

R I C H A R D
M A L O Y
+ K A R E N
W A L K E R



TOP
LIZ + RICHARD 2002
COLOUR PHOTOGRAPHY
600 X 800mm

MIDDLE
BRIDGITTE + JAKES 2002
COLOUR PHOTOGRAPHY
600 X 800mm

BOTTOM
DIANA + CHARLES 2002
INSTALLATION
SUE CROCKFORD GALLERY

POSTER
PAULA + BOB 2002
COLOUR PHOTOGRAPHY
750 X 1000mm

WEDDING DRESS PROJECT

EXHIBITED
SUE CROCKFORD GALLERY 4 - 22 JUNE 2002
AUCKLAND ART GALLERY TOI O TAMAKI 7 SEP - 17 NOV 2002

Wedding dresses occupy a significant place in popular culture. Who doesn't remember Princess Diana emerging from St. Paul's Cathedral in a whirl of silk and tulle or Bianca Jagger poised in a tailored white suit and large hat? The Wedding Dress Project, a collaboration between artist Richard Maloy and fashion designer Karen Walker, takes these iconic items of clothing and uses them to explore the complex relationship between art, fashion, and the traditional role of artist and designer.

Maloy had been considering collaborating for sometime. Rather than work with another artist he chose a fashion designer. He explains "I thought I'd rather work with someone outside of art. It could have been art and anything else I chose, but I'm interested in body garment and construction and my other work led to that".

Working with a fashion designer enabled Maloy to step back from the conception of the artwork. He clarifies "Normally when you collaborate you collaborate with someone else who's an artist and you make stuff together. It comes 50/50. I wasn't really interested in that. I wanted to do something that was more about the process of what you do and what the other person does, the difference and the interaction".

By focusing on this interaction between artist and designer the project differs from most collaborations. Maloy as an artist would usually come up with the idea for an artwork and then construct it. In this project Walker made drawings of seven wedding dresses and then passed it on to Maloy. He then made sculptures of each and photographed them. The actual dresses are not as important as the process of how they were made. Walker explains "It was kind of like that game you play when you're a kid when you draw the legs and then you fold the paper over and the next person draws the head. You [Maloy] gave me the brief and I went away and did my thing and then I gave it back to you - totally blind. You didn't know what you were going to get and without any background or worrying about the idea you went off and did your thing".

The project put both Maloy and Walker in a unique position where they had to relinquish their usual creative control. In doing so both subverted their conventional working roles. Neither had authority for the whole project but were instead reliant on each others contribution.

Choosing to work with a fashion designer disrupts preconceived ideas about what art is. In this project two distinct fields come together to create a hybridised form of both. The end result is not wholly art or fashion but rather a merging of the two into something unique. While the context of the art gallery (the project was exhibited at Sue Crockford Gallery in June 2002) positions it as art in a Duchamp-like manner, the photographs and sculpture are only an introductory point for the viewer. The project as a whole is indicative of past collaborations between art and fashion as seen in the work of Andy Warhol or Salvador Dali.

Walker was already familiar with Maloy's work when she joined the project. She knew the artists preference for using everyday materials such as paper and Sellotape and adapted her ideas to suit. She elaborates "I was listening to Johnny Cash singing about paper wedding bands, and Richard always works with paper, and I thought that was interesting if you're talking about the disposability of marriage in the world today and I thought so why don't we just look at divorce".

Consequently while the interaction between Walker and Maloy is central to the project the artwork itself stimulates cultural comment. A wedding dress is in some ways the ultimate dress. It signifies a pivotal day in a woman's life. Aesthetically it is also more opulent than anything a woman would normally wear. The wedding dresses chosen by Walker are all those of celebrities whose marriages have ended in divorce. There was no specific reason why each was chosen but all symbolise interesting moments in popular culture.

