

Ways of Perceiving

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This exhibition, entitled ‘Dressing for Nature’, will explore the benefits and value in sustainable and eco-friendly textile design, through a collection of garments made with natural fibers, upcycled material, or new technologies. It is drastic, in this day and age, that we need to take the first steps into making Fashion into a more reusable and recyclable industry. ‘When washed, some garments release plastic microfibres, of which around half a million tonnes every year contribute to ocean pollution – 16 times more than plastic microbeads from cosmetics.’ (Ellen Macarthur Foundation). Most of our garments are indeed not biodegradable or environmentally friendly, therefore very damaging to Nature and eventually, very damaging to ourselves. It is fundamental that this exhibition also covers the theme of circular economy and therefore will take place in a circular space. This space will become in itself a representation of a circular economy as each garment, no matter how valuable or mundane, historical or modern, can be taken apart, recycled or reused to create something new. Effectively, the exhibition is not about the garments themselves but about design processes and natural fibre fabrics.

This exhibition space will be a smaller version of the Fashion Galleries in the V&A museum, an elevated circular mezzanine in a very large room with a very high domed ceiling as to avoid any feelings of claustrophobia. The curated garments will be exhibited against the walls but far enough to allow visitors to be able to fully appreciate and analyse each garment. Visitors will be invited to try their own hand at upcycling garments, in the center of the mezzanine, a sewing workshop will be set up. In order for this exhibition/workshop to be manageable, different entry times will be listed as to not overcrowd the space.



Fig.1

Nowadays, clothing fabrics are a concoction of different types of materials and fibers to accommodate our needs but makes them practically impossible to recycle. ‘Reducing the complexity of materials used to produce textiles would allow recycling innovation efforts to focus on a small palette of materials optimized for both functional needs and recycling technologies.’(?). The beauty in an item of clothing is it’s simplicity of design and making, especially if it can be recycled. However, a more concerning statistic is the ever growing number of garment waste, practically new clothing being thrown away in order to purchase the latest fashion trends.



Fig.2

Recycling old yet still wearable pieces of clothing is as important as making the choice between fibre blends and natural fibre newer garments. There is no point in throwing away clothes that are still perfectly wearable, they will still be around for years to come. Bethany Williams is a new fashion designer who took the industry by surprise when she introduced her 100% sustainable and recycled garment collection (Vogue, Autumn/winter 2020 collection). This piece from her newest Autumn/Winter 2020 Collection will be the first garment visitors see as they enter the exhibition, as giving a second life to our wardrobe should be our main priority instead of throwing everything away.

‘For my most recent collection ‘Women of Change’, I have worked alongside San Patrignano in Rimini, Italy - an education and rehabilitation programme for people with drug and alcohol dependency that teaches traditional Italian craft and fosters a sense of community. Together we developed hand-woven textiles from

recycled packaging materials found within the workshop' (Bethany Williams, for Fashion Revolution).

A common worry when it comes to repurpose old clothing, old materials is 'it won't look cool', however this designer shows that it is perfectly attainable to produce cool looking, 'avant-garde' pieces of durable clothing.



Fig. 3

Recycling must also take place within factories, as a lot of offcuts, rejected garments and waste is produced and immediately thrown away, without the chance of being given a second life, even when the first was very short.

Doodlage specialises in making garments out of such waste. 'Every fast paced garment production unit discards anything between 16-20% of solid fabric from their total consumption. Upto 1.5-2% garments are rejected daily in these units for damages. this fabric is often down-cycled' (Doodlage, eco-checklist, website). This eco-conscious brand proves that even offcuts and rejected garment waste can still become very good quality, well made pieces of clothing, no matter how tiny the piece is. This piece will stand next to Bethany Williams, as it is a more 'wearable' daily piece of recycled clothing .



Fig. 4

Her Majesty, Queen Elizabeth II's coronation gown is a perfect example of the beauty in natural fibres. Made from silk for the most part, the coronation dress is one of the most important pieces of twentieth century garment design (Royal Collection Trust). The advantages of the coronation dress being made of silk are, it is soft against the skin, retains its shape, keeps cool in the summer and warm in the winter and it is absorbent to a certain degree. Qualities that are very much needed in a dress of the sort, for such an occasion where wearing multiple layers of heavy fabric and jewelry is required to be worn. The downside for everyday wear, silk looks expensive and is incredibly so.

As mentioned previously, this exhibition will also contain a workshop space where taught sessions will take place to teach basic sewing skills for beginners and more advanced undertakers will be invited to create pieces for the exhibition itself. This exhibition will become an exhibition curated by the public itself and provide the necessary knowledge for future application in their own daily lives whether its creating a brand new unique piece of clothing or fixing a hole or tear. It also allows visitors to come and be creative together, a gesture that is taking place more than ever today, during this pandemic, and will hopefully still be when all is over.

Figures:

Fig.1 <https://www.vam.ac.uk/info/futureplan>

Fig. 2

https://londonfashionweek.co.uk/designers_profile.aspx?DesignerID=3173#RL

Fig.3 <https://www.doodlage.in/product/sehela-blue-tunic/>

Fig.4

<https://www.rct.uk/collection/themes//fashioning-a-reign-90-years-of-style-from-the-queens-wardrobe/buckingham-palace/coronation-dress>

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