



To make clothes that matter

- From tradition to new design aesthetics

Research within the Baltic fashion project, by Pia Mouwitz at
The Swedish School of Textiles, University of Borås 2013.

Foreword

This project looks at how we can design clothes which expresses selected values, in order to make clothes that matter. During fall 2013, designers from various traditions met at the Swedish School of Textiles, to participate in this project. In the end, they were asked to select an idea which was valuable, and to express the value through one outfit or accessory in an exhibition. To visualize selected values through one outfit is a great challenge. In a utopian world, no words should be needed to understand the impression of an outfit.

The exhibition was the end of the project, and finalized many discussions and practical work by the designers. They were jointly researching with both an inside and an outside perspective of the tradition. This report gives an overview of the discussions including a summary of the selected values from the meetings. It is also presenting the results of the discussed values in the exhibition.

The exhibition is published on the web of The Swedish school of Textiles, 16 December 2013 <http://www.hb.se/Forskning/-/Baltic-Fashion/>

The project was one out of several projects, carried out in the EU financed project, Baltic Fashion. <http://www.baltic-fashion.eu>.

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Thanks

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Borås 16 Decemer, 2013.

To make clothes that matter

- From tradition to new design aesthetics

The aim of this practical research about the values of clothes is to contribute to a new design perspective of clothing. In this project, a wide mix of designers and artists are challenging their own traditions and their thinking about valuable design.

Giving designers and product developers a new point of departure within the design process is important. The starting-point is different traditions, research about values and, using selected values, in order to examine and start a discussion about how to design and make clothes that matter. How can we communicate selected values through garments and accessories?

In search of new design aesthetics based on values

This work is a research project exploring the values that clothes embody, and investigates how these values can be communicated and expressed through garments. Fast consumption of clothing and fashion undermines sustainability issues and is no longer feasible. Clothes have lost their value. Can we find new ways to design garments to make them more valuable?

This research begins with different clothing traditions in Sweden. The perspective is multicultural and views clothing from a broad, inclusive perspective – the face of Sweden today is mixed, representing many countries and cultures. At first glance, the Swedish clothing and fashion sector looks homogenous, with simple lines, clean design a neutral language of colours and materials, mid-priced and often functional. While this might be representative of some Swedish fashion brands, the reality is quite diverse: sportswear, work wear, functional clothing, mass-market companies, chains stores, luxury brands, tailored clothes, sustainable brands, brands making accessories, the colourful and ornamented traditional Swedish, folk costumes, and unique garments, such as clothing made for artists. The Swedish fashion and clothing industry is a mix of different interests and expressions, which is why this project involves designers and artists from various clothing traditions with both general and specific knowledge and knowhow. We want a broad discussion about the values within the context of clothing..

The aim is to explore how selected values can be used in the design process to communicate the values of clothes. By including and communicating these values, can we make clothes that matter?

Background

Many years of fast consumption of fashion and clothing have forced us to search for new solutions. Some years ago, we consumed textiles as if there was an eternal supply of fibres. The global impact is immense, and we now know that textile fibres, as well as all resources, are limited. Therefore we need to take better care of the textile fibres we have.

There is a huge discussion regarding how we can change the way people consume and wear clothes, and how to act differently in a broader perspective where many people argue the need of a general system change. We need completely new processes in order to use resources more efficiently for a better future. We need radical solutions as the global impact from clothing is enormous (Fletcher, 2008). Designers need to open up their professions in search

of new ways to work with design. They also need to work together with experts from other disciplines to jointly find solutions (Carlson, 2012)ii.

However, this work is focused on the values that clothes have. We wear clothes and accessories for many reasons, so we need to deepen our knowledge of their value in relation to their design and what we can express through them, namely through aesthetics. We need to take action and work with design processes that improve efficiency leading to clothing for a more sustainable society.

The project “To make clothes that matter” focuses on design aesthetics in order to communicate certain values through garments. We tend to stick to certain garments for various reasons. Why? Many reasons are personal, whereas others are more general and applicable to several areas. In this project we look at examples of clothing and accessories from various traditions and investigate their many obvious and hidden values.

How can we make clothes that matter?

The aim is to find out how selected values can be used in the design process in order to communicate the values of clothes. Can we, by including and communicating selected values, make clothes that matter?

This project looks at how we can design valuable clothes. How can we challenge old and new values of clothing? In order to capture a new design perspective, we need to understand the value of clothes, either visible through the expression of the garment or invisible when the value is hidden.

Overview of the process

The project “To make clothes that matter” has participants both from fashion companies and from the academy. They have experience from different fields of fashion, textile and art in order to exchange knowledge based on each tradition. Research on the values through presentations and discussion took place when the designers met two times in Borås Fall 2013. During two meetings, the value of expression, tradition and techniques were on the agenda. More details are presented in the section, “The modules”, below. After the second meeting, each designer created a piece to communicate selected values, in the exhibition “To make clothes that matter”. Vernissage 16 December 2013.

All pieces were photographed, using a technique where the audience can scroll around to see the backsides of the outfits and accessories, and there is also possible to zoom in to see details.



Fig 1 Inherited men's shirt from the authors grandfather, an example of both visible and invisible values. Oilpainting by Pia Mouwitz.

What is the value of clothing?

In this work, the word “value” is used to tell if an aspect of a garment is valuable to a person. We judge our clothing as well as what other people wear by reflecting on what we see, namely the aesthetic values. The individual perception of what we see is related to a number of things, for instance our previous experiences, habits, culture, context et cetera. But it is not only a judgement of what we see, it is also a judgment based on values that cannot be seen merely by looking at a garment. These values are here mentioned as “invisible values”.

A hidden or invisible value is not obvious when you look at a garment. But for some people who know the story behind it, the hidden or invisible value can be both obvious and important. For example, I have inherited a men's shirt from my grandfather. In my mind, I can imagine that he was very elegant when he used it, say on traditional weddings, funerals and probably when he wanted to look respectable when going to the bank. It was important to iron it properly, at least on the visible parts, or otherwise the value and thereby his reputation would be damaged. To me, this shirt has a special value as I believe it was precious to him, which also makes it is more valuable to me. But this cannot be seen just by looking at this shirt. In other words, this is a hidden value. After washing the shirt, sometimes I refuse to iron it, as I believe that the wrinkles on the shirt look nice. I wear it when it is not ironed at all. Some people, including my mother, cannot stand the fact that it is not ironed. For people around me, this is just another shirt... and I am assuming some people see it as just any other old shirt of no particular interest, beside the old-fashioned cut of the shirt's bib and cufflinks. Others ask me if I work in a laboratory, as it reminds them of the functional cotton coats used

for protection. Of course I have other clothes in my wardrobe that are more expensive and made by respected fashion brands, but to me my grandpa's shirt is the most valuable garment I have.

In this report, the word "value" is not used as a synonym to price, and a high value does not necessarily lead to a high price. However, there is a possibility that someone would like to pay more for a garment when he or she personally perceives it as more valuable or precious.

We tend to bond to some garments stronger than to others that we find more valuable. When a garment has lost its values, there is probably no purpose of keeping it even if it is of perfect quality, with fabrics and design that could last for many years to come. Still we keep a lot of garments in our wardrobes, even if we have not used them for years. Why do these garments still represent some sort of value to us? Or are we just too lazy or busy to send them away so others can benefit from them? We leave these questions for others to research.

Instead, what I would like to know is: How can we design clothes that can maintain their value? Carlson said that, "Design results in lasting value when it relates and is affective, tells a narrative, enhances our life style, and creates personal and cultural identity" (Carlson, 2012)¹. In his pocket book "Make design matter, Carlson is optimistic about the possibilities for designers to make design matter and he gives several proposals on how to take action. He also notes that the user, i.e. the consumer, has problems to see that "the user doesn't read the language of design or even recognize it?" There is a need for more clearly designed products/clothes which can be read by consumers without additional descriptions, handbooks et cetera. This is of course a challenge, since every person, designers and users of garments, comes from a tradition or culture that has its own visual language with norms and values. The impression of the garments do not always correspond to the values that the designer intended express, to communicate through the clothes.

Practical research from traditions

The idea of mixing experts from various traditions is to discern new values and to confirm the obvious ones. For a person or expert within a certain tradition, the values might be obvious, but using the knowledge from experts from other fields makes it possible to pinpoint hidden and new values that might not be visible from the very beginning. Using the knowhow in practice will thus contribute to the research. The participants of this project are dealing with the value of expression, tradition and techniques in six different modules.

Subjects

Sami culture

Mixing cultures

Tailoring

Functional clothing with integrated electronics

Mass market expressions

Weaving

Embroidery - the voice of a hand

Malin Unga

Iman Aldebe

Helle Robertson Forslund

Angella Mackey

Petra Dahlin

Viktoria Cleverby

Fiffi Wilton

¹ In the foreword of "Make design matter", David Carlsson is described by Brent Richards as "not an academic or evangelical curator or design advocate" but an insightful narrator, the wise man in the crowd". He has an "innocent desire to design a better world". Carlsson is also said to be well known for his work with David Report and Designboost.

Folkloric encounter	Linda Holten Ramsvik
Sustainable heritage	Elin Melin
From denim to dressed	Mahilda Nilsson
To start from the end	Sara Lundberg
Swedish folk costumes	Elin Ivre
Artistic expressions through ritual textiles	Birgitta Nordström
Expressions on stage	Bea Szenfeld

The first eleven designers, participated in the entire project, and made an outfit or accessory for the exhibition. The role of Birgitta Nordström, Elin Ivre and Bea Szenfeld was to share knowledge from their traditions but without participation in the exhibition. Bea Szenfeld also gave artistic advice regarding the ideas and the expressions of the outfits. My role during the meetings was to ensure that we followed the main points of the research agenda through presenting, sharing and discussing. The idea of the meetings was to research by discussing the tradition and values through the work of the others, not to make a one-way presentation with a speaker teaching for a mute audience.

All participants had this project as a side project, beside running their own business or project. The project activities took place in Borås. More than half the group came from Stockholm, the others came from Malmö, Varberg, Gothenburg and Borås. All designers invested their time, knowhow and knowledge. All designer was expected to prepare a presentation before both meetings that started off in their own tradition. Each tradition is connected to certain values that were further researched.

All these designers invested their time, knowhow and knowledge. Each designer was expected to prepare a presentation before both meetings that started off in their own tradition. Each tradition is connected to certain values that were further researched. Before the second meeting, each designer prepared a presentation of an outfit or accessory, based on a certain value that they aimed to present in the final exhibition. After the second meeting, the outfits and accessories were produced. Photos were taken and text was written for the exhibition.

Results of the analyses

This project looks at how we can design clothes which expresses selected values, in order to make clothes that matter. Each designer who participated in the project, were asked to select ideas which were valuable, and to express these through one outfit or accessory in an exhibition. To visualize selected values through one outfit/accessory is a great challenge. No words should be needed to understand the outfit. The outfit/accessory should be communicated on a webpage.

The exhibition was the end of the project, and finalized many discussions and practical work by designers and artists, coming from various design traditions. The participants, jointly researched with both an inside and an outside perspective of the tradition. This is a summary of the selected values, discussed in the exhibition:

Interaction between clothing and society We select and wear clothes which reflects what is going on around us, to meet or react to the expectations from the outside. ('Embodied body' by Sara Lundberg).

Identity and metally comfortable We can use our clothes to express our identity. Through mass-market, fashion and clothes can get accessible and affordable. ('Being

someone' by Petra Dahlin). The way we dress, is affecting the person who wears a garment. For example, a decorated evening dress, can make someone feel beautiful and perfectly comfortable, while the same clothes worn by another person can be perceived as the opposite, mentally uncomfortable. ('Decotion' by Mathilda Nilsson). What affects the individual perception and value of the clothes we wear?

Social and spiritual inclusion Our own culture, tradition and history are reflected in the way we dress. Our clothes can exclude and include people. Sweden is a country with citizens not only from Sweden, but from various backgrounds and traditions. We have the choice to design clothes which are socially inclusive which means we can try to use a visual language which can be accepted by many cultures. ('Nature in man' Iman Aldebe),

Identity and heritage Through our clothes we should have the right to reveal or hide who we are, and express our own traditions and culture. We should also respect the tradition of others. Using signs, such as the rainbow, is one way to show ones message. However, we all get an impression of what other people wear. ('Being Proud' by Elin Melin) How we judge people is based on knowledge from our own traditions and cultures. Our perception is also depending on what we know or what we think is relevant wearing clothes. To make a clear expression, when we design clothes, is important when we want others to read our expressions as intended.

Emotional value If we can make stronger bonds to our clothes, through emotional values, there is a possibility that people can wear them longer, understood that the materials should be made to last.
('Everyday memories' by Malin Unga)

Longevity, versatility and personal design impact Still, the driving force in this society demands us to constantly upgrade ourselves including our clothes. We never seem to be good enough. We over and over get bored of ourselves and our expressions. By making versatile clothes, which can be altered from time to time we can get many expressions from the same garments and increase the longevity, use them longer. Garments, designed to be altered by sewing or cutting. ('Shift' by Angella Mackey). Another proposal is to make building blocks of fabrics which can be buttoned and unbuttoned together in endless possible ways. ('The perfect whatever' by Helle Robertson Forslund).To have a personal design impact might also enhance the emotional value.

Slow fashion, craftsmanship, technique, high quality materials To design accessories and clothes, with long lasting aesthetic values is desirable. To let the making of things take time is often seen as valuable where handcrafted techniques are used in parts of the work, such as in folk costumes, tailoring and in exclusive garments and accessories such as high end handbags ('Nesting bag') by Linda Holten Ramsvik. For people who don't know that a certain technique takes time, or is made by hand, the value is hidden. Nor is it obvious, just by looking at a high quality fabric, to read it as durable. If we take more time in the design process, we might improve the possibilities to make better and more valuable priorities. To ensure people can read the values from what they see.

Tactility, uniqueness To enhance the traces of a hand, we need to consider if the stitching should be totally perfect or with visible errors and mistakes. Tactility, and the character of the material, sets the voice when we communicate textiles through clothes (' Loose threads' by

Fiffi Wilton). Uniqueness is often mentioned as highly valuable. But uniqueness is not always appreciated, as when people dress to be look ordinary as they might want to belong to a group.

Local production There is a need to explore the potential and values of local production. We can change the way we work with design and let the designers be catalysts in the design process to develop local production. (Local relations ‘Victoria Cleverby’) This could start a new design thinking which affects our society. The value of local production is getting more and more attention within Swedish. However Swedish design is well known, but Swedish manufacturing of clothes often not communicated (Mouwitz and Svengren Holm, 2013). There are several benefits connected to local production. For example, localness is not only valuable for the user of a garment but it can also have high values for those who are involved in the process of making. Social and ecological sustainability is sometimes mentioned as values, which can be enhanced by local production. However these values would need a separate research or investigation.

The modules

In modules 1-3, The project starts with an investigation of the general background of the selected traditions as above listed subjects. The main focus is on the values experienced by the expert from each field. Traditions of interest: Men’s tailoring, ‘Functional clothing with integrated electronics’, new cultures, Sami culture, ‘Mass market expressions’ and Accessories such as shoes and handbags. New and traditional techniques and methods: Weaving, Embroidery, ‘From denim to dressed’. Each presentation lasted 30-50 minutes, including discussions with all participants, and practical tasks that reflected the subjects. New techniques were also presented by technicians from the laboratories at The Swedish School of Textiles under the titles “Expanding the boundaries of knitwear” and “Expanding the boundaries of printing”.

2,5 days 15-17 September 2013

In module 4, each participant/expert selects a value and presents how this value can be expressed through one outfit. Artistic supervising is given on the proposed outfit and discussions regarding the values and outcome are completed by the expertise within the group. Supervision is given, by Bea Szenfeld to enhance the performance of the values expressed through each work. The participants present the following: Tradition/background, one selected value, the expression of the outfit, technique, material and challenges.

2,5 days 16-18 October 2013

In module 5, the outfits are produced. Some materials are produced in the laboratories at the Swedish School of Textiles, and others in cooperation with a company. The different outfits require different knowhow, and each outfit is produced in a way suitable for each selected technique, often in the atelier of each designer.

Module 6, the photography, in the photo studio at The Swedish School of Textiles.

16 november and 2 december 2013

Exhibition The photos of the outfits and this written documentation are published on the web of The Swedish school of Textiles: <http://www.hb.se/th/s/to-make-clothes-that-matter>, Information is also given on the Baltic Fashion project website: www.balticfashion.eu The

photos of each garment can be viewed in 360 degrees. You can also zoom in on the garments to study a certain technique or view other details.

Vernissage: 16 November 2013

Analysis

The result of module 1-3

Representatives both from the industry and from the academy with experience in various areas of fashion and clothing researched about ways to design clothes that matter. The following areas were chosen for discussion and practical work: Folk costumes, functional clothing, men's tailoring, Sami culture, new cultures, mass market expressions and accessories. New and traditional techniques and methods: Weaving, embroidery, 'From denim to dressed' and 'To start from the end'. For each of these areas, traditions were investigated with the intention to filter out the values behind them.

The result of module 4

Each expert then made a decision on to focus on one specific value and communicate it through one outfit. In a utopian world, the selected value should be communicated and understood without any further explanation besides the actual clothes. But this is a mission impossible. The idea behind each outfit and the selected values is described by each designer, who also presents the materials and techniques. The knowledge of the group and external artistic expertise were used to enhance the expression. At the end of the project, a number of outfits were produced to communicate the selected values.

Designers interested in the idea of sharing knowhow

This research method was possible as it did not aim to do business and sell pieces, neither was it a school project about meeting learning outcomes and giving grades. The idea was to work in a situation where the participants could jointly share knowledge, knowhow and practical skills. It was crucial to ensure that all the participants were aware of the method before the meetings took place. They were interested in giving and receiving by investing the time to learn more about their own work and contribute to others' as well as contribute to understanding more about the values of clothing.

The participants were all working as designers for clothes and accessories but had different interests. This reduced the idea of competition, which otherwise may occur when people from the same area start to show off their knowledge. By talking to the participants on the phone before the meeting, I understood that the idea of sharing was a strong trigger for those who joined the project, beside their deep interest in the subject. From my own 17 years of experience of working as a fashion designer, I can tell that the designers' works are often very individual. In my case, I was mostly working as the only designer in most companies, and in a few companies I was one out of two or three designers. When talking to designers in bigger companies with many designers, they are often a part of a design team with only one designer, a design assistant, a buyer, and, if you are lucky, a design technician concerned with the fit of the garment. But there is rarely time to share your knowledge or knowhow between designers. Many design companies do not accept guests from outside the company to enter the 'holy design department'. This means that sharing knowledge with other designers is quite rare.

However, the designers in this project were willing to take the risk of sharing and open up to see if there are aspects that could be added regarding their own tradition and work, and also to reflect on the work of others and give constructive comments.

There was a positive atmosphere during the presentations. I was surprised to find so many of the conversations discussed so intensely. Some subjects really made the group and I more emotionally involved. We spent many hours systematically going through the presentations, and the motivation was high. Even after these hours, sometimes late in the evening, the discussions were intense and everybody eager to follow the presentations and do the practical tasks and joint research. At times there were signs that they did not feel completely comfortable, particularly when the values dealt with traditions and other cultures. We did not continue or analyse these issues further, as religious or political discussions were not part of the project. Of course clothing cannot be separated from religious or political actions, but in order to understand the connection between religion, politics and clothing, this would need further research.

Nevertheless, when I started to plan for this project, I had the idea that clothes matter. As a fashion designer, I have always viewed clothes as if they matter. While some people see clothes as a decoration or surface, others, including my father, could not care less. Clothes are not important for everybody. But during this project, I was surprised to find that certain clothes could matter and can make a big difference for the person wearing them. For those who looks and judges based on what a person is wearing, understanding or not, is important. This was clearly reflected in the discussions as some ideas generated a lot of energy and enthusiasm – and sometimes frustration.

Traditions and value through presentations and discussions

Below, the designers present examples from their own practice and how they work in relation to their tradition. They have examined the values present in their own work. Each work was discussed by the group followed by a discussion of the presented values of the work in other traditions. Designers from the ‘outside’, i.e. from another background or tradition, can view a tradition from another perspective than the person deeply involved within his/her own tradition.

Sami culture, by Malin Unga

Tradition and own work

Malin Unga’s grandfather was a Sami in the north of Sweden until the 1950s. In order to understand more about her origin, Malin started to research the Sami people, their culture, the way they lived, their approach to life, their clothing et cetera. The Sami were an indigenous people who moved with their animals. They carried their belongings from place to place, folded and packed them moving between the Laplander’s huts. Every piece of the reindeer was carefully taken care of. The Sami clothes of fabrics, were often made from simple geographical shapes. Nothing was wasted. Even if life was tough, they still decorated their utensils. Some Sami belonged to the Shaman religion, and both hard and soft artefacts were decorated with symbols. Sami clothes often have strong colours. Malin Unga made a collection of seven outfits, called ‘Ahkku’, means grandmother, as a part of her BA project in

the Art and Design, Fashion Program at Beckman's College of Design. Malin used only pale colours to enhance the effect of the selected different techniques. 'Ahkku' reflected the idea of the Sami people who used clothing as a shelter. The idea is to use the things around you. For example, Malin mixed padded techniques, hand embroidery and layering, and was careful to use the techniques as the decoration.

Values

Shelter, Layering, Volume/ Silhouette

Personal and cultural identity

Handicraft: to make the human hand visible

Resource fullness: use the things around you

Emotional value

Questions about home: wearing/bringing things

Functional clothing with integrated electronics, by Angella Mackey

Tradition and own work

Angella Mackey works as a designer for clothing that react to their surroundings through wearable electronics. Angella has much experience and continuously works with projects where clothing design, interactive technology and function are important. With the aim to control the whole process from idea to a garment prototype, she was not only educated within technology through media art but also in fashion design, pattern construction and sewing. Angella is continuously involved in wearable electronics projects, as for example a garment used for heart monitoring.

Angella is currently designing a garment for Renata Chlumska, the first Swedish woman who will enter space, in a commercial project for space tourism. Angella's own fashion brand, Vega: Wearable Light, makes jackets with integrated lights, with the aim to prevent cycling accidents. The lights are detachable and hidden in the jackets so that they can be turned on when darkness falls. The jackets should look ordinary and be used and seen as ordinary jackets during the daytime. Normally functionality has strong connections and expectations within sportswear, where the prices already are quite reasonable for the mass market. According to Angella Mackey, it is still confusing both for buyers and consumers to use lights on the body. She says: "To use lights in an ordinary jacket and fashion is not yet acceptable". There are also difficulties finding technical solutions with reasonable price levels for lights used in ordinary jackets. However, on stage where artists or singers need to show a strong personal identity, lights are seen as an accepted means of expression. To design clothes with integrated electronics, high functionality combined with expression and a personal experience of the clothes is a great challenge for Angella Mackey.

Values

Multi-functionality: function, usefulness, lifestyle

Simplicity: seamlessness, balance, off-value

The future: longevity in the present and in the past

Weaving, by Victoria Cleverby

Tradition and own work

Victoria Cleverby has an interest which revolves around the concept “Fashion”. In her practice, she always tries to push the boundaries of fashion and is doing so while studying for her Bachelor’s Degree in Textiles at the Konstfack University of Arts, Crafts and Design. Her work challenges old assumptions about fashion and Victoria wants the viewer to make new findings through her work. She has her background in weaving and developed her skills in weaving while studying at Handarbetets Vänner in Stockholm (The School of the Association of Friends of Textile Art).

Victoria is interested in different techniques but has a strong affection for weaving as she considers it the most revolutionary technique. The weaving technique is old and used in many cultures, pieces of woven fabrics have been found from 7000 B.C but it continues to play an active part in the development of textiles today. Also the development of weaving machines played an important role in the industrial revolution. In fact, Victoria explains further that if it hadn’t been for the jacquard weaves (that make complicated patterns) we wouldn’t have today’s computers as they derive from the punch card technique. In the loom the punch cards decided if the weave or the weft will be visible or hidden on the surface of the fabric and in computers the punch cards has developed into the binary system of 1 and 0 that tell the hardware what to do.

In her own woven work Victoria Cleverby has often a specific idea of a selected matter and uses basic types of weaving with a mix of materials to make a certain expression. She has made several projects from weaving by hand: ‘Blytung lätthet’, (‘leaden lightness’, authors interpretation) was woven to make a formable fabric. She wove the fabric by hand in metal and flax and based the idea of a fabric that could have a memory. [Untitled] is a weaving experiment where the garment was woven in horsehair directly onto a body, which was later used by Silvana Solos in the music video ”Svarta madame”. The work ‘Evolutions’ derived from the idea that history is forever changing and never set. The pieces in this collection are woven and braided in birch bark and leather and are related to something in between accessories, clothing and the body itself. Victoria Cleverby asks: “What happens when you make up your own history and context and how will they be understood in the future?”

Values

Questioning of general practice
Thought through design
Tradition VS non tradition
Theory and practice
Good craftsmanship
Knowledge of material
Knowledge of technique
Non repetitiveness
Exploration

From denim to dressed, by Mathilda Nilsson

Tradition and own work

In her design, Mathilda Nilsson is struggling with the way we are personally affected by the clothes we wear. Why do some people feel perfectly comfortable wearing nice decorated clothes while others feel uncomfortable? Mathilda Nilsson says, "I have the feeling of being over decorated." Clothes for women are often decorated and especially those for festivities. Some women do not feel comfortable in overly decorated clothes. This is not a discussion about the feeling of the fabric or the fit on the body; it is about the mindset of not feeling mentally comfortable.

The work 'Syna' was a project at the Bachelor's Degree Program in Textiles at Konstfack University of Arts, Crafts and Design, where Mathilda Nilsson worked with the idea that some clothes are designed and expected to be used for nicer occasions (evening wear) while others are made for weekdays. She started off by closely studying the construction of the weaving techniques in the denim fabrics in a pair of jeans. The construction of the denim fabric could be seen in a loupe. Each thread in the warp and weft formed a diagonal weave called twill. This was the key to the given structure, surface and character of the woven denim fabric. The warp is dyed blue and the weft undyed, which makes the blue colour fade when the jeans are washed and used. If you tear apart the jeans, you can see this construction.

Matilda Nilsson explains that she "does not have a relation with the jeans until they have holes from using them". She also treats different garments differently. A party dress is often expensive and used for festive occasion and taken good care of, whereas jeans are bought on sale and are used for weekdays. Their value increases as they fade and get torn, and old jeans are often more comfortable than new ones. Jeans are said to originate from work wear but since long are a basic part of our wardrobes. Today, jeans can be worn for some festive occasions but normally they are still seen as casual and informal.

In the project 'Syna', the twill construction from the denim was redesigned into a print used for an exclusive, festive outfit. Two different surfaces were used: one flat and shiny, and one matt with the expression of denim weave printed on it. Screen printing a denim effect was tricky as the lines in the sides of the print frames are difficult to control. This was an unexpected positive effect, and Mathilda Nilsson wants to take advantage of unexpected incidents. In order to obtain the right expression of the print the lines were skewed, which enhanced the idea of making each print different from the previous one.

Values

Memories in clothes

Randomness: the hand is visible

Concept

Usage

Colour: connection with colour

Zoom in

Time - Letting take time

Tailoring, by Helle Robertson Forslund

Tradition and own work

Helle Robertson Forslund worked with fashion since the 1980s. After two years as a men's tailor apprentice, she achieved the journeyman's certificate. Helle is educated in pattern making and works as a fashion designer, running her own fashion brand. She is also a writer and a lecturer, among other skills. Even long before the notion of redesign was used, Helle transformed second hand clothes into new garments. The idea of sustainability has followed her through the years. One example of redesign, is her redesigned wedding dress². A wedding dress is supposed to carry a lot of emotional values. Even though she is not working as a men's tailor, the knowhow and rationality is present her work. It was as a tailor that she learned to work rationally to ensure that the garment fit was perfect on the surface as well as making sure that the layers of fabrics, interlinings, hand stitching, sewing and finishing that build up a men's jacket lasted for years.

In her own fashion brand, Helle wanted to make clothes that would last longer than one season. She found that it was not necessary to come up with new designs every season, as the clients appreciated previous styles. This was also good for ecological reasons. She noted that everything we use is actually harmful to the nature and concluded that making and using fewer new clothes would be less harmful. Helle uses organic fabrics, preferably from Sweden or countries nearby, when possible in her collections. She believes that it is important to work with durability, sustainability, longevity and multifunctionality, as she wants to make long lasting clothes, which also could be cost effective, efficient and rational. Helle's presentation was made after listening to some of the other presentations, therefore she concluded that emotional values cannot be overlooked even when the idea is to deal with effectiveness, rational and functional ideas.

Value

Durability

Sustainability

Longevity

Multi-functionality: can be used in more than one way and on more than one occasion

Cost effectiveness

Efficient

Rational

Emotional

Folkloric encounter by Linda Holten Ramsvik

Tradition and own work

For accessory designer Linda Holten Ramsvik, exclusive, high quality handbags are normal life. She just launched her own brand, Holten: top-of-the-line handbags in saddler technique. Working in a traditional saddler's studio in Stockholm, Linda controls with high precision each step from idea and design to finished product. Working with high quality accessories, implicitly highly priced, excludes every coincidence or error when it comes to the final product. Instead, we can see and even hear to explanation on how to use each tool of her saddler's toolbox.

However, in the beginning Linda Holten used aquarelle technique in her sketching method, to come up with new unexpected solutions of form and function and to set the frames for her coming collections of accessories. She also uses collages for the same reason. Linda Holten is a pattern maker so it is necessary to sew several mock-ups for each new designed handbag, i.e. a sample sewn in cotton canvas, including all the details, made to reveal when the pattern needs adjustments.

Each product is handmade and should be unique. Her final MA work is in Folkloric Encounters, Fashion Artefact, at the London College of Fashion, her topic being, “How using Hardanger embroidery technique contributes to enriching contemporary artefact’s for a modern traveler”, i.e. bags originated from Norwegian folk costumes. Hardanger embroidery was a regional way of stitching, often in bright colours. Linda’s embroideries are used as such, but in selection, and the expression is updated. The silk yarn is treated and waxed to get a dated finish, which reflects the many years that folk costumes are meant to be used.

Linda’s work also deals with how we carry around our belongings. In her collection, each bag has a specific purpose, e.g. a coin bag, including just as many coins as you need to buy a bus ticket, a bag where you can put your four (!) pairs of sunglasses, a bag for your camera, one for your laptop etcetera. All bags can be put together in one. They should be perfectly stitched and made to last for years. “Colours make me happy”, Linda Holten Ramsvik says and have no intentions of following the idea of black traditional handbags.

Value

Craftmanship

Quality

Materials

Colours

Individuality

Non-trendy

Long lasting

Timelessness

Function

Mass market expressions, by Petra Dahlin

Tradition and own work

Working as a freelance designer, targeted at the mass market, is the mission of freelance designer Petra Dahlin. Petra is always meeting the needs of the consumers and she makes everything from street wear to prints on t-shirts and accessorize.

In the beginning of a new collection, there is always a discussion of the coming trends. They are often based on and even selected from internet fashion sites, such as wgsn.com. It is also important to follow the current fashion shows. WGSN and Stylesight are two, out of many global trend prediction sites, with journalists and trend hunters aiming to instantly cover what is happening within fashion, runways, art exhibitions, materials etcetera.

In a company where she previously worked as a designer, samples were made in house, in the correct materials, with all details and printed within an hour. This was required as the buyers

worked fast to match the needs of their clients. Fabrics were also sourced in China, and common practice was to use a blend of different fibres to match the low target price. “Fashion is very different in America” says Petra Dahlin.

When Petra has tuned in the trend and summarised it in a moodboard, she forms the colour board to match the trend and the demands of the client. There are often requests from clients to make styles similar to the best sellers from previous years. Her collections include 100 designed garments many of them similar in styles and ideas, yet made as variations of each other. In order to design rapidly in the computer, copy and paste is commonly used and also necessary. Everything is fast-paced, from trend to sketching and designing each idea, to product specifications with measurements and sketches, and getting the prototypes.”They know how to sell”, Petra says. She is both educated and experienced in Design work in the US.

Managing to make the right cool print on a t-shirt is what really sells. The material and details become less important, but of course the print must be used for a commercial style. Commercial styles can be used for years. The design process is efficient by only changing the print and perhaps a few details, cuttings etcetera. One design can sell thousands of garments. People with less money can afford to buy and wear it! Otherwise, a lot of young people shopping on K-mart would not be able to look the way they want but this way they can afford Petra Dahlin’s printed shirts. If the fabrics were more expensive, the prices would not match the consumer. They cannot afford to be dressed in highly priced designers outfits or expensive brands. Petra has also previous experience from making unique pieces for artists. But Petra Dahlin is also highly motivated in making money on her designs. Mass-customised design by Petra Dahlin stresses that, “You follow the customers and what he wants. This is not about me.” They get, “Good design for low cost”.

Values

Clothing for mass market
Affordable
Accessible
Be a part of a group – Belonging to something
Identity
Time management
Efficiency

Mixing cultures, Iman Aldebe

Tradition and own work

The collections of Iman Aldebe are often seen as provocative. She is constantly pushing the boundaries of clothing and started doing so directly after her design education. She had the advantage of being a part of two cultures, Sweden and Jordan, as her parents were immigrants. She noted that young women with similar backgrounds to herself, with double traditions and a mix of cultures, were trapped. They wore fashionable clothes like Swedish girls but they had chosen to add their traditional shawls. But they did not fit into any tradition or culture. In 2006, Iman Aldebe started to design modern clothes, in terms of colour and material, suitable for Sweden. She was trying to follow traditional ideas, including the demand to fulfil codes of many religions, for example codes covering women’s hair. Iman met girls/women who had bought her designed clothes, shawls and turbans. “Because of the style design, they finally got a job” says Iman. It seemed that Swedish employers as well as

other people were less provoked by these clothes. However, she still met critique as she had dared to make changes where you were strongly recommended to follow tradition. This made her upset and triggered her to really test the expressions of clothing and be even more provocative. The idea of her current collections, made under her brand IMAN ALDEBE, is to be inclusive. Also, she wants all women to feel beautiful and preferably mysterious. Her clothes should be worn not only by women who wants to follow tradition, but by anyone in society, regardless of origin, culture or tradition.

Iman never sketches by hand; in fact she does not sketch at all. She can start to form a nice fabric, make a pattern and develop the garment while she is cutting and sewing it. Her goal is to make attractive garments that everybody likes; clothes that are not excluding but are inclusive. She makes headwear and gets requests from big employers, e.g. the Swedish police force, who need to offer their female staff headwear suitable for the job that still respects various traditions and cultures. There is a huge demand for clothes adapted to Religious codes, which can be worn at work and Iman continuously gets a lot of offers from authorities and companies.

Values

Equal value

Let the clothes speak for themselves
 Clothes that evoke positive curiosity
 Strength and mystery
 Exclusivity
 Money, status, power, love
 Durability: Endurance and functionality
 Think outside the box
 Independence
 Handicraft
 Mixing different cultures
 Environmentally friendly
 Timeless

'To start from the end', by Sara Lundberg

Tradition and own work

“Life is the time You experience”, Sara Lundberg said in the introduction of her performance Life part one. She continued to state that “Absolute time starts from the big bang”, followed by several questions such as: What is aging? Does age change your personality? What is an aging person in a group? And are we afraid of aging?

In other cultures, people take care of the elderly –in fact people are appreciated more with age. Sara Lundberg had the idea of making a collection as a performance and started sketching, and she decided to start from the end. Normally, you make a collection and in the end you make a fashion show. But what will happen if the collection is made only of being in a show, as a performance?

Sara started with setting a date for the show: Berlin, 11 Sept 2012, and then carefully designed layers of clothes to represent ageing. The model was getting dressed, starting with very little clothes, and was dressed through a ritual by two dressers. The silhouette was changing from childish to mature, and layer after layer were coming together in a heavy crescendo in the end. In the beginning the movements were faster and in the end, they were

slower and slower. Her work was a collaboration between many artists, some doing animations, others music etcetera. The audience could be seen in a movie that presented her work, and to spread it to other people. Using this kind of performance made it possible to explain without words. Every time we dress ourselves, we deal with time. The project is also dealing with the identity we get by wearing clothes, and how others see us in clothes. Our clothes also reflect the identity of the designer. Sara Lundberg is doing her first year in the Fashion Master at the Swedish School of Textiles, dealing with critical philosophical issues.

Values

Expressing intuitive values
 New thoughts about dress
 Investigation life in fashion through show performance
 Communicate critical philosophical issues
 Collaboration
 Time
 Reversed process
 Symbolic and emotional values
 Imagination
 Print/Decoration of surface
 Pattern cutting – used as different ages

Embroidery - the voice of a hand, by Fiffi Wilton

Tradition and own work

Fiffi Wilton is interested in textile materials and prefers to make wearable clothes. She has a special interest in surfaces which she also researched when she made her collection “Roots” during her design education at Beckman’s. Swedish traditions and the colourful embroideries were a part of her research. The strong colours in the embroideries are almost like a punch in the face, as they seem to take over the entire expression of Swedish folk costumes. Fiffi Wilton was interested in the surfaces, the materials and also wanted to capture the idea of the person who actually sewn the embroideries by hand. Therefore, she made a collection to celebrate beauty and capture the movement of a hand and the person behind it. The rose motive was interpreted and simplified to decorate the collection, tracing back from Swedish folklore. Transparent fabrics, contrasting with opaque fabrics, gave a new expression as the pieces were all individually sewn in yarns mixed from thin and shiny to thick, soft and hairy. They were updated to new colour scales and thus a modern expression for today’s women was achieved. Recently, Fiffi Wilton started to work as a design assistant for Filippa K, a womenswear fashion brand well-known for innovative silhouettes made in interesting, high quality materials.

Values

Tradition in a new way
 Craft
 Colour or no colour
 Materials
 Surface
 The hand
 Usefulness
 Sweden - in a new way

Hidden values

Sustainable heritage, by Elin Melin

Tradition and own work

Elin Melin has worked for twelve years in the shoe business and spent the last seven of them working with shoe design. She knows the handicraft and has the knowledge to make shoes by hand. For her, it is obvious that shoes should be designed, produced and repaired, but this is not the case with today's shoe industry. As we watch and listen, Elin carefully explain all details as she is making a pattern for a shoe. The handicraft employs many specific tools and each tool is made to make a perfect shoe with perfect fit. Making patterns for a shoe requires knowledge of the foot, how a shoe needs to function to be comfortable, understanding the critical points to make the shoe stay on the foot in the right position. You also need knowledge about the leather, sole materials and how to work with them in order to build shapes suitable for the expression. Sustainable heritage is a collection of clothes were Elin wants us to look at our heritage for coming generations. This concerns a combination of heritage and how we travel in nature.

Elin makes shoes and plays with accessories and clothes. Some shoes live on into a pair of pants, while another is mixed with a backpack. Elin experiments with our perception of what shoes are - wearables, accessories or clothes? Everything is genuine, handmade in finest elk leather to last for years. Sustainability is important to her. Elin is now employed by a Swedish shoe company as a shoe designer. She intends to continue to make shoes for artists and for those interested in handmade unique shoes. To her, it is important to pass on the knowledge of shoemaking to coming generations.

Values

- Multi-functionality
- High quality materials
- Can be repaired
- Sustainability

Swedish Folk costumes, by Elin Ivre

Tradition and own work

Elin Ivre has a passion for Swedish folk costumes. This took her to the craft school at Sätergläntan in the Dalarna region. During two years, Elin learned about the history, traditions and practical knowhow of making Swedish folk costumes. She noticed that there are many different ideas of what was correct and incorrect when making the folk costumes. She was even told that if you do not come from an area where folk clothing is commonly used today, you cannot understand what folk clothing is about.

It seems that there is a misunderstanding regarding the use of folk costumes. Today, people often think that every local village had their own variety. But this was not the case. Instead, specific factors were necessary to develop a condition for folk costume. The area had to be quite isolated with little influences from outside. Countryside people started wearing folk costumes somewhere in the 18th and 19th century. Today, folk costumes are still used in Dalarna, for traditional festivities such as weddings and midsummer celebrations.

Through the years, folk costumes have changed. They have adapted to the way people dressed and lived and even reflected some of the silhouettes and details from fashion. A lot of research has been made on folk costumes and the way people dressed. For those who want to follow their tradition carefully, there are a number of things to consider. Elin mentions how people controlled each other and looked down at someone who did not follow the traditional rules of how to wear the costumes, for example to make sure that a newly-wed changed from the unmarried women's colourful headwear to the white one reserved for married women.

This became evident when Elin Ivre made her final work at Sätergläntan. She wanted to make a traditional costume from Rättvik, the so-called Rättviksdräkten, following all rules, stitching, embroideries, materials and fabrics. Rättviksdräkten has colourful embroideries and in the old days, it was the more colours the richer the wearer. But Elin wanted to make the costume in solid black. People who heard about the project got upset, and some of them felt offended. Elin's intention was not to provoke, so she started to research about other traditional costumes, ended up making the Vingåkersdräkten in solid black. As expected, she received a lot of attention.

Today, Elin Ivre works as costume-maker at Swedish National Television (SVT), along with completing her design education at Beckman's in Stockholm. Elin continues to work with forms and ideas of traditional costumes. She owns a collection of old traditional folk costumes. From the beginning, the costumes were sewn by hand but this changed as the sewing machine could simplify the sewing. Machine stitched garments were seen as exclusive, as only a few people could afford it. Elin Melin makes conscious and qualitative choices regarding material and method and believes that everything does not have to be hand-sewn. She points to a long seam inside one of her old garments from the time where machine-stitched seams were valued higher than hand stitching. Today, some people from the folk costumes context claim that every stitch in a costume has to be handmade, whereas others do not mind combining hand and machine stitching. Elin does not want to remain in the old way of thinking about costumes. Instead, she wants to take them further by keeping the core values from the past and interpret them to today's situation.

The choice of method and technique is connected to how a garment should be communicated, e.g. on TV or on the catwalk.

Values

Consciousness and priority of core values

Craft

Materials

Sewing

Artistic expressions through ritual textiles, by Birgitta Nordström

Tradition and own work

As a textile artist, Birgitta Nordström works with the meeting between fabric and human. She works with ritual textiles handling matters of life and death. Often, she uses blankets that sometimes are used over the shoulders, almost like garments. Wrapping textiles around the body and asking questions is important. In her work, "Life trousers", "You won't follow

through”, Birgitta uses a lifebuoy where the textile is wrapped around and used inside to catch up and protect the saved person from falling through.

Textiles can express certain tones. Birgitta refers to textiles in clothing as a second skin, as life supportive, tactile, related to power, or as adding values to our personal being. She is influenced by myths and religions, such as the approach to life, to death and rituals connected to it, for example the process of mummification. During one period in her life, she spent two years weaving shrouds. “The fabric is telling us something which cannot be expressed through words”, Birgitta says. She also makes funeral textiles; funeral palls.

In November 2013, she finished a long honourable project to design and produce a cope for the Bishop of Gothenburg’s diocese. She could look into the archives and researched thoroughly to make a suitable cope. Why do we need costumes in church? The bishop is involved in profound human nursing activities. He is a very busy man, and the cape has to meet certain functional and ritual demands. He often takes it on and off, so it should not be too heavy (a problem with some older copes). Also, it needs to be foldable to fit into a suitcase. The material needs to be durable and long-lasting. It should also be possible to take it apart in order to repair and clean it. The cape should also correlate to the bishop’s motto “Mitt i livet” (“in the middle of life”). Birgitta lives on the island Hönö, where there are pilgrim crosses which can be seen from the sea, landmarks, to navigate a boat. The ideas of these crosses, as landmarks, were incorporated in the design process of her cape.

She has also designed and made the cope for the female dean of the Cathedral in Gothenburg. The title in English is *A lady's mantle* which refers to the title of a flower, in latin *Alchemilla Mollis*. The fact that it was a woman who should wear it was essential in the sketching process. Working with Christian sacred garments is working in a tradition with origins back to the 6th century and the ritual garments have always been made for men. That is slowly changing now. Birgitta hopes that when the day comes that there will be a male dean it will be worn by him as well, though remade in length.

There are certain rules, traditions and dress codes to follow. Traditionally it is made out of a half-circle and it is a challenge to make it really wearable without cutting and tailoring

Birgitta has just started her doctoral studies at HDK University of Gothenburg. It is cooperation with the Röhsska Museum in Gothenburg. The title of the doctoral project is *In the ritual space- the meeting between fabric and human*. One of the artistic projects she is focusing on is weaving blankets for the babies we loose at birth and she is raising the questions: - Is it possible by making shrouds for the smallest to ask questions about grief? – Can a small little blanket be a language of touch? Birgitta Nordström wants to do research on how to make a textile blanket to be used in the very moment of lost, an affordable piece of textile with respect of life and death.

Expressions on stage by Bea Szenfeld

Tradition and own work

Bea Szenfeld was involved in this project to give artistic advices and tutor the designers in module 4. The purpose was to tutor to enhance the expressed values through the outfits in the exhibition. She also presented her own tradition, work and values.

For many years, Bea Szenfeld ran her own fashion brand, struggling to sell garments in a commercial context. It was difficult to adapt to the needs and demands of the customers. She has a fashion education from Beckmans. Today she is often hired as a designer by artists on

stage, to make theatre costumes, and she is working in different projects for commercial companies to make extreme and unique expressions through garments. Since some years, she works mostly in paper. Her intention is always to work with high precision. If an expression or techniques is not perfect, she would rather reject the item than keeping it in the collection or using it as a part of a fashion show. The ideas are always crucial, and she wants to only work with ideas which she can stand behind.

Values

No repetition – don't do things that already exist
 Work with ideas that I can stand for
 Cancel - rather the presenting what is mediocre
 Perfection

Summarizing and discussing the values

After the presentations, the different values written on post-it notes, were jointly put in to groups, to see similarities and connections.

Time (2)

The past

The present

The future

Longevity

Timelessness (2)

Not trendy

Time - Letting take time

Well thought-out design

Work with ideas that I can stand for

Time, timelessness and other aspects of time are often mentioned in the designers' different traditions (e.g. Petra, Sara, Helle, Linda). Time is also crucial for the value of clothes, as they are often made to last a specific length of time. Thereby, time and fashion has a strong connection and fashion clothes will probably turn unfashionable with time. "Clothing is a tangible, material product, whereas fashion is a symbolic cultural product" Kawamura (2006)iii.

We can be emotionally bonded to the past. One example is my personal bonds to my grandfather's shirt that I mentioned earlier. We can often date clothes from previous years by the way they are cut, the silhouettes and the materials. Time is also reflected through human aging, and the kind of clothes and the expression changes as we live (Sara). Denim jeans are supposed to age, to be torn apart, and they even get better and more comfortable as they get older (Mathilda). We live in a society where newness is expected. We get tired of our clothes, silhouettes and colours.

But is it really the clothes that make us tired? Personally, I get tired of my old selves and the way I look, and I try to reinvent myself through dress, hair, makeup and so on. Looking at society and the fast-paced development around me, I get the feeling to continuously strive for a new expression, an updated version of myself. I do not seem to look good enough.

The way we dress is a reflection of our society (Sara). Some designers are striving for timelessness through aesthetics and how to make garments usable longer (Linda, Iman). At my first design job my boss said: “If you’re never trendy enough, you can never become completely un-trendy.” To be not trendy is aimed to increase the lifetime of a handbag (Linda). Unfortunately, not trendy, can never guarantee expanded lifetime as people constantly changes their minds about what is valuable. The value of longevity for clothes is important to many participating designers: longevity (Helle) and well thought-out design (Victoria).

In the mass market production, the design process is very short, as it reflects the urgent speed on the market. However, the design process seems efficient as thousands of garments can be produced from each design (Petra). Letting the design process to take time is unusual (is it even possible?) on the mass market.

People interested in clothes and textiles can expect and appreciate when some things takes time, for example hand embroideries (Fiffi). Making exclusive accessories is often seen as highly valued (Linda) and when we know that it takes time to make an exclusive handbag, it affects our perception about its value. But for a person who does not know that a certain thing or details is handmade, and took time to make, the connection to time is non-existent.

Is it really necessary to have a slow design process? What would happen if we started to add time into the design process? Several designers mention it is important to work with though through design, “ideas which I can stat for”, and “letting take time” (Victoria, Bea, Mathilda). Could we then also take action to make garments which aesthetics were designed to last longer? This is the idea of slow design where clothes can be used for years in contrast to fast fashion, fast design.

Identity

Individuality (2)

Be a part of a group - belong to something

Personal identity

Cultural identity

Participants from all traditions agreed that the value of identity is one of the strongest values of clothes. We wear and use clothes as a way to express our identity in order to demonstrate how we want others to see us. We also dress for ourselves and try to feel comfortable. Wearing certain clothes can make us feel either secure or insecure. One example is the sensation of not feeling comfortable when wearing clothes for formal occasions (Mathilda). Feeling comfortable in clothing includes that the cuts and fit are not disturbing when I wear the clothes, and that they feel pleasant to me and my body. But you can become mentally uncomfortable, which is what happens when we cannot identify ourselves with the clothes we wear.

There are expectations connected to clothes where we are expected to follow the norms and values of a certain tradition. For example, wearing a shawl in present-date Sweden is sometimes seen as provocative when used by people from other traditions or cultures, whereas the same shawl, wrapped around the head of a Sweden-born person, worn in the exact same way, is perceived and judged differently.

Clothes can be inclusive (Iman) or prevent us from becoming part of a group. We judge people by the way they dress and make decisions depending on a number of things; our own

traditions, history and experiences, and sometimes we judge people without even knowing why. Our brains seem to constantly strive to find a meaning, to straighten out all the impressions which makes sense where we live and act, for example at work, at a party, school meetings, or at home with in our families. Designing clothes and accessories are also a reflection of what is around us, and what is expected within our own tradition. The clothes we wear is a reflection of the society (Sara). When we design things and clothes, we have the choice to follow or disobey the expectations of us as designers.

In this project, there are many designers with strong connections who work close to the values which they find important. Their identities are reflected in the work within each tradition (Linda, Petra, Helle). It seems that many designers in this project already work with values they find important for their clients, users, target groups and for themselves.

Emotional value

Symbolic and emotional values

Memories

Expressing intuitive values

We wear clothes close to our body and we seem to have a relationship with our clothes. Textiles around us are sometimes seen as a second skin (Birgitta) “adding values such as,” life supportive, tactile, related to power and even adding values to our personal being”. We immediately cover and dress our newborns to make them comfortable and warm so that they stay alive. In the end of life, we make sure we dress the dead, or wrap them carefully with respect. The value of a piece of cloth made of textile was especially strong when we discussed what kind of textiles we would use and offer to wrap the dead, premature children. What was respectful to the child and to their parents was one thing, but from a rational point of view, the choice of textile would not matter as the child was already dead. But from a human perspective, we all live on this planet, and most participants believed that the choice of a textile for wrapping really did matter.

We tend to bond stronger to clothes for emotional reasons (Malin). The Sami people have strong emotions about the nature, which gives them respect for nature and materials. Can we enhance the lifespan of clothes by designing clothes where bonding is included? For example, my grandfather’s old shirt has a specific value to me, but for someone else it is just a plain old shirt. Can we include the values of a specific history of a second hand garment in redesigned clothes? Can we visually use torn materials and the patina of second hand clothes? Historical references in clothes seem to affect us, as they bring back memories often connected to our emotions. Designers today often get inspired by earlier garments and clothing traditions. As a designer of leather jackets, I tried to work with expressions that could be recognised from a certain time when trying to come up with a piece that could be suitable for the new time. So how can we design garments with stronger emotional bonds?

Equal value

Accessibility

Independence

Strength - power (2)

Let the clothes speak for themselves

Clothes that evoke positive curiosity

Imagination
Mystery
Money
Status

We design clothes for different reasons and hopefully our target groups will understand the message. To a certain extent, mass market clothes can help people with less income to get access to clothes that can express a certain identity and become part of something which otherwise would not be possible (Petra). Clothes can be used to express the idea of money, status, strength, power, beauty and the celebration of nature (Iman). Clothes can empower people and make them feel stronger. But at the same, clothes can also have the opposite effect, depending on who wears them, the values, culture and tradition they exist in. Clothes can include people but the language of clothes can also exclude people from become a part of society (Elin).

Some symbols are closely related to certain ideas. We can reveal or hide our identities through the way we dress (Elin). Some symbols, has double meanings such as the rainbow. For some people it is the symbol of pride or gay, in the Bible, it has another symbolic value, but for most children it is just a beautiful sight, happening when there is rain and sunshine at the same time. Society needs to be inclusive and reflect equality (Iman). There is a need for an open attitude to those who dare to divert from the rules of the clothing traditions. There is also a need to respect our own traditions as well as the traditions of others. How can we affect the way we design clothes to be more inclusive? How can we design clothes to evoke positive curiosity? To design things that speaks for themselves (Iman).

Usefulness, usable (2)

“Off” and “On” value - Be functional and useful under all circumstances

Durability

Endurance

Functionality

Multifunctionality + emosional

Sustainable

Environmentally friendly

Zero waist - no waist

Resourcefulness - use what is around you

Can be repaired

Shelter

Bringing things

Seamlessness

Simplicity

Function

There were a lot of discussions about how to increase the lifetime of a product through the design. In functional clothing, such as in sportswear and work wear, we can often connect the function to something useful, which we visually can understand. A hood, in padded material can for example, be understood by the user, as functional. The hood can cover our head, and protect it from the wind and coldness. High usefulness, functionality, durability and endurance are used within Sami clothing (Malin), folk clothing (Elin I), tailoring (Helle), exclusive handbags (Linda), and handmade sustainable shoes (Elin M). Among most designers in this project, the idea is to use as little materials as possible. It is modern to use the

notion, “zero waist” which have since ages been the idea in Sami clothing where it is to use every part of a deer. To reduce waste of fabrics and materials is highly valuable within folk costumes. Multi functionality was common, as the garments in folk costumes were made to be combined in different ways, to adapt to different occasion. People could not afford to have many clothes and the folk costumes were supposed to be used for years, and over generations. Today, our wardrobes are overloaded and it would be interesting to see, how many pieces of clothes we would actually keep, if we made a selection based on what is really valuable. The value of functional garments can be connected to our rational values. During the discussion many of the persons in the group, discovered that emotional values are also connected to functionality. In my opinion, also aesthetics value of a garment is a kind of functionality as the aesthetics can enhance or decrease how we think about ourselves, and how other people see and judge us.

Menswear tend to have few details, and often with a certain purpose of functionality. For example, pockets for men are often used for bringing things, while women pockets are sometimes seen more as decoration. Women today use handbags to show their identity, and are also supposed to bring their useful belongings in handbags (Linda).

Jeans are expected to be more comfortable after using them for a long time. We even treat them with less care as they are supposed to have holes (Mathilda). We care more and treat better, the things that we find more valuable. Unfortunately, in general, people today, don't know how to sew and repair clothes. When combining functional values, through detachable electronics in ordinary clothes, there have been big confusions among the people in the target groups (Angella). Also the buyers in different clothing stores had problems to understand the mix of functionality and ready-to-wear. The idea of a certain type of functionality is also understood depending on the context. To use light in artists clothing is today not seemed as strange and using electronics in sportswear and workwear is expected. But to integrate electronics in ordinary clothes is still confusing.

Cancel - rather than presenting what is mediocre

Time management

Efficiency (2)

Balance

Volume

Silhouette

Knowledge of technique

Pattern cutting - to represent different ages

Decoration of surface (2)

Print (2)

Layering

Mixing fabrics

Trimmings

Materials (2)

Knowledge of material

Long lasting materials

High quality

Almost all designers in this project, from all traditions view material as a very important part of their work. Their choices of material and technique are strongly connected to the expression and function of a certain garment or accessory. Even the most perfect pattern construction, is totally wasted, if the wrong material is used. In the design education, we often say that we should “work with the materials, not against them”, meaning that we should take advantage of the specific characters of each material to make a certain form. Using high

quality materials (Linda, Helle) is one way to make products and designs which expressions can last longer (Fletcher 2008). Low price garments are since years, said to be bad quality and this supposed to be the reason why people reject the clothes. However, there are producers of low price garments today, using qualities which surpasses the date when the consumer, don't want to wear them anyway. Still it is not obvious, that the most exclusive garments are the most sustainable choices. There was a discussion regarding the values of a wedding dress. They are high quality, used for one day, and kept in the wardrobes forever (Helle). You have spent a fortune on the dress, and it is filled with emotional values. Wouldn't it be better to make wedding dresses out of recyclable toilet paper? Knowledge in material and techniques is important for the designers (Victoria). The designers all agreed that there is a need for the consumer to learn more about techniques and materials in order to better understand the values behind them. Can the choice of materials and techniques simplify the understanding of materials, for those who use the clothes?

It was only on the mass market that I found less focus on the materials and more focus on the expression, here represented by an interesting print, combined with a selling style and at a reasonable price (Petra). To some extent the material seemed to be less important than other values.

There was also a great interest in surfaces as decoration (Fiffi). Prints are also used to express what designers hope is attractive to consumers who wants to make the bond and maybe get a feeling of being updated (Petra). Emotional bonding was also shown by using personal images from Instagram in a printed shirt. (Malin). The surfaces in themselves, the tactility, are triggering the approach of the viewer, to the known or unknown, in an art piece (Birgitta). How could we build a certain expression through selected techniques, and how make them in materials as decorative elements in themselves (Malin)?

Colour - Connection with colour (2)

No colour - Loss of colour (2)

The colours were also important for all designers as it sets a certain tone to the clothes. Strong colours can be seen in the expressions of folk clothing (Elin M), Sami clothing (Malin) and in the Hardanger Embroidery on the handbag (Linda). The choice of colour tones will have an immediate impact on the viewer, user or consumer. Colour tone, together with the form and material is crucial, trying to understand a certain garment type. Using decorative elements from the Swedish Folk Traditions, translating the colours to pale, neutral tones, makes us change focus from the colours themselves to the materials and the surfaces (Fiffi). From being read as traditional and maybe old fashioned, the change of colours, can affect the feeling, trying to make the viewer, to refer to the present.

Craftmanship and production

Good craftsmanship or craft (5)

The hand - To make the hand visible - Randomness by the hand (3)

In this project, several items are sewn by hand, or partly by hand such as in tailoring (Helle), folk clothing (Elin I) and exclusive handbags (Linda) and shoes (Elin M). Some of them have the aim to express the work of a hand, and uses the randomness of the hand (Fiffi). For example, it is difficult to see, which parts of a handbag is made by hand as it is so perfectly made (Linda). It is unusual to meet people who can make shoes from leather pieces and build them from the beginning. I presume only people working as professionals within the shoe

industry can see that the shoes in this project, are mostly made by hand (Elin M). (Crafting shoes also includes some stitching by sewing machine.) However we can understand and see that the rainbow colours on the shoes, are uneven and have traces by the hand. When we want people from outside our own tradition, to see and understand the values of selected qualities, materials, decorations we need to communicate these values through the final design of the garment. In the utopian world, an artefact should, by the way it looks, the way materials feel, be understandable without and text or further explanation.

Uniqueness
Non repetitiveness
Exclusivity
Perfection

New perspectives , to question and reveal
Zoom in
Theory with practice
Questioning general practice
Communicate critical philosophical issues
Lifestyle
Questions about home
New thoughts about dress
Investigating life - In fashion show as performance
Exploration
Reinvention
Reversed process
Tradition vs non tradition
Tradition in a new way
Mixing different cultures
Sweden in a new way
Collaborations

Swedish clothing and fashion today is a blend of different traditions, with people from mixed cultures. It is not homogeneous group and I have strived, to include designers, from various traditions, giving a personal voice from the own tradition in this project. To make collaborations is important or we would otherwise only see what we already know. To understand and meet, the important values for the user of the garments, requires a new design perspective. We need to rethink the whole and focus on the values, which are important for this society. We need to communicate these values through our clothing in order to make clothes that matter.

References

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What is the use for SMEs?

Companies may use the same method and modules as used in this project. This aims to enhance their performance in their area of expertise, e.g. fashion design, production, work wear, craft, sportswear, art or others. By focusing on the values within their own as well as other traditions, it is possible to identify expressed or hidden values. By revealing the values, the aim for designers, product developers and other stakeholders within clothing is to work with values at an early stage of the design process, express them in clothes, in order to make clothes that matter.

About The Baltic Fashion Project

The Swedish School of Textiles is the Swedish national contact for the EU financed Baltic Fashion project, which aims to promote fashion. The fashion sector in the countries around the Baltic Sea has long textile traditions. The challenge of the Baltic Fashion project, is how the fashion sector can grow in the future. Seven countries are participating: Finland, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Germany and Sweden. More information: www.balticfashion.eu Between 2011 and 2013, many activities and research have been carried out within various subjects such as 'Smart textiles and wearable technology' and 'Apparel manufacturers in Sweden'. 'To make clothes that matter' is the last Swedish project, performed during the fall 2013, and is published 16 December 2013.

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About The Swedish School of Textiles, Borås, Sweden

The Swedish School of Textiles in Borås is regarded one of Europe's most interesting education arenas in fashion and textiles. This is a multidisciplinary environment where practical experience is combined with research in artistic development. We offer education programs at bachelor and master level in design, management and technology with access to extraordinary technology as well as specially equipped laboratories. <http://www.hb.se/en/The-Swedish-School-of-Textiles/>

ⁱ Fletcher, K. (2008) *Sustainable fashion and Textiles*, Earthscan: UK and USA

ⁱⁱ Carlson, D. (2012) *Make design matter*, BIS publishers: Amsterdam