How can we design for better?

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Cover image - Norwegian Sweater, Celia Pym, 2010

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In my studies I would like explore methods that we can use to design for better. This includes low impact surface print, recycling and repair, inclusive design for age, gender and disability, and the promotion of wellbeing in the design for public spaces. For me, fashion should be open to include everybody. In my opinion it is the most compassionate and empathic way in encouraging people to feel comfortable about who they are. While this may also lead into research into diversity I will not be discussing other issues like race, religion or pregnancy in my research. These are of course important issues under the umbrella of inclusive design but expanding into further research may dilute the outcomes. Environmental subjects like water-based dyes, upcycling and zero waste are also not featured as they have been previously explored. Although they may be referred to.

Low impact surface print

Natural dyes can be extracted from plants, minerals and insects. Of these, plants provide the widest range of colours. The dye product is primarily extracted from the leaves, flowers, roots, berries, nuts, seeds, wood, fungi and lichen. Whereas mineral dyes use pigments from earth and rocks, like yellow ochre and umber. In some instances, cochineal, kermes and lac insects can be a rich resource for natural dyeing (Behan, 2018, p.12). The colour achieved has more depth than synthetic dye methods, giving richer colours to the cloth. This is because they are made up of many particles of varying tones (see figure 1). The use of natural dyes is limited to home and craft dyers, traditional artisans and a handful of small-scale brands. This is due to the unpredictable nature of the process. However, it is an invitation to feel more connected to nature. There is a charm to the process as well as lessening negative environmental impact.

Figure 1 Eucalypts Dyed Cloth, India Flint, n.d.

One opportunity for low impact pattern is laser engraving. It is fast, efficient and has a low environmental impact. A range of materials can be used in this process, good quality is key. Very light-weight, sheer textiles are more problematic. Detailed and intricate designs can be achieved with this method that other processes simply cannot (see figure 2). If the CAD is understood by the designer it can be explored commercially, for example, like creating aesthetically appealing personalised engravings onto a garment (Earley et al.,2019, p.3). It is clear, legible and permanent. Unlike printing techniques, it leaves very little waste behind as most of it is vaporised or extracted as particle dust. As long as there is sufficient extraction via a vent into the atmosphere and a fume filtration unit the designer is protected from dust and odours caused by the process.

Figure 2 -woven textile, Kate Goldsworthy, 2007.

Care design to be repaired

Norwegian Rain is a slow fashion company which manufacture their woven materials in Japan for the exterior of their garments. It is this cloth that is made from 100% recycled bottles, making their raincoats both water repellent and breathable

(Hemmings, 2012, p.117). By using warp and weft threads that are digital, circular, degradable, or recycled designers are weaving with ecological systems thinking along with community in mind. Working towards reducing the waste that, as we know, the fashion and textile industry is notorious for producing.

Regardless of a brands economic level, customers report a greater level of happiness from product they know to have been produced from a circular business model. A phenomenon called warm glow (Dunn et al., 2014, p.42). This is achieved through aiding a positive action on a social or environmental footing. Customers feel they are part to the solution. A strategy that offers consumers cause-based opportunities resulting in actions like volunteering,

donating, or giving back. The reGAIN app is a multi-brand take back system that uses digital technology to connect customers with over 25,000 recycling drop off points across the UK (Accenture Strategy et al., 2019, p.36). Rewarding them with discounts towards other products and services for their returned garments. The reGAIN app enables garment collection at a significant scale.

Collaborative consumption should be widely considered amongst consumers. The act of sharing, passing on or renting goods in order to extend its time in use. This term was birthed dissatisfaction of the society of abundance resulting from the never-ending, never-satisfied escalation of consumption (Binninger et al., 2015, pg.971). Extending the lifecycle of a product should be a priority. Consumption can be compared to as an addiction. All of our major environmental issues are all primarily caused by or related to over-consumption (Braungart, 2002, pg.50). The most effective way of reducing environmental effects of fashion is investing in your wardrobe. To produce and dispose of less. Buy cheap, buy twice is not good enough.
an aspirin, alleviating a rather large collective (Braungart, 2002, pg.50). Eco-efficiency would transform the industry into one that integrates environmental and social concerns. A concept that predates the industrial revolution, to use a resource to its full potential. For ideologies surrounding collaborative consumption to be appealing for customers the experience needs to be enticing. Circular fashion brand Mud Jeans advertise their items under a lease service to keep clothing in use for as long as possible as shown in figure 3. It is important to acknowledge solutions like this should be meaningful and provide valuable experiences to the customer.

Figure 3 Lifecycle of Mud Jeans Diagram, 2020

When repairing a garment, the user starts to build an emotional relationship with the cloth, a relationship that may have been previously neglected. The user is then more considerate about the longevity of the item. Brands such as Mud Jeans and Hiut Denim offer free repairs to their customers with every purchase. Although the customer is not directly involved with ather than simply being the consumers of the end product of a craft practice, this potential is best realised [when] maker and user work together (Hur at al., 2013, p.43). When we really value clothing, they are treasured, we repair it and wear it year after year. The garment becomes an appreciated investment. motionally connected consumers are 52% more valuable to a brand than those who are just satisfied p.2). If brand incorporate post-purchase care into an item it can lead to increased sales due to brand loyalty. Care in design rewards the user with a sense of accomplishment and desire to be part of something bigger than themselves. When repair is untaken by hand it is incredibly time consuming but an intimate action that becomes deeply personal (Hemmings, 2012, p.88). An immersive investment that is intense. If a brand like Antiform offer mending workshops, then they are seen to be giving back to their community and investing in the shared future of their products, customers are more likely to stay loyal to Antiform and recommend them to others. The practise of stitch is thought to be restorative and therapeutic, beneficial to the mind and body. We unconsciously see a needle as a tool to repair damage. To use one is an act of forgiveness not to destroy or damage (Parker, 2010, p.xix). The creative process has a self -transformative impact on a person. The only things that limits you is the tools and your imagination to create something that represents an emotion or experience. Stitch as embroidery can portray the thoughts inside the persons head, sometimes better than what they can express verbally. It helps us to understand the process of embroidering affirms well-being in a person through its therapeutic traits as a craft (Parker, 2010, p.xx). Handcraft promotes self-growth as a great amount of time, concentration and effort has been invested.

Inclusivity

Over summer of 2020 ethical clothing brand Lucy and Yak came under fire from their They are a relativity small independent brand that had limited resources compared to mainstream high street

companies but unlike high street brands, they are transparent about clothing production, profits and who their profits help. But their customers felt like their demands for larger sizes were going unheard.

despite the average for British Women is a UK size 14 (Format, 2019). Changing the boundaries of this is made harder by manufacturers as many often do not produce elements

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little industry change that aligns with social changes. Body positivity is gaining traction through social media but that is as far as its going. Inclusivity is recognising we are all human; all have a body and are all just trying to live our lives. Creating divides by size etc. is a barrier to creating an equal society. The relationship between size and beauty changes across time and geographical location, in Western society there is a narrow understanding that being thin is beautiful. However, looking at statues from the Renaissance and Ancient world the sculpturers have portrayed women in an idealised form with large hips, full

see

figure 4).

sizing occurs.

Figure 4 Birth of Venus, Botticelli, 1485

Before now there was seen to be no market for disabilities in fashion. Maybe as there are a spectrum of variants, choosing an area to focus on may be perceived as discriminatory. It is hard to fi

majority of collections are basic garments with muted colours. From my inquires there are a handful of companies that offer stylish alternatives to unimaginative sweatshirts and jogging bottoms. Mode Ézé Plus offers those with disabilities or health conditions effective design. Supporting the comfort of the reduced autonomy user. As a family run business the brand is passionate about what they do. Their bras open in the front with jumpers, dresses and other items have discrete snap openings at the back that gives the illusion of a mainstream clothing item that slips on or zips up. These innovations are aided by the insertion of magnets encased in the seams as shown in figure 5 below. As well as disability adaptive design can be helpful for limited autonomy in older age.

Figure 5 Fleece Sweatshirt, Mode Ézé Plus, 2020.

London Metropolitan graduate Ronja Thielmann graduate collection was derived from similar values. The capsule collection of six looks consists of adjustable, adaptable clothing that is both functional and visually appealing (see figures 6 and 7). Her easily accessible designs include 'stroke-friendly' zips, elastic cords for adjustability, lots of accessible openings for treatment and even an inside pocket for a catheter bag. She focuses on a street wear aesthetic that will appeal to a wide range of ages and disabilities. There is dignity in her concept.

Figure 6 Look 3- The Double Opening, Ronja Inclusive Design, 2020.

Figure 7 Look 5 - The Face, Ronja Inclusive Design, 2020.

The term gender has been used in the English language since the 14th century, but the most

was used to describe the role of a particular biological sex should adopt (Paoletti, 2015,p.22 generation blurred attitudes in fashion relating to gender rules. It became acceptable for women to wear what was considered masculine clothing. However, despite a few celebrity figures in later years androgynous character Ziggy Stardust, it is still considered controversial for men to wear feminine fashion. of US Vogue there is a (see figure 10). Especially as the first female figure to wear trousers on the cover was depicted in 1917 in a sporting scenario (see figure 8), with the first casual photographic depiction was in 1939 (see figure 9) in both US and British publications (Munford, 2012). I believe that describing these social changes as a gender crisis has led to the gradual increase in unisex and non-binary trends (Reed at al., 2009). The increase in this has also led to awareness of gender dysphoria within inclusivity.

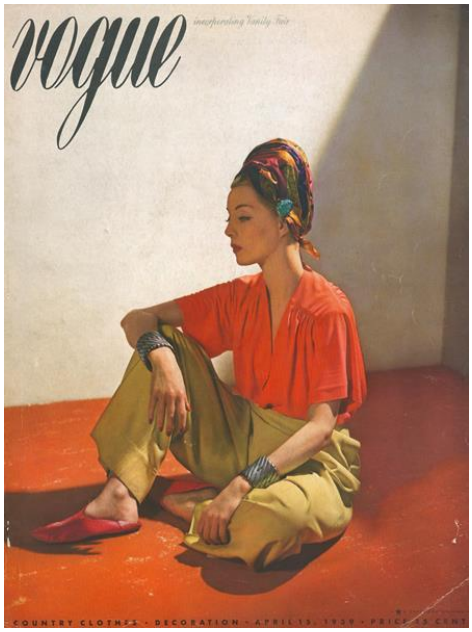

Figure 8 Vogue magazine cover, 1 August 1917.

Figure 9 Vogue magazine cover, 15 April 1939.

Figure 10 Vogue magazine cover, 1 December 2020.

As previously mentioned under unisex, the baby boomer generation were radically responsible for societal changes towards fashion. The power of these deviations came from the vast number of people taking part. They wanted something different from their youth, to be non-conformitive. In the 1960s, many chose, very publicly, to start looking different from the normal mirror image in fashion between mothers and their children (Young, 2016, Pg. 67-73). Innovative designers and more informal approaches to shopping drew a dividing line between the generations that created a new market for youth fashion. The way people dressed was an obvious sign of shifting attitudes in society. However, it is this generation today that gets forgotten. Clothes are meant to mediate between the body and the social world but there is an aging majority that are being underrepresented (Entwistle 2000). This majority is but they do not see themselves as old (Twigg, 2012, pg.1038).

affect attitudes to designing for the older market, which is regarded as a marginal and low-

012, pg.1038).

- Fashion for the older market becomes much more diluted with muted colourways. Just as the body changes over time so does the fit and style of fashion, but there is an industrious lack of creativity when it comes to designing these adjustments.

outnumbered children under five years of age United Nations, 2020). So why are they being treated as a minority? With this being an ever-expanding market, there needs to be a resurgence of contemporary

Wellbeing

Public spaces need to promote wellbeing. Welcoming outdoor public spaces that share the site with a body of water. The relationship between land and water is a humble one, our instinctive urge to swim and splash in the open air runs deep. Marine biologist Wallace J Nichols believes water helps repair the mind, body and soul, the antidote to our modern busy lives. Our brain releases neurotransmitters associated with euphoria and wellness. Swimming increases this as the heart pumps up to 30% more blood around the body, our body is strengthened by the added dose of endorphins, producing a natural high (McCarron, 2020, p.106-109). Where there is water there is life. A wellspring often represents hope.

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children are experiencing nature.

(Pyle, 2015) .

clopaedia of

knowledge about the natural word and how it operates. My parents could name species of birds and plants with limited knowledge of planting and behaviours. I probably know around 15% of that knowledge. We have got too used to surviving outside the rhythms of nature. This refers to the impact of the lack of connection with nature. Nature deficit disorder best

s of alienation from nature, among them: diminished use of the senses, attention difficulties, and higher rates of physical and emotional illness (Louv, 2005, p.36) The fault lies with society, it presents a damning indictment of what we prioritise, value and are distracted by. These are exacerbated by technological advances and acceleration of consumerism. Through the resurgence of reconnecting with the natural world we need to keep the momentum of embracing nature.

Figure 11 Exterior view of Gardens by the Bay, Singapore, 2012.

influences

Through creating public places which foster feelings of security, connection, acceptance and empowerment, we can build places that strengthen community physical and psychological health (see figure 11)

environments are essential for positive mental health (Elliot, 2012, p.24). Ulrich studied the recovery times of patients and required pain relief medication. Half of which had views of greenery, or a brick wall. Indeed, the patients with the views of trees recovered faster and requested less pain medication.

Intensions

As innovators and artists, top fashion designers have the freedom to explore pushing the boundaries of convention, creating wonderfully imaginative and subversive designs. What I perceive to be wearable art rather than practical fashion items. Though important, it is larger retailers who dictate what is available on the high street and online. Despite a noticeable change of scope for low impact, repair and inclusivity there is limited evidence. Until there is, retailers will continue with a labelled linear approach to designing for fashion as they see little profit in changing.

The ripple effects of change start small. With this, for my creative venture I strive be one of those ripples. Moving away from public spaces I would like to create a capsule collection that emulates nature incorporating one or more of the topics previously mentioned. For example, if I were to focus on Inclusivity through adaptable clothing. My aim would be to create a collection for any age, gender or size that draws inspiration from the natural world. Conceptualising a multi-size garment will also cut down on waste. However, these inquires often open more questions. There is so many avenues that it is difficult to focus on one path. Ultimately, I want to focus on what I value as a designer, slowly changing the landscape of design for the future.

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