

Tailoring the Past: An Approach to Dress, Making, and Embodied Knowledge

Alberto Atalla Filho

**The Design of History and the History of Design
Symposium 2025**

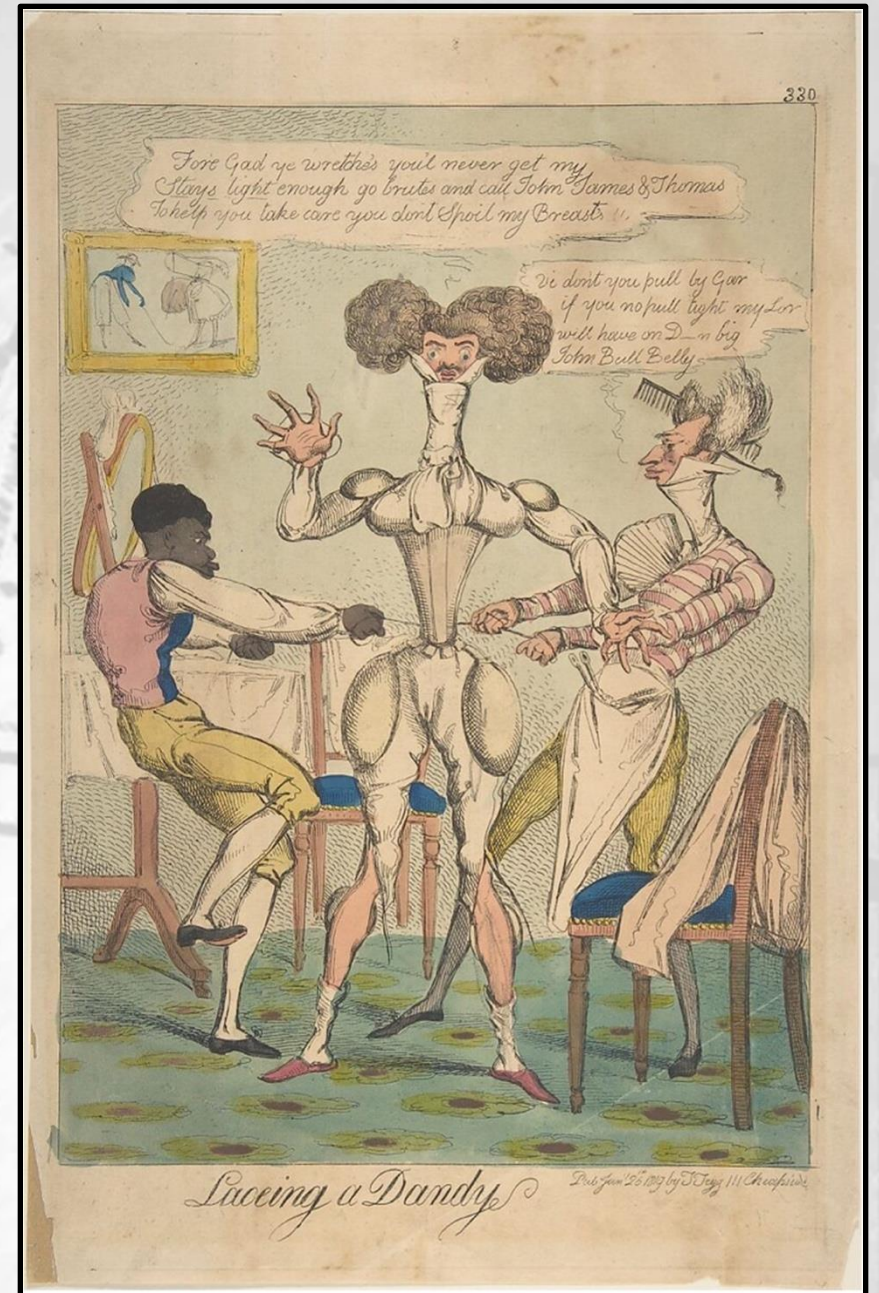
**The importance of design and
making in historical study**



Yves Saint Laurent, 1961

Design history as more than textual or visual analysis

‘[There is a need for] caution in using plates and fashion reports as evidence of anything other than propaganda for commercial concerns or carefully constructed escapist entertainment for readers’
(Breward 1995)



Lacing [sic] a Dandy, 1819
© Metropolitan Museum of Art

How can the making of historical dress help us understand the past?

‘...as if looking through the wrong end of the telescope, the approach [of making or remaking] foreshortens historical distance and allows us to see the museum object anew by uncovering the process that led to its creation’

(O’Neil 2021)



The Tailor, Giovanni Battista Moroni, 1565-70
© The National Gallery

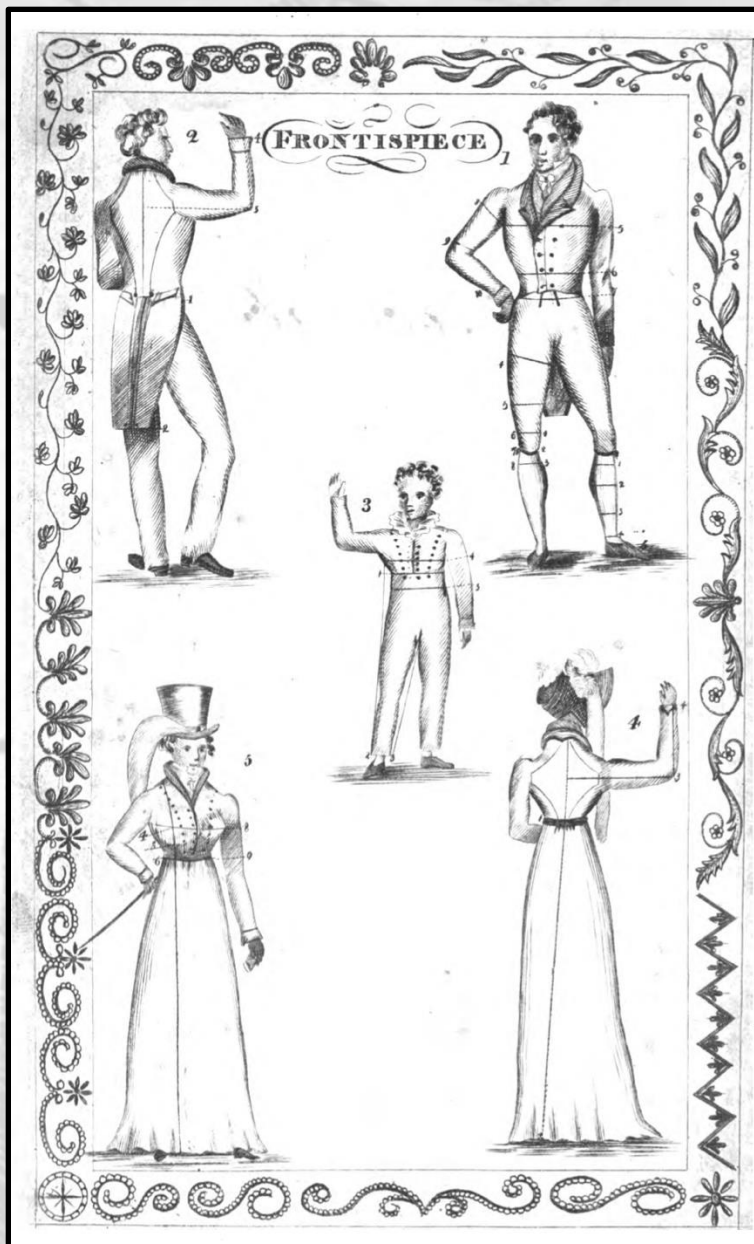
Male tailors and riding habits

**‘...[13] yerdes of blake Batten
delivered to Johnson for
a riding gowne for the Quene...’
(1502)**

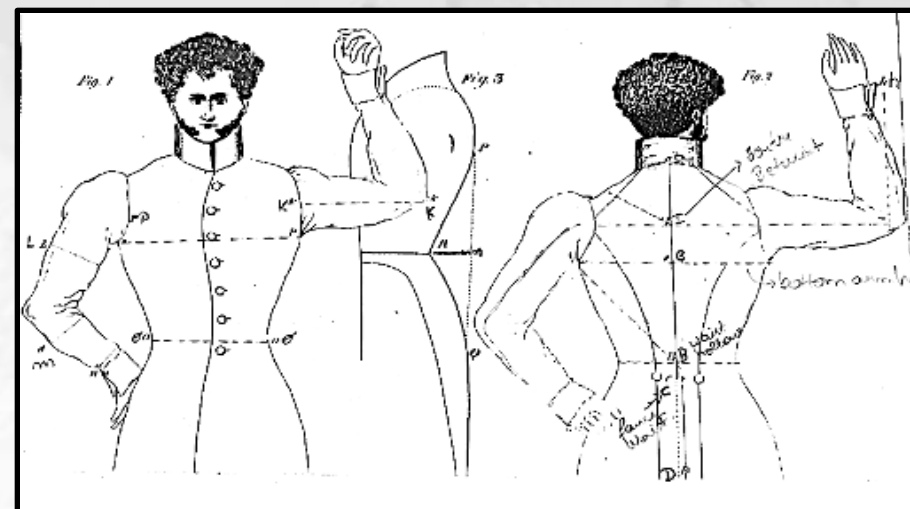


The Lady's Tailor, H. S. Marks, c.1876
© Victorian Illustrated Shakespeare Archive

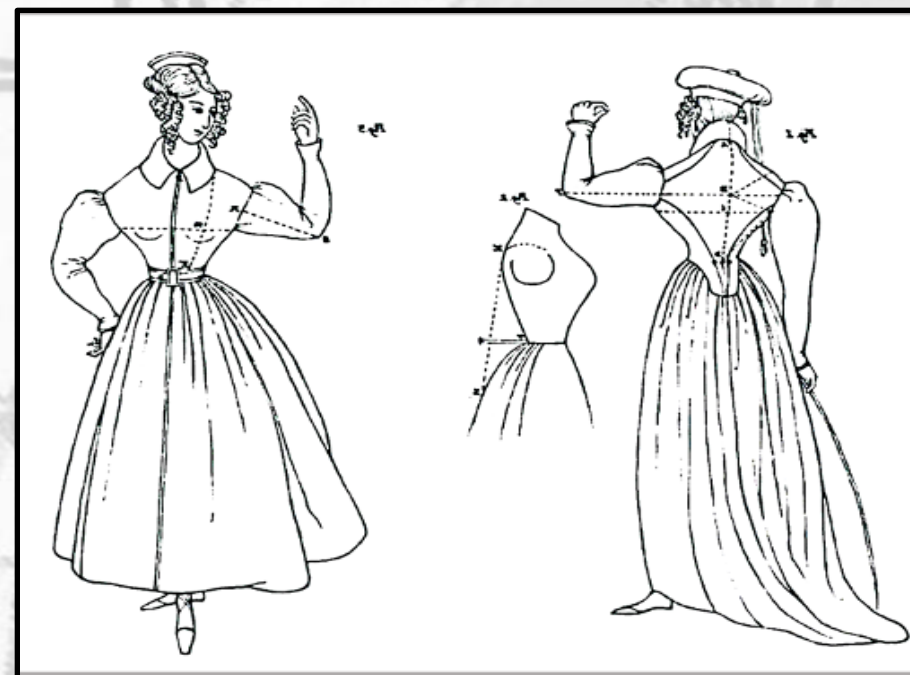
Research focus



The Tailor's Preceptor, Hadfield, 1826



The Tailor's masterpiece, George Walker, 1838

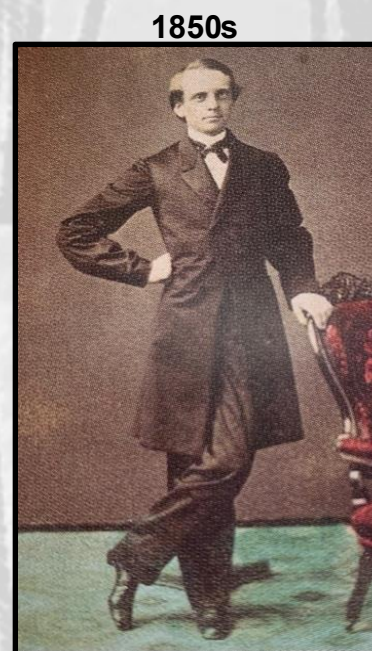


The Tailor's masterpiece, George Walker, 1835

Men's frock coat 1820 - 1860



Moskovsky Telegraph, Great coat, 1830



Men's frock coat between 1820 and 1860,
Edwards, 2020

Women's riding habit
1820 – 1860



Print of riding habit, 1816
© Victoria & Albert Museum



Women's riding habit between 1820 and 1860,
Housden, 2007

Comparing silhouette



Petit Courrier des Dames, 19th century
© Victoria and Albert Museum

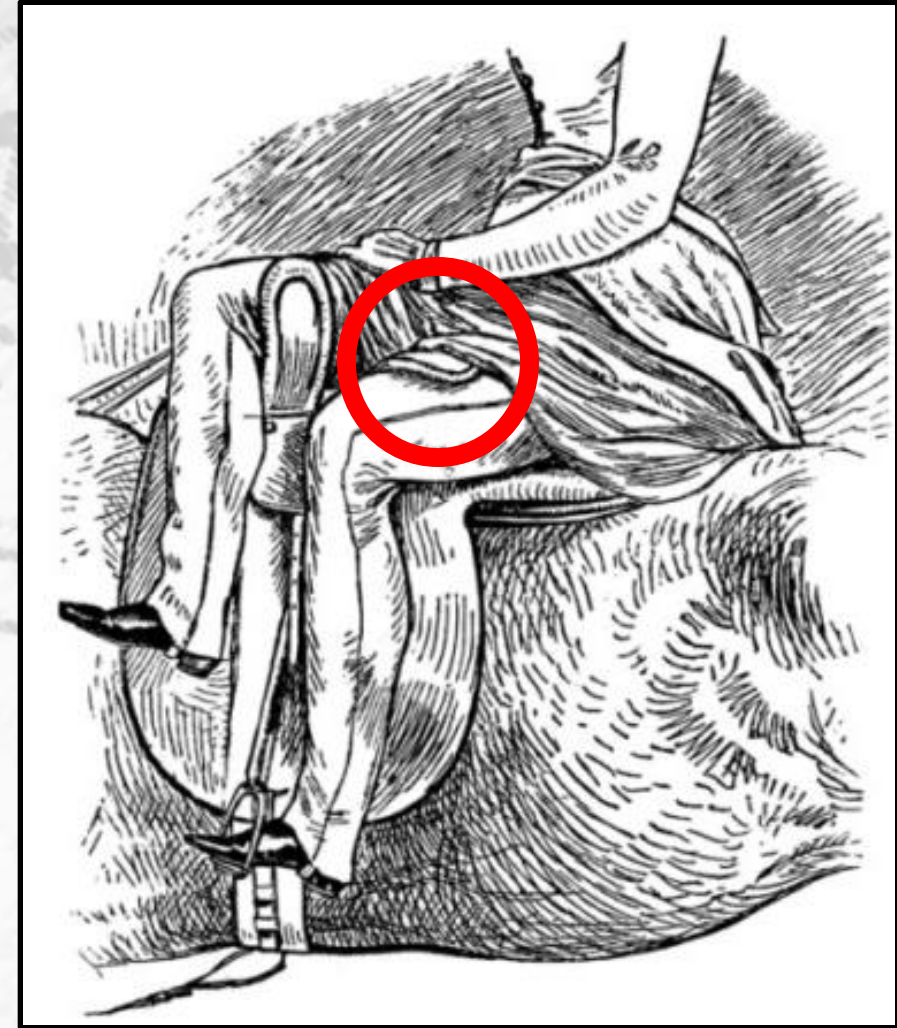
The evolution of side-saddle design



The art of Side-Saddle, c.17th century
Owen, 1984



Side saddle with two horns, c.1800,
© The Museum of the Horse



'Leaping head' or third pommel,
Mead 1887

The riding habit and new saddles



From the series Hark Forward Away!, Francis Calcraft Turner 1830s: 'Gone Away', 'Tally Ho', 'Whoo-Hoop'
© Virginia Museum of Fine Arts

Approach to research

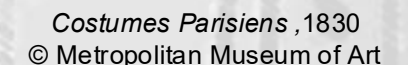
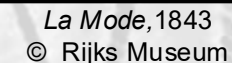
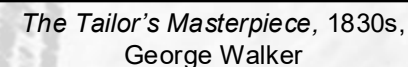
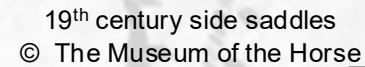
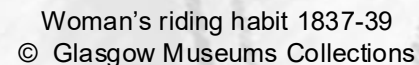
Re-making
as a research
method

Exploring dress as
an object of
evidence

Embodied
research as a
process of knowing



**Investigation of
dress history through
text, images, material
culture and object analyses**



Collecting data



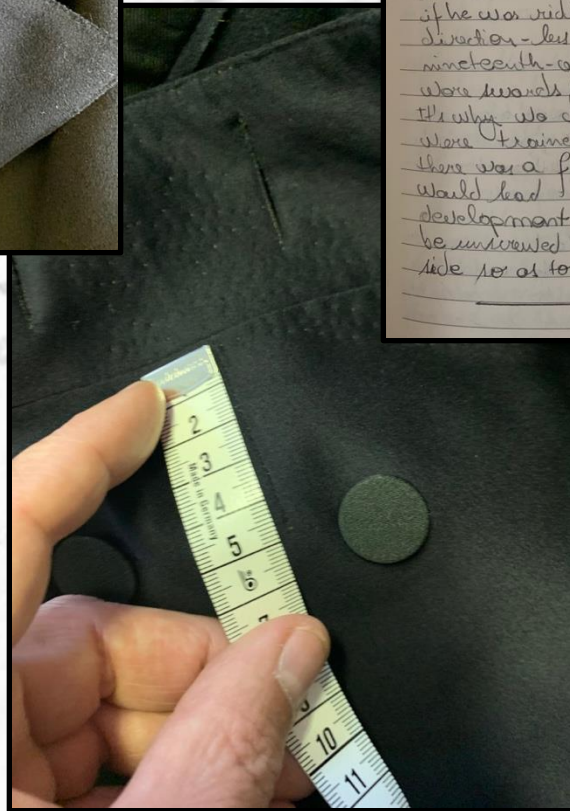
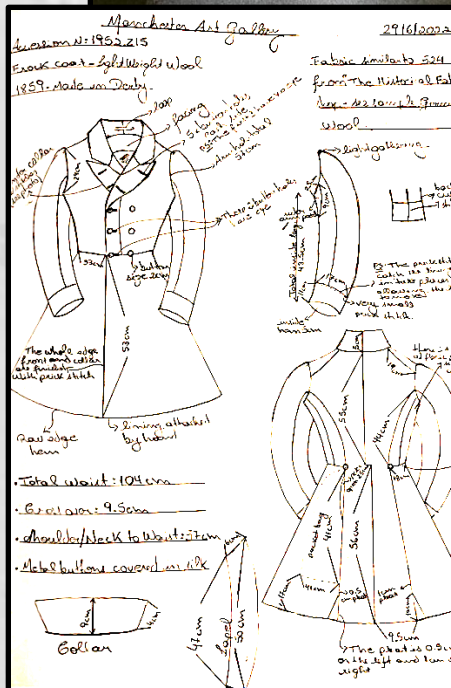
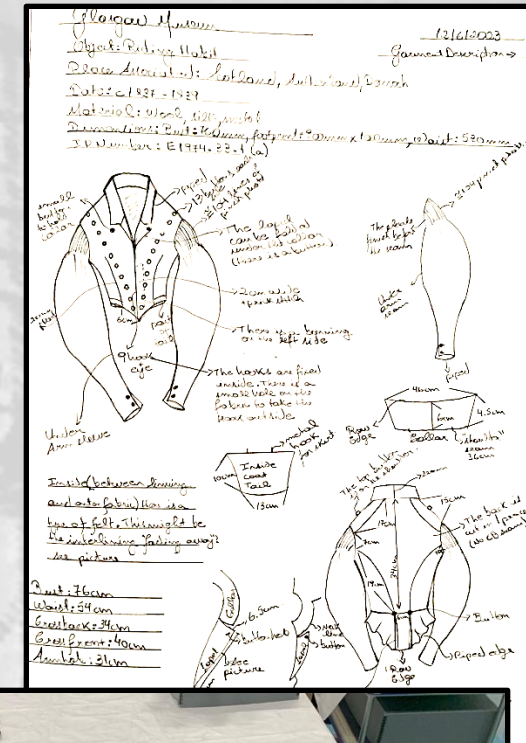
21612023

Visit to the Museum of the Horse

Conversation with Sally Mitchell

"Women rode side-saddle on the left - the expectation was they would be greeted on the right side so as to turn their body away from the horse - the other direction might cause them to unbalance. This was shaped by the tradition that men wore their sword on the left, which would be opposite the woman when approaching from the front but with the woman's skirt unlikely to catch if he was riding beside her in the same direction - less of a issue by the early nineteenth-century as only soldiers wore swords but the tradition stuck. It's why we drive on the left. Girls were trained early but because there was a fear that riding over-side would lead to a twisted spine during development, the third position could be unlearned and placed on the right side so as to alternate the side."

--

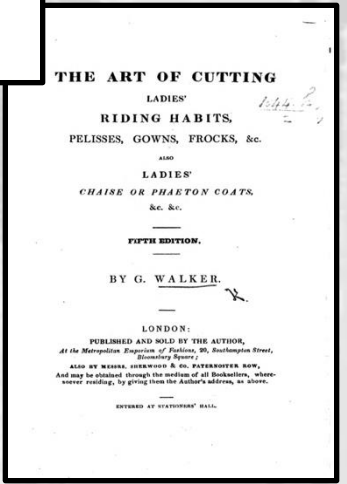
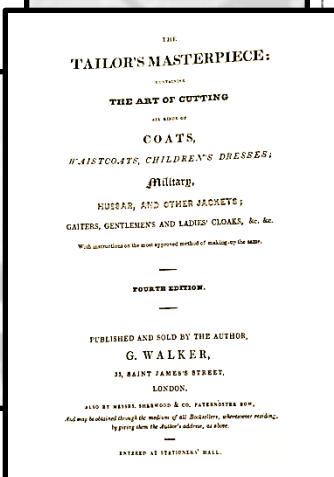
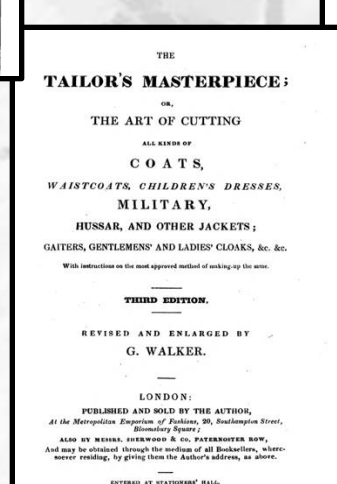
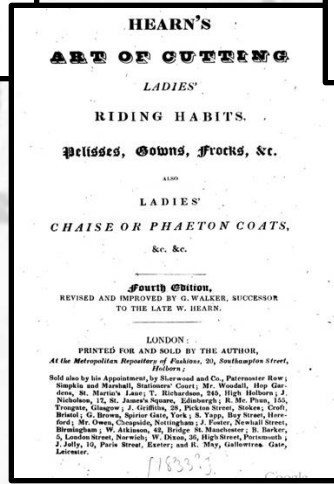
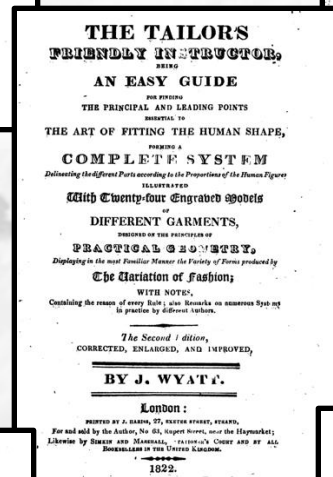
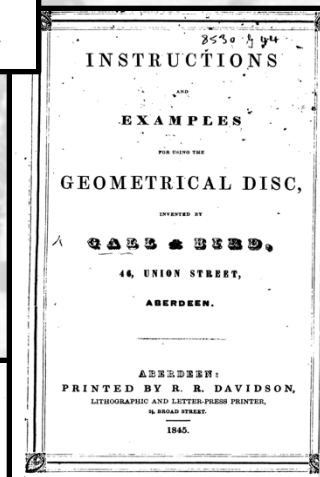
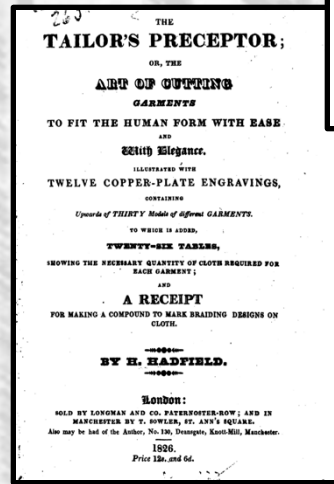
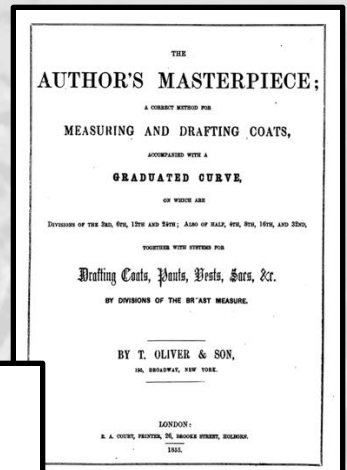
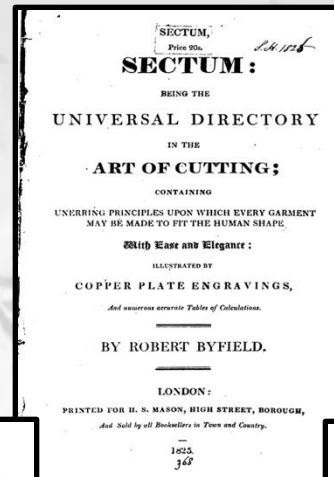
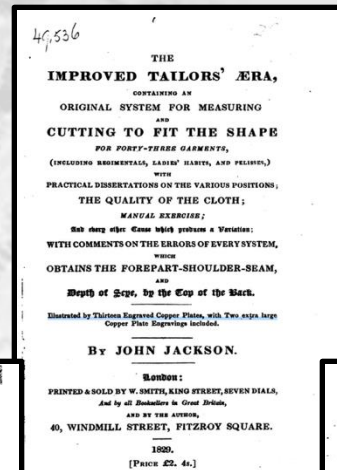
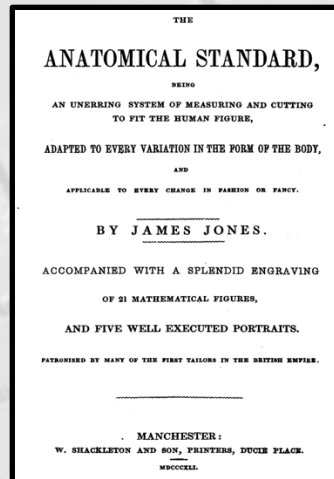


Re-making as a research method

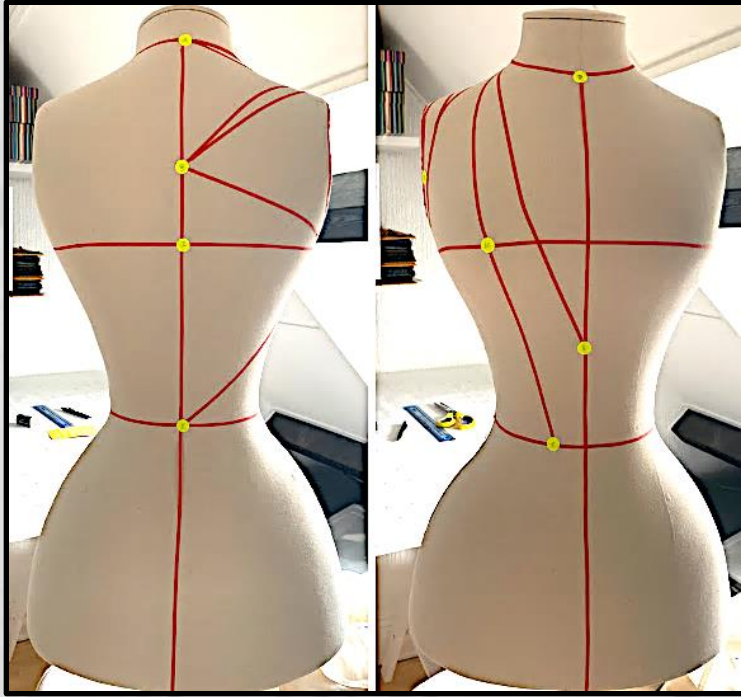
**Re-making historical
dress helps us explore
its design, function, creation,
and cultural meaning through
experimentation.**



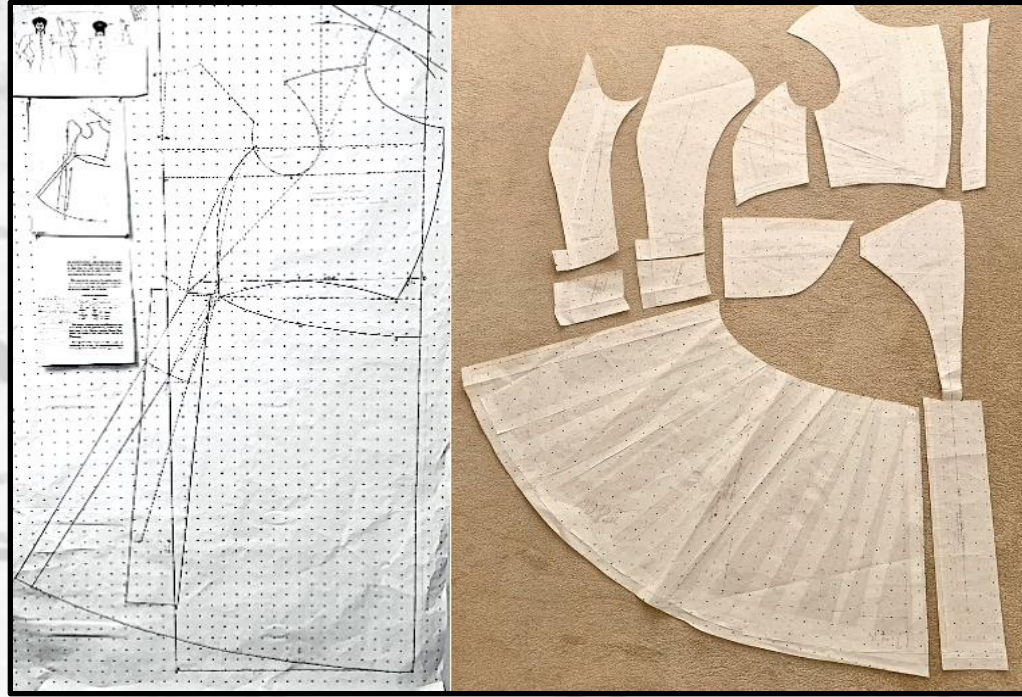
A significant development in tailoring history



Pattern making



Taking body measurements



Frock coat pattern



Toiles (prototypes)

Garments construction



History into form



Remade 1830s man's frock coat



Remade 1830s woman's riding habit

Embodied research as a process of knowing

The relationship between body
and clothing, their performances,
and interaction



The Habit and the Horse: a Treatise on Female Equitation, Mrs. J. Stirling Clarke 1857

Body and Clothing



Angela Wells, 2024

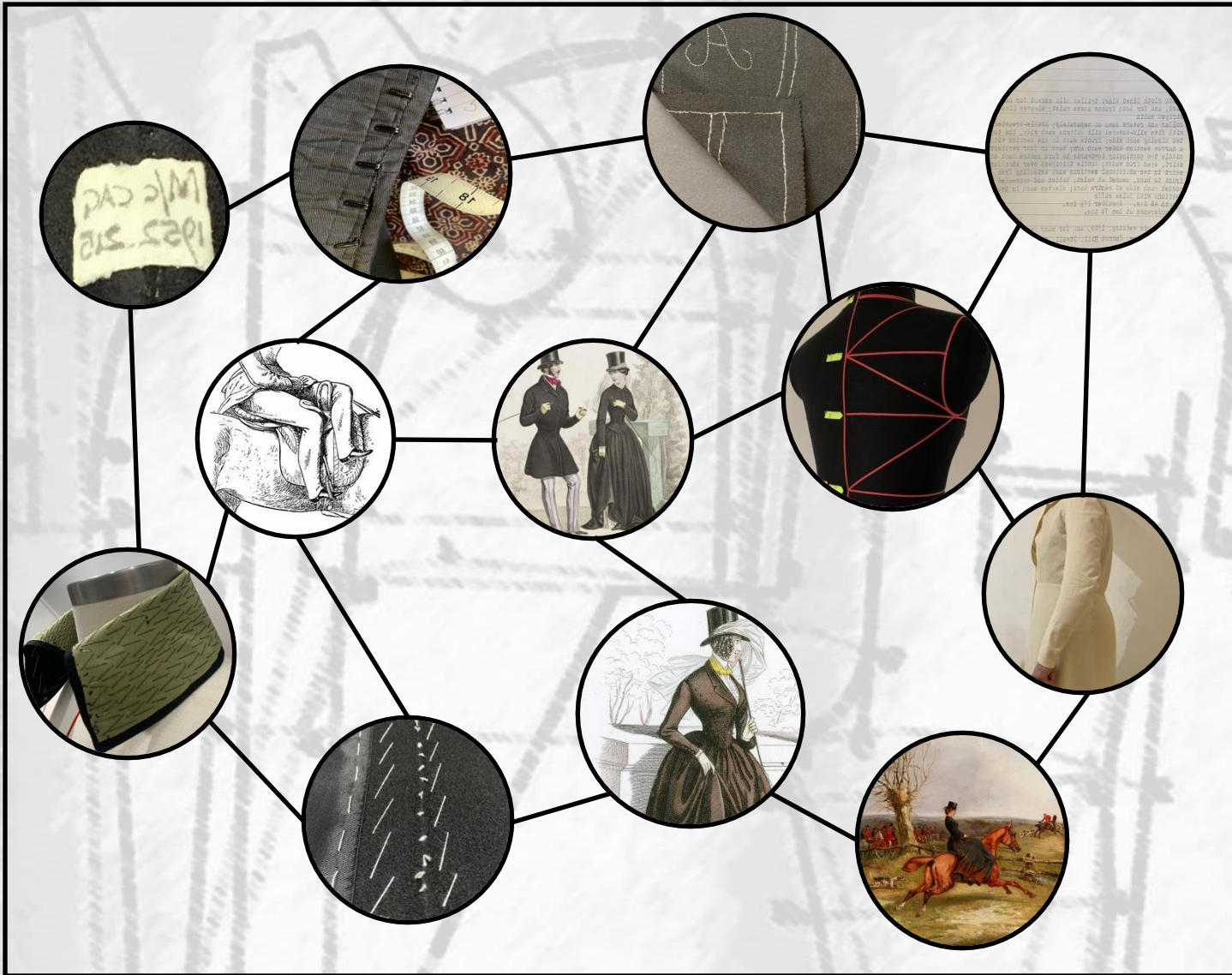


Body and Clothing in motion

**‘Not really restrict but it holds me, it holds me up right, it holds me in for me to engage the core, so it doesn't restrict me, but it supports me...’
(Interview with Angela Wells, 2024)**



Design and making as a way to understand history



Fashioning Frequencies, London College of Fashion 2025

The background is a light gray surface covered with a complex, abstract pattern of thin, dark gray lines. These lines form various geometric shapes, including rectangles, triangles, and circles, some of which are interconnected to create a sense of depth and structure. The overall effect is that of a technical drawing or a modern architectural sketch.

Thank you