

# AUSTRALIAN COUTURE DESIGN SKILLS FOR INDUSTRY AND EDUCATION



## **Tina Guglielmino**

ISS Institute/TAFE Fellowship

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Office of Training and Tertiary Education  
(OTTE), Department of Innovation,  
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# Executive Summary

The Textiles Clothing and Footwear (TCF) industry restructuring that has taken place over the past three decades has led to significant change in the industry. These changes (removal of tariff protection) have seen a significant reduction in manufacturing and as a consequence an increase in imported TCF goods into Australia and a new trend of an increase in small to medium enterprises (SMEs)

The future of Australia's TCF small enterprises lies in the ability of these enterprises to implement the use of value-adding high quality content for niche market products. There is currently a resurgence of interest in boutique designer-made fashion and textile products, which has been generated by the consumer demand for differentiation and high quality individual designed product in the marketplace.

During the period of the restructuring the fashion programs have also been adapted and contents changed to suit the emerging requirements of supply chain management, quality control and production management. Many of the couture skills taught in the past ceased to be taught in lieu of programs supporting the restructuring shift, leaving a skills shortage of these specialist skills.

An increase in small to medium sized enterprises within the TCF Industry has resulted in increased demand for individual customised fitting and couture techniques used in creating high end quality products.

The intention of this Fellowship Program was to provide the opportunity to undertake overseas study in Italy with a renowned fashion couture designer and to visit educational institutes in Italy and Paris to gain skills and knowledge in the application of couture fashion design techniques. It is also envisaged that the information learnt during the Fellowship will be transformed into innovative teaching and learning strategies into the TAFE educational environment.

The aim of this Fellowship was to view the couture practices of an Italian design house and Fashion Institutes in Italy and Paris in order to gain first hand knowledge of these skills and processes to incorporate them into Australian fashion design education, and identify training for the skills gap in Australia.

The first visit during the Fellowship was at Polimoda fashion school in Florence where Tina Guglielmino met with the General Director, Dr Philip Taylor. They discussed educational issues related to fashion programs and the strategic direction of fashion education taken by this fashion school both for the present and future business and educational opportunities. Polimoda has an excellent strategy, based on industry direction. This is a strategy that Guglielmino has now implemented into RMIT University, School of Fashion and Textiles to support program development further. Educational best practice was identified and the institute was also used as a benchmark for fashion programs. Here Guglielmino identified that whilst the institute was situated in one of the centres of fashion design, the education establishment did not have the facilities of the calibre of RMIT and the teaching and learning practises were not as advanced as RMIT.

The Fellowship investigation covered areas of innovation in design and niche market development through the visits organised with the Italian designer Renato Balestra. Whilst at the Balestra design studio links were established with manufacturers, suppliers and design houses in the areas of fashion and textiles and will be useful in supporting professional development for staff and distributing to students for business networks. The time spent with Balestra's staff and contacts and the knowledge acquired was invaluable. It has since provided opportunities for graduate students to visit Balestra's studio and students have also spent internships with the design studio staff and stylists. Couture knowledge gained at the studio has been introduced into fashion programs at RMIT and short courses designed and delivered to industry and staff.

# Executive Summary

Balestra organised visits to observe best practice couture and specialist skills at a variety of companies. One such visit was to Mendel Embroidery situated just outside Rome, and it was there that Guglielmino photographed and observed facilities and equipment used in the manufacturing process for hand tambour beading and machine digitised embroidery. It was clear that the specialist skills demonstrated there were unique to couture design and not available in Australia in this combination. Detailed knowledge on beading practice was attained at Mendel Embroidery as no such company exists in Australia of this calibre. Also observed at Mendel was the embroidery design and manufacturing techniques of automated machine embroidery of a very sophisticated nature, used in the high end fashion design market. This information will be useful in planning strategic directions within our educational programs for textile and fashion.

The Fellow was taken to Textura Manufacturer, producer of formal menswear and tailoring manufacturer. Here the Fellow observed the manufacturing process beginning from Balestra's design sketches to final warehousing of finished goods. The factory was highly efficient and used extensive technology in its design and pattern work rooms as well as automated cutting systems. Here Guglielmino learnt how European design and manufacturing differs to manufacturing in Australia and the advantages and disadvantages of the two differing systems, and found that Australian manufacturing cannot make the same volume savings due to our lower unit numbers. Processes observed at Textura have been implemented into production planning classes for delivery into RMIT fashion programs.

The next part of the Fellowship consisted of visiting three educational institutes in France, the first being Académie Internationale de Coupe de Paris. Guglielmino met with Director General Jean-Claude Lanot and spent time discussing the work that they do for industry and the content of their training programs, as well as observing their classes and visiting the site.

The next institute Guglielmino visited was the Paris American Academy, and met with the President, Peter Carman, and discussed the French Fashion Industry, how it works and what the Government is doing for the French Fashion Industry as well as observing their classes and visiting the site. From both of these institutes Guglielmino observed the equipment and facilities in use and has adopted some of the practices as she found them to be of value to Australia's programs.

Guglielmino also identified that the training packages used for Australia's programs are of relevance to training for the Australian sector and far superior to training programs in either of these institutes.

The Institute Francais De La Mode (IFM) is a not-for-profit association under the management of the Ministry of Industry and has positioned itself as one of the main forces behind the integration of design in industry in France. The IFM works in a broad sector of fashion education and specialises in fashion management as well as fashion design. IFM has a strong relationship with the Fashion Institute of Technology in New York and the Hong Kong Polytechnic. From these relationships a fashion program has developed between the three institutes whereby the structure of the program is taught by a specialist school and exchange staff, to offer students a broad experience and to internationalise their study program.

This program is an educational model highly worthy of considering for Australian institutes and universities to offer a broader scope of learning within our programs, and Guglielmino will continue communicating with this institute to endeavour to learn from the program and the institute itself.

# Executive Summary

Based on the findings of the couture industry in Italy and educational benchmarking of both French and Italian Institutes, Australia is well placed on the world standard in both our training package content and delivery standards.

Following the Fellowship Guglielmino has found that in order to address the couture skills shortage, training should be placed into the higher level of the fashion programs in the second and third years. This will be done by offering a draping course and ensuring that staff undertake professional development to increase their knowledge.

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# *Abbreviations and Acronyms*

AQF	Australian Qualifications Framework
CMM	Curriculum Maintenance Managers
TCF	Textiles Clothing and Footwear
TFIA	Textiles & Fashion Industry Association
IFFTI	International Institute of Fashion Technology Institutes
ISS Institute	International Specialised Skills Institute
SMEs	Small to medium enterprises

# Acknowledgments

Tina Guglielmino would like to thank the following individuals and organisations who gave generously of their time and their expertise to assist, advise and guide her throughout the Fellowship program.

## **Awarding Body - International Specialised Skills Institute (ISS Institute)**

**We know that Australia's economic future is reliant upon high level skills and knowledge, underpinned by design and innovation.**

The International Specialised Skills Institute Inc (ISS Institute) is an independent, national organisation, which has a record of nearly twenty years of working with Australian industry and commerce to gain best-in-the-world skills and experience in traditional and leading-edge technology, design, innovation and management. The Institute has worked extensively with Government and non-Government organisations, firms, industry bodies, professional associations and education and training institutions.

The Patron in Chief is Sir James Gobbo AC, CVO. The ISS Institute Board of Management is Chaired by Noel Waite AO. The Board comprises Franco Fiorentini, John Iacovangelo, Lady Primrose Potter AC and David Wittner.

Through its CEO, Carolynne Bourne AM, the ISS Institute identifies and researches skill deficiencies and then meets the deficiency needs through its *Overseas Skill Acquisition Plan (Fellowship Program)*, its education and training activities, professional development events and consultancy services.

Under the Overseas Skill Acquisition Plan (Fellowship Program) Australians travel overseas or international experts travel to Australia. Participants then pass on what they have learnt through reports, education and training activities such as workshops, conferences, lectures, forums, seminars and events, therein ensuring that for each Fellowship undertaken many benefit.

As an outcome of its work, ISS Institute has gained a deep understanding of the nature and scope of a number of issues. Four clearly defined economic forces have emerged out of our nearly twenty years of research. The drivers have arisen out of research that has been induced rather than deduced and innovative, practical solutions created - it is about thinking and working differently.

### **A Global Perspective. 'Skills Deficiencies' + 'Skills Shortages'**

Skill deficiencies address future needs. Skill shortages replicate the past and are focused on immediate needs.

Skill deficiency is where a demand for labour has not been recognised and where accredited courses are not available through Australian higher education institutions. This demand is met where skills and knowledge are acquired on-the-job, gleaned from published material, or from working and/or study overseas. This is the focus of the work of ISS Institute.

There may be individuals or firms that have these capabilities. However, individuals in the main do not share their capabilities, but rather keep the IP to themselves; and over time they retire and pass way. Firms likewise come and go. If Australia is to create, build and sustain Industries, knowledge/skills/understandings must be accessible trans-generationally through nationally accredited courses and not be reliant on individuals.

Our international competitors have these capabilities as well as the education and training infrastructure to underpin them.

Addressing skill shortages, however, is merely delivering more of what we already know and can do to meet current market demands. Australia needs to address the **dual** challenge – skill deficiencies and skill shortages.

# Acknowledgments

Identifying and closing skills deficiencies is vital to long-term economic prospects in order to sustain sectors that are at risk of disappearing, not being developed or leaving our shores to be taken up by our competitors. The only prudent option is to achieve a high skill, high value-added economy in order to build a significant future in the local and international marketplace.

## **The Trades**

The ISS Institute views the trades as the backbone of our economy. Yet, they are often unseen and, in the main, have no direct voice as to issues which are in their domain of expertise. The trades are equal, but different to professions.

The ISS Institute has the way forward through its 'Master Artisan Framework for Excellence. A New Model for Skilling the Trades', December 2004. The Federal Government, DEEWR commissioned ISS Institute to write an Australian Master Artisan School, Feasibility Plan.

In 2006, ISS Institute Inc. set up a new ISS advisory body, the **Trades Advisory Council**. Members are Ivan Deveson AO; Martin Ferguson AM, MP, Federal Labor Member for Batman; Geoff Masters, CEO, Australian Council of Educational Research; Simon McKeon, Executive Chairman, Macquarie Bank, Melbourne Office; Richard Pratt, Chairman, Visy Industries and Julius Roe, National President Australian Manufacturing Workers' Union.

## **Think and Work in an Holistic Approach along the Supply Chain - Collaboration and Communication**

Our experience has shown that most perceive that lack of skills is the principal factor related to quality and productivity. We believe that attitudes are often the constraint to turning ideas into product and a successful business; the ability to think laterally, to work and communicate across disciplines and industry sectors, to be able to take risks and think outside the familiar, to share – to turn competitors into partners.

Australia needs to change to thinking and working holistically along the entire Supply Chain; to collaborate and communicate across industries and occupations - designers with master artisans, trades men and women, Government agencies, manufacturers, engineers, farmers, retailers, suppliers to name a few in the Chain.

## **'Design' has to be seen as more than 'Art' discipline – it is a fundamental economic and business tool for the 21st Century**

Design is crucial to the economic future of our nation. Australia needs to understand and learn the value of design, the benefits of good design and for it to become part of everyday language, decision making and choice.

Design is as important to the child exploring the possibilities of the world, as it is to the architect developing new concepts, and as it is to the electrician placing power points or the furniture designer working with a cabinet-maker and manufacturer. As such, design is vested in every member of our community and touches every aspect of our lives.

Our holistic approach takes us to working across occupations and industry sectors and building bridges along the way. The result has been highly effective in the creation of new business, the development of existing business and the return of lost skills and knowledge to our workforce, thus creating jobs - whereby individuals gain; industry and business gain; the Australian community gains economically, educationally and culturally.

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# Acknowledgments

In particular Tina would like to thank Carolynne Bourne AM and Jeanette McWhinney from the ISS Institute for their assistance with this Fellowship

## Fellowship Sponsor

The Victorian Government, Office of Training and Tertiary Education (OTTE) is responsible for the administration and coordination of programs for the provision of training and further education, adult community education and employment services in Victoria and is a valued sponsor of the ISS Institute. Tina would like to thank them for providing funding support for this Fellowship.

## Employer Support

Tina would like to acknowledge the support of RMIT University for providing the time and the additional funding required to undertake the Fellowship and associated activities.

- Allan Ballagh, Director, RMIT TAFE
- Allan Cummings, Pro Vice-Chancellor, Design and Social Context
- Christine Robinson, RMIT TAFE Director, Design and Social Context
- Keith Cowlshaw, RMIT Head of School Fashion and Textile

## Fellowship Supporters

### In Australia

- Trevor C Lange, Curriculum Manager, Chisholm Institute General Manufacturing Cluster (including TCF Industry)
- Council of Textile and Fashion Industries of Australia Limited
- Frank Kisvarda, Managing Director, Apparel Management Pty Ltd (past president of the TFIA and Chairman of the Action Agenda Task Force)
- Susan Renouf, Executive Deputy Chair, L'Oreal Melbourne Fashion Festival

### In Italy

- Dr Philip Taylor, Polimoda (Florence, Italy)
- Renato Balestra, Designer, and Sabrina Baldi, Assistant, Renato Balestra Designs (Rome, Italy)

### In France

- Peter Carman, President, Paris American Academy (Paris, France)
- Veronique Schilling, Academic Affairs Adviser, Global Fashion Management Executive, MBA Program Director, Institut Francais De La Mode (Paris, France)
- Monsieur Jean-Philippe Vauclair, Director, Académie Internationale de Coupe de Paris (Paris, France)

# Acknowledgments

## **Australian Organisations Impacted by the Industry (Peak Organisations and Key Representatives)**

### **Federal Government: Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR)**

The Australian Government's Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR) provides national leadership and works in collaboration with the states and territories, industry, other agencies and the community in support of the Government's objectives. They develop and implement policies to ensure the continuing relevance of education, science and training to contemporary needs and the growing requirement for lifelong learning. It is anticipated that the findings will be of value in further developing training packages.

### **Manufacturing Skills Australia**

Manufacturing Skills Australia is the Industry Skills Council that provides advice on industry training and skills development needs to Government and industry. The Textiles Clothing and Footwear Representative is:

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### **Fashion Group International, Sydney**

Domenic Beirne, Regional Director

### **Textiles and Fashion Industries Association**

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### **All Victorian TAFE Institutes Including**

Box Hill Institute TAFE  
Gordon Geelong TAFE  
Sunraysia TAFE  
Central Gippsland TAFE

### **Fashion Technicians Association Australia**

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# About the Fellow



Tina Guglielmino commenced her working life in the fashion design and production sector of the TCF Industry where she has worked in fashion design and production with roles in designing, sourcing, grading and production planning. Guglielmino also ran a small direct marketing business in children's clothing before deciding to change directions in her career and chose education and training as a new pathway. Guglielmino then undertook her Graduate Diploma of Education and has moved from teaching across technical colleges in the eighties to teaching fashion courses at Kangan Batman TAFE, The Melbourne Institute of Textiles and is now in a management role within The School of Fashion and Textiles at RMIT University.

During her teaching career she has also been responsible for managing major projects including the implementation of the Flexible TCF Learning Centre at the Melbourne Institute of Textiles. Guglielmino established effective initial and ongoing operations of a Fashion Computer Aided Design Centre for the School of Fashion & Textiles, successfully implementing the new training packages. She also developed the Bachelor of Applied Science Fashion Technology at RMIT and contributed to the development of courses for the new Masters of Fashion and Textiles.

Guglielmino's professional educational development began firstly with the Diploma in Arts in Fashion and then she gained her Industry experience through a number of roles within the fashion design and production sector of the industry. She then moved to teaching and has continually undertaken professional development to maintain her academic and management skills. In order to further develop educational and management skills Guglielmino undertook a Graduate Certificate in Leadership Development (Educational Management) followed by the Masters in Educational Management in 2004.

In her role at RMIT Guglielmino is a member of the RMIT School of Fashion and Textiles Teaching and Learning Committee, Research and Higher Degree Research Committee. She is also executive member of the International Institute of Fashion Technology Institutes Committee (IFFTI) and the School Executive Management team.

In 2008 Guglielmino led a team of staff in holding the 10th IFFTI World Conference at RMIT, organising keynote speakers from around the world and hosting the presentations of refereed papers.

In her current role she is responsible for programs in fashion design and technology, footwear and textile design ranging from Certificate II through to Degree level. As Programs Manager she has substantial responsibility for developing, directing and administering programs to achieve budgets and delivery targets. She also provides leadership in building the scholarship of learning and ensuring program renewal and quality frameworks are carried out in all programs.

During her years in education Guglielmino has maintained her strong networks with industry and was the executive member for education on the Fashion Group International Committee. In her current role she is responsible for working strategically with Government, industries, universities and TAFE institutes to identify knowledge and skills within the Textiles and Clothing Industry.

Guglielmino is an experienced academic Programs Manager with extensive educational management skills and demonstrates practical experience in designing and delivering quality programs in the Clothing and Footwear Industry.

# The Fellowship Program

The intention of this Fellowship program was to provide the opportunity to undertake overseas study in Italy with a renowned fashion couture designer and to visit educational institutes in Italy and Paris to gain skills and knowledge in the application of couture fashion design techniques. It is also envisaged that the Fellowship will incorporate learning that will be transformed into innovative teaching and learning strategies into the TAFE educational environment.

## **Aim of the Fellowship**

The aim of this Fellowship was to view the couture practises of Italian design houses and Fashion Institutes in Italy and Paris in order to gain first hand knowledge of these processes and incorporate them into Australian design and fashion education.

## **Specific Areas of Study and Development**

- To investigate innovations in design, high end fashion couture product development and niche market development for the Fashion Industry
- To investigate design, innovation and couture production techniques in fashion
- To investigate establishment of links with manufacturers and design houses in the areas of fashion and textile relevance eg: beading and embroidery suppliers and manufacturers
- To investigate best practice in couture design skills in the leading edge training institutes in Italy and Paris
- To investigate leading edge teaching and learning practices in fashion educational programs
- To raise the profile of the Australian Fashion and Textile Industry internationally
- To raise the standard of the couture skills requirement for small business enterprises

# The Australian Context

The industry restructuring that has taken place over the past three decades has led to significant change in the industry. These changes (removal of tariff protection) have seen a significant reduction in manufacturing and as a consequence an increase in imported TCF goods into Australia and a new trend of an increase in SMEs.

Industry policy (in the form of reduced protection) led to the closure of the early stages of the industry supply chains. By 2005 most of this restructuring had taken place. There are few yarn producers and knitters/weavers left in Australia today. The industry has followed the value-add model that predicts first world TCF countries will exit labour intensive commodity early stage production and move towards value-adding through brand, innovation, design and niche market product development.

The industry has always been characterised by a high percentage of SME companies and a spread of larger companies. In 2008 there are relatively few large companies in excess of AUD 100million turnover (see table: *Employment, Establishments, Industry Turnover*).

	1990/91	1995/96	2000/01	2005/06	2009/10
<b>Employment ( '000)</b>	102	104	79	56	40?
<b>Establishments (ABS)</b>	3900	5509	4899	4220	4000?
<b>Industry Turnover (\$Billion)</b>	10.8	10.9	10.6	12.1	14?
<b>Employees/Establish</b>	26	19	16	13	10?

- Industry in total \$ continues to grow
- Business are getting smaller
- Industry is SME, Microbusiness

Source: TFIA/Abs/DITR

*Flaneur*

The Apparel and Footwear Manufacturing Industry and its supply chain has been the segment most affected by industry restructuring.

It is in this market segment (apparel and footwear) that the impact of imports (from China) has been most apparent. The China impact has seen the demise of the apparel manufacturers who have been replaced by designers who source product from offshore. These designers can be found in SMEs, brand houses, wholesalers and retailers. The large retailers are major players/influencers in the apparel/footwear segment and are very much part of the TCF supply chain.

However, the local industry still has a growing garment make-up demand (sewing and patternmaking) to service niche products and short run demands from retailers.

The future of Australia's TCF small enterprises lies in the ability of these enterprises to implement the use of value-adding high quality content for niche market products. There is currently a resurgence of interest in boutique designer made fashion and textile products, which has been generated by the consumer demand for differentiation and high quality individual designed product in the marketplace.

# The Australian Context

During the period of the restructuring the programs also adapted and changed the contents to suit the emerging requirements of supply chain management, quality control and production management. Many of the couture skills taught in the past ceased to be taught in lieu of programs supporting the restructuring shift.

Since the restructuring of the programs specialised skills have not been taught and were not included in the training packages.

The aim of this Fellowship was to view the couture practises of Italian design house and fashion institutes in Italy and Paris in order to gain first hand knowledge of these skills and processes to incorporate them into Australian fashion design education.

There are many skills that may be required for a couture garment to be produced depending on the techniques involved in the style.

The skill required in achieving perfection of fit, construction of interlining and stay taping to perfection for each garment, beading and embellishment, all value-add to the finished product and to achieving a high quality garment.

An increase in small to medium sized enterprises within the TCF Industry has resulted in increased demand for individual customised fitting and couture techniques used in creating high end quality products.

## Skills Identification

Industry restructuring is now complete and whilst there may be some further industry closures in the textile and fashion sector where technology is out of date or products are commodities, the current industry structure will continue in its present form.

It is an industry where competitive advantage is derived from design and the application of design to ideas that will lead to innovation aimed at remaining globally competitive.

Currently there is a labour shortage in the fashion sector of the industry from sample machinists to patternmakers and design room assistants all requiring high level skills and knowledge of couture processes.

The industry will need to attract a higher calibre of people who have higher level qualifications in order to maintain the competitive advantage. Small business is growing at a medium rate and individual couture boutiques continue to grow to satisfy the demand for differentiation in design.

It is in this sector that the skills shortage is of most significance as the new training package does not include any of the specialist skills required for special couture work. The training packages are compiled by large industry groups and as such do not focus on the small business of couture design and individual fit and one off design and make.

The couture sector of the Australian industry is managed by many individual designers that operate small businesses at the high end of the market sector. It is characterised by highly creative individuals operating businesses with staff ranging from one to ten people. These businesses typically make special occasion wear in the high priced market sector and complete the whole production process from concept to completion within the enterprise. In some instances specialised skill work on the garment may be sent overseas for completion, such as beading, and this may be for one of two reasons - to save on labour costs, or the lack of specialised skills to undertake the task.

# The Australian Context

It has become increasingly difficult for many of the small businesses to gain skilled staff to undertake the specialised tasks required in the couture area as the skills have been typically found in migrant staff with the skills acquired in European countries. As the population ages in Australia these skills are being lost and as the migrant population is shifting in origins away from Europe the skills are not being replaced.

In order for Australian couture small businesses to maintain their competitive edge it is imperative that the skills be maintained and any new developments be captured.

The risk of Australian TCF businesses not remaining competitive in the world market will affect the TCF economic contribution to the Australian economy.

The impact would be loss of growth in the marketplace of small business and associated industries. It is imperative that the Australian TCF industries maintain their effectiveness and competitive edge through individual and couture design as this in turn will affect income to the TCF industries.

# Identifying the Skill Gap/s

## Definition

As established previously, for purposes of this report a skill deficiency is where a demand for labour has not been recognised and where accredited courses are not available through Australian higher education institutions. This demand is met where skills and knowledge are acquired on-the-job, gleaned from published material, or from working and/or study overseas. This is the key area targeted by ISS Institute.

## Identifying and Defining the Gap

The future of Australia's TCF small businesses lies in the ability of these businesses to implement the use of value-adding high quality individual design for niche market products. The fashion sector of the industry is reliant on design and specialist technique skills in order to maintain its competitive edge.

The Victorian Skills Statement on training has identified skills as being primary in the future of the employment opportunities *"Industry needs workers with the right skills and knowledge, and individuals need the skills to equip them for changing employment opportunities."* (Maintaining the Advantage - Skilled Victorians p2).

*The Victorian Government has identified design as one of the key manufacturing capabilities that are strategically important for the economy (Knowledge & Skills for the Innovation Economy, Ministerial Statement, Lynne Kosky, Minister for Education and Training p15 June 2002.)*

The TCFL Forum Strategic Plan – June 2002 has also identified the need to *"Promote and elevate the role of design within TCFL"* (p71) as a strong emphasis towards improving the future of the economy.

TAFE education in fashion and textiles has in the past focused on technology and now needs to align this to design and specialist technique skills, in order for education to incorporate innovation into our programs and focus not only on the ready to wear market, but also on the niche market segment.

The aim of this Fellowship is to improve skills and gain new knowledge in couture design and techniques for specialist niche market fashion products.

Paris and Italy are well known as the capitals of fashion couture and leaders in the skills associated with couture. By observing and researching the Italian and Parisian model, the aim was to return to Australia with new knowledge and skills. By using this acquired knowledge, advice for program structures can be provided and new technical design and couture processes can be introduced into fashion programs.

To obtain the necessary skills and information, the following activities were undertaken during the course of the Fellowship:

- Observation of the work room process for design from concept through to completion in the Balestra work rooms
- Visits to fabric suppliers and sourcing details of costs and manufacturing specifications
- Sourcing and visiting specialist fabric treatments work rooms such as beading, embroidery, and other surface embellishment services
- Investigation of the couture business infrastructure in Italy and Paris. How does it work and how can this be applied to Australian business practices?

# Identifying the Skill Gap/s

- Investigation of the manufacturing process of both niche market and large enterprise high-end quality fashion products
- Investigation of whether these skills are taught in fashion schools in Paris and Italy and what other necessary training is currently being delivered which may be of benefit to the Australian TCF Industry

These objectives were achieved by:

- Undertaking an overseas internship with the fashion designer Renato Balestra
- Undertaking research in Paris and Rome at training institutes to review fashion design and couture study programs
- Implementation of the appropriate changes into Australian fashion program delivery where required to incorporate improvements of content
- Developing training strategies for teachers and designers on couture techniques

## **Fashion Education and Training in Australia**

Currently available in Australia are the following fashion programs at national TAFE Institutes and Universities:

- Bachelor of Applied Science (Fashion Technology)
- Advanced Diploma of TCF (Fashion) replaced by Advanced Diploma of Applied Fashion Design and Technology
- Diploma of Textiles Clothing and Footwear (Fashion), which has been superseded in 2007 by Applied Fashion Design and Technology
- Certificate IV in Textiles Clothing and Footwear (Fashion) replaced by Certificate IV in Applied Fashion Design and Technology
- Bachelor of Design (Fashion)

## **Private Provider Programs**

- Certificate IV in Design
- Advanced Diploma of Fashion and Design
- Certificate IV in Fashion Business
- Diploma of Fashion Business (Management and Marketing)
- Diploma of Fashion Business (Offshore Manufacturing)

# International Experience

The overseas program was purposefully designed to explore the identified skills and knowledge gaps and to obtain the information necessary to return to Australia equipped with the knowledge and ideas to enable Guglielmino to advise, instruct, promote and improve education and training in the fashion couture sector of the Australian industry and educational institutes.

## Program Content: Destination and Objective

During the Fellowship Program the itinerary included visits to establishments and meetings with individuals involved in couture fashion design and fashion educationalists in both Italy and Paris.

Destination	Description	Objective	Knowledge Sought
Polimoda Institute	A private provider with training programs specialised for the fashion sector	Investigate best practice in couture design skills	Type of training undertaken. Benchmark training and establish networks for exchange of knowledge
Renato Balestra Design House	A renowned Italian couture and ready to wear fashion label producing high end fashion products	Investigate innovations in design, high-end fashion couture product and production techniques  Investigate links with manufacturers and design houses	Skills and techniques in couture design and manufacture  Sources of specialist manufacturing networks and industry contacts
Mendel Embroidery	Manufacturer specialising in embroidery and beading, both manual and computer aided design	Investigate industrial and manual embroidery and beading design and manufacture	Methods of creating embroidery designs and manufacturing process and equipment used
Textura Manufacturer	Menswear tailoring manufacturer	Investigate manufacturing process suppliers and networks	Production methods and processes for tailoring
Académie Internationale de Coupe de Paris	Private provider industry trainer	Investigate best practice in couture design skills linked to industry	Method of industry engagement within programs
Paris American Academy	Private provider of undergraduate training	Investigate training program in couture design skills	Training programs available and content
Institute Francais De La Mode	Government funded industry trainer for post graduate and undergraduate training	Investigate training programs in post and undergraduate levels	Training programs available and content

## International Experience



*Polimoda Fashion School,  
Florence*

### **Polimoda Fashion School Florence, Italy**

At the Polimoda Fashion School Guglielmino met with the General Director, Dr Philip Taylor and discussed educational issues related to fashion programs and viewed their facilities.

Guglielmino learnt that the school is founded in two parts:

- (a) The school, which manages all of the educational programs aimed at full fee paying students
- (b) The company, which is focused on services such as in-company training, consulting, design and patternmaking services and fashion publications. One of the features of the school is its link to industry and the support gained for their educational program from industry projects. This model supports the RMIT Fashion and Textiles educational model as being directional in educational learning and teaching trends.

The training programs at Polimoda were focused either on patternmaking, design or marketing and contained no specialist couture training. The reason given by Dr Taylor was that the industry undertook training these specialists in couture once they had graduated from the institutes and had gained several years of experience. Then the training is undertaken in the workplace by the existing experts who pass it on to new employees. This is most likely the most efficient way to ensure a high standard of skill-based learning occurs in the couture industry and skills are not lost. This teaching and learning system has been employed in the Italian couture industry for many years and is one that should be adopted by Australia's Fashion Industry.

The programs ranged from short courses to undergraduate courses linked to the Fashion Institute of Technology in New York and a masters program.

The facilities were moderate, class sizes were large and rooms were small (as tends to be the case in Europe). An excellent relationship has been developed with Polimoda through Guglielmino's IFFTI role. An exchange of knowledge has begun through the communication with the CEO and teaching staff of the undergraduate program delivered at Polimoda, jointly delivered by the Fashion Institute of Technology in New York.

Florence is a renowned city for artisan skills ranging from leatherwork through to fashion design, fabric printing and textile design of fabrics. Whilst Guglielmino was there she also sourced suppliers of fashion and textile supplies for a resource development list to be distributed to industry and students.

### **Renato Balestra Design House Rome, Italy**

The Renato Balestra Design House is a renowned Italian couture and ready to wear fashion label that produces high-end fashion products including ladies' wear, menswear and accessories for the Italian and European fashion market. This fashion house was chosen for observation due to its work room practice being specific to couture design and one of unique individually-made garments. It was hoped that a wide range of skills could be observed here and that the supplier contacts could be shared.

During the week of observation Guglielmino found the following practices in the design studio. Two stylists worked with Balestra in drawing his concepts and communicating them to staff in the production work rooms from the design work room. The work rooms contained very basic equipment with no advanced technology systems used in either the design room or the work rooms. Two dressmakers with patternmaking and construction skills worked on garments from beginning to finalisation of each garment. Two well experienced couture specialists staffed the three work rooms being a total of six staff operated in producing garments.

# International Experience

During the five days spent at Balestra the production of garments was observed and ensuing discussions were about the design and manufacturing processes used. An extensive range of photographs detailing the production cycle of garments, the operation of the design studio, the supply and purchasing office and garment production were recorded.

Whilst at the Balestra Design House, the Fellow was advised of other specialists and support manufacturers working with the couture industries and was subsequently taken to visit two of these factories.

## Design Process

The design process is initiated by a theme created by Renato Balestra, drawn from on-going research and communicated to his stylist who creates approximately four design drawings per day. The final styles are chosen by Balestra to formulate the total new range of garments for both women's and men's wear.



*Initial design concepts*



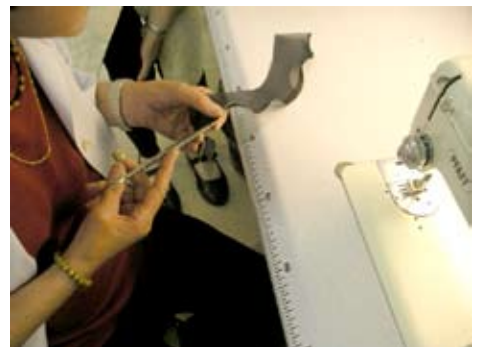
*Balestra stylist*

## Work Room Activities

Guglielmino's observations in the Balestra work rooms covered a range of couture techniques used in the production of garments as detailed in the photos below. She observed the technique of hemming ruffles and how they were positioned onto a blouse. Over the week she observed that the time taken to complete the blouse was over 40 hours of work.



*Balestra work room*



*Work room machine and technique for rolled hem*

# International Experience

## Work Room Practices

Observations were also made on the patternmaking and storing of patterns as well as the use of pattern draping on a stand as common practice for developing individual fit for clients. Patterns were made in paper, not in card, and stored in envelopes, not on racks nor on computer systems. All recording of client details were kept manually and updated at each fitting if necessary.



*Work room patterns*



*Draping on a stand*



*Recording of measurements*

## Work Room Equipment

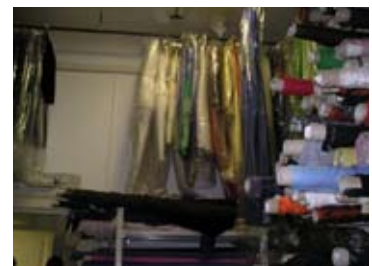
The pictures below highlight the pressing equipment – the velvet pressing board and the sleeve board used in the work room for pressing all couture garments. The sizing stand in the middle picture shows the method used to pad out a stand to fit an individual client's shape. A separate room is used for housing fabric rolls and garments suspended from the ceiling on a rack to save space for storage.



*Pressing equipment*



*Padding of a stand for sizing*



*Storage of fabrics and garments*

## Beading Techniques

Trends in couture work at present do incorporate beading into some garment designs as seen on the following page. The first picture indicates a border beaded edge done separately on a firm backing and self fabric and is then hand stitched onto the garment. The second picture illustrates beading and embroidery done directly onto the garment and the third shows the technique also used in beading known as tambour. This type of beading is undertaken regularly in cases of repair only. The specialised beading and embroidery is sent to be undertaken by specialists.

# International Experience



*Beading techniques*



*Beading techniques*



*Tambour beading*

## **Mendel Embroidery** Italy

Mendel specialises in embroidery and beading for couture designers such as Balestra and other Italian designers. The Mendel company is run by a small group of specialist staff of approximately three people including the owner. The owner has design skills as well as textile fabrication skills. She demonstrated these skills on a computer and showed Guglielmino her designs used by designers in their fashion garment ranges. The premises are large and house advanced digital design technology and computerised embroidery machinery. At each of the facilities equipment was observed and photographed as was the manufacturing process for hand tambour beading and machine digitised embroidery. At this establishment it was clear the specialist skills demonstrated were unique to couture design and not available in Australia in this combination. Detailed knowledge on beading practice was attained here as no such company exists in Australia of this calibre.

Observations of the beading process known as tambour was undertaken during the visit as well as observing automated machine embroidery.



*Both images above show a demonstration of tambour beading*



*Digital embroidery*



*Machine embroidery*



*Beaded garment*

## International Experience

### **Textura Manufacturer Italy**

Balestra also designs a range of men's formal wear to complement his bridal couture range. A visit was arranged to Textura, the company that he outsources his formal menswear tailoring manufacturing to. This company is a large tailored suit manufacturer some three hours out of Rome. Here the Fellow was allowed to observe the manufacturing process from Balestra's sketches to final warehousing of finished goods.

At this plant Textura has the design, patternmaking and cutting facilities with manufacturing outsourced to neighbouring countries with more cost efficient labour. The factory was highly efficient and used extensive technology in its design and pattern work rooms as well as automated cutting systems. Balestra sends design sketches to the company with accompanying notes. All fabrics, trims and first samples are sourced and produced by Textura before final approval from Balestra for mass production.



*Textura design room*

### **Académie Internationale de Coupe de Paris Paris, France**

Monsieur Jean-Philippe Vauclair, Director.

Guglielmino met with the Director General, Jean-Claude Lanot. This academy is a full fee private specialist-training institute and has developed its own method of patternmaking in men's and ladies' wear. Guglielmino spent time talking to the CEO, discussing the work they do for industry and the content of their training programs. She also visited the site and observed their classes.

The institute is a small private provider with approximately five training rooms and staff offices as well as administration offices. The teaching facilities were basic and space was confined in comparison to RMIT's classroom standards. Curriculum was based heavily on technical patternmaking and practical components of design and make. The institute had both the Lectra and Gerber computer patternmaking systems, ten of each for use in their program delivery. In discussion with the Director General around training for the couture industries his response was that in-house couture houses provide this type of training and no formal training programs existed in Paris to meet this skill need as it was well catered for in its existing mode. The industry sourced training for manufacturing from his institute in areas of patternmaking and quality control in particular.

# International Experience



*Académie Internationale de Coupe de Paris classroom*

## **Paris American Academy Paris, France**

The Fellow met with Peter Carman, President, and spent time talking to the CEO. They discussed the program that the academy delivers, the French Fashion Industry, how it works, what the Government is doing for the French Fashion Industry. Guglielmino also visited the site and observed their classes.

The academy runs fashion programs and specialises in teaching students skills unique to the Costume and Fashion Industry. The programs are one, two and three years in length and are different to the other institutes visited. The program includes excursions to haute couture shows and the staff have very good links with couture houses in Paris. Due to these links students are able to see the industry up close and experience opportunities otherwise not available to them. At this academy the basics are taught in the first year and the more advanced gain skills in following years although couture is not a focus of the program.



*Paris American Academy classroom*

## International Experience

### **Institute Francais De La Mode (IFM) Paris, France**

Guglielmino met Veronique Schilling, Academic Affairs Adviser, Global Fashion Management Executive, MBA Program Director.

The IFM is a not-for-profit association under the management of the Ministry of Industry and has positioned itself as one of the main forces behind the integration of design in industry in France. The IFM works in a broad sector of fashion education and specialises in fashion management as well as fashion design. IFM has a strong relationship with the Fashion Institute of Technology in New York and the Hong Kong Polytechnic. From these relationships a fashion program has developed between the three institutes whereby the structure of the program is taught by a specialist school and exchange staff, to offer students a broad experience and to internationalise their study program.

This program gives both students, staff and the institutes a wide range of opportunities and benefits. It is an educational model highly worthy of considering for Australian institutes and universities to offer a broader scope of learning within our programs.



*Institute Francais De La Mode classroom*

### **Outcomes and Key Issues**

- The Italian couture industry is large and supported by strong demand for couture gowns with a well-established market both locally and internationally.
- The Italian couture industry is supported by a wide network of creative highly skilled industries covering couture dressmakers, embroiders, beaders, fabric screen printers, textile mills and established high end manufacturers.
- High end manufacturing is undertaken in Italy and is also sourced globally.
- Skills for the couture industry are developed in-house and on-the-job through a mentoring system within the work room.

## International Experience

- The scale of the Italian Fashion Industry is large and has been well established over hundreds of years.
- Italian fashion schools train students with major focus on fashion style and design and are not production or made to measure orientated.
- The Paris and Italy fashion schools visited were mainly privately funded and resourced to a moderate standard. Only one fashion school in Paris was Government funded and has a focus on fashion management.
- Educational institutes in Italy and Paris provided little to no training on couture construction techniques.
- Couture skills in both Paris and Italy are learnt at higher levels of training once base skills are achieved. They are learnt on-the-job in industry due to the high level of expertise required to undertake couture work and are achieved through years of practice.
- The Australian Fashion Industry employs 45,000 people; the largest sector being employed in Victoria with a focus on ready to wear garments.
- Australian demand for couture garments is relatively low and is prevalent predominantly in wedding and special occasion wear.
- A new training package has just been developed for the Fashion Industry and has new competencies such as draping which is suited to couture training.
- Australian TAFE institutes and universities currently have the flexibility to customise training to meet industry needs.
- Australian TAFE institutes have excellent facilities in comparison to European fashion schools.
- Australian TAFE institutes' fashion studies programs should include a component or elective on couture skills.
- Fashion training in Australia is well supported by Victorian and Federal Governments.

### Options

Based on these findings of the couture industry in Italy and educational benchmarking of both French and Italian Institutes, Australia is well placed on the world standard in both our training package content and delivery standards.

In order to assist and create change, each state, institute and industry representative body needs to be aware of the various training programs and what they can offer to the industry. This can be done by ensuring communication is constantly occurring between all parties involved. This is the responsibility of industry, and industry bodies are critical in undertaking this role.

Training institutes should also be aware of what the needs of the industry are by constant collaboration and networking with all sectors of the industry.

Research is an important field to be undertaken by trainers and industry bodies, so that as new industry needs and directions arise all can work together to lobby Government bodies and associations to rectify the shortage.

In Victoria, Guglielmino is responsible for the fashion programs delivery and content within the framework of the new training package. Following the Fellowship trip she has found that in order to address the couture skills gap, training should be placed into higher levels of Fashion Programs in the second and third years. This will be done by offering a draping course and ensuring that staff undertake short courses to upskill their knowledge in specific areas such as beading and machine embroidery.

## International Experience

Lobbying should also be undertaken to ensure Skills Victoria is aware of the future needs of training our graduates in pre-production skills to ensure graduates are ready for the industry and are able to undertake further skills training to build upon existing skills.

It is important for training institutions to purchase new equipment for digital embroidery and provide staff development in order to address the shortage of creative embroidery and textile design options available to students.

# Knowledge Transfer

It is imperative that knowledge transfer occurs. This can be done through a series of workshops, seminars and individual knowledge transfer such as teaching activities to student groups.

This can be achieved through the following:

- Design and deliver small intensive couture skills programs delivered by overseas skilled workers for short intensive classes to be delivered in Victoria. These can be designed by experienced trainers to cover skills shortages such as couture production skills and delivered in a central venue. Below are some examples of what could be offered:
  - A couture skills workshop, to develop skills in draping for individual fit, targeted to trainers and industry small fashion business with individual fit. To be delivered as a one day workshop.
  - A beading workshop, to increase knowledge of beading design and application, targeted to trainers as a professional development opportunity and industry members. To be delivered as a one day workshop.
  - Developing a fit dummy/mannequin for garment design and prototype development, targeted to small businesses for individual fit and fashion students and trainers. To be delivered as a one day workshop.
- Maintaining international networks developed through ISS Institute Fellowships and leveraging relationships for future collaborations on all levels. This has already been acted upon as some students have visited and spent time with Balestra to observe couture skills. To date four students have visited plus one staff member.
- Mentoring staff and students, within the Textiles Community of Practice, on processes used in couture work rooms through teaching practices within the fashion programs.
- Planning and organising an international conference to maximise networks, skills and knowledge transfer. The International Foundation of Fashion Technology Institutes Conference was held in March 2008. Papers were presented on fashion design and couture production and international networks were further developed for knowledge transfer.

# Recommendations

Following the Fellow's findings the following recommendations are suggested:

- Source overseas skilled workers for short intensive classes to be delivered in Victoria. Renato Balestra is an excellent contact and the staff from his work room have a wide range of skills from the couture industry. Intensive workshops focused on couture techniques would benefit trainers and experienced designer dressmakers. This would ensure that trainers in institutes and industry experienced learning couture skills. They could then feed this back into programs.
- Design and deliver small intensive couture skills programs delivered by overseas skilled workers for short intensive classes to be delivered in Victoria. These can be designed by experienced trainers to cover skills deficiencies such as couture production skills and delivered in a central venue.
- Source and maintain Fashion Industry educational networks. This is critical to ensuring educational programs are aware of industry needs both locally and internationally and are able to share knowledge with other institutes.
- Victorian Government and teaching institutes should seek to maintain their leading edge in the standard of facilities, funding and staffing for TAFE institutes.
- Maintain training package reviews on a regular basis, including reviewing possible skills deficiencies and shortages.

## Government

- Government to continue to fund pre-production training including design, patternmaking, specifications and e-business.
- Government initiatives should continue to focus on small business assistance and the support of niche development for fashion product.
- Support industry to establish and maintain small businesses as this is where there is scope for strong industry growth.
- Continue to maintain a high standard of fashion and textile training facilities and highly skilled trainers.
- Maintain educational focus on multi-skilling industry participants and students by ensuring programs address skills development as a priority.
- Create accessible funding for industry and educational bodies to maintain world-class and leading practices through international networking and benchmarking.
- **Manufacturing Skills Australia** is the peak body in developing the industry training packages and is critical in taking advice and embedding new training into the packages. It is critical that this body is aware of skills shortages and maintains a close working relationship with all TAFE institutes and industry.
- **Curriculum Maintenance Manager, General Manufacturing**  
The General Manufacturing Industries' Curriculum Maintenance Manager is responsible for all Victorian Crown Copyright courses for the Textiles and Clothing sector and is a support network for the Fashion and Textiles Industry. It has already published articles on this ISS Institute Overseas Fellowship Program and works closely with the Fellow on taking advice related to training and industry skills needs.

# Recommendations

## Industry

- Industry to focus on professional development for staff in maintaining technical skills levels in the following areas: computer and manual pattern making, computer design, communication using digital facilities, high quality production techniques. This training is accredited and further enhances industry qualifications.
- Industry to seek competitive advantage through niche market development.
- Encourage industry to adapt higher skills training on-the-job.

## Business

- Niche fashion businesses need to be encouraged and supported.
- Focus of small business to be on business development skills encompassing marketing capabilities to meet and drive market demand.
- Develop niche market products suitable for manufacture.
- Devote time to professional and business development through fashion association networks along the supply chain.

## Professional Associations

### Textiles and Fashion Industries Association

The President of the Textiles and Fashion Industries Association strongly supported Guglielmino's Fellowship and often seeks advice on industry and skills related issues. This is an ongoing role of the association.

### All Victorian TAFE Institutes

Victorian TAFEs offering fashion programs meet regularly through both Curriculum Maintenance Managers (CMM) meetings and an established Fashion Community of Practice where presentations have been made in relation to this ISS Fellowship.

## Education and Training

In order to ensure that couture skills for the TCF Industry are developed in Australia it is recommended that institutes liaise with industry and provide opportunities for workshops, short courses and accredited units of competencies for higher level skills at Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) six. Couture training, whilst a specialist skill, can be and is provided at the lower AQF levels and to entry levels skills standards. It is best suited to existing experienced skill practitioners due to the high skills level required as a pre-requisite.

The following are recommendations:

- TAFEs to investigate digital embroidery systems to be incorporated into short courses.
- Training institutes should seek to internationalise their programs as a source of assisting students to gain a competitive advantage in a global environment.
- Teaching staff to be skilled in couture work is achievable by exposure to couture garments and demonstrations of couture techniques. These are mostly available overseas due to the limited demand for these types of garments in Australia.
- Focus on small business requirements.
- Maintain the standard of courses and facilities.
- Maintain staff development with focus on industry requirements.

# Recommendations

- Network with overseas institutes for benchmarking training.
- Network with industry overseas where possible.
- Seek overseas professional skills development where skills shortages are found.

## Community

In Australia small business needs to be promoted as innovative and fashion as forward in order for the consumer to be fully aware that couture fashion is available to the Australian consumer. The consumer should be encouraged to seek Australian design with confidence in the Australian skills level and expertise.

## How ISS Institute can be Involved

ISS Institute is independent and has no vested interests and therein, is a catalyst for change towards a sustainable economic future for the TCF Industry in Victoria, particularly through the area of training.

The institute has access to a wide range of industry networks both international and local and the Fellow sees it as an agent in seeking and maintaining creative skills networks by:

- Providing workshops as professional development for the Fashion and Textiles Industry.
- Establishing and maintaining networks on an international and national scale.
- Promoting the high standard of Australia's own fashion programs and engaging international designers to collaborate with Australian designers.
- Being a source of funding for skills development for the TCF sector.

## Further Skill Gaps

- In order to maintain industry direction for developing special niche market products within small businesses it is critical that new couture skills are continually being identified and introduced into our designer dressmaker SMEs and into the training system for industry, trainers and new graduates.
- Retail merchandising is another area in which Guglielmino recognised that there is a significant gap in the Australian TCF Retail Industry in comparison with the Italian Fashion Retail Industry.
- The Australian Fashion Industry is small compared to other countries with larger populations. In relation to our population the TCF Industry is a large employer and generates a large portion of the economy's turnover. Scoping overseas industry trends, educational programs, latest technologies and new fabric technologies assists the industry to identify skill deficiencies. During this Fellowship it was found that the Australian Textiles Clothing and Footwear Industry demonstrated few gaps other than those identified in this report.

# References

*Knowledge & Skills for the Innovation Economy*, Ministerial Statement, Lynne Kosky, Minister for Education and Training, 2002, p15

*Maintaining the Advantage - Skilled Victorians*, Victorian Government, Department of Education and Training, 2006

*Review of TCF Assistance*, Productivity Commission, April 2003, pxvii

Textiles Clothing Footwear Leather Forum

*The TCFL Forum Strategic Plan*, June 2002

# Attachments

For further information on the Polimoda Institute programs and facilities visit the following website: <http://www.polimoda.com/english/eng.html>

For further information on the Académie Internationale de Coupe de Paris programs and facilities visit the following website: <http://www.aicp.fr>

For further information on the Paris American Academy visit the following website: <http://parisamericanacademy.edu/>