STORIES TO WEAR

A surface pattern collection that explores storytelling through a memory game as a method for a clothing context.

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**Stories to wear** is a bachelor degree work in textile design. The position of the work is in digitally printed textile surface pattern for clothing where the surface pattern collection is designed for storytelling and playfulness. The project explores the synergistic effect in combining a method where randomness decides the outcome, textiles, patterns and the body.

The collection’s aesthetics were based on hand painted and hand drawn motifs, depicting animals, weather conditions and transportation in a somewhat naivistic style. The surface patterns were digitally printed and sewn into simple garments, with the intention that the story should go from one piece to the other. However, each piece explored the storytelling aspect separately.

The importance of design methods was also emphasized in this work. The inspiration derived from a memory game, created specifically for this project. Three cards from three different categories were picked, and a short poem was written based on the cards. Then the motives started to grow out from the poem. The connection to the climate change was natural, due to the nature of the poems. The poems take us on a journey about climate changes, how the world may look in the future if nothing is done today.

As an outcome of the project six hand painted patterns were created through a memory game method. Above the physical result of the digitally printed patterns the method is a suggestion to the area of designing storytelling textile patterns. On how to use a hybrid generator in the design process, where chance decides the outcome. The project shows possibilities in how to design storytelling contemporary patterns, presented as a printed textile design collection for clothes.

**1.4 Keywords**
Textile design, surface pattern, digital print, design method, storytelling, playfulness, drawing by hand
1.5 Representative images of the work
The rain has just started.
At first, you don’t really notice it.
But it gets stronger.
It pours down, forming rivers and lakes, filling the valleys.
The animals are always the first to know [when the catastrophe is coming].
They went to the hills to seek safety, but the water kept rising.

1.5 Representative images of the work
All in under water

The world we knew is now blue.
The houses we lived in, the trash we tried to hide:
All is floating around, in the calmness in the eye of the flood.

All we knew is under water. If you ask a fish, it’s just where they have always lived; only now with bicycles and houses.

All is well, all is wet, nothing remains.
The sun is shining and everything is calm.
Like nothing ever happened.

1.5 Representative images of the work
The rain has stopped and the first land is sighted.

In the middle of the storm, the birds trying to saving the tulip arks, leading them towards land.

The sun is about to go down, no one knows if the sun will set tomorrow, or if the birds will find land again.
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2. INTRODUCTION

2.1 Introduction to the field

Textiles have been used to decorate our homes and adorn our bodies for a long time. Clothing plays an important role in celebrating cultural rituals and allows us to create our own identities (Gale & Kaur, 2002).

All cultures have told stories, and some of the earliest evidence of storytelling comes from cave drawings from 30,000 years ago in France, depicting humans, animals, and other objects (National Geographic, 2022).

Throughout history, storytelling has been used as a way of communicating with each other, whether they are true or made-up, in books, art, or through oral traditions (fig. 5). The act of telling stories is most commonly used for educational, entertainment, or informational purposes and is universal to the human experience (Edwards, 2009).

The phenomenon of telling stories in pattern design can be seen in both pictorial and conversational patterns. There is an idea that patterns in storytelling can encourage conversation due to the way they make an emotional and physical impact (Edwards, 2009).

One example of a conversational textile in storytelling pattern design is the Bayeux tapestry, a nearly 70-meter-long embroidered textile from the 11th century (see fig. 6). The tapestry shows historical scenes and precious details of everyday life in the 11th century and the life of William the Conqueror (Bayeux Museum, 2021).

Miwa Akabane (2022) is a surface pattern designer who is passionate about generating and delivering stories in her work. Akabane claims, “The storytelling pattern is an endless chain of imagination.” She further argues that storytelling in patterns connects individual memories and reactions with the design. Depending on the textile patterns surrounding them, form and space can affect individual experiences (Akabane, 2012).

Fig. 5 Illustration on storytelling, Illustration made by the author. 2022.

Fig. 6 Bayeux tapestry, 11th century, Bayeux Museum.
The way textile design is perceived today is being changed by digital technology, from the creation to the presentation of designs. Traditional printing techniques are being challenged by the development of digital printing onto fabric, which removes limitations such as color separation, repeat patterns, and production speed (fig. 7). This technique is suitable for storytelling, allowing the textile designer to work freely with regard to color and scale, and provides unlimited design alternatives (Bowles & Isaac, 2012).

Today, with the overconsumption and overproduction of resources, the textile industry is one of the biggest polluters of our environment. In the textile printing process, high consumption of chemicals, such as dyes, binders, surfactants, and solvents, has been found to be environmentally hazardous and therefore responsible for environmental pollution. The consumption of water and energy is high when printing textiles. As a result, many effluents containing harmful chemicals are released from the production of conventional printed textile techniques, such as rotary screen printing. In contrast, digital printing is considered an eco-friendly method that uses less water and energy than screen printing (Tkalec, Glogar, & Sutlovic, 2022).

Dries Van Noten is a fashion designer who has taken advantage of the visual freedom in surface design using digital print. A Van Noten outfit often comprises a multiplicity of prints, colors, and layers that can be seen in the 2022 summer collection (fig. 8). This collision of eras, colors, and cultures, exploring tailoring from both Asia and Europe, makes digital print an ideal technique for Van Noten (2021).

Fleet Bigwood, a Textile designer who taught the textile pathway of the MA fashion course at Central Saint Martins College of Arts and Design for over 20 years, claims that simply scanning an image and printing it on fabric is too easy for a successful designer. The process needs to be more complex, and the work needs to have originality and purpose to make things new (Tamasin, 2015). Today, it is important to question what the cause is for the design: is it to create something for a short period, only to make money, or something more meaningful and sustainable for people to have for a long period? The designer has the power to influence the market.
2.2 State of the Art

Fashion brand Helmstedt works with storytelling and playfulness in a fashion context to show the possibilities of expressing fun, personal prints for adults (fig. 9). All motifs and patterns are hand-drawn by Emelie Helmstedt using watercolour, gouache paint, and digital prints of the patterns to maintain the artistic hand. When presenting the patterns, different scales and prints are usually mixed within one outfit (Helmstedt, 2022). Helmstedt is an example of how the storytelling aspect can be approached when creating garments using watercolour and gouache ink.

The company Monkey Puzzle Tree communicates stories through fabric and textile design, wild prints, and daringly designed fabrics that are not based on trends but are built around a story. The brand’s latest collection, Metamorphosis (fig. 10), is about the phenomenon of pareidolia - the tendency to see faces and animals in patterns and objects. Founder Charlotte Ruffo explains: “The story behind each of our designs allows the onlooker to become more involved and emotionally attached to the design, creating a real connection to the piece. We hope this leads to a more sustainable and less disposable culture as the owner is encouraged to look after and keep their interior for as long as possible rather than changing everything as another trend arrives” (Decorex, 2022). The Monkey Puzzle Tree shows possibilities in designing unique prints that will last longer because of the emotional attachment between the print and the buyer.

Antoni & Alison is an art and fashion studio working with the digital process to create highly individual pieces. Digital print has changed the way they work with print because they wanted to work with photography, which is now available through the printing technique (Antoni & Alison, 2022). Antoni & Alison used the digital printer early to upgrade their designs, which created more freedom in the design process (fig. 11).
Edda Gimnes aims to create a sense of wonder by incorporating an element of surprise in every collection. Combining art and fashion, Gimnes creates a playful and vivid universe in her garments by drawing with her non-dominant hand to create fun and vibrant expressions (fig. 12) (Gimnes, 2022). She uses playful methods in the design process when creating patterns for the garments, allowing unexpected motifs to appear by letting go of control.

Hanna Ryd, a graduate fashion designer from the Swedish School of Textiles, developed a game that worked as a hybrid generator where two or more cards are paired by chance, creating a possible match, for her degree work titled “Grandmother of Cats - Dressed Drunk”. She aimed to add value by upcycling and redesigning discarded post-consumer materials and items. Hanna Ryd’s collection, Grandmother of Cats, demonstrates how an open mind to the process is key when using this method (fig. 13).

Timorous Beasties is a design-based manufacturing company that specialises in fabrics and wallpaper, presenting a unique diversity of patterns created with the use of copperplate engraving. Their elegant transgression, chic and edgy designs showcase storytelling on fabric by metre and wallpaper (fig. 14) (Timorous Beasties, 2022).
Kristi Kuusk’s PhD thesis titled Crafting sustainable smart textile services is looking for ways for textiles and fashion to be more sustainable with the help of technology (fig. 15). Digital stories are explored through an interaction between textiles and technology to make the textile last longer by changing in time (Kuusk, 2016). Storytelling and playfulness using digital tools is one way of approaching textiles with storytelling.

Grayson Perry is a contemporary artist, broadcaster, and writer, known for making tapestries, ceramic vases, and cross-dressing. Perry combines crafted objects with scenes of contemporary life, illustrating his life as a transvestite (Serpentine galleries, 2022). Grayson Perry wears colorful outfits and dresses with uniqueness (fig. 16).
The skill of storytelling has always been well-respected, as great storytellers have the ability to capture the audience and leave them with new knowledge and insights. Today, storytelling can be seen everywhere, as a business tool, on TV, in books, and in design (Dahlström, 2019).

As described, one piece and the story around that specific outfit or fabric are often what many designers work with. It is common for the entire collection and the pieces within it to have a name. In this work, storytelling goes from one fabric to the next, where the pieces are seen as a puzzle, with all bricks fitting into each other. It is possible to see the pieces one by one, but when the textiles are put together as a collection, they complete each other, and the storytelling is visible. The vision is to create a world based on a relatively random method and convey storytelling in advance of no known premises.

Long-lasting products can be increased by good design’s impact. Designing an aesthetically pleasing and well-made product shows that people will use it and have it for a longer period. Due to the uniqueness of this project’s design, a high value regarding designing for circularity is about changing behaviors or ideas of what fashion is and can become. Designers have the potential to create and design products made to last in style and function, products that capture value over time and promote sustainable use while enabling cyclability.

Aesthetic durability in garments can be achieved by designing for the pleasure of the unexpected and creating a one-of-a-kind piece that, because of its uniqueness of aesthetics and shape, the garment will be kept for a long time (Circular design kit, 2018).

Playfulness in relation to this project has its roots in the naivistic narrative style seen as a way of highlighting the symbolism in the storytelling about humans destroying the world for animals. This was discovered during the design process, and the motive has not been chosen to provoke or address a political issue or evoke discussion.

Hanna Ryd (2021) and Edda Gimnes (2022) use a method in the design process that leads to unexpected combinations of prints or fabrics regarding fashion. These projects show that unexpected results will appear when working with methods designed by chance and working with an open mind. To be open-minded and trust the process takes the designer to go outside the typical genre. Like them, this project works with a method that gives unexpected combinations but instead of applying it in a fashion context, this project focuses on using the method to design surface patterns.

Playful and colorful garments for adults in a high-fashion context are designed by Helmstedt (2022). When working in a high-fashion context, trends are considered and the designers need to look at what people would like to buy. The intention of this project is not to design for it to be a trend but rather to design playful patterns with the expression of having a unique style.

Designs are expressed on clothes and fabrics using digital printing by Antoni & Alison (2022). This project used digital printing as a technique for expressing patterns. Instead of using photographs printed on fabric, all patterns were drawn by hand with watercolor. Antoni & Alison’s print can be seen as more realistic and captured in the present, where this work differs in expression.

The designers and projects referred to above work with storytelling and prints where the patterns are made for a singular piece to tell a story. Often, the designers have a theme for the collection but are not seen together as part of a story that goes on from one piece to another. This work positions itself in the gap where the patterns are designed for a clothing context. Instead of making fabric by the meter, the pieces within the collection are meant to be seen together to strengthen the storytelling. The intention was to investigate how a textile designer can create surface patterns designed specifically for clothing.

The prints in the collection are not designed for all types of people but for people who like to express themselves with clothes. The patterns seek to invite and inspire anyone to express their playfulness through the surface patterns in the collection. Grayson Perry shows the importance of dressing, by wearing clothes that make us feel confident and happy. A piece of clothing can be a powerful tool in telling stories about expressing our identity and opinions.
2.4 Aim

The aim is to design patterns and motifs through storytelling and playfulness with the use of digital print as a technique, and memory game as a method in order to create surface patterns in a clothing context.
This project is based on drawings made by hand and the use of a digital printer to achieve the storytelling advantages of the digital printer. The explorations and the sketching techniques were done through practice, hands-on in the right scale, and colour material to understand how the result would turn out. This is described as practice-based design research by Koskinen (2011).

The structure of the work is based on Jones’s cyclic and branching strategies (Jones, 1992). Sketching all motives for the patterns, the branching strategy was used (fig. 17). The parallel stages were used when painting all motives and developing each pattern with each story. The stages were followed by a selection stage for each pattern to be evaluated independently, and selections were made for the collection itself.

For the fabric choices, scale, and making repeats in the computer, the cyclic strategy (fig. 18) was used. The scale was tested on paper, transfer print, and digital print to see what was most suitable for each pattern, and transfer print and digital print were used to search for the right material for the patterns. The repeats in the computer were tested in a lot of variations. Scale, repeats, and fabric choice explorations were evaluated, some discarded and some more positive results, which led to a feedback loop to the previous stage to continue working with newly gained knowledge.

The framework for the method used in this project is based on Thornquist’s methods, alter ego, and hybrid materials (Thornquist, 2010).

Digital printing is used in this project as a method for highlighting the designer’s aesthetics due to the qualities there are within digital printing on textiles. The digital printing process has a lower environmental footprint compared to screen printing. Digital printing uses half of the ink of screen printing methods and results in less waste, and there is no washing of screens or changing colours, so water consumption is reduced to half by using the digital printer instead of screen printing (Tamasin, 2015).

The storytelling in this collection is strengthened with a written story for the viewer to imagine and reflect on the storytelling behind the collection. The patterns in the collection are designed for a body, not as textiles per metre.
The memory game consists of three categories; 1) weather, 2) animals, and 3) transportation. One card is picked from each category, forming the pattern design foundation.

Refining the motives by approaching a realistic appearance

Write a short story based on the cards, 5-8 rows

Make repeats in Ps: block and drop repeats, placed pattern and tryout’s with background colours

Draw motives on paper with gouache, oil crayons, and watercolours. Be intuitive and draw fast. Make sure the motives are drawn separately to facilitate scanning

Print the patterns on paper and tryout the repeats in a three-dimensional form

Decide the colour palette, tryout’s was made to enhance the result.

Final changes on the patterns in Ps; some motifs had to be redrawn

Work with the motives in Adobe Photoshop and Illustrator

Digitally printed the final fabrics

A pattern for the dress was made in Photoshop and digitally printed on a full scale. Sewed three dresses as prototypes for the surface patterns

The printed fabrics were sewn into dresses
3.1 Method of exploration and development

The memory game’s idea was explored and further developed during the pre-study. The interest in exploring the idea of mixing categories was sparked after the creation of this fabric (fig. 19), which featured a swan and fish on it. The project’s playful feeling was generated by the unexpected composition of the picture with the motifs. This was further explored in the degree work.

The Memory game

The method used in this project is based on Thornquist’s (2010) methods, alter ego, and hybrid materials. The alter ego method provides examples of writing a short story or history, while the hybrid materials investigate possibilities of new material crossed with traditional materials. The memory game, which is the ground foundation of this project, is created by combining these two methods.

The memory game developed in this project works as a hybrid generator where three cards from three different categories are paired by chance to create a possible match. The three categories, weather in Borås (Blue), animals Astrid knows (Green), and transportation (Red), are used to bring movement, randomness, and direction to the story. The base of the memory game is to take one card from each category, creating three different cards, and writing a story based on them.

In this first stage of the method, it is crucial not to think too much and keep an open mind for both success and failure. Different combinations should be tried out without judgement, and all combinations should be saved and analyzed for potential hybrid surface pattern creation.

Fig 19. Swan and fish fabric
The decisions regarding the different hybrid results that developed into surface patterns were based on the practical part of immediate attraction and the excitement of the author’s imagination.

In decision-making, the designer’s intuitive knowledge, as a useful tool (Malmgren de Oliveira, 2018), is used to know when attractions occur and to be aware of them. For example, an attraction can be a playful motive combination that creates good storytelling or a clear visual idea. The importance of trusting the inner eye as a method to find good design outcomes is emphasized.

The memory game method can be easily adapted and is accessible to all types of design work, making it applicable to various projects. One of the author’s inspirations came from Astrid and her knowledge of animals around the world. The unexpected expressions of toddlers are utilized to create more playfulness in the design.

Three different methods were explored on how to build a story from the given cards;

1. Intuition based by drawing everything on one paper
2. Collage method, where cutouts were made and glued together on one paper
3. Writing a story of the given motifs, then composing the story with separate motifs
Animals Astrid (5 year old friend) knows = Heros of the story

Weather in Boras = Creates a tempo, reflects on climate changes

Transportation = Animals escaping or going somewhere

The Memory game

Fig. 20 Shows how the Memory game worked in the beginning of the design process

Instuition based by drawing all motifs on one paper

Collage method

Most successful method using writing to convey storytelling and playfulness
The most successful method was to write a story first and then draw the story using both the collage technique and intuitive drawing directly on paper because then it was easier to create a story. This method is used for all patterns.

To create the repeats for the patterns, Photoshop was used. Photoshop worked as a collage tool when all the motifs were scanned into the computer. Something that was discovered in the process of painting everything by hand, it was easier to work with the pattern if the motifs were drawn separately rather than a whole painting with everything on.

The methods used were drawing by hand using watercolour, oil crayons, and gouache paint to embrace the playfulness of creating by hand/analogue in contrast to today's digital world. When a card was picked from the memory game, an example could be a bicycle, not really knowing how to draw a bike. The first drawings were intuitive drawings to catch the playfulness of the motifs. Later in the process of making the motifs, looking at a picture or using the light table was used to get a more realistic look at the patterns.

This project is not about designing clothes. The project has explored how to design surface patterns for a clothing context.

Fig. 21 Motifs drawn separately to later be scanned into the computer
3.2 Development

The patterns are designed for a clothing context, meaning that the repeats of the different patterns have different qualities, directions, and feelings.

Three tracks were developed for each pattern to envelop the body in three distinct ways (see fig. 22). The first pattern, "The Flood Begins," was created with the help of water, flowing from one direction to another, top to bottom. The second pattern, "All is Under Water," features seaweed encompassing the body from all directions. Finally, in the last pattern, "Sight of Land," islands are arranged in a diagonal pattern, covering the body.

![Pattern Diagrams](image)

**Pattern 1: The flood begins**

**Pattern 2: All is under water**

**Pattern 3: Sight of land**

*Fig. 22 Explains how the different patterns were designed for the body*
THE FLOOD BEGINS

The randomly chosen cards for the first pattern were; rain, train, and tiger.
The first idea developed from the cards was how the humans had taken over the land, and the tigers had no place to be anymore. My first written story was: The rain never stops, and the tigers are worried about the land they are walking on. Humans are taking over, and the tigers are sensing a catastrophe.
Upon analyzing the pattern, it became clear that further development was necessary. The objective was to imbue the pattern with a more distinct Scandinavian feel, which ultimately involved selecting a new card in the memory game within the same category of animals. The horse card was chosen, sparking a wave of new ideas. Subsequently, a new story was written:

The rain has just started.  
At first, you don’t really notice it.  
But it gets stronger.  
It pours down, forming rivers and lakes, filling the valleys.  
The animals are always the first to know [when the catastrophe is coming].  
They went to the hills to seek safety, but the water kept rising.  
The flood is coming and there is no turning back…

The motifs were drawn from the written story. All motifs are drawn separately, so it is easier to work further with them on the computer. Which was a great learning point from the first try when the motifs were drawn on one paper; this led to more work trying to separate the motifs in Photoshop. The first chapter in the story about climate change is captured with bright colours, some realistic colours, and some more surreal colour choices. This will be seen in all the patterns to strengthen playfulness. The motifs are created from the author’s imagination, a method where one card is picked and later drawn without striving for a perfect drawing. At the beginning of the design process, this method was applied to all motifs, but later in the process, the author wanted to add a more coherent picture of the motifs. The look can be too childish, a result that is not fulfilling. This led to working with a light table for the horses. The mix of imaginative and realistic motifs was good for this collection.

All motifs in the pattern are seen as individual pieces that later become a whole picture and then a repeat. This way of working gives a lot of freedom because it is easy to change and move the motifs within the pattern, see fig. 25.
Above is a sketch describing the process of making the repeat in Photoshop. The motifs are moved around and changed in size. This is a great tool for finding a good balance within the repeat. When drawing everything by hand, this method was important because this way of working is very time-consuming. If everything were not drawn separately, it would be more challenging to get a good repeat because the repeat had to be planned at the same time as drawing the motifs.

A lot of tryouts were made, but still, something was missing. I decided to draw more water and add more blue for the final repeat to fit the written story better. Because the story was written before making the repeat, it helped to go back and read the story to see if the feeling of the repeat matched the written story.
The final repeat (fig. 27) was developed as a collage where all the motifs could be moved and changed. The most time was spent in this stage of building up the repeat. To get a seamless repeat, it had to be looked at from all different angles and add more objects if it was needed.

The complementary pattern was developed side by side with the main pattern (fig. 28). To strengthen the topic of climate change, the decision was made to focus on the weather from the cards picked from the memory game. The complementary pattern will work as an added pattern to the garment, and the main pattern, to show more ways of telling a story.
The process behind the complementary pattern is outtakes from the main patterns. To strengthen the weather given to each pattern through the memory game, highlight the climate changes. Figures 29-31 show the result of the complementary patterns. To present different patterns on different parts of the garment, the storytelling aspect could then expand with the help of the complementary patterns.
Initially, a lightly-painted color was planned for the background to avoid drawing too much attention away from the intricate pattern details. A grey background was the first attempt, but after printing it onto fabric, it did not achieve the desired visibility. Experimentation with stronger colors ensued in order to strike the perfect balance between the motifs and the story conveyed by the design.

Fig.32-36 Shows different tryouts of background colours
The memory cards that were randomly chosen for the second pattern was:

- FISH
- SUNNY
- BICYCLE

The written story:

The world we knew is now blue.
The houses we lived in, the trash we tried to hide:
All is floating around, in the calmness in the eye of the flood.

All we knew is under water. If you ask a fish, it’s just where they have always lived; only now with bicycles and houses.

All is well, all is wet, nothing remains.
The sun is shining and everything is calm.
Like nothing ever happened.

The second pattern in the collection is a placed pattern. The first sketch of the pattern (fig.37) was the first try with the chosen motif from the poem.
After creating the placed pattern sketch, the dress pattern was designed and constructed in Photoshop, enabling precise measurements for the pattern. Utilizing the dress as a canvas for the surface pattern, it became effortless to plan the placement of all motifs due to the already-established dress pattern. The choice of dress was based on its shape and volume, resulting in a successful first attempt at integrating the motifs of the placed pattern into the dress pattern.

The digital printer was an excellent tool for this type of method because the digital printer works exactly as printing on paper. The dress with the pattern on is planned and worked on on the computer, and then the whole dress comes out (fig. 38). All the steps are controlled, leading to no waste of the printed fabric.
When the dress was printed out, it was very easy to sew it together; it resulted in a surface pattern that was not broken by seams because it could be controlled in the process of making the dress.

Collaborating with a designer from another field presents a valuable opportunity to acquire new techniques and skills, whilst allowing each designer to focus on their specific area of expertise. In the context of this project, the author was able to concentrate on surface patterns, including the knowledge of creating repeats, selecting colours, and choosing fabrics. Meanwhile, the fashion designer was able to focus on designing the dress pattern and determining the placement of seams.
The pattern was developed further to fit in better in the collection. The decision was to make the colour softer and the fishes look more like those living in the Swedish waters. A decision that helped the collection to be more coherent and relatable. All motifs were processed and analysed until the shape and colour reached the desired outcome. If any colour or shape did not suit the pattern, the whole motif needed to be redrawn.
When the motifs were finished and scanned into the computer, the work began with the compositions and the background. All patterns in the collection are very colourful, so a challenge was to get them to belong together, which meant that many tests were done on the background colours. The written story of this pattern is a reflection of how the world is under water. Dirty water and more surreal colours were tested, but we later decided to go for a calm blue as the background took too much focus from the motif and the story.
SIGHT OF LAND

The cards that were randomly chosen for the third pattern was:

BOAT  TULIP  STORM  BIRDS

Why tulips? 5-year-old Astrid said tulips when asked about animals. The card was drawn, but for the sake of the story, another animal card was drawn. Both were woven together in a story where the birds save the tulips from the flood. With the chosen cards and the information the other two patterns gave, it became easier to write the last story. The development of the pattern started when the story was written:

The rain has stopped and the first land is sighted.
In the middle of the storm,
the birds trying to saving the tulip arks,
leading them towards land.
The sun is about to go down,
no one knows if the sun will set tomorrow,
or if the birds will find land again.

The motifs are drawn in many colours and shapes to see what works best with the story. Drawing by hand was a very slow process; when the most successful motifs and colours were chosen, it was time to build up the structure and the seamless repeat (see fig.49-51).

Fig. 49 A lot of motif with different colours were drawn to see what suited best in the collection

Fig. 50 Hand drawn tulips

Fig. 51 Birds in different colours
The pictures above show the computer process where many tryouts were made regarding the repeat. It was important that the repeat would surround the body and get the feeling of the body inside of the storytelling. The prints were printed on paper to see how the different repeats looked in a three-dimensional shape.

This part of the story symbolizes what is left of the earth after the big storm, which can be seen in pattern 2, All is under water. Therefore, the green islands in the pattern played an important role and needed to be the dominant motif. An organic shape with the islands was discovered, making the pattern surround the body. The repeat is a block repeat where the pattern is repeated next to each other.
The background for this pattern was planned to be in focus because the memory game card given was; storm. To capture the storm, different drawings with a lot of colours were made using watercolours. The chosen drawing was worked on in Photoshop with the feeling of a storm but with colours inspired by a sunset (fig.54,55). Pictures of the sky were taken to analyse the clouds’ colours and movement.

Fig. 54,55 pictures of the sky before it starts to rain, photographed by the author.

Fig.56 The hand painted background that was worked on in photoshop
Colour

The colour palette for the collection was decided and chosen to be in brighter colours than the story to bring hope. When painting everything by hand, a lot of different shades and hues appear within the same colour. It is harder to control the outcome when painting with watercolour compared to when doing it in an illustrating program on the computer. The technique was chosen to enhance the artistic skills of the designer’s hand and to bring out the playfulness and the feeling of imperfectionism.

Stories to wear tell a story about climate change and how the world is about to be flooded, which is a heavy subject. To get a contrast from the theme, the colours have been chosen from Swedish nature, especially the shift from spring to summer—softer tones with a romantic touch. The collection is designed for a clothing context, and the colours were chosen because of that. The patterns are designed to give some hope and to make them appealing to wear due to the softer colours. Compared to the theme, the pattern and colours are dampened and calmer, adding playfulness to the storytelling.

Fabric

Different tests were made on a small scale in the heat transfer and digital printer to try different fabric qualities, such as silk, polyester, cotton, and viscose, to see how the draping ability and the colours were presented.

For the final pieces, a viscose fabric was chosen; the viscose has a good draping quality that suits this project very well.
Suggestions on different ways of wearing the patterns

This collection consists of six patterns; the illustrations show different ways of wearing them if there are other stories that reveal themselves when changing the patterns’ placement and size.

An exploration using photoshop and the finished patterns in the collection.

Fig. 59 Complimentary pattern on the same main pattern
Fig. 60 Mixed and broken patterns
Fig. 61 Mixed and broken patterns
Fig. 62 Trying different scales with same pattern
Fig. 63 The complementary pattern are displayed on different main pattern
Fig. 64 The complementary pattern are displayed as main pattern
Suggestions are given for different combinations on more ways of wearing the patterns. By changing the placement, a different story is revealed. With their own imagination, the person who wishes to wear the patterns can play around and create a new story. During the design process, it was discovered that by experimenting with the placement and size, the patterns can be used in many different ways to capture playfulness and storytelling.
4. RESULT AND PRESENTATION

4.1 Result

This degree work explored through a practical exploration how to design surface patterns with storytelling and playfulness in a clothing context. The result is a collection of all together six surface patterns; three main patterns and three complementary patterns. The collection’s aesthetics were based on hand painted and hand drawn motifs, depicting animals, weather conditions and transportation in a somewhat naivistic style.

The surface patterns were digitally printed and sewn into simple garments, with the intention that the story should go from one piece to the other. However, each piece explored the storytelling aspect separately.

The materials for the collection is vicose due to its possibilities of draping and good colour rendering qualities. Each piece is digitally printed directly onto the dress construction, minimising the waste of both materials and colour dye stuff.

The importance of design methods was also emphasised in this work. The inspiration derived from a memory game, created specifically for this project. Three cards were picked, and a short poem was written based on the cards. Then the motives started to grow out from the poem. The result of these decisions contributed to the visual expression.
The flood begins

The rain has just started.
At first, you don’t really notice it.
But it gets stronger.
It pours down, forming rivers and lakes, filling the valleys.
The animals are always the first to know [when the catastrophe is coming].
They went to the hills to seek safety, but the water kept rising.
Fig. 68 The flood begins
All is under water

The world we knew is now blue.
The houses we lived in, the trash we tried to hide:
All is floating around, in the calmness in the eye of the flood.

All we knew is under water. If you ask a fish, it’s just where they have always lived; only now with bicycles and houses.

All is well, all is wet, nothing remains.
The sun is shining and everything is calm.
Like nothing ever happened.

Fig. 69 All is under water
Fig. 70 All is under water
The rain has stopped and the first land is sighted.

In the middle of the storm, the birds trying to saving the tulip arks, leading them towards land.

The sun is about to go down, no one knows if the sun will set tomorrow, or if the birds will find land again.
Fig. 72 Sight of land
4.2 Presentation

The six pieces were presented as hanging fabrics with the written poem. The pieces are intended to be worn as dresses. To highlight the pattern design, they are presented as fabrics. However, the context for the patterns is clothing and is designed specifically for the body.

A disadvantage when exhibiting the pieces as hanging fabrics is that it could be hard to communicate the context. As explained in chapter 3.1, the prints can be worn in different ways depending on the clothes.

The written stories presented next to the patterns are important to understand that the story goes from one piece to another and for the viewer to take part in the designer’s thoughts behind the collection.

One way could be to present all the pieces with a picture of how the patterns would look as garments and the memory game next to it for the visitors to get a chance to play and understand the game. One important aspect is to present the fabrics so that the story about climate change is visible. Another way could be to put the fabrics in a surreal context where they could be placed in an environment that has been destroyed by humans, or on a famous person, or in a demonstration, for example.
This degree work explored through a practical exploration how to design surface patterns with storytelling and playfulness in a clothing context. Through the memory game, designing by chance was the ground foundation for the project. This method made it possible to leave expectations of “right and wrong” thoughts about the design result, to design on intuition, and to have a playful approach when creating a collection. The method forced the designer to leave the comfort zone, and trust the inner eye as described in Acts of seeing: seeing as a methodological tool in fashion design (Malmgren De Oliveira, 2018). It was an important finding during the design process to be calm and trust the process.

On the other hand, a limitation of this work is that when painting with watercolors, numerous color hues can appear, which may result in an incoherent collection. The majority of time was dedicated to ensuring the color scheme was cohesive. Using a computer program to paint would save a considerable amount of time.

The context is surface patterns for clothing, which means that the prints in the collection are made carefully out of the knowledge of how the patterns can surround the body in different ways to explore how the storytelling is perceived. This is shown in how the patterns are built up with the motifs; all three main patterns have three different directions to show different ways surface patterns can be designed for clothing. These results connect to the aim because the development shows that designing surface patterns for a clothing context is possible.

Due to the short story presented with the prints, the storytelling goes from one pattern to the next. The pieces in the collection can be seen as separate but complete each other and make a whole story when put together in a collection. The written story strengthened the storytelling and was important for the message about climate change and to make the pieces fit together as a collection.

Digital technology is changing the way textile design is seen today, from methods of creating to presenting designs. It removes restrictions like colour separation, repeat patterns, and production speed, which creates more freedom in the design process. This technique was important for the result; It made it possible to paint all motifs with watercolour and gauche ink.

Collections from Emelie Helmstedt (2022) was a great inspiration to see works with similar approaches, even though Helmstedt works with high fashion and this project does not. The most successful finding in this work was to digital print directly onto the dress construction; it was then possible to sew the dress directly after it had been printed, and a lot of steps could be reduced. This led to minimising the waste of both materials and colour dyestuff.

During the research, it was discovered that not many designers work with prints and garments in this way, and there was no information available on its application. It was surprising that this method is not used by other designers when working with digital printing. It is hoped that this method will become more common in the future, as it minimizes waste and has a great impact on the environment.

In the future, further research can be done on applying the digital printing technique for printing directly onto garments. Perhaps future designers and factories can use this method to change how printed garments are produced; this will significantly impact the textile and fashion industry.

If more time was given to this project, experiments would be done using different digital print techniques, such as embroidery as a print plus technique. It would give the prints a tactile experience and increase the print experience.

The process of making the story about climate change was through the memory game, to adapt the playfulness and let the imagination run wild. This method could be used by other designers in other fields. Applying the method in other projects can be successful because it is easy to learn and adapt and a fun way to come up with unexpected combinations.
The aim was to design patterns and motifs through storytelling and playfulness with digital print as a technique, and memory game as a method to create surface patterns in a clothing context. The project resulted in a surface pattern collection named Stories to wear, including six different patterns presented with a written story. Through storytelling, climate change has been a recurring theme for the collection.

The body was the starting point for how the direction of the patterns turned out. The goal of the patterns is to wrap around the body in different ways to enhance the storytelling. By using the qualities of the garment, the storytelling could be enhanced/diminished depending on how the patterns were placed on the garment.

During the project, discoveries were made on how to reduce waste in the printing process. Designing the patterns and the specific garments simultaneously made it easy to see how the pattern would look before printing it out. The storytelling was improved because no pattern was ruined by seams, and the story became clearer.

A benefit of this project’s investigation is that it opened doors for collaboration between textile and fashion designers. When working with the collection, help was taken from a fashion designer for the pattern making of the garment. Collaborating with other fields can help us develop new ideas in the creation, widen our perspective, and see other angles in the design process for the textile designer. This meant that the focus could be on designing the surface patterns in this project.

Increasing the understanding of how to design surface patterns for a garment means that in the future, we can hopefully get more garments with prints that are well thought out from the start. To emotionally get attached to the design, hopefully, the clothes and fabrics will be kept for a longer period.
6. References


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