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Artistic Ideas – on the Gestation of Ideas in the Design Process

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Introduction

As round as the sun, as black as soot, and with a tail – what is it? This is an old riddle; the answer was of course: a frying pan. A frying pan looked just like that, a combination of shape and colour. It was a commonly known visual concept, for children as well as adults. The frying pan existed in the collective mind in this one and only way. Besides its function, the concept of 'frying pan' was synonymous with a precise shape and a precise colour. Perhaps one might say that 'the frying pan' was once a visual icon.

Today, with people moving across the world – whether by choice or not – ours is a multi-visual society. A society where an abundance of visual expressions, ideas, currents and ideals exist side by side, parallel, influencing and cross-breeding. Today, increasingly, all human beings carry their own world of images, their own visual references, and hence their own aesthetic, based on their more or less personal ideas and artistic knowledge

Today the old riddle has all but lost its relevance. The answer to the riddle is no longer a shared visual concept – to many it would be incomprehensible. Nowadays we have completely individual concepts of 'the frying pan'. It is round or square, shiny or black, red or white, flat or wavy. Perhaps it has no tail. Or it has two. The previously shared concept is now diverse and hence transformed into something individual. And if we were to test the riddle on people, we would probably get much more imaginative and diverse answers. The transformation of the old riddle presents a simple picture of the complexity and the immense new potential available today, of examining, exploring, working and creating in the disciplines of art and design.

Artistic Training in Design, Education

Artistic training is regarded as an important source of inspiration in the design process. In most design courses at university level, artistic training is an important part of the education. Courses in artistic training include materials/ techniques for sketching etc, but may also include the exploration of ideas and/or design methods related to the artistic process.

The link between artistic training and industrial design may seem obvious, but their relation is also highly complex and multi-faceted. It can easily be turned into a 'hen-or-egg' issue, since the relationship between art/artistic work and design – and not least the question whether design is art – has been mulled over endlessly. The only thing that can be said with relative certainty is that the boundary between these two concepts is somewhat unclear, and that the issue has not really been addressed scientifically. Which, of course, doesn't make it any less relevant to reflect upon (Zaunschirm 2000).

Courses in design at Swedish universities are taught on artistic and a scientific basis. At the School of Textiles, a department of the University College of Borås, Textile and Fashion Design are taught at undergraduate and master's level. For a number of years the educational programmes have been classified as Fine Art. Both include artistic training and design.

In our work as lecturers in Art, Textile Design and Research Methodology, we have an ongoing discussion about the relationship between art and the design process. This resulted in a pilot project where we wanted to address the issue. We carried out a study at three Nordic schools of design and fashion, focusing on the students 'germ to gestation' process. Our study includes students at both undergraduate and master's level.

Initially we intended to concentrate on the interrelation Art – Textile and Fashion Design. As a result of our conclusions from the first phase of the project, our focus changed, to be replaced by the students' gestation process, i.e. from inspiration to a developed idea. In this pre-study we have chosen not to include illustrations, but for our next project we intend to put emphasis on visual documentation.

Aim

Our study aims to present the design students' views of their own gestation of ideas.

From this starting-point our questions were as follows:

How do ideas originate?

How can ideas be retained/lost?

How are ideas developed?

What is the importance of experience and knowledge in the gestation process?

Background

The Artist and Designer – Social Actors

Art is art, and everything else is – everything else. This is a rational notion, but the reality of it is different. Industry and researchers in science and technology are increasingly looking for artistic participation in different projects. New scientific structures, not least in technology, tend to be more cross-disciplinary today. Researchers with a holistic view and the ability to embrace a humanistic and social perspective are required. Artists are well suited here, not only because they have universal aesthetic knowledge or unusual creativity, but more importantly, because artists often know how to apply interesting methods when solving a problem. Artists are used to handling ideas, expressing the unknown, and trying out irrational methods. In art there is also a tradition of daring the untried and seeing the undiscovered. Also, contemporary art often addresses humanistic and social issues at different levels, issues that are also at the core of design.

As a concept, design is not easily or clearly defined. Most of those involved would agree, however, that design is increasingly vital in the knowledge society. The definition of design is of course related to the area of application, but it is clear that the concept has moved away from only including aesthetic expression to considerably more complex ideas. Ideas that include the fulfilling of varying needs, under varying conditions and in varying contexts.

One example of this new cooperation is the *Design with Care* project, run by the Västera Götaland region. It aims to

create sustainable environments, products and services for interior design in public places. In this case, sustainability means that human needs are to be met ecologically, socially and economically without compromising the needs of future generations. It also means that beauty is an important factor when planning for people's wellbeing. Another factor which impacts both textile and fashion design is the allocation of production in Asia and Latin America. This requires knowledge of the diverse effects of globalisation. The ability to connect the known with the unknown, and structure with chaos is vital in the work process of a designer, as are intuition, sensitivity and psychological insight.

Art and Design – a New Reality

Art and design can be seen as products of reality; at the same time these two disciplines create a kind of 'new' reality (Rampell 2003). In the 20th century both art and design developed along parallel lines, where the concepts of art and design pushed their limits, moving towards experiments with various media and crossing borders. Design can consist of experiments and product design, with a focus on aesthetics. It can also be involved in the process, where final decisions about design problems are taken and practical problems solved. It also includes a wide spectrum of services and strategies where the designer can be seen as an innovator as much as an aesthete. Design is an act of problem solving and planning, where the designer is not the same person as the maker. New techniques play an increasingly important part in the design process in all areas of production; this applies in particular to fashion and textile design. In the same way, many contemporary artists work with new techniques, new materials, and with methods that very much resemble the inquiring approach of the design process. In contemporary art it sometimes seems as if artists draw their inspiration, as well as their methods, from the world of design

Behold the Man

The visual arts of today often address and give shape to important humanistic issues. This was clearly manifested at the 2001 Venice Art Biennial (Biennale di Venezia, 2001)

where more than sixty nations' most influential artists were invited to show one or more of their works on the theme '*Platea dell 'Umanita'*'. Perhaps the theme could be interpreted as a wish to see art as a foundation of humanity. A wish to reconnect to the idea of humanity as a family, achieved through art. (Biennale di Venezia, 2001). Many of the artists represented address subjects and issues shared by humanity. In their art, they express wishes, needs and ways of experiencing life that affect all human beings. As an example, two Swedish artists' works can be mentioned: Lars Stillberg's video where a muscular man dressed in some kind of silver-coloured phantom suit is balancing, his hands and feet fettered by spherical shapes – a quiet, iron-grip nightmare without beginning or end, a man whose entire muscular strength is focused on one thing, trying to balance. Or Magnus Wallin's video animation of disabled people in ghastly, exposed situations: chased by fire or shot at at by invisible shots. True, some of the human figures are saved by helicopters, but not all. Your heart races, your lungs gape for air, the visual heat is almost real in that chilly room at Arsenale, an old military barrack in central Venice where some of the works were exhibited. Another comment on mankind was a work by Xiao You from Inner Mongolia. She constructs new beings by connecting human body parts with parts from animals. Through the obscurity of the formaldehyde, these strange little figures can be contemplated. Leon Tarasewicz from Poland paints and sculpts a floor so that it looks in a certain way, and has a certain colour when observed from one angle, but looks completely different, and has a different colour, when observed from the opposite. Perhaps the human condition can be expressed using a floor! The Korean artist Do-Ho Sou had filled a whole room with thousands of little human figures – five centimetres tall – holding up the floor on which the visitors trod. Judging by the works exhibited at the Biennial it is clear that artists in many countries simultaneously address global issues and concepts concerning man at the beginning of the 21st century. At the same time, the artists create a multitude of visually complex interpretations, with individual references to highly subjective – and often deeply moving – aesthetics.



Sara Wikman

'Seeing Ideas' – Art as Inspiration

Design and visual arts from the same period often seem to be interrelated, to have some sort of common denominator or related expression. Björn Dahlström is a well known and very experienced Swedish industrial designer. He has designed many products for companies like Fjällräven (sports gear), Hackman (kitchenware), Ericssons and Scania (grafic). In an interview (Sommar, 2001), when asked if he had any role models in his own field of expertise, utensils, he said that he draws his inspiration from designer colleagues, but more often than not from things other than design. He then referred to the works of a number of contemporary artists. Asked whether he looks for inspiration rather than models, he mentioned the Venice Art Biennial. He claimed to be more inspired by seeing art than by visiting furniture fairs, explaining that he is constantly on the look-out for new angles to his own work. And that he is more likely to find these new angles through art. Further into the interview, the reporter asked if Dahlström meant that you could visit the Venice Art Biennial in search of inspiration for a gadget for Atlas Copco. Dahlström said that he thought so. He explained this by stating that design is a mixture of many concepts, where things can be perceived at different levels. That on one hand, design is something that speaks directly to the consumer, but on the other has undertones, a subtext that speaks to people's feelings. Dahlström maintained that this is the very reason why art is an important source of inspiration, since it often is about touching people.

'Seeing Ideas' – Design as Inspiration

If, conversely, you look at design as a source of inspiration, scrutinising for example Gerrit Rietveld's well-known Rot-Blau Stuhl from 1918, you will see a very specific relationship, an object in the spirit of modernism, but also an object which has undergone a metamorphosis: from an innovative piece of furniture to an object of pure art – as will happen when a designer object ends up in a museum. Looking at one of the 20th century's big artist icons, Francis Bacon, originally a designer of carpets, whose

modernistic carpets are often glimpsed in his early paintings, you will find that he is the modern day heir to the complete history of art. A history of Art filled with magnificent painted fabrics, still lives with painted jugs and painted table cloths. What would a Vermeer be, without its depiction of the softness of the fur hat, the woven silk of the turban, the subtle shape of the earring? Or a Velasques, without its immortalisation of the magnificent textiles of the Spanish court? Or a Braque, or a Gris, without the pondering on the shape of the cup in relation to the jug and the table? In 1963, the American pop artist Claes Oldenburg created his 'environment', his installation 'Bedroom Ensemble' using rhomboid, over-size bedroom furniture: a real room, which from one point of view seemed totally gross, but regarded from a certain vantage point, looked quite normal (Gerleit, 2000)

The same year, two German artists, Konrad Leug and Gerhard Richter, exhibited their pictures at a furniture exhibition. They then proclaimed that everything was art: the paintings, the furniture and – themselves. In 1977 the Geneva artist Sylvie Fleur again staged Oldenburg's Bedroom Ensemble in her 'A Celebration of the Pop Art Master's Bedroom Ensemble'. In her paraphrase she covers everything in orange fake fur. She not only wanted to celebrate the master but also – and not least – be trendy. She often chooses the fashion colour of the year for her art, e.g. a floor-to-ceiling carpet, to display her exhibition. The Swedish artist Kajsa Eriksson also works with ideas and concepts from the world of design.

There are many artists involved in a dialogue with design. And there are probably just as many designers who use art as a source of inspiration. In 2000 many museums exhibited works that showed crossbreeding between art and design, e.g. Moderna Museet (2000a; 2000b) and Konstrnärshuset (2000) in Stockholm and Louisiana (2000) in Denmark.

It is clear that art and design theoretically are closely linked, or sometimes more or less symbiotic. But also that the underlying rules and restrictions are completely different. Perhaps the symbiosis itself is at the core. Art and design: two essentially different phenomena. And perhaps, at the same time – without one – not the other. And vice versa.

'Seizing Ideas' – an Example

The question of what constitutes an idea has often been raised, and the answer has just as often been elusive. Birgerstam (2000) is among those who have searched for an answer. Her interest is mainly focused on how ideas emerge when sketching, basing her study on a group of architects and artists. Birgerstam highlights the sketch as a means of 'visualising whereby you can achieve new ideas and creative expression'. In Birgerstam's work the sketch represents a means to acquire new knowledge, to get an insight into something you didn't know before. Her interviewees repeatedly emphasise the huge importance of sketching in catching a course of action. They also explain that many sketches are required to give shape to the process, since the steps are so varied. Sketching is used as a way of solving a problem or highlighting an idea. Sketches are made to visualise a certain thought and are not regarded to be finished work. Birgerstam maintains that it is the sketcher's own experience that determines the sketching, so the sketcher needs to be open to new impressions and sensations.

The study highlights some of the difficulties that an inexperienced sketcher might encounter. Things like the ability to spot what is essential in a multitude of sketches or a big comprehensive sketch. 'It is vital for a sketcher to retain a character' says one of the interviewees (p 61). That the feeling is allowed to remain, that you don't allow everything – whether important or unimportant – to influence the sketch. If everything experienced is included, it often results in a feeling of blockage. Paring down is essential. Without it there is chaos. The interviewees mention 'balance' and 'harmony', arguing that this is something to aim for in a sketch. At the same time they contradict themselves by also claiming that too much order in a sketch may cause ideas to be lost.

The study also discusses the importance of intuition in sketching, but it also points to the problems this may entail. Birgerstam argues that reflection on and analysis of a sketch may mean that further work can be 'monitored, amplified, changed or stopped' (p 64). This analysis could make it easier to see what to pursue, whether to stop or

do something else. Difficulties in analysing may lead to too much self-criticism, and to dropping an idea that could have been developed. All the same, Birgerstam stresses the importance of being able to distance oneself from one's work, claiming that verbal expression can be helpful in this

The study shows the importance of experience, both for sketching and for the gestation of ideas. Organising a sketch and being able to see which parts belong together, how different sketches belong together, is vital for proceeding in one's work. It is only by putting things together in a novel way, by thinking along new lines, by changing, re-thinking and extending borders, knowing what cannot be changed etc, that a new target becomes visible. 'New connections and patterns may appear' (p 71) – an idea has been born.

Birgerstam's work may seem limited in the sense that she describes how an idea or a sketching process is carried out, using only basic materials, like pen on paper. But sketching and the flow of ideas can also be put in a wider context, where the work is carried out with various methods of collection and manifestation, using several media and techniques, and pictures as well as words. Or using completely different materials, completely different methods: *'Should I lack material for my work, I simply go down to the beach and draw in the sand using a reed; I draw by pissing on the dry ground, in the empty sky. Drawing the arabesque of bird song, of the roaring of the sea and the wind, of the wheels of a wagon or the sounds of insects; letting it all be dissolved by the wind – but still retaining the belief that all these explicit expressions of my thoughts, miraculously or by or magic, may have an impact on people's thoughts.'*

Joan Miró (Moderna Museet; the Museum of Modern art, Stockholm, 1998)

'Seeing What You Are Doing' – and Describing It

In our study we also embrace the concepts of *tacit knowledge and reflection* – vital to all artistic work, in design education as well as in the work of a designer or artist. Tacit knowledge includes the ability to verbalise the germi-

nation and gestation process of ideas. Trying to verbalise this knowledge contributes to developing the artistic discipline in question, and also to conveying knowledge of a rather unexplored area.

A designer acquires professional knowledge by active participation in design work, like learning how to master a specific craft, how to work with different materials and techniques (practical knowledge) and becoming familiar with the varying conditions involved (familiarity knowledge). This kind of achieved knowledge is difficult to communicate verbally; it needs to be visually demonstrated. It is commonly called tacit knowledge, since it is partly acquired non-verbally and differs from theoretical knowledge, which is acquired by reading a book, attending a lecture etc. This type of theoretical knowledge is, however, no knowledge per se, since true understanding is required for it to be called knowledge. In order to properly understand, and be able to express a view, tacit knowledge and theoretical knowledge must be combined (Johannesen, 1988). Describing the knowledge of a textile/fashion designer or an artist is difficult. They both know how something is to be formed or shaped, but aren't always able to explain how to express their idea. Experience without reflection doesn't automatically contribute to increased knowledge, but by trying to describe and reflect on one's work, this can be achieved. Within a discipline there are often established beliefs and rituals, e.g. a belief that certain things have to be done in a set way. Knowledge doesn't necessarily mean repeating something; knowledge is furthered when earlier patterns are modified and developed. Knowledge is about being both proficient and critical. In order for someone to develop his/her familiarity knowledge, experience must be reflected upon and worked at. It is also important that tacit knowledge is verbalised, described in terms that comply with content, and is easily understood. Verbalising facilitates communication with others and can lead to knowledge being spread. It is vital, however, that the perspective is always that of the artist or designer. (Rolf, 1991).

Reflection is an important tool for studying one's own work. By articulating thoughts and reflecting on them, words can be put to one's tacit knowledge. More than

anybody, Schön (1983) has developed the concept of reflection in his pioneering work, where the development of knowledge through reflection is described. Reflection can be inward, by looking into oneself, or outward, by observing someone else. Reflection can also be applied in action, e.g. while creating something, or afterwards, by letting one's thoughts run and then reflecting on what has been achieved. The level at which reflections are made has a significant impact on the work. Kihlström (2003, p5) has described this phase as follows: Kihlström (2003, s.5) *Should a problem arise, I can also stop in the middle of something and reflect on it. The same applies to observation, I can observe freely, write down what I have observed and then reflect on it, or, while observing, I can act out my reflection.*

Schön (1983) highlights the knowledge of professionals for further developing a specific area. It is important that this knowledge is not neglected when art and design are to be incorporated in university courses. Artists should therefore be given the opportunity to develop specific research paradigms where their own experience can be utilised.

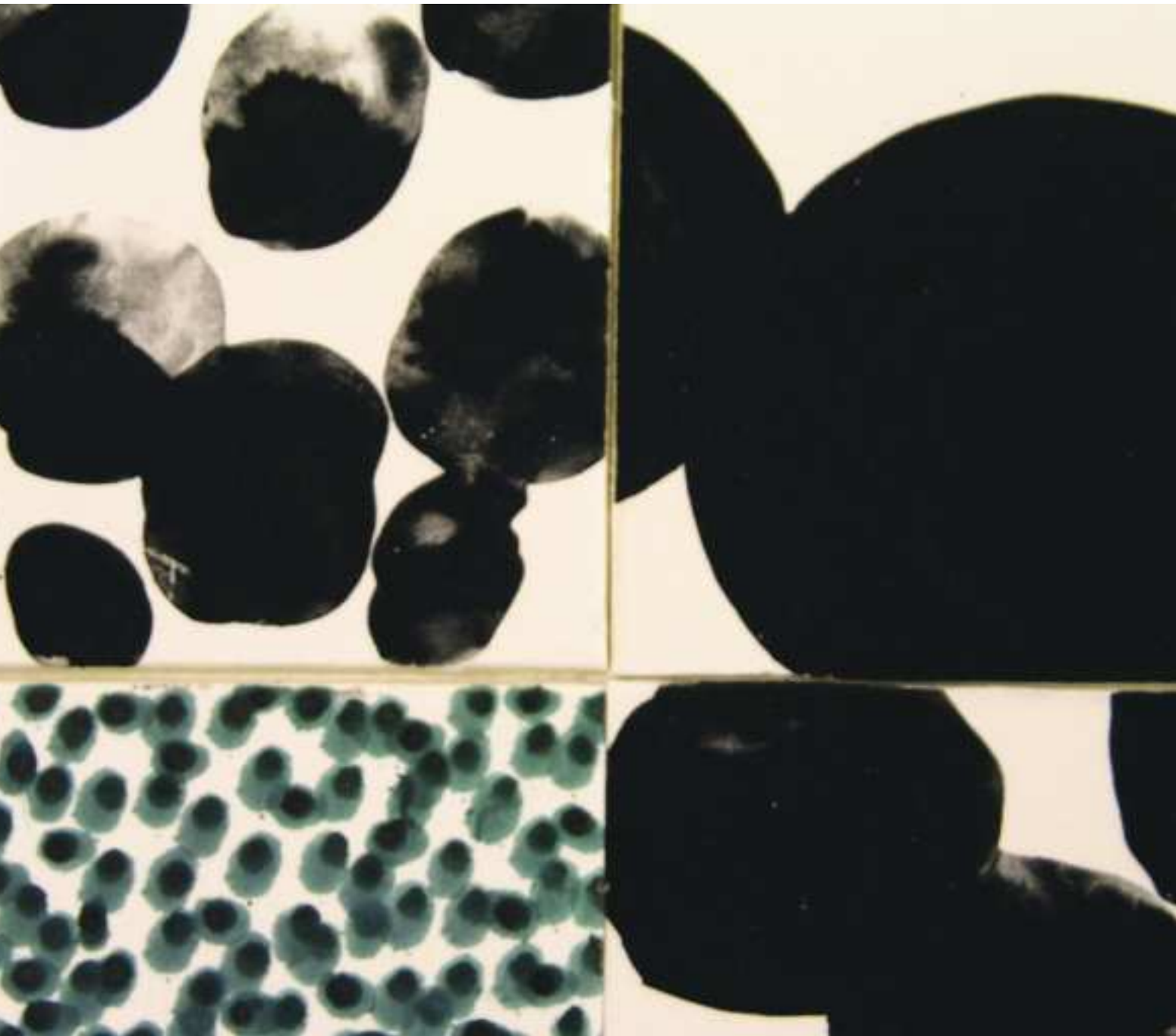
Planning the Pilot Project

We regard our study as a pilot project. While gathering information our focus changed, which resulted in the report being divided into two parts. In the first part, Phase 1, our starting-point is defined and the implementation described; then the results are presented, followed by our conclusion. The conclusion is the basis of our modified aim and the consecutive implementation of Phase 2.

Starting-point

As mentioned above, design education is traditionally based on art, and artistic training is seen as a natural source of inspiration for design. From the beginning, our intention was to study the interrelation between courses in art and textile/fashion design.

Thus, our plan was to study how artistic ideas, i.e. ideas emanating from unrestricted creative work, are brought into the design process. Our intention was to interview both



Kristina Antonsson

lecturers/teachers and students about their views regarding the interrelation between art courses and design courses.

Implementation Phase 1

Interviews were our chosen tool to acquire the desired knowledge. These were carried out and analysed using phenomenographic methods, i.e. looking at variations of different ways of reflecting on a certain phenomenon and describing the resulting qualitative differences (Marton, 1981). To find out how teachers view artistic training in relation to design, we interviewed some teachers at a Nordic school of design. We assumed that they would have in-depth experience of tacit knowledge, of how knowledge is acquired – knowledge geared towards education, but still with a focus on the acquisition of knowledge. Consequently, when trying to show similarities and differences in their views on tacit knowledge, we used the teachers' own answers for the analysis. Hence, for the initial phase, our aim was to investigate how artistic ideas are communicated in the design process. We had the opportunity of interviewing four teachers about their views on the Design School's work with issues regarding the interrelation between art and design. The interviews were carried out at the school, each interview lasting about an hour. The findings of this phase are presented below.

Findings Phase 1

The teachers addressed four issues during the interviews: thoughts concerning the teaching of visual arts, of how they work with the design process, and how the two are linked throughout the education; the students' documentation of their own studies is also briefly mentioned.

Visual Art

Visual Art is taught as a separate course in the first year. It is a comprehensive foundation course focusing on training the students' visual skills, sense of feeling, aesthetic ability etc. *Training your eye, your sensibilities and aesthetic* In this initial course the students do exercises aimed at achieving elementary knowledge of colour theory, basic

geometric shapes, theory of perspective and construction of models.

The course consists of workshops, i.e. projects in visual art, using sketching, drawing, painting and photography. Towards the end of the course the students are to develop their project towards a textile product, in order to acquaint themselves with the design process. The aim of the course is to give the students a shared foundation, a shared technical language. The students are to train their ability to reflect, and to be able to convey their knowledge. The teachers were, however, a bit uncertain as to what the students actually acquire.

The Design Process

The teachers emphasised that the design process consists of many parts and that the students must have knowledge of them all. This requires teamwork. In order to integrate the different parts, more reality-based projects are favoured. Step one of the process is usually generating ideas and finding the most appropriate methods. The projects are often ideas based.

We discuss methods – how to work with ideas and how these ideas can be turned into a product.

In their work the students have to choose between different ideas and methods. How these choices are made is therefore important to the process, as is the ability to analyse and describe their work. Through reflection the students acquire an adequate language for their process, thus improving their knowledge of the different parts of their work. Whether the project is to result in a product or illustrate a process is also discussed.

In the second year the students attend a course called Design Drawing. In the drawing workshop they select an object to be drawn in different ways, using different tools, colours and structures. This gives them an opportunity to experience the diversity of a creative work process. It is about knowing one's craft, being able to draw, finding an individual expression – not about copying. It is also about mastering different materials and having a commercial attitude.

In the third year the starting-point is a real situation – the students participate in a design fair. Here the work is more independent, with an individual starting-point focused on

one's own development. It is about decision-making and being aware of current trends, it is about developing one's own material. Above all, an in-depth knowledge should be acquired.

Interrelation between Courses

Knowledge of visual art is pivotal for a future designer. This knowledge gives them a shared technical language applicable in their design courses. The teachers pointed out that students who have not attended the Visual Art course don't possess this shared language. *A shared 'design language' is acquired through the course in Visual Art. The knowledge is based on experience, by doing and by writing.* Some of the areas covered in Visual Art are perspective drawing, interlacing patterns, giving depth to a pattern and using knowledge to achieve this.

Knowledge of perspective, acquired in Visual Art, is used in the design process, but there is no organised connection. The two subjects, Visual Art and Design, are taught by teachers from different sections. This requires cooperation, which doesn't always exist. The students themselves have to bring their knowledge of visual art into their design courses.

Documentation

During the first three years the documentation process is voluntary. When starting a new work period the issue to be addressed is described, and the students are encouraged to think of problem solving methods and to reflect on what they are doing.

Writing a journal is voluntary but encouraged as an aid to memory. There are no set rules to follow – a process can for example be documented using photographs. The teachers have noted a difference in those who do and those who don't record their work. Those who refrain seem more uncertain about their own thoughts and achievements. Those who record their ideas, plans and sketches, use their notes as memos. Some teachers maintain that writing may disturb the creative process; students sometimes get blocked, finding it difficult to put words to the process of expressing their knowledge in words or sketches.

Conclusion and Consequences for the Continuation of the Project

When moving on to interviewing the students, we soon found that they were more interested in discussing their own ideas than in making a connection between Visual Art and Design. Their accounts clearly showed that they themselves were capable of linking the different parts of their education together, and that they were rather more focused on how to develop and retain their ideas. Since the gestation of ideas is at the core of our project, we chose to focus on this part of our work henceforward. So in our further interviews we focused on the students' accounts, attempting to illustrate the students' views on their gestation of ideas, i.e. how, in their view, ideas are generated and developed, and what can be done to retain ideas.

Implementation Phase 2

Students at two Nordic schools of design were invited to participate in the project. Seven students accepted and were all interviewed at their respective school. The interviews, each lasting 1 – 1,5 hours, were carried out jointly by the three of us. One of us conducted the interview and the other two came up with complementary questions. The interviews were more like conversation, focusing on the students' own experience and thoughts. (Interview manual attached.) During the interviews, all three of us took notes.

The notes were then recorded on the computer, straight away if possible; thus, there were three versions of each interview, and each of us had our own copy. The Analysis Phase commenced by reading the recorded interviews, singling out statements of relevance to our study. Eventually a number of areas crystallised where the students' thoughts on the gestation of ideas were expressed. The outcome is presented in the following chapter.

Findings

Our findings illustrate the various phases in the design process: from inspiration to ideas, from germs to gestation, all the way through to implementation. Lastly, the importance of knowledge and experience for the implementation process is illustrated.

A. The Inspirational Phase

In their accounts of the inspirational phase at the beginning of a design process, the students give many examples of how ideas are born. Inspiration may come from within, but also emerge from more or less conscious observations of the environment. An outsider may give an assignment in order to initiate a design process. How inspiration develops is also dependent on the idea itself and on the time aspect, on whether the process is short or prolonged.

'Inspired by Doing'

The students say that inspiration can be triggered by work – it is the process that generates new thoughts and ideas. An assignment, initiated by someone else, can be the first step, as well as the student's own individual activity. By experimenting and trying things out, completely new ideas may crop up, sometimes as a result of chance.

Getting an assignment and doing it means searching the unconscious. The artistic process is my inspiration..

A lot of experimenting with projections on long paper slips resulted in 'rooms in rooms'. You can make a lot out of rather little. You use your own experience from earlier work with a lot of different materials, techniques and methods. Newspapers and books can be inspirational. I draw inspiration from materials and techniques.

This source of inspiration can sometimes be found sub-consciously, it is simply there. But prior experience is often stored in the form of clippings, notes and sketches, and can be brought out to add weight to the inspirational process.

'Inspired by Looking'

The students list their sources of inspiration. Observing one's environment is one example; it may be observations of people, but also of textiles or old woven fabrics. Inspiration may consist of observing other people's work. *I look at people and notice how they act, how they dress. Looking at work by a certain artist, chosen by myself, Hopper for instance, his idiom. If somebody helps you with inspirational material, you can find new paths*

Looking can also be more general, e.g. being inspired by things around you, anything. The students stress, however, the importance of not waiting for inspiration to appear at a given moment; inspiration has to be worked upon 'constantly'.

My inspiration comes from everywhere. 'Every day observations' provide inspiration.

Influences from art are problematic; at the same time as art is a source of inspiration, the art you look at in museums or exhibitions has already been analysed. Therefore it could be the artist's thoughts that exert an influence. *It has already been analysed, it might influence me too much*

'Inspired by Knowing'

Knowledge of the area within which work is to be done provides inspiration. This is expressed by one student as follows:

My weaving is inspired by extensive prior knowledge.

'Inspired by Feed-back'

The students told us that their Artistic Training teacher helped them to find inspiration. Feedback on their work was considered to be pivotal for inspiration and for proceeding with an idea.

You're inspired by feedback from your teacher

An important course, but much is down to the teacher.

You're trusted to work as you see fit. Feedback gives me inspiration.

'Inspired by Space'

Visual Art courses are often inspiring. No results are 'required' in the sense that some practical application is expected, a process requiring bits of knowledge to be

brought together as a whole.

Visual Art offers some kind of breathing-space. That's when you absorb things, I feel that it gives me inspiration. I get something out of Visual Art, but no connection (to design). I'm glad that there isn't one.

The Moment of Inspiration

The sequence of courses is important. The students stress the fact that Visual Art is the basis of other courses. The inspirational phase must precede the start of a project, so that it doesn't interfere with creative work.

The inspirational course preceded the technical one. I had so much material from the inspirational course. If there's inspirational input during a project, it might have too much of an effect on me, I am influenced

Power of Inspiration

If the inspiration is powerful it will be remembered.

I remember what I thought.

In these situations, the students say that no notes, sketches or photographs are needed.

B. How Ideas Emerge

The students mention several sources of ideas, not only their own inspiration and observations, but also their own inner feelings. And these feelings – or this atmosphere based on personal experience – must be retained. Ideas can also be generated when concrete work is in progress, or they can emanate from discussions, or from prior knowledge.

From Inspiration to Idea

When inspiration is to be transformed into an idea, photography, sketching, writing or creating models can be used as tools. These methods are important when committing one's thoughts to memory.

If I have ideas that I want to remember, I make some sketches.

Writing down words – I's really helpful in the process

From Observation to Idea

In the germination phase, observations are vital. The students say that by observing their environment they get ideas that help them proceed, perhaps in the form of a new project.

I enjoy watching people and wondering why they're doing something ... trying to understand

I get ideas from baskets that are plaited

From Feeling to Idea

The students describe their ideas as being inside a feeling, and when the body becomes full of this feeling, there is a need for it to be transformed into something more concrete, a creative expression. Ideas are gathered inside and the birth of an idea is no coincidence. A conscious selection of these ideas is then made; a main thread is acquired, linking everything together.

Touching – memorising by using touch or smell – the atmosphere. Senses tend to stick much longer than ideas. When you store feelings and sensual experience, it all has to come out..

It's all accumulated – it's not a coincidence that I do what I do. Everything is interrelated, you just don't think about it

From the Concrete to the Abstract

New ideas also develop through your own work. An assignment may trigger new ideas, and sometimes limitations are the driving force behind the development of an idea. It may be an assignment given by a teacher, but limitations can also be self-imposed. Another way of developing new ideas is using old visual material in a new way.

Doing an assignment, that's where ideas originate. If you aren't given an assignment, you create one for yourself. The need to create and to be creative is always there. Got other ideas from my teachers. He highlighted other things than those we'd planned to pursue.

I used pictures that I already had, as inspiration for a new idea. It was a hit.

From Discussion to Idea

Ideas can also be conceived during the students' own discussions. The resulting ideas may address different human needs, and possibly lead to a project aiming to try to meet these needs.

In our discussions we established that people need textiles, they need warmth and softness.

From Knowledge to Idea

The students also said that Visual Art gives them vital knowledge in their search for creative ideas.

I like these courses; they give me ideas.

You can take ideas from these courses and use them in the design courses.

C1. Handling Ideas – Retaining Ideas

Many students experience a need for documentation of some kind, as a security measure when an idea is to be retained. This can be done by drawing, writing, taking pictures or collecting samples, but also by memorising the touch of a surface or the enjoyment of a scent. They also learn that it is important not to give up when problems arise. Asking your tutor for support, or putting your work aside for a while to be able to look at it afresh, can also secure an idea.

Retaining by Documenting

In order to retain ideas, they need to be documented in some way. This should be done as soon as possible, so that they are not lost. Too many ideas should not be kept in one's brain without being documented. Samples, sketches and photographs can be used for documentation, as well as notes on how something felt or smelt etc.

I write some words, draw pictures, trying to save – otherwise it's soon lost.

The best thing is to get down to it straight away, and to finish it. It is difficult to collect too much before it is recorded. I take a physical sample. I always use photographs for documentation. I made small sketches, when I needed to find different materials. Transparency was always there. You can utilise a collection of tactile sensations and scents.

Retaining by Limiting

Awareness of the need to set limits is vital for retaining ideas. Selective documentation means for example not taking more photographs than can be realistically analysed *I only take a picture when I see something important that's definitely important for my project. Good to be able to set limits. What's the essence of what I want to do*

Retaining by Not Giving Up

Another way of retaining ideas is not giving up when faced with problems or difficulties in one's design work. There are many ways of tackling the problems involved. They can be ignored for some time, to be addressed and reflected on later with fresh eyes. Or they can be dealt with directly and/or sporadically, returning to them from time to time, allowing the work to mature. The approach chosen is partly dependent on the time available.

I don't give up if problems emerge– I put them in front of me so I can see them, several times a day – they need to mature.

If there's time I'll put it on one side – allowing it to mature

Retaining by Getting Support

The students also mention the importance of tuition; talking to your tutor can be helpful when trying to retain an idea.

For support there's one tutorial and lots of discussion.

C2. The Handling of Ideas – Losing Them

The importance of documentation is illustrated by the fact that many seemingly good ideas are lost without it. Also, knowing when enough is enough and how to set limits, seems a hard act to balance. Those who don't take any notes or photos, or draw any sketches risk losing ideas. Ideas can also be lost by lack of distance to one's creative work. Some students also mention the expectations of others, resulting in an idea being lost.

Losing by Not Documenting

The most common reason for losing an idea is lack of documentation during a project. Even if the result is photographed, the failure to take notes and pictures throughout presents a problem.

I don't write much. I should have taken more pictures. I don't do any sketches. I take a few notes, but collect some stuff. Sometimes it's a bit difficult to explain because of my lack of documentation I have no photos from the process. I should have done more photo documentation throughout.

Even if there is some written documentation, it is often not enough when the work is to be described in writing.

I write lists – key words, but don't write why.

Losing by Not Setting Limits

Difficulties in setting up limits can cause an idea to be lost. The reason might be that too many ideas are to be fitted in, and knowledge of how to get the proportions right, is lacking. Everything in moderation – too many photographs and the idea may be lost. It is easy to be obsessed by taking pictures, thus forgetting reflection and analysis. The idea may be lost in a sea of unrelated photographs.

There isn't room for all my ideas. Learning to select the right amount is a good thing. Setting limits. I don't stop to do that but I'm beginning to learn.

Earlier, I took huge amounts of pictures, but I realised I lost lots of ideas. I mean, if I take pictures it's easy to forget to think and to analyse.

Losing by Giving Up

Sometimes the loss of an idea is caused by fear of exploring an idea in-depth.

Proceeding would have been a good thing, but it didn't happen, because I feared that it wouldn't work in the long run.

Losing by Not Getting Enough Support

The students also testified to a feeling of not getting enough support in their creative work.

I'm left alone in the creative process.

Losing by Not Distancing Oneself

Another reason for ideas to be lost is the student getting too involved in a project.

Earlier, I was so involved in my projects, day and night, even in my dreams. My results weren't as good as I'd imagined.

Losing Due to Other People's Expectations

Yet another reason for ideas to be lost may be that the education seems to be geared towards finished products rather than the design process

The other courses (not Visual Art) seem to stress the look of something rather than the work being carried out thoroughly. It's difficult to get motivated when you don't make a product. I don't want to work with clothes as products.

It is clear from the interviews that the students often focus on ideas being lost.

D. The Gestation of Ideas

Ideas can be developed in different ways, e.g. getting a new perspective by distancing oneself. Ideas can also be developed in a more concrete way, e.g. by exploring old techniques and/or taking used objects and changing them. Being able to tell others may also contribute to the development of ideas. Also, ideas may be developed while working, but it is often difficult to explain what is happening.

Distancing Oneself

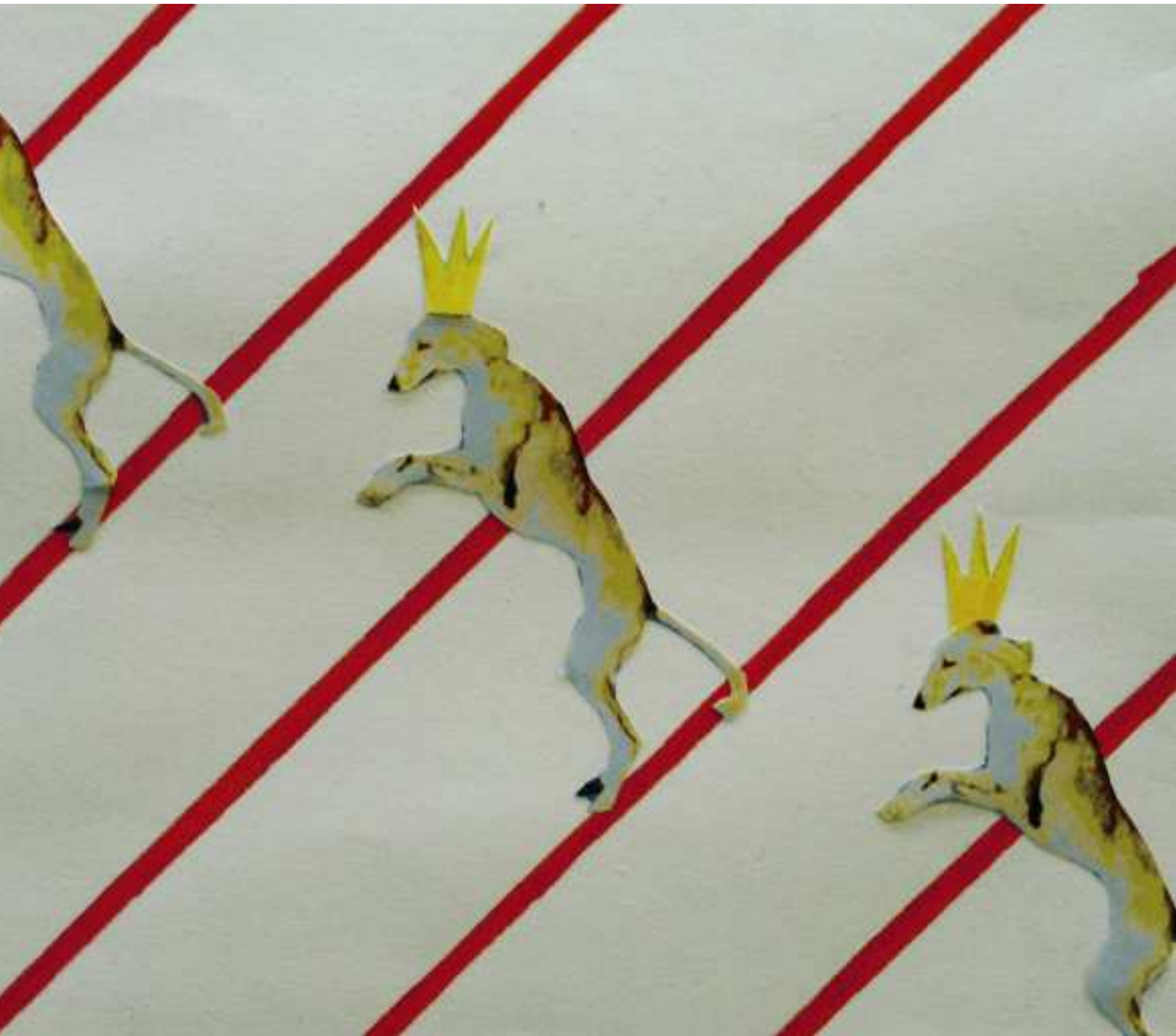
The students stress the importance of distancing oneself. Literally taking a step back and taking a good look at what has been done, may promote development.

When I've collected everything and focus on my idea, I take a step back and look at it. Then I can see if something is missing, if something isn't correct in what I've collected.

Took a step back. Stopped and looked at what I'd accomplished and wondered what was interesting.

One student said that a former teacher had taught her this method of looking at her creative work.

I needed to be free to forget and then think about it again – 'Looking from a distance'. Being away from it empties my soul, makes it new again.



Jenny Adbo

Following Up

When an idea is to be developed it is important to follow up the original thought with the help of the documented material, e.g. photographs. One student said that the writing itself could influence or develop an idea. Analysing can make it easier to determine what to pursue.

Writing was optional, but good, it started in one direction but finished in another.

We took photographs. The material was then used for sketching. Then I got ideas to pursue.

Problem Solving

The students stressed the importance of being aware that problems will always crop up, needing to be solved. One mustn't give up but keep on trying until a problem is solved. *I keep at it all the way through, living with the assignment and collecting more and more. There's this sense of euphoria when you're getting to grips. It's not solved automatically.*

Changing

Another way of developing an idea is to change old techniques, e.g. transforming old things into something else. *I look at old things and transform them into something new. Changing old techniques, enlarging, working on the scale, old techniques applied in new ways.*

Discussing

Being a member of a group where ideas can be discussed promotes inner development and provides help with practical skills, e.g. learning new techniques. *I talk a lot about the assignment, both to myself and to the others, about what they've done.*

An opportunity to discuss my own thoughts with others This seems to be especially important to a student who doesn't write very much.

When I talk to a teacher, saying it out loud, I get a better grip of it myself.

Doing

Students who don't write find it more difficult to explain how their ideas are developed and why the result turns out in a certain way. Their work is all about doing, and

sometimes it seems as if what they achieve is the result of chance. The choices made seem invisible, as does the development of ideas.

I think – and then I do it – finish it. Not many steps. Why did it turn out the way it did? Could have become something different, but then it was already finished.

Why I make these choices – I haven't written about it. It's difficult to explain. It's the way I work.

Wait and See

Another way of trying to develop ideas is to wait and see. It is not always possible to speed up the process; sometimes one must wait and let the matter take its course. *I've become more aware of the process, learnt that it must take its course. When the problems start you just put it aside, and wait for the brilliant idea to appear.*

Cooperating

When an idea is to be explored, help from other fields of expertise is sometimes necessary. Weaving a semicircle, for instance, cannot be done in a traditional loom, so new tools must be made.

I drew a model and had some help from another department with the metal construction .

E. The Relationship between Ideas and Knowledge & Experience

The students stress the importance of knowledge and experience for the progression and completion of their design work. Without it, it would be impossible to complete an assignment or implement an idea. Experience is interwoven with the process. It is also with the help of experience that theoretical and practical knowledge from different fields of expertise can be integrated and used in the design process. Knowledge and experience from prior courses promote self-confidence and give the students the courage to pursue an idea.

The Importance of Experience

The students talk about the importance of experience in carrying out their design work. It is there, waiting to be used in the design process.

Getting an assignment and finishing it means using your experience. Ideas may disappear but experience and feeling remain.

My experience from Visual Art confirm that I can implement my ideas. The best results are down to experience.

The Importance of Knowledge

The students also talk about knowledge acquired in various courses that can be applied in their design work, from purely technical knowledge to the ability to look at and experience a room in different ways.

Technology teaches me limitation.

The atmosphere changed during the project period. We learned to discern interrelations in a room. Stämningarna förändrades under projektperioden.

I wanted to introduce a tactile element into a room. The tactile is something I carried with me from our first course.

Awareness of the importance of light and sound in a room is also highlighted. The students mention it as being of particular importance when working with sound-absorptive textiles.

You can change things by using light and sound.

Then I worked with sound-absorptive tactile textiles. And still managed to include thoughts from the design course on how rooms can be affected. Drawing rooms – experiences in rooms.

The students talk a lot about the importance of knowledge. Knowledge seems to be pivotal in implementing a work of design.

The course gave me food for thought.

It was good to learn about it at that stage, I realised how important it was.

The students highlight the importance of specialist knowledge in their own field of expertise; they want more of it. They mention colour as an area where they want to extend their knowledge.

Some books deal with the meaning of colour. How it varies in different cultures. In Thai culture yellow means wisdom, in England it means cowardice. There are so many shades of yellow. I looked at the yellow that means cowardice to see if it's the same as the one that means wisdom.

Cowardice is a greenish yellow. Wisdom is a yellowish orange. In design it is vital to know something about trends, so the students attach importance to this subject.

We discuss how trend analysts see things, we have lessons in it.

Prior knowledge may be important for how the design process turns out.

I have specialised in weaving. Since I'd studied it before, it was easier for me to go on.

Knowledge of drawing and chromatics are thought to be of special importance.

In textile art it is important to be able to draw and to paint, to know about colour.

We must take courses in painting, drawing, sculpture, and chromatics.

Summary

Complex and Multi-faceted,

this is how the inspirational phase appears in the interviews in our pilot study. It also seems to be highly individual at times. Since it constitutes an important phase in the design work it needs space, both mentally and timewise, a fact stressed by the students. For ideas to develop productively it is vital to work on the inspirational phase, but it can also be the work process itself that generates new ideas: sketching or working on one's own ideas, may evoke ones inspiration.

Several different strategies can be discerned in the students' handling of their inspiration and transforming it into ideas. This process is documented in different ways, using words but above all using pictures. It is important to make little sketches of one's thoughts, things learned and experienced. Sketching (Birgerstam 2000) allows new ideas to emerge through the visualisation of a thought. The students say that apart from the thought itself, the senses, e.g a scent, are important in a creative process.

In the very phase between inspiration and an idea it is considered vital to document an idea so it can be retained and developed. Writing and taking photographs are favou-

red forms of documentation. This seems to comply with Birgerstam's study where her interviewees stressed the importance of sketching in order to retain an action. Birgerstam also stresses the importance of setting limits – everything sketched cannot always be used. The thing is to be able to discern key elements in a wealth of sketches. The students also highlight this. The most common reasons for the development of an idea seem to be that it is documented and clearly defined. For the gestation of ideas the students also stress the importance of distancing oneself. Being involved 'day and night' in their project doesn't work. One must literally be able to step back and 'look from a distance'. When discussing the importance of distance, May (1975, p 56) writes: 'Insight is gained in the transition between work and rest.' Hence, it is important for the students to be able to relax during periods of hard work. Knowledge and experience is perceived by the students as crucial to their chances of carrying out an ideas process successfully. They mention Visual Art, different materials and techniques, theoretical and practical knowledge of aesthetics etc.

Tutorials and support from teachers are also key elements in the inspiration-to-ideas process, explicitly required by the students, along with time for discussions and analysis of their documentation. Group discussions are also considered to be important in the gestation of ideas. It seems that the students don't have enough time to discuss these matters. The strength of not giving up, and the ability to follow up one's ideas from germination to gestation in the design process is pivotal. According to the students, many ideas are lost if these criteria are not fulfilled. It is also clear that the students sometimes forget to stop for reflection and analysis; too late they realise that they have failed to provide enough documentation. They mention the fact that they don't always manage to distance themselves.

Documenting and distancing oneself are part and parcel of the process, and, if disregarded, may lead to the work being unfinished or unsatisfactory.

The pilot study shows some of the students' ambivalence towards the gestation of ideas process. On the one hand, the students' confidence and satisfaction in their creative work is felt, on the other there is the feeling that great

uncertainties are always present in this process: how to find the ways and means of handling their inspiration, how to bring their ideas into the design process. The students seem to be aware of the various methods of developing ideas, but express uncertainty as to having enough time, or being able to fully implement these methods in their own work.

In our study, the importance of getting support in the gestation process of individual ideas is clearly expressed by many Textile and Fashion Design students. If the students could be given more support in developing their ideas, what amazing, mind-blowing innovative ideas might be implemented – it beggars description!

The complex world of ideas, outlined in the introductory part of our study in a somewhat simplified metaphor, has a potential for true development in the area of design. It points to the multi-faceted world that exists in every individual's creative work, in every individual reference and preference, forming a constant source of inspiration and innovation. With this in mind, work on developing methods that provide the ultimate support of the students' individual development in the design courses, is urgent.

The world around us has changed in character. More and more, people tend to work with information, symbols and codes, with systems and models rather than things. 'Experiencing' is becoming more important than 'owning' (Flusser, 1993). In the first part of our study the changing relationship between art and design is mentioned. Many contemporary artists address the same issues as industry, philosophy and scientific research. Designers draw inspiration from art, and artists from design. The boundaries between art, design, public affairs and universal problems is often blurred. Designers and artists turn to new areas for inspiration, techniques and methods. It is very likely that in future, artists and designers will be increasingly working in common public arenas.

University education in design is also changing. But to address the gestation process in-depth, it is vital to acquire more knowledge of this process in a pedagogical design context. This is where art can be a 'nutrient solution' in the vital gestation process.

On the basis of our pilot study, we are hoping to continue our work on a more comprehensive study, one whose aim would be to identify and analyse different parts of the gestation process, trying to establish how variations in the parts may have an impact on the whole gestation process. At the same time, we are aiming to establish how the works of some contemporary artists are bordering on design.

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Annex Bilaga

Student Questionnaire

Give a brief outline of the structure of your educational programme

Project based or course based?

Describe one design course/project

How is the course designed?

What do you do in this course/project?.

How do you interpret the design process?

What do you learn?

What knowledge do you achieve?

What experience do you gain?

Are you influenced by other parts of your education?

What is meant by free artistic work?

How does it happen? The meeting of artistic ideas and the design process?

Describe a course where free artistic work is included.

What do you mean by 'free artistic work', 'the artistic design process'? Vad menar du med "det fria konstnärliga arbetet" "den konstnärliga processen"?

How do you think this experience can be used later on?

Do these courses have an impact on your other studies?

Do they have an impact on courses in design?

How do you gather your ideas?

How are impressions seized?

What do your ideas look like?

What steps do you take? What routes?

Describe your gestation process.

Are artistic ideas communicated into the design process?