

Physically engaging in digital fashion design processes

Jan Tepe

Three-day workshop at Art University Linz – Fashion and Technology department

15. – 17. November 2023

Motivation

The increasing use of digital technology in fashion design processes affects how designers experience and engage with the body and fabrics for creating garments. What was once a design practice that was primarily rooted in bodily engagement with physical design materials has shifted towards modes of material engagement that can be done dissociated from the physical body (Särmäkari, 2021). To exemplify, 3D CAD software such as CLO3D encourages a more sustainable design practice by reducing material waste, yet at the same time reduces tangible and tactile experiences of material (expressions) due to ‘disembodies acts of making’ (Atkinson, 2017; Thiel 2017). Rather than exploring materials through an interconnected web of sensory stimuli, conventional digital tools in fashion design can reduce the design experience to visual imagery that serves as a representation of what physically could be. Consequently, considerations in terms of wearability and artistic expression are limited by the tools’ affordances.

Scope

The workshop aimed to suggest alternative methods and techniques of engaging with digital tools in design processes to reintroduce the physical experience of design materials in the making of fashion-related products. Fashion design students on undergraduate and graduate levels learned to work with various kinds of digital technology in a combined workflow that allowed them to shift back and forth between physical and digital spaces. For this sake, extended reality technology such as virtual reality devices and augmented reality editors were used to an equal extent compared to 3D scanning devices and 3D CAD software such as CLO3D and Blender. Together, they allowed the participants to bodily engage with digital material, leading to more artistic freedom in terms of material exploration and product development.

Outcome

Resulting of artistic-based practices and group discussions that were informed by relevant literature, the participants created fashion-related experiences that took place at the intersections of the physical and digital. Mediated by digital technology, the design outcomes challenged distinctions of the body, fabric, and space by engaging with them during design processes in an interchangeable manner. Underscored by the design outcomes, the workshop output reflected upon the changing responsibilities of designers who wish to work for the body *with* the body using digital technology.

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Included technologies

Blender, CLO3D, VR Meta Quest, Gravity Sketch, Snap AR, Meta Spark AR, Adobe Aero, and Polycam.

References

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