



THE MORBID ANATOMY OF EMOTIONS

- Dress and Fashion as a Form of Art

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The Morbid Anatomy of Emotions - Dress and Fashion as a Form of Art

This work looks at dress as a potential art form and the way the worlds of fashion and art overlap. Can fashion design be considered an art and if so when does it become art? The aim was not to find conclusive answers but to examine definitions. As this is a topic that continuously interests me, I wanted to study, question, and analyse existing opinions as well as develop my own thoughts.

The first part examines the concepts of fashion and art, and it is comprised of literary research and my own thoughts on the topic. The second part focuses on the collection made as part of this work, which explores my own creativity and thoughts on dress as an art form. The two parts are closely linked and are meant to support each other.

During the process I have pondered upon the definitions of fashion, art, and design and the ways they interact with each other. Although the collection is the outcome of an artistic process it is not created to be exclusively art nor is it intended as fashion. It is a creative process questioning the definitions of fashion and art, exploring the way dress can be used as a form of expression.

Key words: fashion, art, design, dress, Alexander McQueen, Hussein Chalayan, Rei Kawakubo

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The Morbid Anatomy of Emotions - Dress and Fashion as a Form of Art/ Den sjukliga anatomin av känslor - Dräkt och mode som en kostform

Detta arbete handlar om dräkten som en potentiell konstform samt hur modevärlden och konstvärlden överlappar varandra. Kan modedesign anses vara konst, och i så fall när blir det konst? Syftet är inte att finna slutgiltiga svar utan att studera de olika definitionerna. Eftersom detta ämne ständigt intresserar mig ville jag forska i, ifrågasätta och analysera existerande åsikter samt utveckla mina egna tankar.

Den första delen behandlar begreppen mode och konst, och består av litteraturgenomgång samt mina egna tankar kring ämnet. Den andra delen fokuserar på kollektionen jag skapat som en del av detta arbete. Med kollektionen har jag utforskat min egen kreativitet och mina tankar kring dräkten som en konstform. Dessa två delar är nära sammanbundna och det är tänkta att stöda varandra.

Under processen har jag funderat kring definitionerna av mode, konst och design samt samspelet mellan dem. Även om kollektionen är ett resultat av en konstnärlig process är den inte skapad enbart för att vara konst och den är inte heller avsedd att vara mode. Arbetet är en kreativ process som ifrågasätter definitionerna av mode och konst och utforskar på vilket sätt dräkten kan användas som ett uttrycksätt.

Nyckelord: mode, konst, formgivning, dräkt, Alexander McQueen, Hussein Chalayan, Rei Kawakubo

Språk: engelska

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The Morbid Anatomy of Emotions - Dress and Fashion as a Form of Art/ Tunteiden sairaaloinen anatomia - Puku ja muoti taiteenmuotona

Tämä työ käsittelee pukua mahdollisena taidemuotona sekä muotimaailman ja taidemaailman suhdetta toisiinsa. Voiko muotisuunnittelua kutsua taiteeksi ja jos voi, niin milloin siitä syntyy taidetta? Koska tämä aihe jatkuvasti kiinnostaa minua, halusin tutkia, kyseenalaistaa ja analysoida olemassa olevia käsityksiä sekä kehittää omia ajatuksiani. Tavoitteena ei ole ollut löytää lopullisia vastauksia, vaan tarkastella eri määritelmiä.

Ensimmäinen osa tarkastelee muoti- ja taidekäsityksiä ja kostuu kirjallisesta tutkimuksesta sekä omista pohdinnoistani. Toinen osa keskittyy mallistoon, jonka loin osana tätä työtä. Mallisto tutkiskelee omaa luovuuttani ja ajatuksiani puvusta taidemuotona.

Prosessin aikana olen pohdiskellut muodin, taiteen ja muotoilun määritelmiä sekä niiden vuorovai-
kutusta. Vaikka mallisto on taiteellisen prosessin lopputulos, sitä ei ole luotu yksinomaan taiteeksi eikä sen ole tarkoitus olla muotia. Se on luova prosessi, joka kyseenalaistaa muodin ja taiteen määritelmiä sekä tutkiskelee, miten pukua voi käyttää ilmaisukeinona.

Avainsanat: muoti, taide, muotoilu, puku, Alexander McQueen,
Hussein Chalayan, Rei Kawakubo

Kieli: englanti

for mum

because you gave my creativity everything it needed

for Darryl

because with you life suddenly makes perfect sense

Preface

I do not quite know where all of this started but the roots of this work go back to my teenage years. I have always had a need to express myself creatively and my interest in fashion design and art became increasingly strong when I was about fifteen. Since then clothing and fashion have always had an important role in my life.

Sometimes I do not know whether I should call myself a fashion designer or an artist. Part of me at times feels like an artist at heart but studying design and having an understanding of well-functioning, aesthetic objects and environments sometimes makes me see myself as a designer. I have a need for artistic expression as well as a desire to live in a beautiful and functioning environment. Since both art and fashion design are important to me I do not want to choose between them. I want them to co-exist in my life. For me fashion design has always had potential as an art form. I have never felt that painting, sculpting, or other fine arts have the creative elements and possibilities that suit me and thus fashion design became a way for me to express my creativity.

This work is a personal journey of thoughts and feelings that combines my love for art, dress, fashion design, and photography.

Table of Contents

Part One: Dress and Fashion Design as a Form of Art

| | |
|---|-------|
| 1. Introduction | p. 1 |
| 2. When is it Fashion? | p. 3 |
| 3. When is it Design? | p. 5 |
| 4. When is it Art? | p. 7 |
| 5. Fashion Design as a Form of Art | p. 9 |
| 5.1 Conceptual Fashion | p. 13 |
| 5.2 Deconstructive Fashion | p.14 |
| 5.3 Fashion Designers as Artists | p.15 |
| 6. Conclusion: Can Fashion Design Be Called an Art? | p. 19 |

Part Two: The Morbid Anatomy of Emotions

| | |
|---|-------|
| 1. Introduction | p. 23 |
| 2. Inspiration | p. 26 |
| 3. The Creative Process | p. 28 |
| 4. Materials and Techniques | p. 31 |
| 5. The Collection | p. 37 |
| 5.1 Layer One: Memento Mori | p. 39 |
| 5.2 Layer Two: Agliophobia | p. 53 |
| 6. Conclusion: Is it Fashion Design or Art? | p. 73 |

| | |
|--------------|-------|
| Bibliography | p. 78 |
|--------------|-------|

| | |
|------------------|-------|
| Acknowledgements | p. 79 |
|------------------|-------|







PART ONE

Dress and Fashion as a Form of Art

1. Introduction

Fashion design is rarely considered to be art but what if dress is created from a need for artistic expression? Is it simply clothing, is it fashion, or can it be called art? Perhaps it is all of the above. Are clothes exhibited in a gallery or a museum art or are they still only clothes on display?

Why is architecture considered to be one of the arts but fashion is not?

What we today commonly refer to as fashion is a visual form of expression that requires skill and creativity like any other creative work, but when commonly talking about fashion we define it as a mass-produced and commercial product. The topic 'art and fashion' is a frequently discussed theme and there is a clear relationship between the two. Art and fashion are, however, often seen as two completely different things and when fashion is approached as an art it is defined as applied or decorative art.

Two reasons many critics say fashion cannot be art is that it lacks the aspect of rarity and that fashion is ultimately commercial in its nature. A work of art is said to be created without the pursuit of profit and that it is one of a kind, whereas fashion is a business of mass production. Fashion is a commercial phenomenon and art is usually considered to be completely free from such demands. Some who have denied classifying fashion as an art form also state that fashion is fleeting, frivolous, and highly feminised. Those who defend the claim that fashion is a form of art, say it is a visual medium that is created from the same stimuli that is used by painters and sculptors. Fashion is a creative process just like art. One of the most common arguments for why fashion is not art, is that

fashion is a fast-paced, commercial, and seasonal industry. Fashion has a practical function, while art is art only for art's sake. (Welters 2011, s.365) Art has no utility value and is said to be created on a higher spiritual level than that of commodity and commerce. The artist is not considered to be creating something in order to earn money without the need of self-expression and to create a unique work of art. Critics also contend that fashion does not have the value of being rare. This, however, is not always the case. Often what we commonly understand as art is created for commercial purposes in the same way as design, while unique dress can be created without links to mass production. The painters who produced what we call 'high art' were commissioned to paint portraits or historical paintings and it was a trade like any other. At the beginning of the twentieth century, Paul Poiret considered himself equal to his fellow artist friends and argued that what he was creating was as much art as anything else. Today fashion designers create unique garments that look more like sculptural artefacts than clothes made to be worn, where the process and content become more important than the look, while artists still rely on commissions and sometimes have to make compromises and think about the customer, in other words the viewer, while working.

It seems critics often look at the topic of art and fashion in a somewhat simplistic and dated manner. Some will argue strongly to classify all fashion as art, while others say it cannot be art because of its utility value and commerciality. However, the topic of ‘fashion and art’ is problematic due to, among other factors, the changing definitions of fashion and art. Today the definitions may vary depending on place and time. Both fashion and art can convey and mean several different things depending on the context and the observer.

Part one of this work focuses on the relationship between fashion design and art. It is comprised of both literary research and my own thoughts on the subject. The sourced texts were chosen based on my own thoughts and factors which I find important. It is through the sourced text and quotes that I hope to demonstrate my process of reflection. Part one takes the reader along my thought process looking at the definitions of fashion and art. Firstly, I will look at the various definitions of fashion, design, and art and the way they have changed in order to show that the way in which the questions asked in this work are approached depends very much on the context. These three terms are important in understanding the differences as well as the similarities between fashion design and art. I will also look at two different artistic approaches used frequently in fashion design. Deconstructive fashion and conceptual fashion are both tendencies in fashion derived from art movements. In these two approaches the emphasis lies on both the content and process, and elements of these can be found in my own creative process. I will then discuss the similarities of fashion design and art and how dress can be and is used as a form of artistic expression. To illustrate the ways in which fashion design is used as artistic expression, to convey feelings and concepts, and to make statements, I have focused on three fashion designers who tread on the border between fashion design and art. Collections by these designers are results of creative processes similar to those of artists. The reason I chose well-known fashion designers, who clearly exist within the fashion system, is exactly this, because they work within the fashion world contributing to what we accept as a current fashion, it is more difficult to define their work as art.

The purpose of this research is not to conclusively determine whether fashion design is an art or not. It is a study on the relationship between fashion design and art and questions if fashion design in some cases could be called art. If fashion design can also be art then when does it become art and does it then lose its definition as fashion design?

2. When is it Fashion?

'Fashion is not something that exists in dresses only. Fashion is in the sky, in the street; fashion has to do with ideas, the way we live, what is happening.'

— *Coco Chanel*

Fashion can today define and be defined as many things. It is something that exists in many areas of life and society. It does not only exist in the way we dress but also in other spheres, such as food, interiors, and our way of thinking. When fashion arises as a topic of discussion most often dress becomes the focus and the discussion frequently centres on clothing. (Johnson & Tortore & Eicher 2003, p. 1)

Fashion and dress (or clothing) are often used as synonyms and today we commonly refer to dress when talking about fashion. Fashion does not, however, exist only within dress. Fashion can convey several different social meanings whereas 'clothing is the generic raw materials of what a person wears' (Kawamura 2005, p. 3). Fashion extends far beyond the objective aspect of the product clothing. Through fashion, clothing is given a social purpose above and beyond those of function and aesthetics. Clothes as well as accessories are products, which are realised by means of a design process. This process does not necessarily mean the end result is fashion. Which of the products are accepted and become fashion is determined by the society, a group

within society, or a single community. (Loschek 2009, p. 134)

The word fashion originally meant 'make', 'shape', or 'appearance' as well as 'a particular make or style'. The word is derived from the Latin word '*facere*' meaning, 'do' or 'make'. It was in the mid sixteenth century that the word came to denote a mode of dress currently adopted by society. (Chantrell 2002, p. 199) *The New Oxford English Dictionary on Historical Principles*, published in 1901, defines fashion primarily as: 'the action of making', 'a manner', 'a prevailing custom', 'a current usage' and 'the conventional usage in dress and mode of life' (Kawamura 2005, p.3). 'The word fashion indicates that some (dress) practices end and others take their place' (Johnson & Tortore & Eicher 2003, p. 1).

The meaning and significance of the word fashion have changed to suit the social customs and clothing habits of people in different cultures and social structures. When the concept of fashion changed historically so did the phenomenon. Fifteenth-century fashion is something entirely different from twentieth-century fashion.

In the fifteenth century fashion was an indicator of class status but during the twentieth century fashion became increasingly democratic and looking fashionable was something almost everyone had a right to. (Kawamura 2005, p. 4-5) Since the 1960s, at latest, the word fashion encompasses all forms of clothing and accessories without making any statement about their fashionable status (Loschek 2009, p. 133). Today no clear distinction is made between the terms fashion and clothes in general use.

Fashion is approached by theorists as an institutionalised system separated from clothing. Fashion can be seen as a system in which individuals (and institutions) related to fashion, including designers among many other fashion professionals, engage in activities collectively, share the same belief in fashion, and who together produce and maintain not only the ideology of fashion but also fashion culture, which is sustained by the continuous production of fashion. It is essential to clearly distinguish the fashion production process from that of clothing because clothing does not immediately convert into fashion. (Kawamura 2005, p 39)

‘The designer designs not fashion but clothes, which are credited with the attribute fashion or accepted as such as a result of communicative observation. The definition to the question “When is it fashion?” is given by the viewer’ (Loschek 2009, p. 177). For something to become fashion it has to be negotiated between institutions, groups, and individuals.

Today fashion covers a broad spectrum, spanning from couture and designer-brand level, which utilise the highest quality materials, to the mass market where pricing is the key. Recently, the fashion spectrum has both polarised and expanded to include the value market, where clothing has become a basic commodity, produced and sold at the highest volume and cheapest price in supermarkets and discount stores. (Black 2006, p. 6-7)

In this work I refer to fashion within dress and mainly the conscious use of dress and clothing as an attempt to bring forward new design innovations and styles; that is fashion design. When mentioning dress in this work I refer to the things we use to cover and alter our bodies; clothes and accessories as well as various body modifications.

3. When is it Design?

‘Art has to move you and design does not, unless it’s a good design for a bus.’

— *David Hockney*

Design is a word which occurs in many contexts: a design, graphic design, interior design, engineering design, architectural design, industrial design, corporate design, design methods, and today even social design, service design, and environmental design. (Walker 1989, Lees-Maffei & Houze 2010, p. 280) The word is both a verb and a noun and can therefore refer to a process as well as an object.

Design is about giving something a functional, desirable, and aesthetic form. We often refer to design when talking about functional and aesthetically pleasing objects, but design can also mean quality within function and today design can be found in abstract concepts like service and social care.

The source of the English word ‘design’ is the Latin word ‘*designare*’ (to designate), which entered into English via the French word ‘*designer*’. The early English verb meant ‘to designate’. The noun, first recorded as meaning ‘a plan or a scheme’, derived from Italian

via French. The use of the word to mean ‘a drawing to show the look or function of something’ dates from the mid seventeenth century.

(Chantrell 2002, p. 145)

Like most other words ‘design’ is ambiguous because it has more than one common meaning. The word can refer to a process, to the result of that process, to the products manufactured with the aid of design, or to the look or overall pattern of a product (‘I like the design of that dress’). The word design, (like fashion and art), has altered its meaning through time. During the Renaissance ‘*disegno*’ described the inventive, conceptualising phase, which generally preceded the making of paintings, sculptures, and so forth. Design as an exclusive concern of a full-time professional emerged later as a result of the growing specialisation of functions which occurred in Europe and the United States as part of the Industrial Revolution of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. This is at least the generally accepted story. (Walker 1989, Lees-Maffei &

Houze 2010, p. 280)

During the twentieth century the word ‘designer’ became a synonym for brand names. The functionality and practicality of the product were less important than the fact that it was designed by a famous name. ‘Today, our notions of design are still largely shaped by the idea that design means luxury and/or intellectual pretensions. Conversely, design is also misused to justify the unusual and the expensive’ (Losheck 2009, p. 175).

Contemporary design is becoming increasingly prevalent in many areas of life and although design still in common language often refers to luxury, today design exists within most social fields and it is no longer only about the object. Services, environments and wellbeing are designed as an attempt to make the world around us better. Today design encompasses more than the aesthetic and functioning object, it has become a matter of life.

When using the word ‘design’ in this work I mainly refer to the conscious and planned actions to shape and build a functioning as well as aesthetically pleasing object, environment or concept.

4. When is it Art?

‘Art is not a handicraft, it is the transmission of feeling the artist has experienced.’

— *Leo Tolstoy*

Art is a process of communication. It is communication between the conscious self and the subconscious, the artist and the world, the artist and the viewer and the viewer and the world.

The terms ‘art’, ‘craftsmanship’, and ‘technology’ have seldom had meanings as distinct as those they have acquired in the West since the sixteenth century. At that time painters and sculptors assumed a status superior to that of potters, furniture makers, metalworkers, embroiderers, weavers, and other practitioners of the so-called decorative arts. (Fleming & Honour 1982, p 2)

The word ‘art’ came via Old French from the Latin word ‘*ars*’ which has the base meaning ‘put together’, ‘join’ or ‘fit’. ‘Skill’ was an early meaning of art in English. Art as the application of skill according to aesthetic principles (in painting, sculpture, architecture etc.) is a term from the early seventeenth century. (Chantrell 2002, p. 30) The borders between art and design have been laid down firmly since the beginning

of the twentieth century. Design is a matter of socio-politically relevant themes like the use of objects, the organisation of labour sharing processes, the social and aesthetic consequences of industrialisation, innovative production techniques, the use of new materials, and economic thinking. In contrast to this, fine art could be viewed as separate from such mundane issues. Thus art became a reserve for all those things that no longer had a place in an industrialised society; self-determined activity, mastery of craftsmanship, mythical ideas, self-reflection, and a subjective view of the world. (Tietenberg 2005, Loschek 2009, p. 205)

One could say that art has never been as free as it is now. In past times art was a profession like any other and most paintings and sculptures were commissioned work. ‘At one time it was the task of many painters to portray the rulers of Europe, consolidating their power through a show of fashion or to document the vestimentary characteristics of the common people’ (Loschek 2009, p. 168).

Painting, sculpting, and other methods of visual presentation were rarely used for self-intentional purposes. Artworks were mainly created for a specific need, such as religious, social or political and occasionally self-expressive. (Honour & Fleming, p. 12) Contemporary art is incredibly diverse and whether it is created exclusively to convey a feeling or as commissioned work it will usually make a statement of some kind and reflect on the environment around it. Contemporary art is often challenging, provocative, or questioning. The methods used in contemporary art vary immensely and the content of the work has become increasingly important. Thus, art is becoming increasingly difficult to define and today almost anything could be considered art. The question ‘what is art?’ is perhaps one of the most debated yet most difficult questions to answer. There is no short, simple answer and it often varies depending on the context in which the question is asked. As said by Marcel Duchamp, co-founder of conceptual art: ‘A work is made entirely by those who look at it or read it and who make it survive by their accolades or even their condemnation’ (Daniels 1992, Loschek 2009, p. 205).

When mentioning art in this work I refer to contemporary Western art. My personal conception of contemporary art is that it is a creative process resulting in something which conveys a feeling, thought, concept, or statement. The content or process is as important or even more important than the visual outcome of the work.

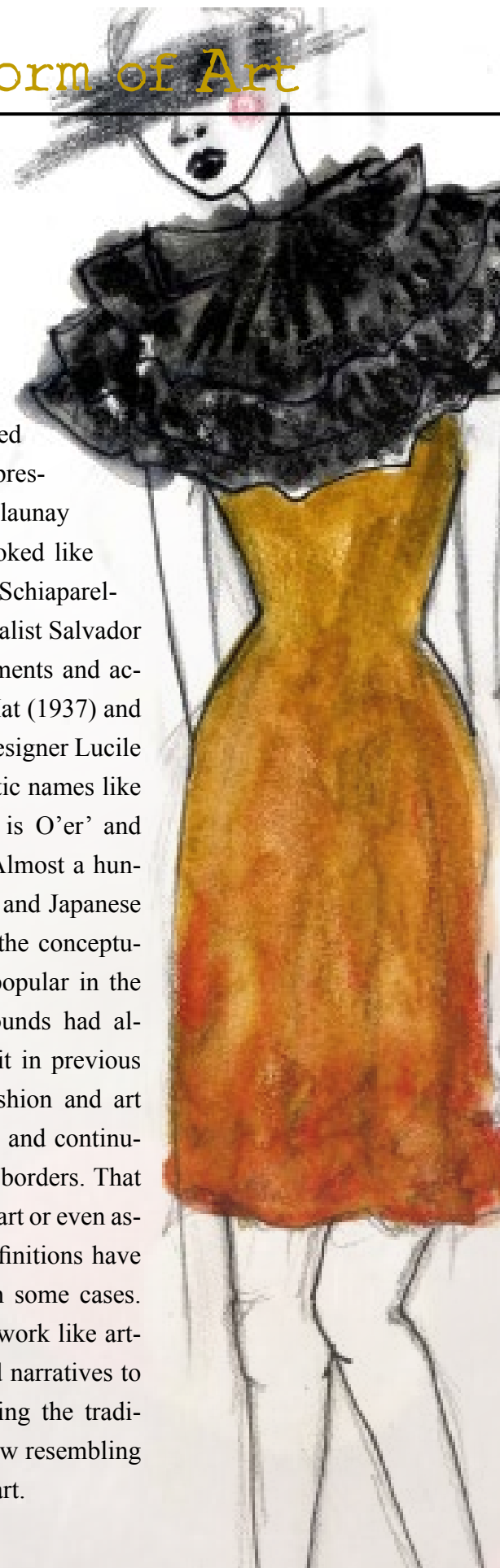
5. Fashion Design as a Form of Art

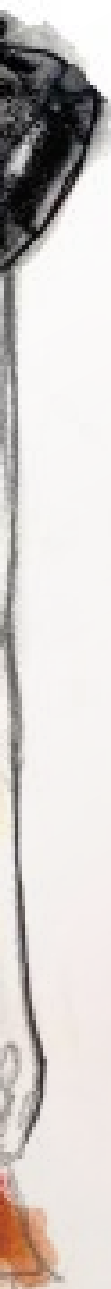
While fashion and art for decades continuously have been crossing each other's borders, the question 'is fashion a form of art?' has been debated and discussed by many. Some argue that fashion is not art because it is commercial and fast paced. Some say that fashion designers use the same stimuli as painters or sculptors and thus fashion design can be art.

Fashion and art are both aspects of visual culture that involve form, colour, and texture. Like art, fashion can be both technically and conceptually rich. (Steele, Geczy & Karaminas 2012, p.13) 'Regardless of which position one accepts, there is a clear relationship between art and fashion' (Welters 2011, p. 365). This relationship does not, however, imply that fashion design is an art.

Fashion and art have always had a close relationship and since the beginning of the twentieth century designers have been driven by artistic inspiration and artists have engaged in creative collaborations with fashion designers. 'It was the direct relationship between the body and creative expression that was to fascinate artists and draw them into the sphere of the couturier's salon' (Geczy&Karaminas 2012, p 1). Since

the father of *haute couture* – Charles Frederick Worth – a number of fashion designers have regarded themselves as artists and artists have used fashion as a creative expression. Artist Sonia Delaunay designed dresses that looked like cubist paintings and Elsa Schiaparelli collaborated with surrealist Salvador Dali creating iconic garments and accessories like the Shoe Hat (1937) and the Tear Dress (1938). Designer Lucile created dresses with poetic names like 'When Passion's Thrall is O'er' and 'Give Me Your Heart'. Almost a hundred years later, Belgian and Japanese fashion designers made the conceptual approach to fashion popular in the 1980s, although the grounds had already been laid out for it in previous decades. To this day fashion and art have a close relationship and continuously cross each other's borders. That does not mean fashion is art or even aspires to be so but the definitions have certainly been blurred in some cases. Some fashion designers work like artists, adding concepts and narratives to their work and exchanging the traditional catwalk with a show resembling performance art.





Fashion has historically tended to be dismissed as superficial, ephemeral, and material. By contrast, art has been valorised as significant form, eternally beautiful, and spiritual in its nature. Because fashion changes it has seemed to lack the qualities of truth and ideal beauty that have been popularly associated with the high arts. (Steele, Geczy & Karaminas 2012, p. 13) Although dated and simplistic these contrasting definitions play a significant role in how contemporary fashion and art are defined.

While fashion is rarely considered art, due to its utility value and commerciality, among other things, it is assumed that so-called ‘free art’, that is fine art, has no utility whatsoever. Starting out from this assumption, one might come to the conclusion that fashion is art when it has no utility value. (Loschek 2009, p 171) Stating that fine art has no utility at all is perhaps too simplistic since saying something has no utility value whatsoever fails to include aesthetic and expressive values, which are considered to be the essence of fine art. ‘The freedom of liberal arts has become rather dubious, for it also serves a purpose such as representation, decoration or communication. The current understanding of art implies that any kind of artistic creativity is bound to a purpose, whether this is to express something or to design it in a creative way, to take enjoyment from it or to earn a living by it’ (Loschek 2009, p.167).

Fashion - especially *haute couture* – is sometimes regarded as art but it is never defined as fine art, it is then treated as applied art or decorative art. The utility value of dress makes it applied art in contrast to fine art, which serves no other purpose than aesthetic experience. *Dictionary.com* defines applied art as ‘any art that applies aesthetic principles to the design or decoration of useful objects, such as industrial design, bookmaking, illustration, printmaking, and commercial art’. According to Ingrid Loschek neither ‘*haute couture* (high fashion) nor *prêt-à-porter* (ready-to-wear) fashion should be defined a priori as applied art’. *Haute couture* represents the highest form of craftsmanship while ready-to-wear epitomises the industrialised version of *haute couture*. Couture fashion is characterised by the processing at the highest level of craftsmanship and genuine, refined materials. As such, it may be a luxury but not necessarily art. (Loschek 2009, p. 171) In her book, *When Clothes Become Fashion*, Loschek states that ‘fashion is applied art when clothes are not designed as a commodity but make an artistic – ideological claim or this claim is incorporated into the object “clothing” to a dominant degree. Clothing as applied art must become free of the demand for application – that is, from its wearability in a social context. It must expand or even explode the utilitarian language of forms of fashion as a commodity’. (Loschek 2009, p 171)

Since applied art is defined as aesthetic application to useful everyday objects, fashion design (or dress) should become applied art when it is created for aesthetic as well as utilitarian purposes. The product clothing is not applied art and even designer fashion should not exclusively be defined as applied art. A couture creation however, does fit the definitions of applied art and could in most cases be defined as applied or decorative art. The most beautifully executed couture creation might be decorative and rare but that does not necessarily mean it can be defined as fine art. The point dress moves away from its value as a commodity and makes an artistic statement is the point when it should become art. Dress is then used as a means for artistic expression and the fashion design process adopts similar characteristics as the artistic process. The question is then: is it still fashion design or is it only art making use of dress?

Art and fashion are defined by, or inhabit, if you will, different systems. These systems are what define them as the respective discourses: where the system and discourse can be read interchangeably. In other words, fashion and art occupy different modalities of presentation and reception; they have different uses and they are subject to different responses within both monetary and desiring economies. Since both are aesthetic creations, for which judgement is always subjective, the differences are less in the objects of fashion and art and instead in the places of social, economic, and

linguistic exchange that they occupy. (Geczy, Karaminas 2012, p. 4) Fashion (as well as art) is a system consisting of institutions, organisations, groups, individuals, producers, events, and practices, all of which contribute to the making of fashion (Kawamura 2005, p. 43).

Fashion and art are different in relation to both the intention and the expression. In art the artist is never in full control of either, whereas it is rare to non-existent to speak of the couturier's expressions having sub-conscious motives or being an amanuensis for a higher cause. (Geczy & Karaminas 2012, p. 7) This may apply to most cases and can be considered a good general rule for the demarcation of art and design. Although art also can be a planned act, it usually contains elements of the unknown, whereas design often is planned and created for a specific need. However, there are always exceptions. Something that is created and becomes accepted as art might have very little or no sub-conscious motives, while something we normally understand as design is an expression of something else than usefulness. Is the so-called design object in this case still design or does it become art, and is the artwork actually a design object? Or are they both art as well as design?

A design object is not produced contingently, like an artwork for example, it is produced for a specific purpose. The design object is intended to satisfy needs and demands. In this way the design object appears purpose oriented,

although the purpose does not necessarily have to be practical use. A vase can be designed and valued more as a formal aesthetic object than for its function. (Loschek 2009, p 174) Still, a vase has a function whether it was created to serve an aesthetic purpose or not. 'Design is the sum of the functional object and the work of art [or the aesthetically stimulating]. We talk of good design when the proportions are right. Design is the aspect of art within commerce or industry' (Welsch, Loschek 2009, p.174).

If we look at the act of painting, which is considered as one of the high arts, the paint is the medium and painting is the method. Whether the result is art or not has little to do with these things. The same idea could be applied to dress. Clothing and dressmaking can be used as the medium to express something that then becomes accepted as art. 'Fashion is an object of the second order – that is, it is defined by observation and not through the object itself. The clothes are objects of the first order' (Loschek 2009, p. 177). The same is applicable to the question 'when is it art?' An object becomes art through observation and communication. Art is then, also an object of the second order.

The exhibiting of fashion design in museums and retrospective exhibitions of well-known

designers' work has contributed to blurring the border between fashion design and art. When fashion is placed within the context of the space of a museum or art gallery, its value as a commercially driven, mass-market product shifts from consumable merchandise to art object. The fast-paced, commercial role ceases and it realigns itself with a new value system – a rarefied commodity to be collected. (Geczy & Karaminas 2012, p. 3) However, to state that something is art because it is placed in a museum or a gallery does not always correlate with our current understanding of art. Although a beautiful couture dress might adopt the same characteristics and aura of a beautiful painting when displayed in a museum, placing fashion within the context of a museum does not automatically make it art.

The complex value concepts in art and fashion are not transferred from the object to the viewer only via contemplation; they are negotiated and meditated in a communicative way. This communication is not realised in one direction, but is based on an exchange between the creator, the object, and the viewer. Fashion design, like art, incorporates different categories of creative techniques and innovative processes as well as the potential for social exchange. (Loschek 2009, p. 7)

5.1 Conceptual Fashion

For fashion to become art it has to adopt similar characteristics as art and the content has to become as important as or more important than the visual impression. Conceptual art offers the means with which fashion can adopt these characteristics. In conceptual art the primary aspect is the concept and the idea.

It often raises questions without giving a distinct answer.

The characteristic feature of conceptual art, which developed from minimalist art in the mid 1960s, was shaped by the American artist Sol LeWitt and is a turning away from the experimentally creative in favour of defined statements or comments on and fixation of processes. (Loschek 2009, s. 60) Conceptual art practices identified the primacy of ideas over appearance, self-reflection over resolution, innovation, and experimentation and statements that posed questions but rarely provided clear answers (Clark, Geczy & Karaminas 2012, p. 67).

Recognition of a conceptual approach to fashion developed in the 1980s, when the international fashion media began to acknowledge the work of Japanese fashion designers, particularly, Issey Miyake, Yohji Yamamoto, and Rei Kawakubo, who created garments that were unfamiliar to the eye; garments that covered most of the body and did not make demands on its natural shape. These designers questioned what fashion was, what it looked like, how it felt on the body, how it was displayed and sold, and moreover, where it originated. (Clark, Geczy & Karaminas 2012, p 68)

Conceptual fashion, like conceptual art, is not about forms and materials, but about ideas and meanings. It cannot be defined in terms of any medium or style, but rather the way it questions what fashion is. (Khan, Bruzzi & Church Gibson 2000, p. 122)

Deconstructionism also emphasises the content but in a different way than conceptualism. In fashion design both deconstructive elements and conceptual elements can often be seen together.

Deconstructionism is understood as a philosophical concept, a superdisciplinary scientific theory, and a tendency in art. In design as well as in art and architecture, structures and forms are subject to deconstruction and renewed construction. In clothing this means that the (nonvisible) construction is made visible as the interesting and essential aspect. Traditional orders and all kinds of conventions are exploded and aesthetic habits with respect to the body proportions and the criteria of beauty are questioned. (Loschek 2009, p. 187) Deconstructive fashion takes the conventional forms and reconstructs them in a way that questions the existing structures.

Deconstruction must proceed in different ways according to the object of its contemplation. It cannot always be applied in the same manner to e.g. literature, media, architecture, or fashion. Deconstruction is intended not as a universal method, but as a flexible form of activity adapting to the relevant context. However, it is possible to discern two fundamental applications: the first comprises reversal, the second involves a shift in the entire logic of something. Deconstruction functions by questioning concepts and their history of development as well as conditions and conventions. The deconstruction always represents a critical analysis of the origins, foundations, and limits of our conceptual, theoretical, and normative structure. (Loscheck 2009, p.186)

5.3 Fashion Designers as Artists

Since the beginning of the twentieth century fashion designers and artists have influenced each other and there was a time when fashion designers positioned themselves as artists along with painters and sculptors. In order for fashion design to become art it needs to adopt elements from the artistic process and not visual influences. Collections by some designers are a result of an artistic process and created to convey an idea. These designers work in a similar way as artists and the result becomes something that possibly could be called art. Although fashion designers today rarely want to call themselves artists ‘there are designers with great artistic affinity and unusual perceptions, like Alexander McQueen and Hussein Chalayan, who arrive at something new by starting out from an emotion, an experiment or a deviation’ (Loschek 2009, p. 27-28). Instead of simply designing aesthetically pleasing clothes many designers introduce the idea of narrative and history into their clothes. Collections by some designers display more of a theatrical pretension by being clothes that pay no account to the demands of everyday products, apart from their impact as advertising and to attract attention or inspire other fashions and trends, they lack utility to the extent that art also claims for itself (Loschek 2009, p. 171).

This part looks at the work of three designers who have left a unique and artistic mark on the world of fashion. While revolutionising the fashion world, these designers have also made artistic claims. Because it can clearly be stated that these designers create fashion, it seems that saying they create art becomes more controversial. If a fashion designer works within the fashion system does this automatically deny them the possibilities of being seen as artists or creating art? Were Alexander McQueen’s theatrical catwalk shows, presenting his unique and often provocative creations, fashion or were they art? Some might say, ‘How can one even question whether what McQueen created was art or fashion, it was created within the fashion world and therefore it cannot be art.’



‘For me, what I do is an artistic expression which is channeled through me. Fashion is just the medium.’

— Alexander McQueen

Alexander McQueen’s, among other designers’, collections and theatrical fashion shows do, however, bring the viewer’s thoughts to art because many of the outfits have underlying meaning and the shows resemble performance art. Even when the viewer thinks, ‘Who on earth would ever wear that?’ the thought of fashion is negated and the outfit assumes a position similar to a work of art.

The purpose of the catwalk show is to attract attention and promote the designer, but this does not necessarily mean that it cannot be considered as art. The purpose of art is to attract attention and also promote the artist. While the artist creates something from the need of artistic expression, the purpose of the work is also to convey something and to attract attention. To continue working as an artist the artist has to attract the attention of potential buyers and exhibitors. In a similar way the fashion show offers the designer the possibility of expressing an artistic statement as well as attracting the attention of media and buyers.

The late Alexander McQueen revolutionised the catwalk presentation like no other British designer has been able to by turning fashion shows into performance art. The sets for his catwalk shows were no less dramatic than the clothes presented in them (Quinn 2002, p. 50) and together the clothes and the

theatrical catwalk gave his work a narrative loaded with symbolism and underlying meaning beyond the visual. He did not create only fashion, he created stories. McQueen used his catwalk shows to shock and challenge the viewer and McQueen himself argued that his main concern was to make the audience react, be it via joy, sadness, or disgust (Khan, Bruzzi 2000, p.118). ‘Most of the time, I try to provoke people, I’ve always said if someone leaves the show and vomits, or has a feeling of “What was that all about?” then I’ve done my job’ (Frankel 1999, Quinn 2002, p. 50). McQueen’s collections were postmodern, deconstructive, and conceptual. His collections were loaded with deeper meanings, although at first glance they can seem like pure provocation. (Loschek 2009, p. 57) Trauma such as isolation and loneliness as well as dialectics of pleasure and pain, eroticism and death, man and machine, love and brutality were reoccurring themes in McQueen’s collections (Loschek 2009, p. 56). Refusing themes that camouflage the flaws of the body, McQueen finds beauty in imperfect flesh, in exotic juxtapositions of pleasure and pain and in the examination of destruction and decay that fashion tries to mask. He recognises that while traditionally focused on the surface of the body, fashion unconsciously reveals the anxieties of the flesh beneath it (Quinn 2002, p. 47).

Hussein Chalayan is another well-known fashion designer whose creations and shows concentrate on the concept and narrative more than the visual aesthetic. He designs more than simply clothes or fashion and his work is at least in some ways comparable to art. Both his shows and his work are layered with meaning and invite the viewer to think about other aspects than simply the look of it. His use of live music or sound instead of soundtracks and an unusual use of space, and choreography (Khan, Bruzzi 2000, p. 120) make his shows differ from a traditional catwalk.

Chalayan's work explodes conventions of clothing design and clothing aesthetics, crossing borders between fashion, art, and philosophy. He says himself that he designs ideas rather than produces fashion. Chalayan is devoted to the wearable garment as well as the aim to realise abstract ideas and concepts. 'However many of his creations are not intended for everyday wear or for sale; they are realisations of ideas'. (Loschek 2009, p.62)

In his collection *Afterwords* (2000), Hussein Chalayan collaborated with product designer Paul Topen and explored the mobility of mankind via multipurpose garments. In the fashion show, a living room with four chairs and a low round table constructed from wooden hoops inserted into each other, were trans-

formed into clothing. The furniture in the room disappeared onto the models' bodies and became clothing. All the belongings in the room became part of a wardrobe and thus the home became mobile. 'Chalayan often expresses concepts rooted in displacement, transmigration and transformation, making personal, cultural and socio-political statements in addition to creating beautiful objects and fashion for sale' (Black 2006, p.84).

In Chalayan's work the body is approached as a site of exploration. He investigates its physical and metaphorical relationship to the world around it. (Quinn 2002, p. 50) Chalayan often starts out from a clearly defined statement, analysing clothing and fashion and the conditions under which they exist. He succeeds in innovation without the individual items of clothes necessarily being innovative in their cut, material, colour, or pattern. (Loschek 2009, p. 62) In most of Chalayan's work the idea or the concept is more important than the wearability or the visual aesthetics. 'Chalayan's work brings innovation through an idea or a bigger concept consisting of different parts that are all important in forming the final result. In Chalayan's hands, the dress becomes emblematic and layered with meaning' (Black 2006, p.84). His work shows characteristics similar to the ones found in art and sometimes the only link to fashion is the fact that his work can be worn.

Rei Kawakubo was one of the Japanese fashion designers who helped reinvent the Western fashion world during the 1980s. The both patently shocking and structurally formidable clothing by Kawakubo has transformed the ambitions of modern fashion since the inception of her label *Comme des Garçons* in 1973. She has played a significant role in establishing the language of deconstruction, both physically and theoretically, in late twentieth-century tailoring. (Black 2006, p.92) Kawakubo repeatedly questions accepted traditional notions of fashion and rejects the concept of the beautiful and perfect. *In the collection Dress Becomes Body, Body Becomes Dress*, Kawakubo shifted padding in dresses until it no longer only over formed, but deformed the body, questioning customary aesthetics and calling for a new perception of the human body. (Losheck 2009, p. 42) The padded designs in this collection could be seen as speculative prototypes, or an experiment in rethinking the human form. One could speculate that *Comme des Garçon's* padded extensions, which 'morphed' the body into new forms, were simply poetic speculations on the theme of embodiment in the modern age. The press release for the collection stated that 'the theme is body meets dress, body becomes dress, dress becomes body'. (Evans 2003, p 269) Throughout time bodies have been reconfigured and modified by various elements. In *Dress Becomes Body, Body Becomes Dress* Kawakubo reconstructed the relationship between body and clothing; subject and object.

Kawakubo's commitment to form over function and her esoteric approach to clothing construction echoes the abstractions of a visual artist more than a fashion designer. Often she deconstructs clothing by disregarding its function – she once made a dress with no openings, making it impossible to put on. But it can be worn, she insisted and decreed that it could be used as an apron. (Quinn 2002, p. 145) As a dress this piece has moved away from its utility value as it cannot be worn as a dress. Kawakubo takes a conceptual approach to clothing and the idea becomes the main element of the dress. It questions traditions as a dress normally is something that can be put on. Still this is a garment that can be worn in some way. Is this dress then a piece of art that can be worn or a dress, which fails to fulfil its purpose? Is Kawakubo creating art or designing fashion?

7. Conclusion: Can Fashion Design Be Called an Art?

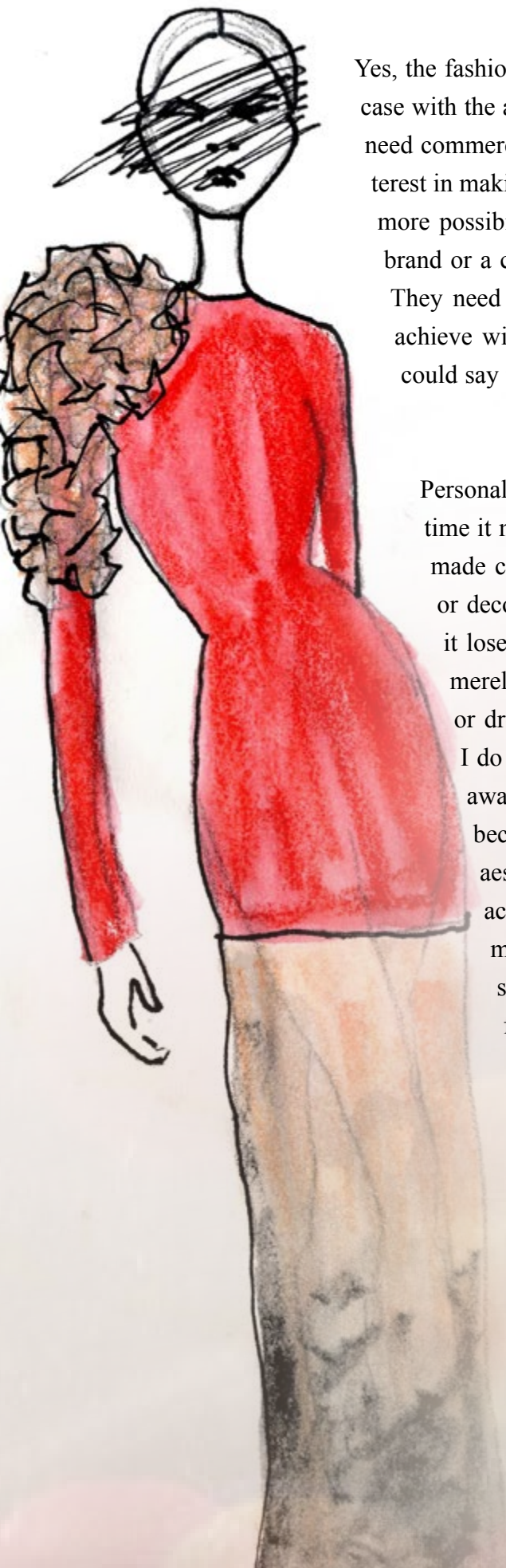
By definition, fashion is not art, it is fashion. Fashion and art are two different systems or phenomena, but when is it fashion and can fashion design also be art? There is a clear relationship between fashion and art, they are two different systems but at the same time they also share similar characteristics. It is important to acknowledge that the definitions of clothing, fashion, and fashion design are different, although often used as synonyms in daily language. Clothing is only a product, the raw material of fashion, and it will only become fashion through communication. Fashion design is the conscious process of creating clothing with the intention to bring forward new styles that then can be accepted as fashion. Clothing or dress is the raw material, fashion design is the process and fashion is the system or the phenomena. Art can be seen as a similar structure. The painting for example is the raw material and the act of painting is the conscious process of expressing something that then becomes art through contemplation and communication.

Fashion using art as a visual inspiration and art making use of fashion or dress does not mean one becomes the other. Although they inspire each other and do tend to cross each other's borders, fashion is created within the fashion system and art is created within the

art system. Fashion cannot be produced within the art system but the creative production of dress, commonly referred to as fashion design, could also exist within the art system. Then it is a question of dress and clothing being used as the creative medium and the artistic statement is made through the use of dress. Dress becomes the creative medium in the same way as photography, painting, or sculpture.

Artists use various means of expression to convey a feeling, form a thought provoking idea, or challenge existing traditions through new concepts. Today, art is not about with what it is created but the ways in which it is created. It is about a process and conveying an idea. In the same way fashion design can be used as a tool to create an idea or a concept beyond commercial needs. Many fashion designers will create something that is not intended to be worn and whether it is to attract the attention of the media or to question existing norms it can be a result of an artistic process. The question is, is it then art or is it still fashion, or can it be both?

To say that fashion design cannot be art because it is commercial is problematic and does not offer a completely accurate perspective on the topic.



Yes, the fashion industry is a business that relies on commerce but is that not the case with the art world as well? Is art only art for art's sake or does the art world need commerce to be able to function and evolve? Of course designers have interest in making a profit, and being commercially successful can mean they have more possibilities to express their artistic views. Even full-time artists need a brand or a commercial side in order to be able to continue working as artists. They need people to view, buy, and fund their art and this is impossible to achieve without gaining popularity and a certain commercial status. So one could say that a designer is able to work within the fashion system as well as create things that could be called art.

Personally, I think fashion, or more specifically dress, can be art. Most of the time it might be a question of applied art in contrast to fine art but a handmade couture creation should definitely, at its best, be viewed as applied or decorative art. Clothes are not art and when fashion is mass-produced it loses any elements that could be regarded as applied art and becomes merely a commodity. If dress is used as a medium for artistic expression, or dress created within the fashion system makes an artistic statement, I do think it can be called art. In this case, however, dress has to move away from its status as a commodity and the artistic statement has to become more important than the utility value and the currently accepted aesthetic values. It is then a question of dress being used to question accepted norms and traditions, expressing concepts and emotions or making a statement beyond and above aesthetics. The collections and shows of some fashion designers could definitely be called art and the fact that these artistic and conceptual clothes are later transformed into wearable fashion does not minimise their value as works of art.

During this whole process I have thought about art and fashion design until nothing has made sense anymore. To conclude this part I will say that for me the topic is still confusing and that it depends on the context whether something is art, applied art, or design. The lines between art and fashion design have become increasingly blurred and will continue to intertwine making it more difficult to define them. I do not, however, think this is a bad thing. Art and design can coexist and make use of each other even to the extent where it is difficult to demarcate one from the other.

PART TWO

The Morbid Anatomy of Emotions

1. Introduction

Since I was a child creative expression has been an important part of my life. Later it became a way of dealing with and expressing emotions, a type of therapy, and way for my subconscious to communicate with my conscious self. It helps me deal with overwhelming thoughts and feelings, frustration, fear, and the unexplained – life in general. In my opinion creativity and art are very important aspects of human life and the purpose of art is not only to serve as aesthetic stimuli. Whether creating something yourself or experiencing something created by someone else, art and creativity can help us understand and realise different social aspects, it can help us deal with overwhelming emotions and even create a better environment.

While keeping the concept of fashion design in mind I wanted to use the human body and dress as tools to express myself creatively. I wanted to personally explore the borders between art and fashion and create a collection of unique outfits that convey a meaning deeper than simply visual aesthetics. I find that dress and clothing can be a very good medium for artistic expression because of its endless sculptural abilities, diverse possibilities for modification, and the fact that it always refers to the body in one way or the other. Throughout history, and in different cultures dress has been used to express class, status, and mood and to alter the body in different ways. Clothing and dress is a language comprising of signs and symbols. It can be used to express truth, lie, or give distorted images. It is used to cover the body as well as reveal parts of it.

This collection is a metaphor of the human body and mind. The two layers it consists of refer to the physical side of the human body as well as feelings and thoughts. It is an exploration of dress as a creative medium and a result of a need for artistic expression. The intention was not to create fashion or art but simply to explore the way in which an artistic process can be used in fashion design and if the outcome could then be called art.



Lace Queen Elisabeth
Withered Flowers
Dilapidated Houses Ghosts
Masks Francesca Woodman
Circus Performers Red Blurred
Big Collars Feathers Ruffles
Smoke Frayed Fabrics
Melancholia Ray Caesar Veils
La Catrina Contrasts
Femininity Anxiety Time Love
Corsets Big Skirts
Sheer Fabrics Mould
Lee Bowery Anatomy Roses
Fears Marco Mazzoni Nets
Darkness Costumes Oddities
Armours Scars Phobias
Muscles

2. Inspiration

‘Research is what I’m doing when I don’t know what I’m doing.’

— *Wernher von Braun*

In the beginning I had no or little idea of what I was actually doing. I was researching and collecting inspiration without knowing exactly what I wanted to do or was going end up doing, which is how most creative processes start. I knew I wanted to use dress as creative expression and explore my own creativity. I did not want to follow a certain structured and preconceived plan, instead I wanted to listen to my heart and create something that felt right. In other words, I wanted my conscious mind to communicate with my subconscious. I wanted to experiment, act on impulse, and do things that seemed to make sense at the same time as there was no logical explanation for them.

I spent weeks looking at images for inspiration. I visited museums, listened to music, and thought about in which ways dress could be used as a form of art. I collected and documented inspiration in a sketchbook and it quickly filled up with pictures and words. The research part of a creative process is like a journey and it is definitely not a quick weekend trip. It can take weeks or months even to look for inspiration and then process it. For me it usually takes a very long time to process my ideas. And the more time I give myself the more my ideas evolve. I will spend several hours a week looking at pictures and collecting inspiration. At times it feels like nothing is happening and the right idea will never exist while in fact it is just around the corner. I find inspiration in many things, everything from paintings and photographs to music and poetry. Although objects and other designs can be inspiring, I often find myself being mainly affected by feelings and atmospheres. Images, music, or poetry with a certain ambience are always my main source of inspiration.

There are certain themes and sources of inspiration I will use frequently. A reoccurring source of inspiration is the work of Canadian based artist, Ray Caesar. The first time I came across Ray Caesar's digital artworks I was mesmerised by them and since then their beautifully melancholic and strange atmospheres have inspired me over and over again. Whenever I feel a lack of inspiration I seem to find it in Ray Caesar's art. In this collection the beautifully eerie and alluring atmosphere of Ray Caesar's work was again a valuable inspiration.

Image 1: *Coming Undone* by Ray Caesar. (Courtesy of Ray Caesar)



Another reoccurring theme is the human body. For a long time I have been both fascinated and perplexed by what is underneath our skin and there is something beautiful as well as terrifying about how fragile the mortal body is. This might also be a reason I find dress to be such a compelling creative medium. At a quite early stage of this work I realised it will be all about the human body. The first ideas came to me when I was looking at a book of old anatomical illustrations.

The main visual inspiration for the corsets comes from human anatomy and historical corsets. I remember the day the idea for the corsets came to my mind. The idea hit my head like lightning and I am not only being poetic when saying that. I was looking at pictures of corsets and it suddenly struck me. Corsets with parts resembling the human body that will be buried in the ground as a metaphor to the mortality of the human body as well as the act of burying feelings we do not want to deal with. I felt happy and relieved to finally arrive at a concept. The idea of burying garments came from a thought of alternative ways to dye or stain fabrics. I had been thinking about dyeing with mushrooms, rust, and mould. Interestingly enough, I did not know that this had been done before. Due

to my ignorance the idea of burying the corsets was innovative to me. I was not until later that I found out that Hussein Chalayan buried the garments from his graduate collection.

The second layer is inspired by contrasts between soft and rough, beautiful and intimidating. I wanted the outfits to be detailed and well executed as well as unfinished and frayed. As visual inspirations for the second layer I used images of African costumes, different masks and historical garments. Here the inspiration is less visual and more about the ambience and the idea of a layer of protective armour that covers the whole body. The thought was to create something that hides and alters the body while still keeping the human form.

Throughout the whole process I have been frequently looking at images and listened to music in order to nourish my creativity and keep the artistic part of my mind active at all times. Although my mind thinks in a creative way all the time, that seems to be its normal state, it needs to be stimulated to be able to function at its highest capacity. Creativity needs to be nourished in order for it to blossom. If it is neglected and taken for granted it will wither and fade away.

2. The Creative Process

'I put my heart and my soul into my work, and have lost my mind in the process.'

— Vincent van Gogh

The heart of this work is artistic expression and the pulse is creativity. The process has been very personal and it has helped me achieve a better understanding of my own creativity and the ways I can use dress as an artistic expression. Some of my actions were planned and conscious whereas many of my creative actions were subconscious and did not become clear to me until the very end of the process. Some things are still impossible for me to explain and could perhaps be seen and analysed by someone else. When I look back to the beginning of the process I can see a clear difference between the early stages of the work and the finished process. I understand things I had no clue about at first. I think many things are unravelling and will unravel later when analysing the process from a different angle. When I was in the process of creating I let my heart and subconscious do the work with the help from my conscious mind. I used dress and clothing to understand and bring order to the chaos in my mind.

I am very fascinated by contrasts and melancholy, melancholy being the perfect balance of contrasts. This work started with the idea of frayed and stained fabrics, a contrast be-


tween the beautiful and the defective, but I did not know how I wanted to use this or what I wanted to express. At first I was thinking of alternative ways to dye or stain fabrics. I played with ideas of dyeing with mushrooms, rust, and mould and I experimented with leaving fabrics with pieces of rotting fruit and vegetables in sealed bags. At one point I was planning to make a few dresses using natural materials and neglect them in different ways like wrapping them in barbed wire and leaving them in the rain, burying them, or leaving a silk dress out in the harsh autumn weather for weeks. I was going to call it *Summer Sadness*. Somewhere along the way, however, these thoughts evolved and I ended up burying three corsets instead.

I started working on the second layer without using any sketches or designs as a base. All ideas existed mainly in my head at first and later in the process I sketched some of them on paper. It was a creative process during which I did what felt and looked right. I started working on each outfit by either sculpting the fabric on a dress form or by starting out from an idea, making a pattern and then sculpting the pieces on a dress form.

I experimented and tried different techniques and models. It was a slow process that required contemplation and creative inspiration. Days when I did not feel inspired, I could not work with this part of the collection. One could assume a creative process free from any demands is easy but in fact it can be very stressful and frustrating at times. I was working on this part of the collection for a long time, taking breaks every once in a while to be able to see them from a new perspective. When the collection was nearly finished I took a few pictures of the complete outfits on a model and when I saw the pictures I realised I was not happy with two of the outfits. This resulted in a mild frustration and a few minor changes and additions. Both the underlying meanings and the visual look are important in this collection. I wanted the work to stimulate the mind as well as the eye.

The photography is an extension of the work and is a part of the creative process. The presentation of the collection (in photographs, as an installation, or a performance) intensifies the underlying meanings and completes the work. These photographs are meant to complete the narrative of the collection and convey a feeling. They are not photographs of products or objects, they are portraits of emotions.

Image 2: Photograph of a corset from the collection



*‘A photograph is a secret about a secret.
The more it tells you the less you know.’*

— Diane Arbus

2. Materials and Techniques

During the first stages of the creative process I used methods that provide a good base for any creative work and help translate thoughts and inspiration into ideas, and forms. Various creatively stimulating techniques, like mind-maps and brainstorming, are useful in any creative or artistic process. During this process I mainly used mind-maps for the photography and the layout. For the collection I used an inspiration-board where I collected the main words, ideas and pictures that I had in my sketchbook. This helped me translate the chaotic mess in my head into concrete ideas. If the thought process is not documented the ideas cannot evolve and be developed. The ideas and shapes in my sketchbook were translated into garments by shaping and draping fabric on a dress form. All the corsets were created using basic patterns and then sculpted on a dress form to make a new pattern. The final model was then once more sculpted on the dress form in order to get the right shape. I used various cotton fabrics that I found at home and cheap fabrics from the local fabric shop. I did not want to buy new fabrics because I did not see it as an essential part of my work and I also like using discarded materials that no one else wants. One of the white fabrics used for the corsets is from a box of old fabrics from my grandmother and the rest of them are discarded cotton fabrics found cheap. The fabric used for the ‘muscles’, however, is new since I needed a material that would drape easily and have a colour that resembles muscles.

The technical process of the corsets could be called a chaotic design process. Based on sketches the corsets were sculpted to a certain form. I sketched different models for the corsets but I did not follow one certain style or design. The corsets are a mix of several sketches and ideas that changed during the practical process. The corsets are fused and boned to give them the sturdy structure that is the essential part of the corset.



Image 3: Corset being buried.

The most interesting and experimental part of the collection, was burying the corsets in the ground. The idea was to give them a stained look by leaving them in the ground for a few weeks. I partially knew what would happen to the fabric once buried but in the end I had very little or no control of the end result. Nature took over my project. It felt both exciting and nerve-racking not being in control. Having spent weeks making the corsets, I was scared to leave them in the moist ground but also strangely relieved. The part of me that was bored of the corsets, having spent so much time making them, was happy to leave them buried in the ground. On the other hand a part of me felt sad that I was about to 'destroy' my precious work. In the end the excitement of creating something through an experiment remained the strongest emotion.

The corsets remained buried for almost two months. I would have left them buried longer, but because of the winter waiting to lay snow and frost on the ground I had to dig them up earlier than I wanted. It was a very exciting moment to finally dig them up. The corsets were stained by dirt and mould but since the material used for the muscles is polyester only the white fabric reacted when being left in the wet ground. The polyester 'muscles' remained the same as before burying.

Image 4 and 5: Corsets after being buried for over six weeks.



Image 6: Detail of stained fabric



Image 7: Washing the corsets in rainwater.



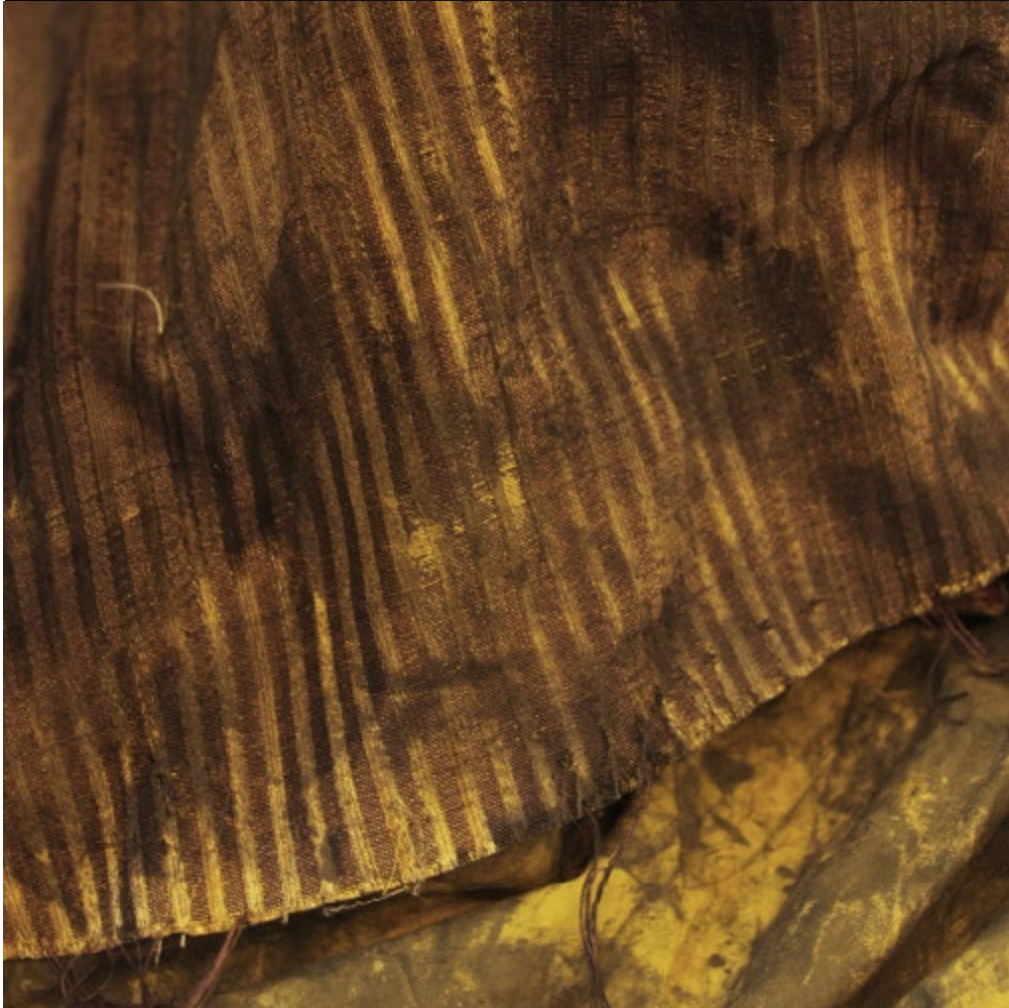
Image 8: The corsets hung up to dry.

The second layer is a mix of different techniques and experiments. The garments are mainly sculpted on a dress form using a basic pattern at most. Some parts of the garments are left unfinished and frayed. Many of the techniques I used were derived from experiments and some even from mistakes. During the process I changed, removed, and added things as well as started working on something all over again to create something completely different. The outfits have changed shape numerous times.

The materials used for the second layer are discarded and flawed fabrics. I chose to use these fabrics partially due to economic and sustainable reasons (I like using fabrics that otherwise might just be thrown away), but mainly because their flaws inspired me and fit the concept. I also like to use old, ugly, or worn out materials and create something interesting or even beautiful from them. The hems of all skirts were ripped with scissors to obtain a rough and frayed look and then stained with fabric dye. The colour was applied to the hems either by hand or, in the case of the pink cape, sprayed on the fabric and then washed to obtain an uneven and faded effect. Before doing this the garments looked strangely unfinished; they clearly lacked a certain key element. After ripping up the hem and staining it, the garments suddenly looked finished.



Images 9-11: Details of ripped and painted hems.



2. The Collection

During my research I was reading about the body and its relationship to clothing. Clothing can be seen as an extension of the body and these two are perhaps not as separate from each other as we think.

'If the human body is seen as a spatial form, the skin represents the demarcation line between the inside and the outside. Clothing then becomes an extension of this corporal space boundary and the interface between a person's corporal space and the external space of the environment. This extension may be realised with several layers of protective fabric and by means of physical apparatus creating distance. Clothing is always connected to the body, whereby on the one hand it forms a spatial extension of the body and alters our image of the body's surface and form; on the other hand, it imposes the materiality of the clothing on to the body and alters it in this way' (Loschek 2009, p 17).

So where does the body end and dress begin?

The first layer of the collection consists of corsets inspired by both the physical side and the psychological side of the human body. The corsets were buried in the ground for over a month and this gives the garments a dilapidated and stained pattern as well as deep layers of meaning and symbolism. While visually representing what is underneath our skin - the muscles and bones - metaphorically the corsets symbolise our most intimate thoughts and feelings.

The second layer is the armour that covers the fragile bodies and intimate thoughts. It covers the body almost completely, giving a glimpse of what is underneath. The covering layer of armour is soft and decorative yet intimidating and powerful. It invites one to admire its fascinating appearance while keeping a distance. It is beauty and anger at the same time.

This collection is dedicated to the tired and wounded hearts, and to the people who possess the special power to heal them.





5.1 Memento Mori

*‘From my rotting body, flowers shall grow
and I am in them and that is eternity.’*

— *Edvard Munch*

This is life at its most vulnerable. These are the deepest, most inner emotions and thoughts – fears and memories; all those things that make us who we truly are. While visually referring to what is underneath our skin (the muscles and bones) the corsets are a metaphor of our most intimate thoughts. They symbolise our fears, deepest feelings, emotional scars, and tired hearts. The corsets, or bodies, are dilapidated and stained, wounded and healed. Some wounds have not healed. They are part of the body. Other wounds are slowly healing, leaving a scar while others cannot be seen anymore. The sturdy structure of the corset symbolises the strong skeleton and the mental strength keeping us from falling apart.

The word corset derives from the French word “corp”, meaning body and the first corsets were called whalebone bodies. It is an interesting fact that the early corsets were known as whalebone bodies, because this blurs the distinction between the fleshly body and the garments that cover and fashion it. In addition to the symbolism of the most inner part of the human body, our emotions and fears, these corsets are of course loaded with all that history linked to this controversial garment. The corset is used to shape the natural body into an ideal and thus becomes an extension of it.

Beauty and dress can be seen as temporary distractions for the mortal body. The fashioned body often denies death and decay, creating an immortal image of the human. The corset forms the body and gives it a seemingly everlasting youth while acting as a material extension of the body. These corsets bring to surface the internal parts of a mortal body; what is underneath the skin is now exposed on the skin, reshaping the body. The inside of the body almost always brings our thoughts to death and mortality and since clothing refers to the body they are always linked to mortality. The corsets symbolise not only the fragile insides of the physical body but also the vulnerable mind. The act of burying also refers to the hiding and burying of emotions and true feelings. We are often more willing to emphasise our physical bodies rather than our emotional. We will hide anything that makes us vulnerable, afraid that it can be used against us, while emphasising our physical features distracts others as well as ourselves from the fragile inside that is the human mind.



Model: Verna Nurmiranta









Model: Hannah Rinne





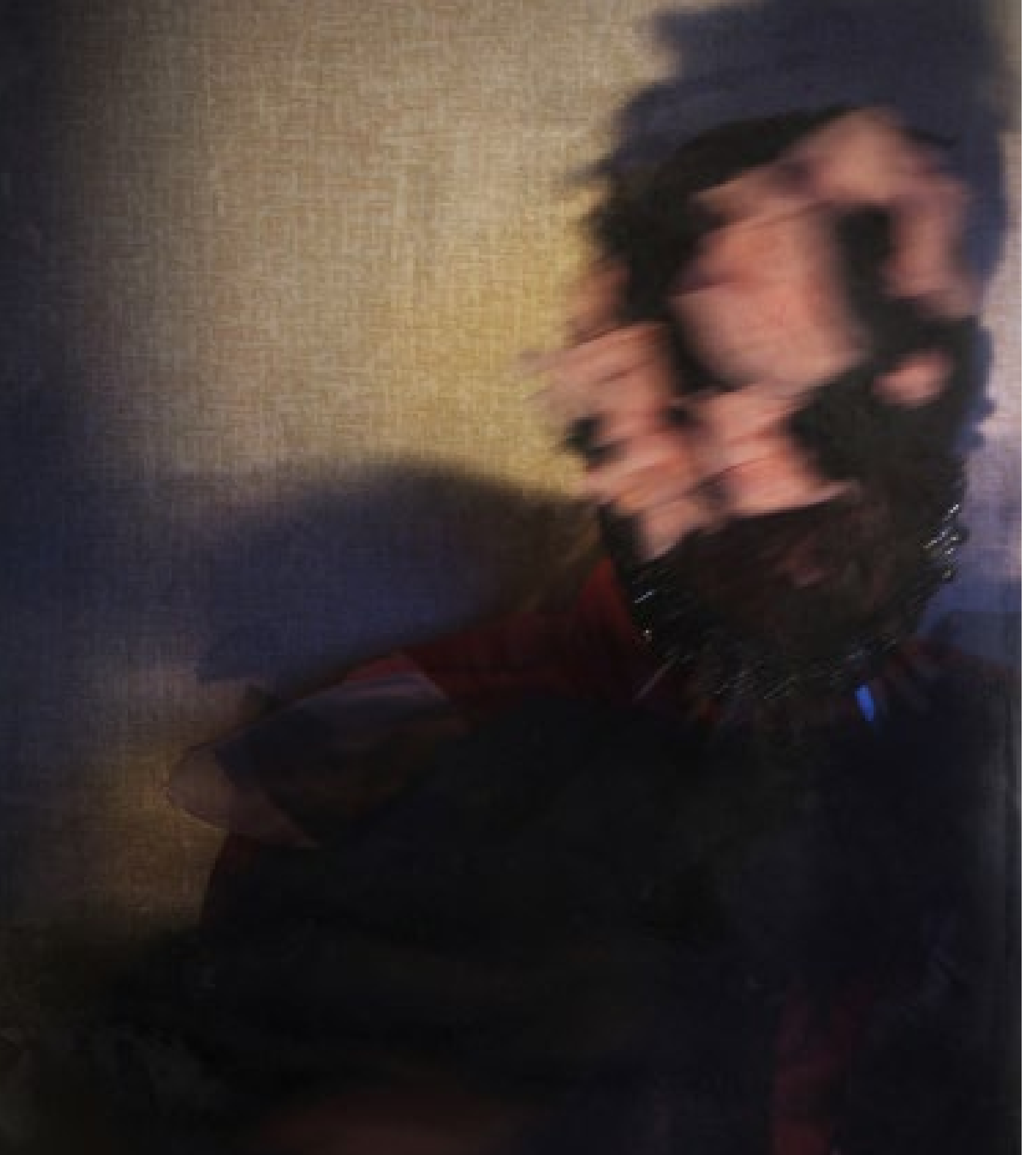












5.2 Agliophobia

‘The oldest and strongest emotion of mankind is fear.’

— *H.P Lovecraft*

This is the heavy armour we wear to protect our fragile bodies from being hurt. It is a metaphor of all the things we use to hide and protect ourselves with. The garments cover the body completely only to show a few glimpses of what is underneath. With dress and modifications we can alter the image of our bodies and even distract ourselves from our mental self.

Through dress we can create an image of a perfect human.

Dress can alter the human image and identity. It can disguise, distract, or draw attention. It can make one unnoticeable, intimidating, and powerful, or weak. Through dress we can hide our true selves and emphasise the parts we want others to notice. We can become someone different or the one we secretly wish we were. Dress is an essential part of our cultures. We use it to communicate and protect ourselves. We show feelings (or hide them), we dress in armour to appear strong or to protect ourselves, we choose colours to match our mood, and we dress decoratively to attract attention. Dress can both emphasise the truth and distract from it.

The second layer is all of this. It protects, distracts shows true feelings, and lies. It confuses and distracts both the one wearing it and the outside world. It covers and protects the fragile body inside so that it cannot be hurt or exposed. This heavy armour can also symbolise the burdens we have to carry or are expected to carry. Things that weigh us down and make us feel trapped. It is both the armour we create ourselves and the external stress that we experience. If the first layer is the vulnerable inside this is the hard shield protecting and disguising the body underneath.

The figures are not meant to be good or bad, beautiful or ugly. They are all of these things. The insides are wounded and vulnerable as well as dark. The exterior is not frightful nor is it appealing. They can be both beautiful and sinister. Are they fragile figures hiding underneath an uninviting exterior or wicked spirits disguised in delicate beauty?



































6. Conclusion: Is It Fashion Design or Art?

Whether the collection I created is art, design, fashion, or simply clothing is not something I want to decide completely on my own. Some theorists and artists believe that something is a work of art if it is created as art and defined by the creator as art; it is art because the artist says so. Others will argue that something only becomes a work of art if it is presented to the public as art and accepted by the public as such. I could choose to call the collection art and it would then become art or I can present it to the public in hopes of it being accepted as art. Creating art was not however the conclusive aim of my work. I wanted to explore my own creativity using dress as an artistically expressive medium and question whether fashion design can be seen as an art form and if so when does it become art. Does the content make it art, is it the process which determines whether the outcome is art or fashion, or is it defined by social systems? The collection was created through an artistic and creative process and includes artistic experiments, sub-conscious actions as well as elements of fashion design and design methods. Although elements of fashion design methods were used while creating this work, the process was mainly an artistic process. It was not created to become fashion but that does not necessarily mean it lacks the possibility of being adapted as or transformed into fashion.

The way in which the collection is presented alters the way it can be defined. When put together the garments form a narrative and, depending on how they are displayed, this narrative becomes more or less prevailing. If the outfits are presented as installations in a gallery they might seem more like works of art and if they are presented on a traditional catwalk they might be seen as fashion. Depending on the place, context, and the way they are displayed they can assume different characters.

Dress created as artistic expression can be used as a source of inspiration and it can be altered into a ready to wear collection. Artistic experiments can help find new innovation, ideas, and concepts. The artistic process and the design process can co-exist and benefit from each other. During the course of this work I have been thinking about the differences between art and fashion design and how artistic expression can also result in design innovation. This process inspired me to do further work and when the collection I created was nearly finished I began to sketch and design a ready-to-wear collection based on this work. I drew inspiration and chose elements from the collection shown in Part Two and translated it into a series of wearable items. I have not been this inspired to design and sketch in a long time and through this artistic process I found fresh inspiration and new ideas to use for a design process.

Image 12: Sketches of the ready-to-wear collection



The purpose of the collection is artistic expression and the aim is to question why fashion design is rarely regarded as a form of art. In my opinion fashion design can also be art. When it becomes art depends on the context. I argue that the collection I created can be seen as art as it is not only an aesthetic product and it is the result of an artistic process. The collection can be analysed like a painting with many underlying meanings. The personal experiences of the viewer can change the meaning and substance of the collection. I will leave it open for the viewer or reader to decide for themselves if fashion and dress in their opinion can be art and if this collection is art, fashion, or simply clothing. Without communication between my work, the viewer, and myself, the collection will become art only if I chose to call it so. As I have mentioned in Part One, art, fashion, and design are all about communication and what ultimately defines all of these as social phenomena is the communication between the creator, object, and receiver.



Image 13: Sketches of the ready-to-wear collection



This work has been a valuable exploration of the ways in which the worlds of art and fashion design can interact, as well as the way my own creative mind functions. I feel like I now understand how artistic expression and fashion design can complete each other. This work has helped me find a good balance between fashion design and artistic expression and I feel I now know how I can use dress as a creative medium.

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The mask of the second outfit is dedicated to you.

Memento Mori

- a symbolic or artistic reminder of the inevitable death or a reminder of human failure and errors

Agliophobia

- an irrational fear of being hurt

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