

Knowledge making in fashion and textiles 2023

Kirsi Niinimäki

Emmi Pouta

Leonardo Hidalgo

Aim of the course

- **Knowledge building in fashion and textiles;** First touch to MA thesis process in FaCT
- **Design Research;** presents different methods in design research (practice-based being one of those)
- **Thesis plan orientation;** start at the end of May, first course in second Master years, starts the MA thesis process
- **Thesis plan presentations,** 5 pages, accepting the plan, process starts (October)
- Good time to do the thesis during the second study year until the end of May
- Publish your MA thesis in repository aaltodoc.aalto.fi

Aim

- **Learning Outcomes:**

- The course provides understanding of different forms of research-based knowledge and concepts that are used in support of fashion and textile design processes.
- On completion of the course students should be able to:
 1. Understand and explain the role of research-based knowledge in their creative process (e.g. in data collection, documentation, and reflexive self-evaluation)
 2. Show ability to use research-based knowledge in their own design practice
 3. Explain in written and textual form the use of research-based knowledge in their design practice

Aim of the course

- Presents different ways of doing Master thesis in FaCT
- Provides some writings you can use in your own process
- Provides learnings in information and visual retrieval (using and finding the right sources/repositories, google scholar and other data sources)
- Helps you to identify your own interest and viewpoint (positioning + context building)
- Helps you to be ready to start the MA process in autumn 2022

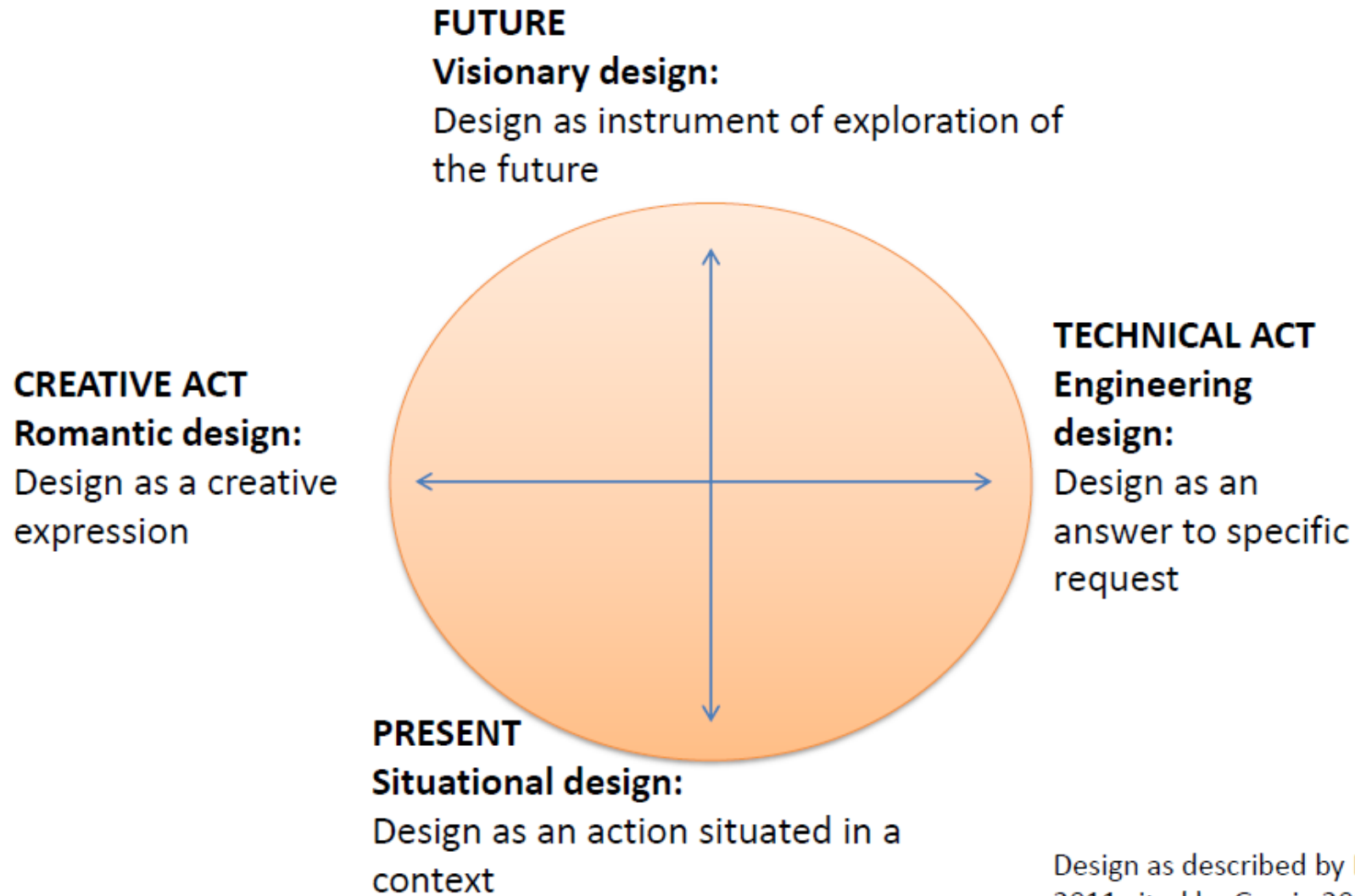
Pro- gramme

Date	Content	Pre-readings
9.1.	13.15.-17.00 Course starts How to do the course; First task reflective journal Kirsi Niinimäki: positioning your MA thesis	Koskinen, I., & Krogh, P. G. (2015). Design accountability: When design research entangles theory and practice. <i>International Journal of Design</i> , 9(1), 121-127. Mäkelä, M. (2016). Personal exploration: Serendipity and intentionality as altering positions in a creative process. <i>Form Akademisk-forskningstidsskrift for design og designdidaktikk</i> , 9(1).
16.1.	13.15-16.00 Information retrieval VÄRE R 102 16.15-17.00 MA thesis, group task Form a group (max 4) and select MA thesis to read and analyse.	MA thesis guidelines
23.1.	13.15-15.00 Visual retrieval VÄRE R 102 15.15-17.00 Presenting the group task	

<p>30.1.</p>	<p>13:15-14:15 Research-through-design Practice-based-research Emmi Pouta Data collection in practice-based approach Leonardo Hidalgo</p> <p>14:30-16:30 Practice-based-research Panel discussion – Emmi Pouta - host – Julia Valle – Noora Yau – Leonardo Hidalgo</p>	<p>Please read these texts before the session and prepare view questions.</p> <p>Nimkulrat, N. (2007). The role of documentation in practice-led research. <i>Journal of Research Practice</i>, 3(1), Article M6.</p> <p>Julia Valle-Noronha, 'The body within the clothes', <i>RUUKKU - Studies in Artistic Research</i>, 10 (2019)</p>
<p>6.2.</p>	<p>13.15-17.00 Kirsi Niinimäki: User centered approach Participatory design Co-design Ethnography</p>	<p>Please select one text from following and read it before the session and prepare to discuss this topic</p> <p>Hirscher, A. & Niinimäki, K. (2013) Fashion Activism through Participatory Design, <i>Crafting the future conference</i>. 10th European Academy of Design Conferences 17-19 April, 2013. University of the Gothenburg, Sweden.</p> <p>Brent Luvaas (2018) Introduction: Anthropology, Street Style, Bloomsbury Academic</p>

8.2	Reflective journal submission deadline 8.2.	
13.2.	<p>13.15.-17.00</p> <p>Feedback from reflective journals</p> <p>Kirsi Niinimäki: Positioning your own interest in MA thesis</p> <p>Last task; short writing; How are you planning to position your MA thesis</p>	<p>Clemens Thornquist (2014) Basic Research in Art: Foundational Problems in Fashion Design Explored through the Art Itself, Fashion Practice, 6:1, 37-57.</p>
15.2.	Deadline to submit your positioning text	

Design in its placement



Design as described by Deserti
2011 cited by Garcia 2012, 154

Reflective journal by 8th February

- **AIM**

- A reflective journal is a dialogue between you and your teacher(s). Writing helps you to become aware of your own thinking, which in turn helps and supports you in your creative process. It also helps you to contextualize your own work in the wider field of fashion/textile design. Writing makes your thinking and creative process visible to others.

PROCESS

- Simply start by documenting your creative process or going through the material you have been collecting in autumn 2022 in a creative course; your ideas, thoughts, feelings, choices and decisions.

A) Or B) option

If you begin to reflect some past process (e.g. Innovative fashion or Experimental textile course material from autumn 2022) go through all material you have been collecting. Create a continuous writing process. At the same time, think about the wider context of your work: how and by whom (designers, artists, theorists etc.) has the subject been treated previously? What has been done, what has not been done? What is your contribution to the subject? Please also use texts which will be offered to you in the course.

Reflective writing

- Try to identify critical moments in your creative process by asking yourself the following questions: How do I create? What / who inspires me? How do I make creative choices? How did I resolve problems? These questions help you to become aware of how you work as a creative designer. The writing process is free-form meaning that you can choose the style of writing that suits you best but if you use text references, use them correctly and add the reference in the text as well as construct a list of references at the end. (e.g. APA style).

- When you have gathered enough visual and textual information, go through it and try to identify moments which were important in the process. Write these moments down and reflect on them. Ask yourself: Why were these moments important? Why did I make the choices I did? What did I learn in these moments? Where does my project situate in the wider field of fashion/textile design? In this phase you give meaning and context to your creative process. When writing, you can also think about following questions:
 - Which subject did I choose and why?
 - How did I find information (both visual and textual)? How has the subject been approached before me? What is my contribution?

Reflective journal

- How did the material help me in my own creative process?
- What did I learn? What did I enjoy? What did I find difficult and why?
- **What were the critical points in my learning?**
-
- **OUTCOME**
- - 4 pages of text (min 1500 words)
- - 1-2 pages of visual representations

Examples

phase 1: frustration sketches

Finding motivational starting point for the project was surprisingly challenging. I felt that I needed to alter my way of approaching shapes and structures in order to elevate my own understanding of structural elements in garments. I tried to figure out what could be the next step in this process.

It felt like it should be grown in top of my earlier experiments, to link these new methods to my own expertise in a way that they wouldn't feel irrelevant in perspective, that they would feel like a natural progress for myself.

Ideas about multifunctional elements in clothing felt very intriguing to me, patterns and constructions that could have multiple purposes in different kinds of garments, e.g. a shape that could be used as a sleeve for a coat but would also fulfill the role of a pant in trousers.

This goal seemed really vague at first glance, yet I had this oddly clear but abstract image in back of my mind what I was willing to achieve. It felt like it was right there, I just needed to reveal it. But I didn't know how. It seemed that there are limitless possibilities how this could be done. You can do anything out of anything and in every possible manner, it is the most paralyzing feeling. I needed to have some kind of restrictions to limit these possibilities.

Having this somewhat described goal in my mind, but no actual road to take me there made me feel that I'm just stuck in the place.

My over-analyzing style of approaching things didn't necessarily help me getting started, I tend to repeat my plans in my mind over and over again before I'm getting even close to a starting point. Like I'm planning everything ahead of time and then just trying to burst it all out when it's complete. It never goes like that but I keep doing it everytime. It usually just kills my excitement on trying things out: when the first fault occurs, the harsh reality breaks my daydreams, ruins all of my planning. More robust methods for this opening act needs to be found.

Ideal way might be something more intuitive, more hands-on, that could lead to unexpected elements beyond any calculative, calculative approach based on already known factors. There seems to be a need for raw playing in me, fascination of unknown, empowering excitement over

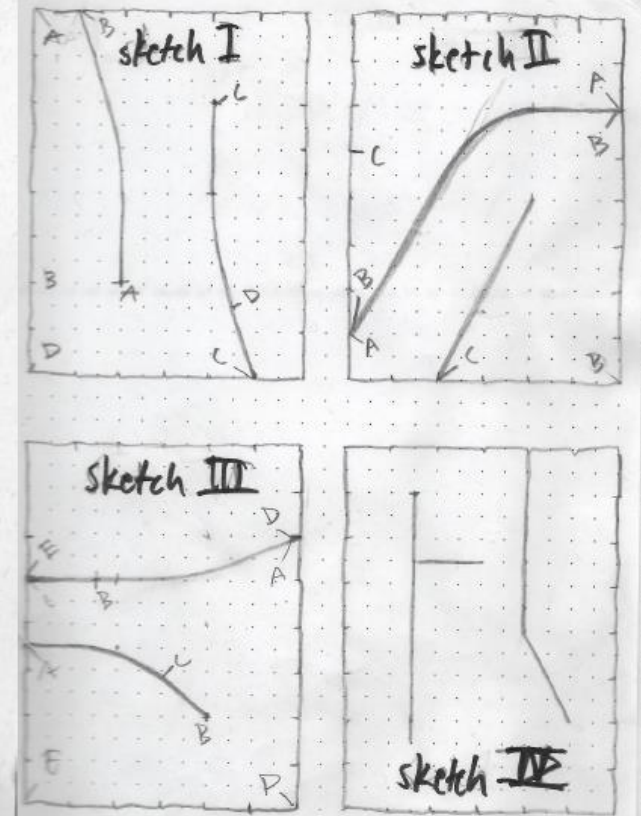
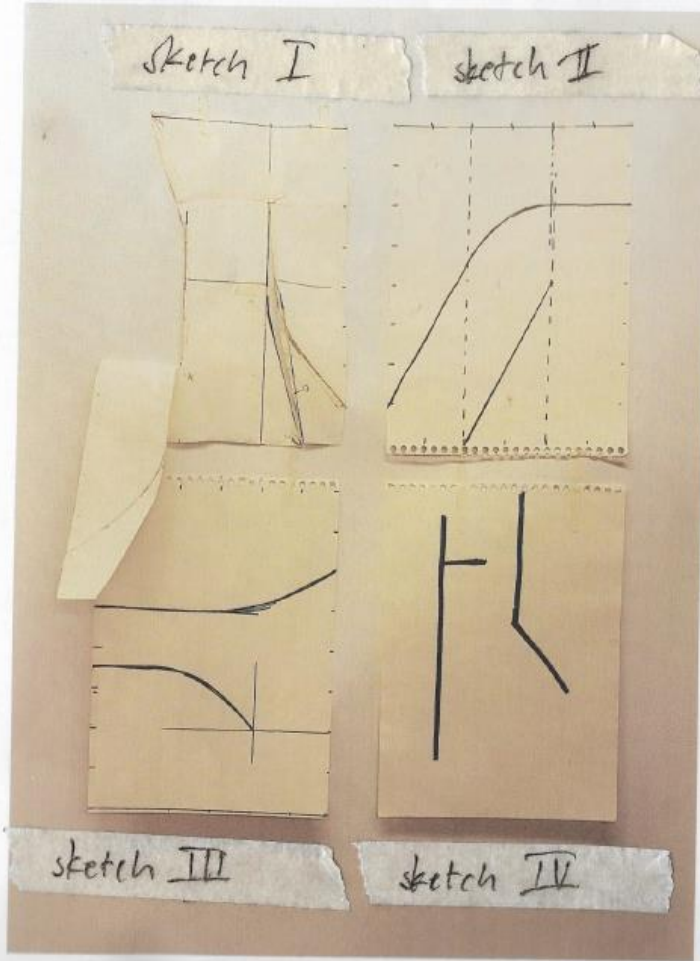
something still unrevealed. I don't want to be bored with my working.

I started to work with my own pattern-making ideology in my BA-studies, alternative system to construct a garment with minimal material waste, patterns that uses optimally the whole width of the fabric and creates shapes for garment mainly by making open cuts into fabric and then turning and folding it into a shape. This style of garment-constuction has since grown to be a crucial part of my design process and I wanted to elevate it further also during this process.

With all of this messy headspace and disorienting ideas what I should or should not be doing, I started to get really frustrated. I tried to figure out where to go, where to start. I grabbed my A3-sized paper pad and began sketching aggressively with thick black marker these raw patterns for garment, each line representing an open cut in fabric. I drew few lines each paper, and then moved on to next page. After this vigorous sketching session, I picked some of the sketches that I had optimistic this feeling with, that they could turn into a wearable shapes for garment.

I cut open the marked lines and started to play with them, folding and turning them around, taping different sides together to resemble seams.

I found out, that these shapes matched the size of 1:2 sized fitting dummy, so these sketches became a base for my actual patterns for this project, A3-sized paper became the restriction I needed, my frame for this work.



phase 2: playing with the blocks

Now that I had created my building block to play with, I had decide how to use them, what to build with them. Should I try all of them or should I focus on one and see what I could do with it? I chose the latter, Sketch II.

I marked the size of A3-paper into a fabric started to cut a pile of these pieces of the same pattern. This pattern has these two separate pieces, this curved line slicing them apart. Cutting open this linen, turning one of pieces around and sewing it together backwards from original compose, creates this 3D-curve, a shape that seemed to have potential to act in various functions of garment.

I started placing this piece in differents ways, on different parts of half-sized torso to see how it fit to its shape. Seeing how the curve adapts into different body parts. The slit in this pattern also adds more possibilities turn it different ways around the body, making it more variable to different kinds of shaping.

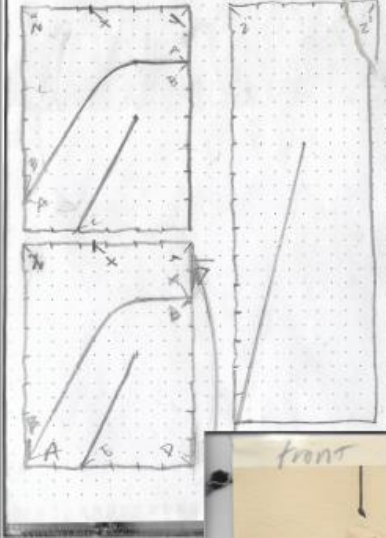
I quickly realized to possibilities for sleeve and tube collar structures and decided to play with those. I tried to compose those in a way that would keep its shape in cloth-like realm, yet I tried to catch a hint of unexpectedness, playing around with asymmetry. I added more and more, I thought that handling multiple pieces in once would have gave me more understanding about the shapes and possibilities how the building blocks could be used. I tried various different options how to organize these blocks in one garments with this still lingering idea of a multi-functional piece that could be worn in multiplous different ways. I was still working on a 1:2 sized level and I started to feel that I'm stuck again. The more complicated the structures escalated, the more I felt loosing the main focus in this sea of possibilities, coming up with all these gimmicky ideas, the crazier and the more unconventional, the better. It felt wrong, forced and vain. The feeling about the organic elevation of ideas got more hazier when I kept going.

I decided to move on, to stick with more simplified ideas. How I could achieve something that would resemble more 'conventional', actually wearable clothing with these given shapes? I thought that it could be more suitable, more practical challenge to set for myself at this point.

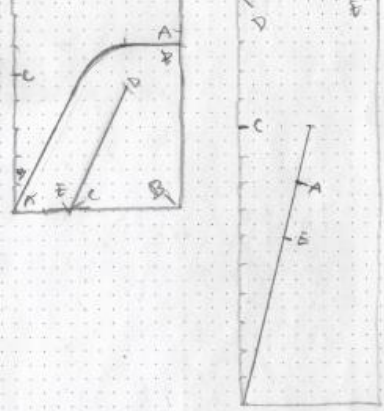
Finally proceeding to the phase of the full sized shaping.

I cut out four pieces of full sized pieces of fabric and decided that these will give me full, functional garment. I draped two of these pieces into loose-fitted sleeves. I tried them on to see how they move with an arm inside them. Turned them around until I understood the optimal position for movement. I attached third piece for this tube-like collar and chest part. The back was still fully open but I decided to left as it is. Two of those tube-collar structures was possible to be composed into short-sleeved torso structure with large collar. I decided to use it as as a base for the final garment that would be some like of a coat supposedly.

Sketch II testing [Z.]



sketch II testing [I.]



front testing I.



back

front

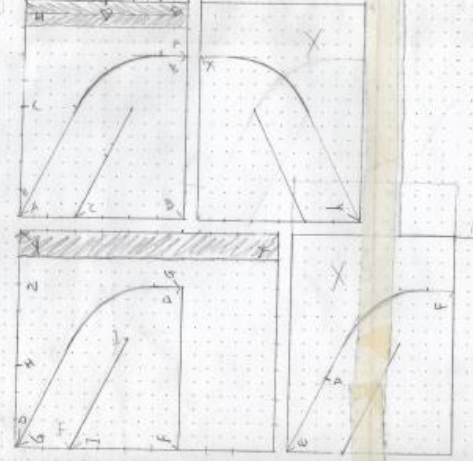
testing Z.



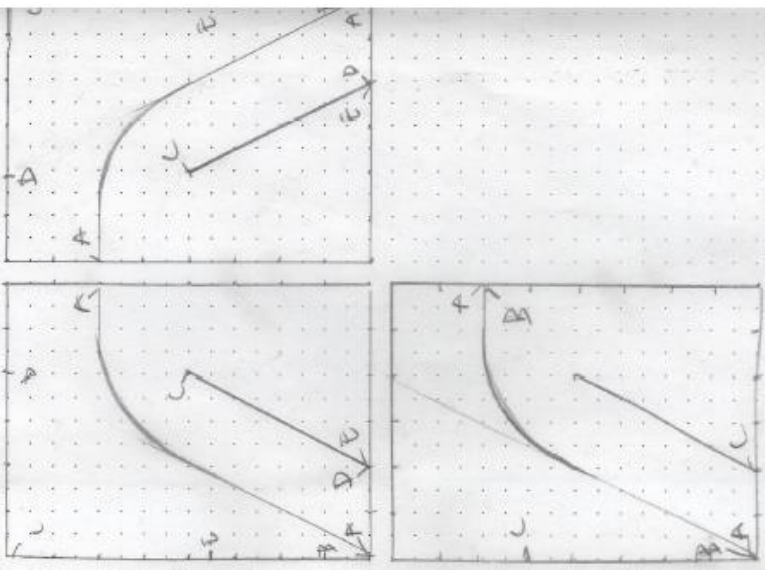
back



Sketch II testing [3.]



Sketch II - testing: shirt



phase 3: merging with the material: distressing towels

With materials for final product, I wanted to choose something that I haven't yet tried.

The texture of old, shaggy towels felt really inspiring at the time, so I collected some of those.

It felt like it needed to have some kind of altering manipulation so the result wouldn't be a complete sauna-coat. Also, I felt that the towels I found weren't really shaggy enough so I came up with an idea about distressing them some more and dyeing them.

Physical action taken in altering the material gives one immediate experience about its properties, its essentials. Decision of distressing, stripping away the properties of material, destroying its original purpose, its functionality made these mixed emotions to emerge. How I could be reasoning my doing when I'm not adding anything concrete but only stripping away its properties? I felt like

I'm working against the material, dishonouring its origins as an old towel. Despite these feeling of uncertainty, I decided to continue working with my method of choice.

The surreality and the feeling of 'wrongness' made me come up with all these romanticizing plays of thoughts, absurd excuses for my manic handcrafts of destruction.

Grabbing the yarn loops and fibers from this old terry cloth started to feel like some kind of harvesting. Pulling out this newly sprouted growth from its seedbed, gathering its crops to these little piles of textile trash. The amount of this harvested trash became considerably noticeable, so I started to think: could this be used for another purpose? How I could create these miniature closed loops within each project, how to utilize the material excess of one part of the process to be beneficial part of the other? For example, turning the excess fiber from the used fabric to the supporting structure of a garment.

Engaging with the action I can't find a way to stand behind, finding purposeful methods by diving into unpurposefulness. In perspective, the philosophy behind all that seems somewhat wishy-washy and feels like it could justify some un-justifiable actions, yet it brings up a point that merging with something reasonably unsustainable could reveal a sustainable solution to something alike. Even though, it shouldn't validate whole new methods to act in unsustainable manner, but instead used as a study how to approach existing faults.

In the end, I didn't use the excess fibers in this project. But I stored them all and will be using them at some point for something. The main realization from this part would be the miniature loops that could be occurring on one process, and I would like to engage with this idea some more in the future.



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phase 4: the final coat

Finally after the long process of distressing towels, I had enough material for the coat.

I cut the material and started to draped it when I noticed that the sleeve-shape I was going for wouldn't work so well with thick towel material. The patterns were already cut out of the material precisely worked material so I felt little struck down at this point. I started to examine what could be done in this situation. Gladly, I noticed the multi-functional properties of the pattern, that there are actually other ways for draping the sleeves. The end result was even looser, upside-downesque sleeve structure.

After the sleeve problem was solved, I had to figure out the rest of the garment. Since the pattern pieces with sleeves covers most of the torso already, I decided to start with finishings, maybe I could come up with an idea as I go. When I was working with collar, it felt like it would need some volume to it to make the proportions more harmonous. I added this scarf-like piece to it that wraps to the other side of torso. At this point I had two finished separate pieces when I realized that they could actually be worn separately, but also could be worn at once to create the whole coat.



Week 1/6

Had initial brainstorming session today. I've landed on the words "opacity" & "translucence." I'm kind of lost in terms of what exactly I'm going to do with textiles.

This week I'll work on some visual research and after next week tutoring I'll have a clearer idea of where to go.

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Week One

I'm thinking of moving on to the words "hiding" and "revealing" for this course. I've collected a lot of visual research and been inspired by it. There's more to study with hiding and revealing. I'm feeling a little ambivalent about school at the moment. The election is this week and I'm not really thinking about much else.

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Week Two

Had tutoring today. It went well! I feel like I'm going in the right direction.

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Hiding / revealing is a good theme but I need to develop it. Hanna-Kaisa said that my visual research had a strong photographic emphasis and that I could use my own photos and take new ones for my final research. The kinds of photos that stood out had a contrast of light and shadow that they shared. Shadow and light works quite organically as a visual representation of hiding and revealing.

I'm also interested in using second-hand materials. It's been a while since I've worked with textiles so using ready-materials would be approachable. Hanna-Kaisa and Maarit suggested I go look for second hand materials.

(other notes on page)

Like the politics of hiding-revealing and interpreting textiles? Maybe altering "traditional" fabrics? Cutting/ burning away as "hiding"? Removing from the existing to reveal underlying structures?

Coming from the existing to reveal

WEEK 2

Had tutoring today. I went well! I feel like I'm going in the right direction. Hiding/Revealing is a good theme but I need to develop it. Hanna-Kaisa said that my visual research had a strong photographic emphasis & that I could use what my research had a few of my own photos and she mentioned that I could use my own photos and take new ones for my final research. The kinds of photos that stood out had a contrast of light & shadow that they shared. Shadow & light works quite organically as a visual representation of Hiding & revealing.

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WEEK 2

Went to UFF. Couldn't really find anything. I found a brown velvet blazer that I could use. I'm not sure. Not really feeling it. Other than my idea to use existing textiles I have no idea what to do with them. Not really sure what's possible.

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WEEK 3

Didn't do much to further anything this week. My mind was very much elsewhere. Biden won the election so I'm feeling a bit more positive. But like I said I haven't really focused on school. I have the same visual research as last time, edited down to only a few things. Tutoring tomorrow!

I have my UFF things but I'm not going to use them.

Week Three

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Had tutoring today. It went ch. I think I'm focusing on using photography. That's my strength. I took photos today before the tutoring around Lauttasaari. It was sunny but very foggy so I think I got some good visual material. I'll go home and edit that and see if anything happens lol. The midterm is Thursday and I don't really have much time.

TO DO:

- edit photos
- work on moodboards/visual research
- collect what you have for midterm (Thursday)

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MOODBOARDS of midterm



Bright light
sunlight
exposed



Moodboards from midterm.

Samples one and two:
Black bleached cotton



Samples three and four:
Screenprinted pattern on black cotton



Reflections

Looking back at my process during the Experimental Textiles course, I feel content and satisfied with almost everything. I had a moment during the midpoint of the course when I felt the usual dread and anxiety that nothing good was going to come of anything and I was going to produce something uninteresting and uninspired. I was lucky though because the tutoring was really helpful and I was able to climb out of the rut and figure out what I wanted to do.

I think for me the difficulty was with the concept of the course. I haven't done anything with textiles in almost three years, and so my understanding of technique is a little rusty. I was afraid that I wasn't going to know at all what I was doing and going into the course I had an idea that I was supposed to be producing massive amounts of experimental samples and trying all kinds of techniques. I had an experimental design course in the past that didn't go very well at all because the instructor kept asking me to experiment more and all it did was make me feel like I was supposed to reinvent the wheel. Luckily this

course wasn't like that and I actually feel like I was able to utilize some of my strengths in tandem with textile design. Basically in the end I used photography and my skills in visual design to create a kind of conceptual textile experiment that resulted in some really nice photos and videos.

I'm also happy with my concept and the fact that I was able to edit it down to one singular point of focus. I'd started out with the words obscurity and translucence, and moved from those to "hiding" and "revealing." I listed out questions as to how I would translate that concept

to textiles and the visual world and came up with the idea to play with light and shadow as visual symbols for those words. It was kind of a perfect storm. I've been getting really into photography, and after my first round of visual research I chose to only use my own photos for the research. My own photos have a lot of play between light and shadow and the ones where I had photographed the light cast onto my bedroom wall gave me the idea for my experimental samples. To reiterate, my idea was to recreate the light cast through venetian blinds onto a wall on textiles. In the end I had 4 samples, two pairs and one original.

Documenting and reflecting creative process

Kirsi Niinimäki

Artistic practice

- "Artistic practice is an attempt at controlling complex combinations of materials, practice, techniques, stimuli, performance practices, and discourses, recipients, institutions, and trade.
- These practices have produced coping strategies which are an important part of a practitioner's professional skills.
- All this is included in artistic research and may be the most important contribution artistic research makes to knowing" (Varto, 2018, 85)

Practice-led, Practice-based

- Doing design is a practice
- Making art is a practice
- Focus in professional practices
- Knowledge making: The brain controls the hand which informs the brain.
- Practice-led research, where the end product is an artefact – where the thinking is embodied in the artefact
- Practice-based research, design practice is part of the research process

Reflective practitioner

- Setting problems and solving them in real world and professional context
- Based on personal knowledge and professional practices, which are not always articulated
- Knowledge in action (embodied knowledge)
- This kind of knowing is dynamic – knowing how rather than knowing what (Schön, 1983)

Thinking in creative process

- The process is iterative in nature
- "Unlike many other disciplines, where formal logic and serial thinking are predominant, artists and designers are usually **visual, lateral thinkers**. In our domain we know that there are no certainties, no 'right' answers, no simple solutions, no absolute objectivity.
- All views are admissible, many interpretations are possible, different 'ways of seeing' are encouraged." (Gray & Malins 2017, 40)

Reflection-in-action

- "Research is an activity of practitioners. It is triggered by features of the practice situation, undertaken on the spot, and immediately linked to action
- The exchange between research and practice is immediate, and reflection-in-action is its own implementation." (Schön, 1983, 308)
- Reflective practice attempts to unite research and practice.

Reflection

- Reflection-on-action, critical research skill, review, evaluation, analysis
- Reflection-in-action, activity of professional practitioner, thinking about what you are doing and reshaping action while doing it. Improvisational and relies on feeling, response and adjustment.
- Designing is like reflective conversation with the material and the process (Gray & Malins, 2017)

Reflective practitioner

- We understand and become aware of our creative practice by telling ourselves a story about ourselves and our practice
- Capacity for self evaluation and self improvement
- The problems of practice are open to reflection and inquiry
- "To look at one's own creative practice means taking on both a creative and a reflective role." (Douglas, 1994, 45)

Creative practice

- "Practice can be understood primarily as the knowledge, tacit or otherwise, of how something is done within the context of a professional and cultural framework, a contingent activity that makes or establishes meaning or significance, although not through the application of thought alone. Practice needs to be understood in its wider sense as all the activity an artist/creative practitioner undertakes. **Practitioners think, read and write as well as look, listen and make.**" (Haseman & Mafe in Smith & Dean, 2014, 214)

Creative practice

- Something is done in a certain professional context, through creative and technical skills and using different knowledges (material, color, aesthetical, form, style.....)
- Also haptic and tacit knowledge is used
- Meaning making in a selected context and through professional practice

Creative process

COMPLEX

CHAOTIC

INTUITIVE

MESSY

UNEXPECTED

SURPRISING

GENERATIVE

Reflecting creative process

- In the creative process you collect ideas through visuals, sketches, material example ect.
- This method of collecting ideas can be repurposed to serve as a research method to documenting and recording discoveries
- Repurposing can mean regular reflection with the material: reviewing and re-reading the journal through to identify key moments in the creative journey
- All the time practice-led researcher is making decisions and moving forwards and backwards in the process of creation

Reflecting

- Practice-led process needs heightened reflexivity
- The process of searching and "not knowing" takes time
- The process of maturing or accidental discovering
- To understand this process own reflection is needed

Why to write about creative process?

You learn writing by writing and reading

Writing in MA thesis

- Thesis is a written academic deliverable that needs to show mature thinking.
- In other words, you should be able to craft a research question, and to show how you plan to collect and analyse your observations, how do you plan to support your creative work with findings from research or theories, on what do you build your academic contribution.
- What is the literature that connects to and supports your work? Even when doing a production based thesis these issues are relevant component of master's thesis.

Reflective Journal

Why

To make sense of things that happened. What you write should sound as if you are describing the details to someone who wasn't there. Be as descriptive as possible. Just the act of writing down the details of what happened may give you perspective that you may not have otherwise considered had you just continued to think about it.

Why

- **To get thoughts and ideas out of your head.** Writing down your thoughts can help relieve pressure or help resolve problems. It will also help you focus the task at hand.
- **To share your thoughts and ideas with others.** Getting opinions from others about what you wrote can help you clarify your feelings for a deeper understanding of yourself.

Reflective Journal

- Is a purposeful process for helping to expose and explore various models of practice
- Have effective conversation with ourselves
- Journal is a store – a repository for different kind of information, which is added to and consulted on a regular basis
- Can include different types of information

Ingredients can be ect.

- Observation
- Visualization
- Photography
- Videos
- Sketchbook
- Diary text
- Readings

Reflection

- Reflection-in-action
- While doing something
- For capturing actions, design process, design decisions, critical moments, your learnings
- To describe and evaluate the action

References

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