material world and in how they see themselves in relation to others. Producers, retailers, and consumers evaluate products based on understandings of design and manufacturing tied to "place-qualities."⁹⁰⁰ In this way, consumer goods reify place-based identities and the conditions and relations of production. Across interviews, it became apparent that people hold similar ideas about the significance of made in Italy, Germany, China, and Japan. Design is used to characterize the local and global—the 'other' is embodied in products from 'elsewhere' that reify the labour of non-core workers. International competition is waged through these objects. CATRA, the cutlery association in England, uses the rhetoric of expertise and research to assert Britain's position in the global market, while 'protecting' citizens from badly made foreign goods. Mellow Walk employees echo this sentiment when they position the quality of Canadian-made goods as superior to Chinese imports. When Violi posted an article about Chinese manufacturers outsourcing to Ethiopia and the unethical treatment of workers, the value of 'Made in Canada' grew by comparison.⁹⁰¹ At the same time, the object ethnographies reveal that those distinctions are not so clear—'Made in Canada' really means 'Made in the World.' The footwear and flatware indicate that Canada is a country on the periphery, neither a driver of design like Italy or Scandinavia, nor a source of manufacturing capacity like Mexico or 'Factory Asia.'

This project contributes in several ways to the field of design history. It presents a model for research that fully investigates distributed authorship, resulting in a big picture of the contexts influencing design, at the same time that it delves into the complex, granular relationships of design at the level of individual actors. This kind of study is necessary in order to move beyond the fetishism of the designer and to present a more accurate depiction of how the global work of design takes place. It shows that the design product should not be considered

⁹⁰⁰ Molotch, *Where Stuff Comes From*.

⁹⁰¹ Dipaola, "Ethiopia Becomes China's China in Search for Cheap Labor."

as a static object but as a series of events and material manifestations that represent the division of design labour. It is therefore fruitful, in the context of design studies, to look for other iterations and evidence of design as starting points for new research.

In addition to presenting an original model for design study, this project has documented the design, development, manufacturing, distribution, and consumption of two objects that would otherwise not receive this level of attention in design history. Gourmet Settings, Kerr, and the Non Stop flatware have all been celebrated with design awards, exhibitions, and media attention, but the fuller picture of distributed authorship has not been told in this way. Mellow Walk is seen as a novelty of Canadian manufacturing, both a living history site and a way forward for small-scale manufacturing in a post-industrial context. It has been acknowledged by government and media alike as a local business success, yet the global networks that make it possible are not discussed. This project constitutes a historical record of modes of design, production, and consumption with a particular view of the Canadian and Toronto contexts. However, the parallels between the two case studies suggest that they are indicative of conditions of production elsewhere.

The case studies illustrate that putting everyday goods under the microscope, reveals macro-concepts and leads to global commodity chains. Common consumer goods are invitations to learn more about global design and how materiality connects actors throughout production, circulation, and consumption. Focusing on these two objects made discussions of globalization concrete and helped to question assumptions about where and with whom design originates. It exposed relations of design at multiple scales, from the designer's desk to meeting rooms and the factory floor, from trade shows to major retail outlets, to sites of consumption including work and homes around the world.

This project also exposed a wealth of sources that could be further explored, like the accounts of industry-specific growth and decline made possible through trade data from Statistics Canada, the extensive online communities of consumers and quasi-professional product reviewers, or the glimpses into individual households available on social media.⁹⁰² The significance of the sites of convergence—the trade shows, the 'shoe cities,' and the factory floors—could each be the subject of ethnographies mapping exchanges of design knowledge. This project could also be extended to include the voices and sites that are noticeably absent, like the factories and agents in Vietnam and Mexico, the invisible suppliers that exist further downstream, the sales people who interface with retailers and consumers, and more in-person accounts from consumers of both products.

⁹⁰² Government of Canada, "Canadian Industry Statistics - Home."

By decentering the designer and recognized design processes, this project has shown that it becomes easier to contest traditional definitions of design and demystify the fetishism of global production. To focus only on what the designer controls is to tell a small portion of the story and a misrepresentative one at that. The case studies illustrate that designers do not start with a blank sheet of paper, nor do they hand over beautiful drawings that are executed by others exactly as envisioned. Rather, the design process is iterative, a combination of steps and phases that build on each other, cancel each other, circle back, change, and move ahead. It is a process of input, revision, and transformation that involves many actors enabled by new and old practices, knowledge, and technologies generated all over the world. What is sold to the customer does not represent the signature style of a single author, but the sum of ideas and actions from a large network of creators, further transformed through representation and use.

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Appendix A: Record of Interviews, Meetings, and Observation Sessions

Mellow Walk Case Study

17 Milford Ave, North York, ON

Interviews

(all at Mellow Walk unless otherwise indicated)

December 10, 2013: Andrew Violi, President

January 5, 2014: Manuel Boita, Line Worker, Lasting (translated by Nelson Silva), Jitterbug Boy, 239 Sorauren Ave, Toronto

January 28, 2014: Nelson Silva, Footwear Design Director

January 28, 2014: Diana Sullivan, Plant Manager

February 11, 2014: Maria Barreto, Supervisor, Finishing

February 11, 2014: Carol Padda, Supervisor, Cutting

February 14, 2014: Arminda Romeiro, Sewing Machine Operator and Sample Maker in Fitting/Sewing, Caldense Bakery, 337 Symington Ave, Toronto

February, 14 2014: Teresa Torres, Supervisor, Sewing, Caldense Bakery, 337 Symington Ave, Toronto

July 18 2014: John Colantonio, Managing Director, Mister Safety Shoes Inc.: 2300 Finch Ave W #6, North York

July 29, 2015: Bonnie McCabe, Consumer, 733 Kipling Ave, Etobicoke

Observation Sessions

(all at Mellow Walk unless otherwise indicated)

December 10, 2013: Nelson Silva, Pattern Drawing

December 13, 2013: Nelson Silva, Arminda Romeiro, Testing and Sewing

December 20, 2013: Nelson Silva, Manuel Boita, Testing and Lasting

January 28, 2014: Maria Barreto and Finishing, and Carol Padda and Cutting

July 18, 2014: Nelson Silva, Diana Sullivan, Bev Hodgins, Teresa Torres, Arminda Romeiro, and Katarina all working on Fit Trials

July 18, 2014: Mister Safety, 2300 Finch Ave W #6, North York, ON

2014: Mark's, 65 Dundas St W, Toronto, ON

Other Meetings

(all at Mellow Walk)

August 22, 2012: Nelson Silva

February 4, 2013: Nelson Silva, Andrew Violi

September 30, 2013: Nelson Silva

November 22, 2013: Nelson Silva, Andrew Violi, Diana Sullivan

Gourmet Settings Case Study

Interviews

April 15, 2014: Nigel Smith, Co-President, Kerr Smith Design, 2 River St, Toronto

May 8, 2014: Helen Kerr, Co-President, Kerr Smith Design, 2 River St, Toronto

May 27, 2014: Johnny Lim, Senior Designer, Gourmet Settings, 245 West Beaver Creek Rd, Richmond Hill

June 6, 2014: Stéphane Monnet, President and Creative Director, Monnet Design, 197 Argyle St, Toronto, ON

June 15, 2014: Sabrina Chen, Owner and CEO, Spring Lotus Ltd. (Taipei), answered email questionnaire

July 25, 2014: Anonymous buyer, New York

August 12, 2014: Hildy Abrams, CEO and Owner, Gourmet Settings, 245 West Beaver Creek Rd, Richmond Hill

August 23, 2014: Daniel Choi, COO and President, Taeyang Vietnam Co., Ltd. (Vietnam), works closely with Gourmet Settings, answered email questionnaire

Observation Sessions

October 17, 2013: Gourmet Settings showroom, 41 Madison, 22 floor, NYC, New York Table Top Show

October 17, 2013: Bed Bath & Beyond, 1932 Broadway, New York

Other Meetings

August 1, 2012: Helen Kerr, Kerr Smith, 2 River St, Toronto

Fall 2012: Hildy Abrams, Gourmet Settings, 245 West Beaver Creek Rd, Richmond Hill

October 11, 2013: Hildy Abrams, Helen Kerr, Shangrila Hotel, 188 University Ave, Toronto

Appendix B – Interview Guides

Interview Questions and Advance Questionnaire

*These were used to guide conversation and not every question was asked.

Sample Written Questionnaire A - Production-Circulation

Purpose: to establish basic information about the person and their job, to understand their professional, personal and cultural background and how these influence their work – this will help to uncover any local or traditional knowledge that influences manufacturing, and to establish other types of expertise and skills they bring to their jobs that might not be reflected in their job descriptions

Name:

Title:

Company:

How long have you worked for this company?

Who do you report to?

Describe your principal responsibilities:

In your view, what is the most important aspect of your job?

In your view, what is the most important skill needed to perform your job?

Describe your training and professional background (e.g. other jobs):

Place of birth:

Places you have lived:

Primary language:

Other languages:

Is there a tradition of this kind of work among your family, friends or community?

List any hobbies, interests and other skills you may have:

Do you feel that any of these hobbies or skills influences how you see or perform your work? If so, how?

Sample Interview Questions A - Production-Circulation

Process

Design of the Case Study Object

Purpose: to understand how the participant views the purpose of the case study object (final product) in order to compare how different actors perceive the common goal of producing/circulating/consuming the product

1. Describe the [case study object]
2. What is its intended purpose?
3. Who is it designed for?
4. How is it intended to be used?

Design Process

Purpose: to understand how people in different positions perceive the design, manufacturing and distribution of the case study object, their own roles and the roles of the designer; to understand if the participant engages in design through decision-making and creative problem solving in ways that may not be recognized as 'design'

1. What does the word "design" mean to you?
2. Describe the phases of development, production and distribution of the [case study object]. For example, how does the product go from initial idea to the consumer? Where does your job fit in this process?
3. Describe the design process for the [case study object]. Where does design fit in the phases of development you described?
4. Who is responsible for the design of the [case study object]?
5. Do you have any involvement with the design? If so, describe.
5a. [when interviewing the designer]: Describe the involvement of others in the design process. What are they responsible for? How do they influence your work?
6. What kind of decisions do you make in the course of your job? What kinds of problems do you have to solve?
7. Would you describe your job as creative? If so, what aspects?
8. What are the most important factors influencing the design? Influencing the manufacturing process?
9. What are the most important skills and knowledge that the designer must have?
10. Does working with a designer influence the manufacturing process? If so, how?

Objects, Tools, Technologies, Materials

Purpose: to expand the actor network diagram to include other non-human actors; to understand how locally and globally sourced tools, technologies, materials and knowledge impact design and production; to understand how technology is changing the way goods are designed, produced and circulated

1. What are the most important tools and technologies that you use in your job? Where are they made (if you know)?
2. What materials are used to make the [case study object]? Where do the materials come from (if you know)?
3. In your view, are new technologies changing design, manufacturing and/or distribution processes? If so, how?

Relationships & Communication

Purpose: to understand how human actors interact with each other (how they communicate and to what end), and especially with the designer, both at their place of work and globally with other sites of production

1. What people/roles do you have the most contact with? Where are they? Describe how you communicate and collaborate with those co-workers.
2. [delete for the interview with the designer] Do you have any contact with the designer? If so, describe what you do with the designer.

Video Review

Purpose: to understand some of the principal tasks undertaken by the participant in ways that the participant may not think to describe otherwise, and to understand how those activities relate to design and the overall production process

1. Describe what you and others are doing in the video.
2. What phase of the design, manufacturing and distribution process does this represent? How does this connect to the rest of product development?
3. Would you describe any of these activities as creative? Which? Explain why you find them to be creative.
4. Would you describe any of these activities as related to design? Which? Explain the relationship.
5. Does anything surprise you when watching this video?

Object Review

Purpose: to present the participant with an iteration of the object representative of their work (e.g. a prototype or component of the case study object that they have made, an advertisement or packaging that they designed, etc.) with the idea that the object might help them think about their work in ways other than those described in the interview

1. Describe this [version of the case study object].
2. Who worked on it and how?
3. What decisions were made to arrive at this [version of the case study object]?
4. What phase of the design, manufacturing and distribution process does this represent? How does it connect to the rest of product development?
5. In your view, was creative or design activity required to produce this? Describe or explain the activity.

Meaning

Purpose: to understand the meanings invested in the object at different phases, to understand the symbolic significance of the case study object

1. In your opinion, what does the [case study product] symbolize? For example, does it convey any social, cultural or economic messages or values? If so, what are they and how are they conveyed?

Identity

Purpose: to understand how the participant views the object's and the company's significance in relation to themselves and the consumer at a personal, corporate, national and cultural level

1. Do you have an opinion (or opinions) about the final product? If so, what?
2. If you were going to re-design it, what would change? Keep the same?
3. Are you proud of your work? If so, what are you most proud of in the object?
4. Do you see yourself reflected in the final product? If so, how?
5. Do you own [the case study product]?
6. How do you think consumers perceive [the case study object]?
7. What does [the company] mean to you at a personal level?
8. What does [the company] represent for the public? Do consumers identify with the company, and if so, how?
9. Is there anything that might identify this product as being "locally-made," Canadian, or another nationality?

10. In your opinion, does culture play a role in the design and manufacturing processes? Describe.

Exchange Value

Purpose: to understand how participants perceive the exchange value – how does the object's retail value correspond to its production value, what economic value does it represent for the producer and consumer

1. Do you know how much it costs to manufacture each [case study object]?
2. Do you know what the retail price is for the [case study object]?
3. In your opinion, does the retail price represent the value of manufacturing (labour, materials, shipping, etc)?
4. In your opinion, does the [case study product] represent good financial value for the consumer? Why?
5. In your opinion, is the [case study product] a good financial investment for the company? Why?

Relationships

Purpose: to understand how much the participant knows about consumers and other global producers; to understand how the participant sees their relationship to consumers and offshore producers; to understand what weaknesses/challenges they see in producer-consumer relationships, especially in terms of globalization

1. Where do you think the [case study objects] are sold?
2. Describe the kind of person who would buy the [case study object]. What would [the case study object] say about them?
3. Describe how you imagine your relationship to the consumer.
4. Do you think that consumers have a good understanding of where [the case study object] is made, who makes it and how?
5. If you could ask or tell the consumer anything about the product, what would it be?
6. Do people ever use the [case study object] in ways that surprise you? If so, how?
7. Describe your relationship to producers of similar products on the other side of the world.
8. Describe how you imagine off-shore manufacturing.
9. In your opinion, what would be the ideal relationship between designers and the people making the goods they design? For example, where would they be located? How would they communicate and work together? How well would they know each other?
10. In your opinion, what would be the ideal relationship between designers/manufacturers and their clients and consumers? For example, where would they be located? How would they communicate and interact? How well would they know each other?

Globalization/Change

Purpose: to understand how the participant views globalization related to production and consumption; to understand what change the participant has observed and anticipates because of globalization

1. Do you think there are any local skills, knowledge or traditions that influence the design and manufacturing process of [the case study object]? Have any been lost over the years the [object] has been produced?
2. Do you remember a time when these products were made differently? If so, how have production processes changed?
3. Has your job changed? If so, how?

4. Have any parts of your job, or other people's jobs that you know of, been outsourced to another country? If so, what were the reasons? How does that make you feel?
5. Why do you think the design and production of [the case study object] takes place where it does?
6. Are there any differences in how [the case study object] is made or designed in Canada compared to similar products made overseas?
7. What are the advantages and disadvantages of manufacturing in Canada?
8. Do you think offshore manufacturers and/or designers offer something that Canadian manufacturers do not? And vice versa? Is this changing and how?
9. In general, do you think the design process has changed because of off-shore manufacturing? If so, how?
10. In terms of the [case study object type] or more generally, what concerns or hopes do you have about global manufacturing?
11. In terms of the [case study object type] or more generally, what future trends do you anticipate in design and manufacturing?
12. In terms of the [case study object type] or more generally, what future trends do you anticipate in consumption?

Sample Written Questionnaire B - Consumption

Purpose: to establish basic information about the consumer, to understand their professional, personal, economic and cultural background and how this influences their consumption

Name:

Occupation and employer:

Describe your training and professional background:

Place of birth:

Places you have lived:

Primary language:

Other languages:

List any hobbies and other skills you may have:

Do you feel that any of these hobbies, interests or skills influence purchasing the [case study product]?

Sample Interview Questions B - Consumption

Process

Design of the Case Study Object

Purpose: to understand how the participant views the purpose of the case study object (final product) in order to compare how different actors perceive the common goal of producing/circulating/consuming the product

1. Describe the [case study object]
2. What is its intended purpose?
3. Who do you feel it is designed for?
4. How do you think it is intended to be used?

Consumption/Use

Purpose: to understand what motivates the consumer to purchase the product including if they have any history with this type of product; to understand how they will use it and what its anticipated lifecycle will be

1. Where did you purchase the product?
2. Who was it purchased for?
3. Describe the process of shopping for and purchasing this product. What attracted you to it? How did you hear about it? What factors influenced you to buy it?
4. Describe the process of taking the product home, unpacking it and preparing to use it.
5. Describe how you will use it. Where will you use it? What situations will it be appropriate for? How will you take care of it? Who else will use it and how?
6. How will you display it/show it to others?
7. How long do you expect to keep it?
8. Will you dispose of it? How?
9. Have you owned similar products in the past? If so, how many do you own/have you owned? How often do you replace it?

Design Process (use, interpretation, appropriation, adaptation)

Purpose: to understand how consumers perceive the design, manufacturing and distribution of the case study object, including the role of the designer and the consumer as designer

1. What does the word “design” mean to you?
2. Based on your understanding, describe the phases of development, production, distribution and consumption of the [case study object]. For example, how does the product go from initial idea to you, the consumer?
3. Describe the design process for the [case study object]. Where does design fit in the phases of development you described?
4. Who do you think is responsible for the design of the [case study object]?
5. What do you think are the most important factors influencing the design? The manufacturing process?
6. What do you think are the most important skills and knowledge that the designer must have?
7. Do you think the consumer plays a role in the design? If so, how?
8. Do you think the manufacturer, designer, advertiser, retailer or others involved in the production and distribution of the [case study product] listen to the consumer? If so, how do they listen to them? And how are consumer views reflected in the [product] design, manufacturing, advertising, or other representation?

Objects, Tools, Technologies, Materials

Purpose: to understand how aware consumers are of materials and where they come from, the global origins of goods, the tools and technologies required for manufacturing

1. What materials do you think are used to make the [case study object]? Where do you think those materials come from?
2. What tools and technologies do you think are used to make the [case study object]? What country do you think produces those tools and technologies?
3. In your view, are new technologies changing design, manufacturing and/or distribution processes? If so, how?

Relationships & Communication

Purpose: to understand how human actors interact with each other (how they communicate and to what end) to influence consumption

1. When purchasing this product, whom did you have the most contact with? (e.g. other shoppers, retail staff, friends) Where did you interact with them? (e.g. in a store, on-line) Describe how you communicated with them and what influence they may have had on your decision.
2. When using this product, whom do you have the most contact with? (e.g. friends, family, co-workers) Where do those interactions take place? (e.g. at home, in the kitchen, exercising, at work) Describe how you communicate with them and what influence they have on how you use the product.
3. Have you ever communicated with the manufacturer about this product? The retailer? Other consumers? If so, how? (e.g. in person, by email, online)

Object Review

Purpose: to present the participant with an iteration of the object (in situ and/or in use) that demonstrates consumption (e.g. a used version of the object, the object on display in the home or in a picture) with the idea that it might help them think about consumption in ways other than described in the interview

1. Describe this object and its setting [used/consumed case study object in situ].

2. In your opinion, what type of use/decisions influenced how it looks now? Would you describe any of those activities as creative?
3. How does its use reflect you?

Meaning

Purpose: to understand the meanings invested in the object through consumption, to understand the symbolic significance of the case study object

1. In your opinion, what does the [case study product] symbolize? For example, does it convey any social, cultural or economic messages or values? If so, what are they and how are they conveyed?

Identity

Purpose: to understand how the participant views the object's and the company's significance in relation to themselves, other consumers and the producers at a personal, corporate, national and cultural level

1. Do you have any opinions about the [case study product]? The packaging, retail display or other presentations of [the case study object]?
2. If you were going to re-design it, what would change? keep the same?
3. Do you think the [case study product] suits you? What does it say about you? Are you proud to own it? Why?
4. Do you see yourself reflected in the design and manufacture of the product? In the advertising or other presentations of [the case study object] (e.g. store displays, packaging)?
5. Is there anything in your cultural or personal background that influenced your purchase or how you will use it? If so, what?
6. Does the [object type] hold any significance for you (i.e. historically, traditionally, culturally)?
7. What significance do you think [the case study object] holds for other consumers?
8. What significance do you think [the case study object] holds for the producers?
9. What does [the company] or brand mean to you personally?
10. What does [the company] or brand mean in general? Do consumers identify with the company, and if so, how?
11. Is there anything that might identify this product as being locally-made, Canadian, or another nationality?
12. Does culture play a role in the design and manufacturing processes of [the case study product]? Describe.
13. Does culture play a role in the consumption of [the case study product]? Describe.

Exchange Value

Purpose: to understand how participants perceive the exchange value – how does the object's retail value correspond to its production value, what economic value does it represent for the producer and consumer

1. Do you know how much it costs to manufacture each [case study object]?
2. How much did you pay for the product?
3. In your opinion, does the retail price represent the value of manufacturing (labour, materials, shipping, etc.)?
4. In your opinion, does the [case study product] represent good financial value for the consumer? Why?

5. In your opinion, is the [case study product] a good financial investment for the company? Why?
6. Would you ever buy a used version or sell yours second-hand? Why? How would you do that?

Relationships

Purpose: to understand how much the participant knows about consumers and global producers; to understand how the participant sees their relationship to consumers and offshore producers; to understand what weaknesses/challenges they see in producer-consumer relationships, especially in terms of globalization

1. Where do you think the [case study objects] are sold?
2. Describe the kind of person who would buy the [case study object]. What would [the case study object] say about them?
3. How do you see your relationship to other consumers who own this product?
4. Do you think that consumers have a good understanding of where [the case study object] is made, who makes it, and how?
5. How do you see your relationship to the producers of [the case study object]?
6. If you could ask or tell the producer anything about the [case study product], what would it be?
7. Describe your relationship to producers of similar products on the other side of the world.
8. Is there anything that you do with the [case study product] that you think might surprise the designer or manufacturer?
9. Describe how you imagine off-shore manufacturing.
10. In your opinion, what would be the ideal relationship between designers and the people making the goods they design? For example, where would they be located? How would they communicate and work together? How well would they know each other?
11. In your opinion, what would be the ideal relationship between designers/manufacturers and their clients and consumers? For example, where would they be? How would they communicate and interact? How well would they know each other?
12. Do you think globalization has influenced the relationship between producers and consumers? If so, how?

Globalization/Change

Purpose: to understand how the participant views globalization related to production and consumption; to understand what change the participant has observed and anticipates because of globalization

1. Do you think there are any local skills, knowledge or traditions that influence the design and manufacturing process of [the case study object]? Have any been lost over the years the [object] has been produced?
2. In your opinion, are there traditional ways of acquiring and using the [case study product type] that continue to have influence today or that have been lost?
3. Do you remember a time when things were made and sold differently? If so, how have things changed? Has this affected you as a consumer? If so, how?
4. Have any parts of your job, or other people's jobs that you know of, been outsourced to another country? If so, what were the reasons? How does that make you feel?
5. Where do you think the object is designed and produced? Why do you think design and production take place where it does?
6. Are there any differences in how [the case study object] is made or designed in Canada compared to similar products made overseas?

7. What are the advantages and disadvantages of manufacturing in Canada?
8. Do you think offshore manufacturers and/or designers offer something that Canadian manufacturers do not? And vice versa? Is this changing and how?
9. In general, do you think the design process has changed because of off-shore manufacturing? If so, how?
10. In terms of the [case study object type] or more generally, what concerns or hopes do you have about global manufacturing?
11. In terms of the [case study object type] or more generally, what future trends do you anticipate in design and manufacturing?
12. In terms of the [case study object type] or more generally, what future trends do you anticipate in consumption?

E-mail Questionnaire

(sent to Daniel Choi and Sabrina Chen)

Please respond to as many questions as you can. You may refuse to answer any questions.

I am interested in your personal opinion and experience with Gourmet Settings flatware. I am focusing on the Non Stop line, but you can discuss the cutlery in general too.

The questions below are designed to help me understand:

- global design, manufacturing and consumption processes
- who is involved in design and manufacturing, where they are and how they work together
- what people contribute to different phases of design and manufacturing
- what Gourmet Settings flatware means to people at different phases
- how Gourmet Settings flatware connects people and places around the world

Background information

Name:

Title:

Company:

Date (you are completing this interview):

Location (where you are answering these questions):

How long have you worked for this company?

Who do you report to?

What types of services does your company generally provide?

Describe your training and professional background (e.g. where and what you studied at school, other jobs you have had):

Place of birth:

Places you have lived:

Primary language:

Other languages:

Is there a tradition of this kind of work among your family, friends or community?

List any hobbies, interests and other skills you may have:

Do you feel that any of these hobbies or skills influences how you see or perform your work? If so, how?

Your Job

1. Describe your job (your principal responsibilities):
2. In your view, what is the most important aspect of your job?
3. In your view, what is the most important skill needed to perform your job?
4. What kind of decisions do you make? What kinds of problems do you solve?
5. Would you describe your job as creative? If so, what aspects?
6. What people/roles do you have the most contact with? Where are they? Describe how you communicate and collaborate with them.
7. What are the most important tools and technologies that you use in your job? Where are they made (if you know)?

What is Gourmet Settings Flatware

5. Describe Gourmet Settings Flatware in your own words:
6. What is its intended purpose?
7. Who is it designed for?
8. How is it intended to be used?

Design and Manufacturing

11. Describe the main phases and locations in the design and manufacturing of Gourmet Settings Flatware (how does the flatware go from an idea to reality? how does it go from a prototype to a product on the tables of consumers?):
12. What is your role and your company's role in this process?
13. What other companies and suppliers do you work with directly? Where are they?
14. What materials are used to make Gourmet Settings flatware? Where do they come from?
15. What does the word "design" mean to you?
16. Who is responsible for the design of Gourmet Settings flatware?
17. Do you have any contact with the designer(s)? If so, describe how you work together:

18. Do you or anyone other than the designer(s) contribute to the design of Gourmet Settings Flatware? (this could be anything from the choice of materials, the design of molds and tools, suggestions on shapes, finishes, marks, packaging, advertising, display, etc.)
19. What are the most important factors that influence the design?
20. What are the most important factors that influence the manufacturing?
21. What is the biggest challenge in manufacturing Gourmet Settings flatware? How does your company help?
22. What have you learned from Gourmet Settings?
23. What has the Gourmet Settings team learned from you? What do you think was the biggest surprise for them in manufacturing?
24. What is new and exciting about Gourmet Settings?
25. Generally speaking, what are the biggest challenges for North American (Canadian) companies that manufacture in Asia?
26. What are the most important skills and knowledge that a product designer must have today?
27. What would be the ideal relationship between designers and manufacturers? (for example, where would they be located? How would they communicate and work together? How well would they know each other?)

What Gourmet Settings means to you

11. In your opinion, what does Gourmet Settings flatware symbolize?
12. What is your opinion of the final product?
13. If you were going to re-design Gourmet Settings flatware, what would you change?
14. Are you proud of your work on Gourmet Settings flatware? If so, what aspect are you most proud of?
15. Do you see yourself reflected in the final product? If so, how?
16. Do you own Gourmet Settings flatware?
17. What does the Gourmet Settings company mean to you personally?
18. What does the Gourmet Settings company or brand mean to the public?

Economic Value

6. Do you know the retail price of Gourmet Settings flatware?
7. In your opinion, does the retail price represent the value of manufacturing (labour, materials, shipping, etc)?
8. In your opinion, does Gourmet Settings flatware represent good financial value for the consumer? Why?
9. In your opinion, is flatware a good financial investment for Gourmet Settings? Why?

Consumption

11. Where do you think Gourmet Settings flatware is sold?
12. Describe the kind of person who would buy Gourmet Settings flatware:
13. How do you see your relationship to the consumer?
14. Do you think that consumers have a good understanding of where Gourmet Settings flatware is made, who makes it and how?
15. If you could ask or tell the consumer anything about Gourmet Settings flatware, what would you say?

Globalization

13. Why do you think the design and manufacturing of Gourmet Settings flatware takes place where it does?
14. Is there anything that identifies this product as Canadian, Vietnamese, or another nationality? (for example, is there anything special about the design, materials, or manufacturing that could only come from one place?)
15. Are there any local skills, knowledge or traditions that influence the manufacturing of Gourmet Settings flatware?
16. Are there any differences in how Gourmet Settings flatware is made in Vietnam compared to similar products made in other countries?
17. What are the advantages and disadvantages of manufacturing in Vietnam?
18. What are the advantages and disadvantages of manufacturing in North America/Canada?
19. Do you think Asian manufacturers offer something that North American/Canadian manufacturers do not? Is this changing and how?

20. In your opinion, does culture play a role in design and manufacturing? Describe.
21. In your view, are new technologies changing design and manufacturing? If so, how?
22. Do you remember a time when products like Gourmet Settings flatware were made differently? If so, what has changed?
23. Has your job changed? If so, how?
24. In general, do you think the design process has changed because of global manufacturing? If so, how?
25. In terms of cutlery or more generally, what future trends do you anticipate in design and manufacturing?
26. What concerns or hopes do you have about global manufacturing?
27. Is there anything else you would like to add?

Thank you!