# THE WARDROBE OF SENSUAL AND ETHICAL RELATIONSHIPS: SLOW FASHION, TREASURED GARMENTS

Name: Claire Mainwaring
Student Number: 1706525
Course: Surface Pattern Design
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Supervisor: Julia Lockheart
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## Introduction

This Independent Inquiry begins by exploring the contrasting values of fast fashion and slow fashion, and how these terms relate to the production of textiles and clothing. Many current issues are identified through my research about the methods of producing textiles, primarily ethical and environmental concerns, and the depleting global natural resources. I also address the current clothing demand and discuss the role of manufacturers, designers and consumers, and suggest changes that could be made towards creating a more circular economy. I have presented a case study of how I consider improvements could be made to promote and sell recycled clothing, based on my research findings.

A garment could become more valued and treasured if an identifiable production history was known to the consumer, I have identified a way this could be achieved. This leads to my discussion of what contributes to a garment becoming treasured, and why aesthetic nourishment and emotional attachments are important. I have researched how our senses are used to perceive our surroundings and influence our purchasing behaviour.

The Japanese philosophy of *wabi sabi* (侘寂) is identified, addressing the need to accept change and impermanence. I have included the reasons why upcycling contributes, not only towards a clothing circular economy, but towards a garment becoming aesthetically unique and valued. The work of Junko Oki is explored, her use of *boro* ぼろ）and *sashiko* (刺し子） embroidery stitch create contemporary works of art through repair. The results of this Independent Inquiry have led me to discover how designers can draw upon the senses to create treasured garments within slow fashion. These treasured garments provide us with a wardrobe of sensual and ethical relationships.

## Chapter 1 – Clothing production and natural resources

The UK Parliament Environmental Audit 2019, states that the fashion industry was worth £32 billion to the UK economy in 2017. We need to understand why consumers purchase such vast amounts of new clothing, whether it is solely due to following fashion or because of other emotional needs. Although some businesses are incorporating current ethical and environmental policies in their production of textiles and clothing, the vast majority are not. This audit also specifies that 'two-thirds of polled fashion executives have not made environmental and social factors guiding principles for their companies' strategy'. The audit highlights that the best performers on sustainability are the big and medium sized companies together with family owned businesses. The main concern is that the remainder of the clothing manufacturers follow the current fast fashion business model which results in over-consumption and generation of excessive waste. Indeed, the UK Parliament Environmental Audit 2019, states that 'by 2050 the equivalent of almost three planets could be required to provide the natural resources needed to sustain current lifestyles given the growth in global population.' This prediction identifies that changes need to be made within the fast fashion industry regarding their current use of natural resources.

Fast fashion is a description for clothing which has been mass produced using basic skills, it has a fast turnover to meet accelerated consumer fashion demands. This means that wash and wear tests are often omitted which has implications on garment durability, often inferior textiles are used which are not recyclable. To cater to fast fashion demands, manufacturers produce clothes to such a cheap and low-quality standard that the products have low personal value to consumers apart from the initial emotional value (Fletcher, 2008). Large quantities of this type of clothing end up in landfill sites within several months of purchase which is an astronomical waste of natural resources.

Slow fashion, in contrast, is concerned with all aspects of the production of clothing. It is not just about the slower pace in which the clothing is produced, it is about providing skilfully made clothing with durable quality which will become part of a lasting circular economy (Stegall, 2006). It is also important to protect and sustain traditional skills and consider that, even though this type of clothing may be more expensive, it

is worth the benefits of investing in quality and durability. Kristine Harper, author of Aesthetic Sustainability (217, p.118), considers the benefits of artisan clothing as opposed to the imitated mass-produced versions:

> *Of course, it is possible to draw on unique value in mass-produced objects by imitating artisanship, and, in this way, create an artificial glimmer in the final product. This latter method can be effective, but such an artificial process cannot benefit from the storytelling about the slow genesis of the product, the artisanal techniques, or the hands behind it. As a result, the concept loses both transparency and credibility.*

Harper has highlighted the fact that mass produced clothing within fast fashion can appear similar to artisan clothing, however, when clothing is made within slow fashion there are subtle differences within the finished garment. The artisan clothing portrays a history evidently embedded in it, such as with dye, natural textile and stitch. A garment produced within slow fashion is more likely to become treasured because of these traits.

According to the Cambridge Dictionary (2019), the word treasured means 'to take great care of something because you love it or consider it very valuable'. Throughout my research of what makes a garment treasured, I found that the physical appearance and the way the garment was made is just part of the storytelling. A treasured garment affects our senses and emotions, and that is when it becomes part of our own personal story.

It is important that the design of clothing appeals to the greatest number of people to reduce the volume produced (Fletcher, 2008). To address this issue the best approach is to make clothing neutral so that the product can attract consumers from all ages and social backgrounds, Harper (2017, p.116) summarises:

> *Multifunctional objects are yet another means of creating long-lasting aesthetic value; the ability of such objects to alter appearance and expression accommodates the changing needs of a person's different life phases.*

If clothes were designed multifunctionally and not subjective to fashion trends, they could appeal to a larger variety of consumers and worn for longer than just a season. Eventually these clothes would become desirable for recycling use and create long-lasting value for consumers (Johnson and Foster, 2007). Stella McCartney, who is an advocate of sustainable fashion, recently commented in FG Magazine (2019), "It's

really the job of fashion designers now to turn things on their head in a different way, and not just try to turn a dress on its head every season." This suggests that there is wastefulness within the fashion industry. The mass production of seasonal clothing is not just wasteful but is environmentally challenging on a national and global level.

Although Harper emphasises the benefits of 'neutral' clothing being more versatile, she also explores a contradicting view in which she explains the importance of aesthetic detail. Harper (2017, p.115) reflects,

> *Aesthetically sustainable value is closely connected with sustainable value, but is, at the same time, permeated by the aesthetic experience. Aesthetically sustainable value is based on a product's ability to please the viewer/ user with its expression for years to come.*

When clothing is designed and produced with slick tailoring, quality textiles and skilful sewing work, the result is a beautiful garment and a pleasure to own. Clothing produced within slow fashion employs crafts persons and, additionally this contributes to the economies of smaller community businesses. I consider that designers have a responsibility to ensure that traditional methods continue to be appreciated and retained. If designers taught with sustainability in mind, this could not only encourage local production but pass on the traditions of the craft. An example of a textile being hand screen printed is shown in Figure 1 by Slowalk (2016).

Figure 1 Hand screen printed textile

Beth Kempton, author of Japanese Wisdom for a Perfectly Imperfect Life (2019, p.98), considers that clothing and textiles, should be personal to the creator. She suggests that the symmetry and uniformity of perfection is not the aim, the aim is to produce an item of natural beauty which shows the mark of the hand and the infusion of the heart.

Fred Davis, author of Fashion, Culture and Identity (1994, p.4), considers how we create personal statements through the clothing we wear, and why we are influenced by archetypal fashions within society. This affects the design of clothing we purchase and fuels the fashion market.

> *… its sources in culture and social structure, the process by which it diffuses within and among societies, the purpose it serves in social differentiation and social integration, the Psychological needs it is said to satisfy, and, not least of all, its implications for modern economic life.*

Davies considers that fashion can not only impact social situations, but also society itself. Clothes can be used to convey social identity and may have symbolic meaning, but this can vary culturally. Davis (1994, p.18) later suggests within his book that social symbolism can have a large impact on the sales of fashion. He uses the term 'symbolic clothing' to discuss how clothing can be linked with a person's identity and personality. He further discusses how the clothing is constantly changing and adapting to current trends and needs. As society is becoming more accepting of personal identity, clothing can now be used to express '… masculinity versus femininity and androgyny versus singularity'. Davis (1994, p.17) continues to explore that, '… at some level of consciousness, if only subliminary, new, psychologically satisfying reflexivities can be evoked from potential wearers of the fashion'. The public may not be aware that they are purchasing clothing due to the influence of others and may not be aware that manufacturers contribute to the demand and supply process. However, there is now serious concern regarding environmental issues, and I consider that fashion, culture and identity will inevitably change as resources become scarce in the near future.

Regarding clothing design in general, the majority of new clothing is neither traditional or innovative, nor does it challenge previous design concepts. Nevertheless, we still compulsively buy clothing we do not need and do not keep it long enough for it to become treasured. Blasescu, author of Subliminal Influence on Purchasing Behaviour in the Retail Market (2016, p.20), states that where purchasing is

concerned, '… it can be concluded that people often use automatic behaviour in this context. This manifests as habits and unconscious routines …' We need to use our senses to really perceive what we are purchasing in order to change our automatic intuition and unconscious routines. Michael Polanyi, author of The Tacit Dimension (1966, p.55), explains the power of inherent knowledge, '…tacit knowing achieves comprehension by indwelling, and that all knowledge consists of or is rooted in such acts of comprehension.' Consumers have inherent ideas before purchasing clothing, they have already been influenced by their social groups or by contemplation of visual and auditory fashion advertising.

Jessica Hemmings, author of The Textile Reader (2012, p.376), explores the views of Orsola De Castro, the curator of Estethica, regarding her scrutinisation of the changing attitudes of consumers, expressing:

> *We've been taught to want differently. It's our attitudes that have been completely discombobulated. I reckon that it's going to take enough time to go back to a different way of desiring and that's where we're going.*

In today's climate, we should desire both new and recycled clothing, but advertising primarily focusses on new clothing only. Baudrillard, author of Simulacra and Simulation (1994, p.87), reflects upon the influence of advertising:

> *Today what we are experiencing is the absorption of all virtual modes of expression into that of advertising. All original cultural forms, all determined languages are absorbed in advertising because it has no depth, it is instantaneous and instantaneously forgotten.*

Baudrillard is describing how advertising has become a mode of promoting clothing which fails to have any depth of meaning or intention to display reality. There are just clues and hints of original ideas now worn and changed beyond original meaning. Baudrillard (1994, p.93), further suggests that, 'There is no longer a staging of the commodity: there is only its obscene and empty form. And advertising is the illustration of this saturated and empty form'. We need to visually notice how clothing is marketed and recognise the 'wolf in sheep's clothing'. Within fast fashion, there is no hint of the human and environmental contributions reflected in the clothing, there is merely surreal imagery projected which is more advantageous to sell products.

We need to consider who benefits from the sale of fast fashion clothing. Globally, environments are depleted of natural resources and landfills are expanding to

accommodate textile waste. It appears that the only people to benefit are the business owners who make excessive profits. We also need to consider that fast fashion technology is constantly developed to cut labour and production costs, which affects communities both financially and environmentally. Nathan Stegall, author of Designing for Sustainability (2006, p.59), discusses this in more depth:

> *The modern world has been driven by the undying pursuit of scientific advancement and economic profit, a system which has failed because products, organizations, and practices conceived in this spirit are concerned primarily with what new technology can be created and what bottom line can be met, with little regard for the effects on people, society, or the natural world.*

This would suggest that clothing business owners and their designers should consider that ethical resources and sustainability are their responsibility. Consumers should also purchase with awareness of these ethics, in most cases they are not aware of who, how or where the clothing or textiles were produced (McDonough and Braungart, 2008). In other words, consumers need to be provided with informative details of the production of the clothing in order to make a responsible decision on whether to purchase or not.

How do we convince people to buy responsibly with awareness? Possibly, to promote purchasing fewer but better-quality clothes and not fall into the continual fashion trap. Workmanship is normally visually evident. Natural fibres are better quality for clothing because they are more durable to be recycled, they can eventually be composted because they have no chemical compounds which the synthetic fibres have. Some synthetic clothes have toxins which are unhealthy for our skin, unhealthy for the people who produce them and detrimental to the earth. Recently, in consumer food labelling, it was deemed necessary to state food additives, whether eggs were battery or free range for example, or if prepared food contained nuts. It could be possible for retailers to display an information tag on clothing to inform how ethically and environmentally they have been produced. For garments to become treasured, they not only need aesthetic and emotional value, they need an honest history.

Mahera Shaw is a textile and clothing business which produces contemporary fashion using traditional artisan skills. Based in Jaipur, India, it supports fair trade, artisan skills development, heritage textile crafts and the promotion of organic cottons. Their clothes are sustainable and sold in many countries worldwide. Mahera Shaw promote

their products and sustainability values on their web site, an example is shown in Figure 2. I consider that this could be a suitable form of tag to attach to clothing. Consumers could instantly see the production history of the garment they are interested in, and the contributory benefits that make the clothing recyclable.

Figure 2 Sustainability Values

## Chapter 2 – Sensual influence and marketing strategies

Humans have five basic senses: touch, sight, hearing, smell and taste. Aradhna Krishna, author of An Integrative View of Sensory Marketing (2010, p.334), considers, 'Perception is the awareness or understanding of sensory information'. Basically, the sensing organs associated with each sense send information to our brain to help us to understand and perceive the world around us.

Our sense of smell is linked to memory. Harper (2017, p.125) considers this further and states that, as well as individual emotional attachment based on sentiment, we are also able to remember subjective stories and experiences through our sense of smell. This suggests that memories can be brought to mind by our sense of smell, and this could be advantageous in promoting clothing sales. Distinctive aromas in a clothing shop may help consumers to remember the experience of shopping there long after they have left. Smells can enhance comfort and happiness and consumers are more likely to purchase in this type of surrounding. Lighting, colour, sound, interior design and layout of the shop are also influential in creating an overall sense of tranquillity. Promoting sales in this way is called 'sensory marketing' and is hugely influential in enticing consumers to purchase. Krishna (2010, p.333) discusses this in more depth, '… sensory marketing can be used to create subconscious triggers that define customer perceptions of abstract notions of the product (e.g. its sophistication, quality, elegance, innovativeness, modernity, interactivity) – the brand's personality'. It is not just the aroma of our surroundings that is influential, it is our personal aroma too. We use scented spray on our bodies to reflect our emotional mood, this is further discussed by Donald Johnson and Helen Foster, authors of Dress Sense (2007, p.62), 'Perfume companies suggest identities through advertising by implying a fragrance leads to such traits as being sexy, bold, or daring'. I agree that smell plays an important part in how we perceive ourselves and how we want others to perceive us. In some parts of the Middle East, clothes are infused with certain scents by placing them over incense before they are worn. Interestingly, I lost the ability to smell several years ago but still try to instinctively smell a flower. Even though this is impossible for me to do, the visual image of the flower generates my memory of the scent, as well as associative memories.

Our sense of touch develops at a very young age and helps us to perceive our surroundings. If we touch something that gives us a positive feeling, our oxytocin levels increase, which is a chemical secreted from our brain that gives us a feeling of happiness. When we touch an item of clothing which makes us feel happy, we purchase it in the hope that it will continue making us feel happy. Harper (2017, p.124) considers, 'Designers can help rouse the recipient's senses and mind by creating products that are sensorially stimulating and durable in the way that they have the potential to be experienced, continually, as being interesting, beautiful, challenging, or comfortable to be around'. This attraction is described in more depth by Krishna (2010, p.335), '… touch provided a true picture of the intrinsic nature of the object, so that the soft coat of the kitten is indicative of its innate softness of character'. I agree with Harper and Krishna, the textures of certain garments are designed to entice us to touch them and want to wear them close to our skin. It is in touching that we decide whether to purchase or not. Krishna (2010, p.335) expands on this by describing that sensation and perception are stages of processing of the senses. Two examples of garments irresistible to touch are shown in Figure 3 and 4, by Pinterest and Choies.

Figure 3 Faux fur jacket

Figure 4 Satin dress

Our sense of sight helps us to interpret the world around us and helps us to evaluate. When we purchase clothing, we initially look at the visual aspects of the design such as the colour, shape and textile used (Welters and Lillethun, 2011). I can be influenced by natural dye and natural textiles such as linen, silk and cotton, and would spend more on clothes of this nature. I also think that natural fibres are more durable, environmentally friendly and feel cooler to wear next to my skin. Basically, I could just simply be seduced by the sight of a beautiful garment, Harper (2017, p.123) elaborates on this emotion:

> *Aesthetic nourishment is related to the experience of beauty and the feeling of being pulled out of the everyday for just a moment. Aesthetic nourishment happens as a result of being moved by beauty, in an overwhelming sense…*

From Harper's exploration of visual aesthetic beauty (2017, p.115), I can conclude that aesthetic insight is something very different from logical or rational forms of reasoning. Indeed, aesthetic insight is something that is individual and unique to each person and is the reason why we are attracted to different things. Aesthetic beauty depends on how we perceive the object, this means interpreting and understanding it with knowledge of what we have already experienced in the world around us.

Harper (2017, p.124) further considers that aesthetic nourishment and experiences are stored up in our body and mind and provide a great sense of edifying pleasure, subsequent encounters of the world are coloured by this experience of beauty. Undoubtedly, for a garment to become treasured and continue to be an enjoyment to wear, I consider that it needs to have both emotional value and aesthetic beauty. If a garment does not have sustainable value, it may be appreciated but will not be worn very often. This means that the garment needs to be contemporarily nourishing or neutral enough to give us a sense of feeling attractive. Furthermore, the perception of what is beautiful is subjective and what one person finds beautiful another may not. Hence the statement, 'beauty is seen in the eye of the beholder'. Harper discusses this aspect further (2017, p.118), 'Unique value can also emerge by integrating traces of the production process in the final product or by allowing a certain degree of randomness to influence the design process'. From my own experience, unique value in clothing is created by using natural fibers which inadvertently vary, and by hand-dyeing and screen-printing the textile for the garment. This will create variations in colour and intensity of print. I believe that this value could be achieved by using

traditional design techniques within slow fashion (Sennett, 2009). If garments are made in this way they have aesthetically more to offer, are more sustainable and durable, and the clothing is more likely to become valued and treasured. Polanyi author of The Tacit Dimension (1996, p.32), states that an item can possess '…a significance that is not exhausted by our conception of any single aspect of it.' I believe that this type of significance can be found in garments which have unique and aesthetic beauty, appealing to all of our senses.

## Chapter 3 – Japanese philosophy and contemporary stitch

The Japanese philosophy of wabi sabi helps to slowly peel back the layers of life's mystery to see the beauty of the world in a different light. According to Beth Kempton, author of Wabi Sabi (2019), the word 'wabi' means 'subdued taste' and the word 'sabi' means 'patina, antique look or elegant simplicity'. Wabi sabi lies not in things we accumulate but is an intuitive response to life itself. We need to recognise the gifts of living simply, more slowly and in a natural environment. Wabi sabi is an acceptance and appreciation of life which is not permanent and is not perfect. In today's climate of depleting resources, this philosophy is more important than ever.

Wabi sabi is about finding beauty in simplicity. It is about using all our senses and experiencing beauty in all things. Kempton (2019, p.17), describes the meaning:

> *Wabi sabi is a feeling, and it is intangible. We feel wabi sabi when we come into contact with the essence of authentic beauty – the kind that is unpretentious, Imperfect and all the better for that.*

Kempton (2019, p.19) further explains that wabi sabi is not a describing word or the external look of an object, it is a feeling, an impression we are left with after an encounter with a particular kind of beauty. Eugene Gendlin, author of Focussing (1981, p.33), also discusses a bodily awareness which he describes as a felt sense. He explains that it is a separate bodily sensation which is not based on thoughts, memories or familiar feelings, it does not communicate itself in words but in a bodily feeling which is a deep-down level of awareness. Gendlin (1981, p.32), describes this sensation in more detail:

> *An internal aura that encompasses everything you feel and know about a given subject at a given time – encompasses it and communicates it to you all at once rather than detail by detail.*

Indeed, when researching both the Japanese philosophy of wabi sabi and Gendlin's felt sense, I found that they both appeared to be describing similar bodily sensations even though geographically and culturally separated. The differences are that wabi sabi sensations are based on visual simplicity and imperfection whereas Gendlin's felt sense is based on a deeper level of awareness. Awareness and hindsight are based on life experience and memories.

Another Japanese word, ‘sabiru’, means ‘to rust or decay or show signs of age’, adding layers of flavour, similar to our notion of ‘entropy’. Age is not something bad, age adds meaningful beauty, traits which are evident in worn clothes. The beauty of ‘sabi’ reminds us of our own connection with the past and memories of time spent (Kempton, 2019). Clothes should lift our spirits and keep us inspired for years to come and, reflecting on sabiru, as they get older give ourselves permission to accept imperfection. ‘Wabi sabi’ teaches us to be content with less and appreciate what we have without yearning for more. Indeed, if consumers purchase better quality clothing, these could eventually become treasured garments displaying flawed beauty and hold meaningful memories. Balasescu (2016, p.24) comments, ‘Recent research shows that sense of nostalgia makes people appreciate less the value of money…’. I think that what Balasescu describes, is that treasured garments cannot be bought or sold, they have emotional value not financial value to the owner. When I saw a photograph by Inspiredluv in Figure 5, I imagined combining older worn clothing with new clothing to create a look suitable for today’s contemporary lifestyle.

Figure 5 Denim dungarees and traditional coat

The Japanese Kimono is made within slow fashion and is a wonderful example of an embedded fashion. Even though most people in Japan like spending their days in jeans and sweatshirts, it is their Kimono that they treasure. It speaks of continuity, people's weddings and celebrations, coming of age and graduations. Often Kimono's belonged to other women in the family, they are passed down through generations. These garments have a sense of power and have embedded meanings. Figure 6 shows a traditional kimono wedding dress by Modern Sakura and Figure 7 shows a 'western' contemporary version of a traditional kimono.

Figure 6 Traditional Kimono

Figure 7 Contemporary Kimono

I consider that it is important to create clothing that will allow others to invest their own personal experiences and memories into it. If clothing is made with an aspect of room for future repair in its' design, this could be advantageous for the circular economy. Yohji Yamamoto recently quoted his views regarding fashion design in the literary magazine 'Goodreads' (2019), 'I think perfection is ugly. Somewhere in the thing's humans make, I want to see scars, failure, disorder, distortion'. Yamamoto considers that imperfection is a sign of genuinity and by personifying fashion with 'scars', he

considers that aesthetic uniqueness is achieved. Many slow fashion clothes are made using traditional techniques with quality and durability in mind so that they can withstand a lot of wear and eventual repair. Unfortunately, with fast fashion clothing, sewing and repairing is a skill that is not used because textile durability is poor, clothing is just throw away and replaced with similar items cheaply and effortlessly. To repair clothes by sewing them using just simple running stitches is easy to achieve, the repair can be invisible or decorative, the problem is that people have lost the reason to do it. Richard Sennett, author of The Craftsman (2009, p.81), considers 'The greatest dilemma faced by the modern artisan-craftsman is the machine, is it a friendly tool or an enemy replacing work of the human hand?' I think machinery is a friendly tool, the problem is that most people have become so reliant on machinery that it is considered quicker than doing the work by hand but, sadly, skills are being lost together with the enormous pleasure hand making provides.

In Japanese culture, repairing a broken or worn item is considered to enhance its' beauty, flaws and evidence of repair become an endearing characteristic. Repairing clothes is an opportunity to display sewing skills which have symbolic meaning and aesthetic beauty (Hemmings, 2012) (Kempton, 2019). Sashiko and Boro are two Japanese embroidery techniques which were widely used during the Meiji Restoration period of 1868 to 1912, and are continuing to be used today within contemporary design (Cliffe, 2017). Sashiko means 'little stabs'. Sashiko embroidery is a simple running stitch and was originally used to strengthen homespun worn clothing or to join pieces of old clothing together to create new clothing. This made the clothing strong and durable (Kempton, 2018). Sashiko stitch developed over time and was used to embellish clothing. My own contemporary example of Sashiko stitch work is shown in Figure 8.

Figure 8 ‘Sashiko’ stitch jacket

Boro derived from the Japanese word ‘boroboro’ which means something tattered or repaired. In many cases a garment would have been handed down over generations, eventually resembling a patchwork quilt. Textile scraps were used out of economic necessity and reworked using various stitches. This type of clothing was characteristically worn by peasant farm workers (Kempton, 2017). Boro is a worthy example of the Japanese aesthetic of wabi-sabi, in that the fabric reflects the beauty of natural wear and imperfection. A contemporary example of Boro is shown in Figure 9 by ‘Little Prairie Sparrow (2019), and Figure 10 shows a traditional 19th Century Boro work coat by SRI threads (2013).

Figure 9 ‘Boro’ stitch jeans

Figure 10 19th Century 'boro' coat

Currently, Junko Oki uses Japanese stitch techniques to create contemporary art forms. According to the International Journal 'Contemporary Art Daily' (2017), Junko Oki, born in 1963, in Kanagawa, Japan, has been creating contemporary stitch work since 2002, using textiles collected by her late mother, often several centuries old. Oki sources appropriate aged and worn clothing along with woven textiles previously used for candle making. Her design work consists of embroidering these old textiles using Boro techniques, along with Sashiko stitch. Oki has recently been profiled in 'Ocula' magazine (2019), which presents the best of contemporary art exhibited by leading galleries around the world, and profiles the people, ideas and events shaping art now. Ocula (2019) appraises Oki's exhibition and describes her style of work:

> *They consist of abstract coloured thread drawings implanted like spiralling memories into fabric. The contrast between old and new textile layers signifies an elegiac distance from past ways of living, yet her palimpsest approach can equally evoke proximity. Her aesthetics are shaped by childhood memories as well as a multitude of experiences.*

This description of Oki's style of work is consistent with my previous description of a treasured garment. The design work reflects history and emotional attachment. Oki's work focuses primarily on human relationships and feminism, as shown in Figures 11 and 12.

Figure 11 ' Moon and Chrysalis'

Figure 12 'You have to go beyond extreme solitude'

## Chapter 4 – Case Study: A new image for recycled clothing

For my case study, I have researched the UK retail consumer market to identify how and where recycled clothing can be purchased. The majority of recycled clothes are donated by the public to charity shops and then sold. The shops also tend to sell other donated items, in most cases, the shop is a jumbled combination of everything. I do not consider this to be an ideal location to promote recycled clothing or convey the importance of a clothing circular economy.

The word charity means, according to the Oxford Dictionary (2019), 'an organisation set up to provide help and raise money for those in need'. Items within charity shops tend to be donated because they are no longer wanted or needed. As society evolved, a stigma developed associating charity shops with people who may not be able to afford higher retail prices, the items in the shops are sold at lower prices because they are not new products. However, with the changing attitudes towards reusing and recycling clothes, the retail value of clothing in charity shops is increasing and the appeal of shopping in these stores is expanding.

I consider that, for recycled clothing to appeal to everyone, a contemporary marketing image is needed. If a shop solely sold recycled clothes which were arranged to be visually appealing, with a pleasant aroma and with auditory input, I think that recycled clothes could have much more credibility and be more appealing to a larger number of consumers. Krishna (2010, p.346) evaluates, '… when the arousing qualities of scent and music are congruent, it improves approach behaviours.' Undoubtedly, I consider that consumers approach behaviour towards recycled clothing could be altered by providing a shopping experience that is enjoyable, memorable and contemporary. Figure 13 shows an example of a charity shop layout, and Figure 14, featured in Sabrina Fashion Magazine, shows a contemporary shop layout, selling clothing and accessories. I consider that a shop layout similar to that of Figure 14, could be a sensual and contemporary option to promote the sale of recycled clothing.

Figure 13 Charity shop

Figure 14 Contemporary shop

Recycled clothing is generally donated and then purchased by consumers in charity shops. Sustainable value could be achieved by upcycling clothing to become more contemporary reflecting current fashion. This can be achieved by aesthetically altering garments, and then selling them to consumers. Figure 15 shows a white shirt which has been dyed or printed to achieve a contemporary look, photographed by Ellington (2019), titled 'Blue Muse'. The benefits of upcycling are that value is added to the clothes making them more appealing and desirable to wear, the clothes are saved from landfill and they can be enjoyed for longer by becoming part of a circular economy (Fletcher, 2008).

Figure 15 'Blue Muse'

The quality of the clothing textile, above all, should be viable for a circular economy (Fletcher, 2008). Eventually, it is hoped that people will instinctively purchase recycled as well as new clothing and continue to recycle clothing they no longer need. Sheila Cliffe, author of The Social Life of Kimono (2019, p.7), considers, 'People are not so clearly defined by class, as by different lifestyles now'. Recycled clothing needs to be identified as part of a sustaining lifestyle and promoted as such rather than a current trend. In the future, with population expanding and more people to clothe, we need to

consider that natural resources to make clothing are going to become scarcer. Michael McDonogh and Michael Braungart, authors of Cradle to Cradle (2009, p.42), describe this anticipated problem:

> *… the natural materials to meet the needs of our current population do not and cannot exist. If several billion people want natural-fiber blue jeans dyed with natural dyes, humanity will have to dedicate millions of acres to the cultivation of indigo and cotton plants just to satisfy the demand – acres that are needed to produce food.*

This is precisely why recycled clothes need to become more valued and part of a circular economy, hence the creation of recycling shops that will hopefully become a habitual way of purchasing clothes. McDonogh and Brungart (2009, p.14), summarise the impasse, 'It is not that we are "so bad" or that the science of Cradle to Cradle is too hard or impossible. It needs people who can think across many of the stalemates'. It is imperative that we encourage a new way of thinking with hindsight and awareness so that products can be used to their full potential.

As previously mentioned, a change of attitude towards reusing and recycling clothes is needed, and more information provided to consumers. The idea of a 'clothing information tag' I described earlier could provide this information. I agree with Harper (2017, p.118) in the following statement, I think consumers purchasing behavior could change if they were more in the loop.

> *…transparency is the general rule that all communication about aesthetically sustainable value must adhere to. The user must feel part of whatever lies behind a given product and the intentions that it is charged with. The user should feel enriched with a form of insider knowledge about what is behind or what came before the product.*

It is beneficial for consumers to have as much information as possible about the clothing items they are interested in so that they can make an informed decision whether to purchase or not. Stegall (2006, p.56) concludes that if people do not partake in the recycling of products, then whatever else is achieved could be irrelevant:

> *… if a company could design and manufacture a product that used only solar energy, gave off no toxins, and could be one-hundred percent recycled at the end of its useful life, it would still not be truly sustainable unless every person who used it did so in a responsible manner and returned it for recycling at the end of its life.*

When clothing is no longer needed, unless it is recycled, then all is lost no matter how much information and awareness is provided.

During my case study research, I became aware that some larger retailers have already started to envisage the importance of clothing sustainability. The clothing retail H&M have been accepting recycled garments in exchange for gift vouchers to encourage customers to recycle their clothes. Although they have been promoting this project since 2013, the scheme is only now beginning to gain publicity due to the rising awareness of sustainability and global warming.

## Conclusion

Throughout my Independent Inquiry, I have endeavoured to research the benefits of slow fashion and how this method of producing clothing could develop a greater understanding and appreciation of garments. To say a garment is treasured is to consider many layers of meaning, connecting treasured garments to each other and eventually forming a wardrobe of sensual and ethical relationships.

I have concluded that designers can draw upon the senses of sight, touch and smell to provide sustainable aesthetic nourishment, summon emotional memories and influence pleasant experiences. There are many other contributing factors as to why a garment becomes treasured because we all have individual ideas and life experiences. Treasured garments need to have an honest history which reflects environmental concerns and ethical practice. Garments which have evidence of being hand made using traditional skills provide unique aesthetic beauty because of the slight variance of the design.

I have concluded from my research of slow fashion, that garments produced on a smaller scale are more skilfully made and have more design elements. And, because they are not mass produced, the quality of the textile and the durability of the garment makes it suitable to be recycled. Garments of this character can be worn and appreciated for a longer time, and even across generations.

The Japanese philosophy of wabi sabi is an acceptance of imperfection, repairing worn clothing is seen as an opportunity to display sewing skills which have symbolic meaning and aesthetic beauty. This philosophy has been invaluable and has provided me with an insight into how traditional sewing skills can be applied to contemporary designs, providing aesthetic nourishment and meaning to my work.

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