

Basic Goodness:

Creating a Uniform for a Modern-day Devotee.

Meghan Cooper

Thesis

A thesis presented to OCAD University in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Interdisciplinary Master's in Art, Media and Design in Master of Fine Arts

Toronto, Ontario, Canada, 2021

Table of Contents

i. Abstract.....	p.3
ii. List of figures.....	p.4
1. Chapter 1 - Preface.....	p.5
2. Chapter 2 - Methodology.....	p.13
3. Chapter 3 - Meditation + Dharma Art.....	p.18
4. Chapter 4 - Yogic Science + Colour.....	p.26
5. Chapter 5 - Steiner— Waldorf + Knitting.....	p.32
6. Chapter 6 - Spiritual experience + Art.....	p.36
7. Chapter 7 - Process.....	p.38
8. Chapter 8 - Basic Goodness Clothing.....	p.43
9. Chapter 9 - Closing Thoughts.....	p.47
iii. Bibliography.....	p.49

Abstract

This thesis investigates the science of yogic living: living in harmony with nature and expanding consciousness through meditation. It discusses how the clothing we wear can support this way of living. Wearing white/light clothing is an ancient, science-based tradition maintained by yoga practitioners. The thesis culminates in the creation of a line of clothing called 'Basic Goodness Clothing'. The line consists of light colour clothing made of organic cotton, illuminating a way of living a specific modern yogic lifestyle. The thesis begins with an account of what art and artmaking mean to me and how this meaning includes clothing, in principle, and Basic Goodness Clothing in particular.

List of Figures

- Figure 1. Meg in meditation in Basic Goodness Clothing, 2021.....p.14
- Figure 2. Meg adoring a Basic Goodness cardigan, 2020.....p.16
- Figure 3. Sadhguru teaching in India, 2018.....p.29
- Figure 4. Inside the Goetheanum, Dornach. Switzerland,1919.....p.33
- Figure 5. Children knitting in grade 1 at Ak Lu'um Waldorf School, 2019.....p.34
- Figure 6. Basic Goodness Cardigan, 2021.....p.44
- Figure 7. Basic Goodness Clothing, 2021.....p.45

CHAPTER ONE

Preface

Before giving an account of how Basic Goodness Clothing is integrated into my understanding of art and artmaking, I would like to thank my supervisor, Nithikul Nimkulrat, for her critical comments on an earlier version of this thesis. I am aware that the arguments I make in it are unusual for a conventional MFA requirement. Nithikul Nimkulrat has challenged me to be clearer about how Basic Goodness Clothing is a form of art, and for that I am very grateful. Necessarily these introductory remarks will be somewhat autobiographical.

The logic of the argument of this thesis is straightforward: (1) there is, for me, a connection between artmaking and spiritual practice; (2) clothing can be a form of artmaking; (3) colour and spirituality are connected; (4) specifically, I apply the teachings of Chögyam Trungpa regarding Dharma art (genuine, authentic art) to the production of a clothing line, which I call Basic Goodness Clothing; (5) this artmaking is related to my meditative practice and my practice of kriya yoga; (6) through trial and error I developed patterns to knit; (7) there are parallels between the experiences of Eastern and Western thinking that are expressed in different but equivalent formulations; (8) the production of Basic Goodness Clothing combines art and spirituality in order to aid practitioners in yogic living today in Western societies.

For me there is a strong connection between a spiritual practice and artmaking. This connection likely stems from my childhood, since I was fortunate to attend the Calgary Waldorf school and the Rudolf-Steiner-Schule-Schwabing in downtown Munich. Waldorf education maintains an holistic pedagogical system in which art, spirit, reverence and Divinity permeate learning in every subject. I carried the essence of that early education within me through all of my later educational experiences, noticing when it was missing and when it was present. Through that contrast I sought out teachers and education systems that understood the importance of integrating spirit and art, so that I might learn to create my art from inspiration. I use the term "inspiration" in the literal sense of "breathing into" (*in-spirare* in Latin). For the ancient Greeks inspiration was a gift of the muses; for Christians, a gift of the Holy Spirit. The point is that inspiration is experienced as coming from elsewhere even while it is also internal. It is distinct, for example, from technique or skill. To use modern language, inspiration is not an attribute of consciousness or conscious intention. Sometimes inspiration is said to come from the subconscious or from a pre-conscious awareness, which is fine so long as we remember that inspiration is beyond our control. We cannot simply summon it at will.

Having studied art in six different countries and in an even greater variety of education systems, I found that the schools that provide a more holistic and even esoteric approach to learning were far more meaningful and important to my creative process. Eventually, I completed my undergraduate degree in art at

Buddhist-inspired Naropa University, in Boulder, Colorado. The foundation of education at Naropa is contemplative learning.

It is on the basis of this foundation, of enjoying a meaningful connection between art and spiritual practice, that I understand the evolution of this thesis. In the classes I took for my graduate degree, which were very useful in many respects, I nevertheless felt the lack of an esoteric or spiritual dimension as part of the artmaking process. I began to yearn for the warmth of that connection and so sought to recover it. Thus did my research develop into deepening the relationship between art and spirituality by looking to the most consequential influences from my past. I began to knit, a “practical skill” that I had learned in Waldorf schools. I chose to use only white and light-coloured fibres as a means to supplement my spiritual practice, as these colours are connected to an ancient scientific colour theory, which I discuss in chapters 4 and 5. I began to research the relationship between meditation and art, and between yoga and art, and to undertake research about contemporary as well as past artists who incorporated spirituality in their artwork.

There is a long-held theory, elucidated in the Twelve Lectures on Colour, given by Rudolf Steiner, that white/light (which according to this theory is the combination of the seven colours in our spectrum) can connect us to the Divine, and how wearing white can support the process of our spiritual development.¹ White/light represents simplicity, which allows for a more accessible route to the

¹ (Steiner 1996, 5)

Divine.² It was from that point that I began my project of Basic Goodness Clothing not as an exercise in dogmatic theology but as a series of questions about artistic creativity: What is the place from which I am creating? Can I make something for the world that supports spiritual development or spiritual progress? Can I make something that is in harmony with nature and the genuine nature that resides in each of us? My understanding of the science and of the comprehensive account behind the practice of yoga showed me that a positive response to those questions was possible. Thus, I began to work on a white/light-coloured, organic clothing line.

My project then, includes reflection on the process of artmaking: I love to use my hands, to choose a yarn with the perfect texture – softness or smoothness or coziness – to suit my vision, and then to use my hands to transform that yarn row by row into a sweater that can wrap around and comfort someone. My first commissioned sweater was for artist Ceara Metlitovec, who called it a cloud and said, “I have never felt so in love with a sweater before. My husband cuddled me all day. It’s so warm, I am wearing it for the third day in a row and I don’t plan on wearing anything else for the next two months.” I will try to show in the following few pages how this response confirmed what I understand to be art because it corresponds to what I, the maker, intended the reception of the work to be. It seems to me that an ability to create a garment that has the intended result for a wearer of it confirms my artistic practice more strongly than a discourse about a modern yogic lifestyle.

² (Steiner 1996, 5)

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How do I understand artmaking? To begin with, the agent, the artist, is distinct from the work produced. This is why an artwork can be meaningful even when we do not know the name of the artist who produced it. This is why European medieval artists are sometimes known simply as the "Master of ..." Aachen, Cologne, and so on. Without claiming any medieval predecessors, my looking to fabricate a line of clothing simply as an artistic achievement goes against the contemporary concern with art as a unique product of an artistic imagination. That is, there is no concern here, in this artwork, for the "signature" by which an artist signs a work to stamp it as his or hers. There is, however, a sensitivity to style, skill, and workmanship common to both personally signed and unsigned art.

Second, in principle, I believe that works of art, whether relatively anonymous or identified with a unique maker, aim to be permanent, or at least more than a consumer good. The process of fabrication ends with a finished product that we usually call a "use-object," which in turn becomes a means for other purposes. In this respect, ordinary clothing is simply used, for example, as protection against the elements. Basic Goodness Clothing, however, aims to be more than just a line of wearable apparel. This "more than" I have referred to as the spiritual significance of the line of clothing. The term "spiritual significance" is not meant to evoke a sense of pious superiority so much as a sense of beauty and love. I once saw an old photo of Jacques Cousteau on his ship, *Calypso*. In

the photo he was wearing a wool sweater, which looked very well worn. It struck me that it might be his one cherished sweater. I wondered then if it had been made for him by someone who held him dear and who wanted him to be warm as he pursued his adventures, someone who thought of him with every stitch, placing prayers within each one. I thought of it as one sweater worn as a prayer.

Works of art, then, are not *just* for use, are not *just* use-objects. The philosopher Kant said works of art were also things in which we take pleasure or enjoyment. Indeed, the proper place of a work of art, a painting, for example, or a concerto, is removed from the context of ordinary objects as well as from the wants of ordinary life. That is one way of enjoying art. Sometimes we regret that we have to go to an art gallery or a concert hall to experience such art, but even the oldest human art, Paleolithic cave art and petroglyphs, which I have visited in the company of my dad in his study of them, are found in non-ordinary and out-of-the-way places. Other forms of art, which may be tied to conventional religious and magical experiences, have often survived the occasions of their creation precisely because they were sequestered in “special” places.

Fine: but what about a line of clothing? How is that art? To be sure, this line of clothing, when compared to a painting or a petroglyph, only minimally takes on the attribute of permanence. Like Jacques Cousteau’s sweater, it will wear out and do so more quickly than the almost permanent durability of a sculpture or of a painting. That said, clothing can still be understood as an art form. This insight was strongly impressed on me several years ago when I experienced a semester abroad in Florence. One of the field trips enabled several of us to visit the semi-

annual Milan Fashion Week. This event was for me as much an exposure to art as a visit to the Uffizi or the Accademia.

A few years ago, the Glenbow Museum in Calgary hosted a visiting exhibit of the “New Look” of post-world war two clothing created by Christian Dior. The dresses in this retrospective from 1947 to 1957 came mostly from the collection held by the Royal Ontario Museum, but they also illustrated a story of postwar Toronto and postwar Canada. Dior’s *haute couture*, (literally: elevated needlework) was also a celebration of elegance following (particularly in France) the war years of deprivation and suffering. Here, it seems to me, one can find an example of how clothing can also carry a spiritual meaning: in Dior’s case it was to rejoice at the end of war-making.

A second, more modest example is also housed in the Glenbow: my great-grandmother’s wedding dress. It combines lacework with elements of Tsuut’ina symbolism to honour the heritage of both her parents and to celebrate the experience of pioneer Alberta women. It was worn only twice: once on her wedding day and once by her youngest daughter on her wedding day. As with the Dior collection, this was not an ordinary garment, but a formal dress suffused with significance, which is why it was worn only on joyful and special occasions. This kind of art, clothing art, may be “used up,” unlike a painting, but in service to a celebratory or spiritual experience for the wearer of it. That experience, like the semi-permanence of other artforms, also rises above the occasion of its making.

A final consideration regarding Basic Goodness Clothing as an art form is that the source of this art, like other forms of art, is the human capacity to imagine and to think. This capacity is more than a want or a need, which humans share with animals; wants and needs are unconnected to the world of meaning that humans alone create. Works of art, Hannah Arendt once said, are “thought things,” by which she meant that thought, usually imaginative thought not logical analysis, preceded the fabrication of the work. Once produced, in order to become meaningful and more than a mere thing, the clothing has to be (as it were) resurrected in the thoughts and imagination of the wearer. In this respect, one might think this line of clothing as akin to poetry. Just as poetry requires an imaginative act of participation to be understood, so too this line of clothing is meant to enhance the spirituality of humans through the imaginative participation of the wearer in the meaning intended by the artist. This is what took place when Ceara Metlitovec received and wore the sweater I made for her. The evidence in support of that statement lies in her remarks to me on how the sweater was received and worn.

CHAPTER TWO

Methodology

The general reflections in the previous chapter, and the contingent autobiographical facts that occasioned them have a specific and focussed application for my artwork. This chapter is intended to address in a preliminary way the question of “process” raised by Nithikul Nimkulrat in her response to the first draft of this thesis. I discuss “process” in more detail in chapter 7. The first part of the question posed by “process,” however, concerns what we usually call methodology. This general term refers specifically to the sources of imagination and thought introduced in chapter 1.

Dharma Art, anthroposophy and yogic science are the “pillars” of the theoretical framework in which I position myself as an artist. These three “pillars” constitute the specific sources of my artistic imagination. They include a specific spiritual content because, in my view, making art is not just about “producing” artwork, it is also about a way of living, about the art of living. I practice yoga-meditation in order to clear my mind as well as to care for my body, so that whatever I put forth into the world is, at least by intention, aesthetically “clean” and, to use a metaphor favoured by some yoga practitioners, of a “higher vibration.” That is, the element of art in a line of clothing aims to elevate the clothing beyond the ordinary utilitarian function that clothing conventionally has.

The keywords that describe the spiritual practice I have in mind include:

reflection, prayer, meditation, silent contemplation, studying sacred texts and practices, clearing/cleansing space, sound/vibration, presentation, documentation, yoga, nature.

For this project I began every morning with a meditation and a kriya yoga practice. I first cleansed my space using Palo Santo and diffused essential oils. I played recorded mantras during my work in order to elevate the space. I spent at least an hour each day reading sacred texts of Yoga/Buddhism/mysticism/sacred art, etc.

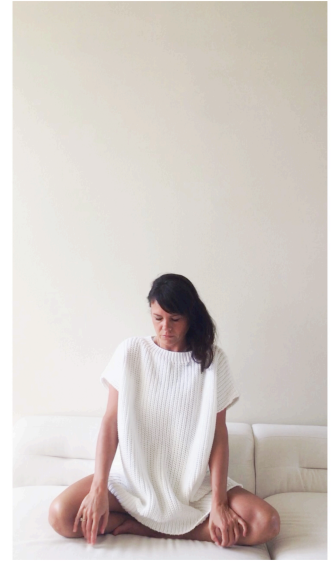


Figure 1. Meg in meditation in Basic Goodness Clothing Sweater Dress, 2021.

As noted in chapter 1, in order to recover a spiritual sense of artmaking that I seemed to have lost, I recalled having learned to knit. I wanted to recover and develop that skill, so I practiced knitting basic stitches and techniques. Once I regained an ease with it, I challenged myself to learn new ones.

I did a great deal of research online, including watching technical videos that demonstrated stitches, methods, fibres, and techniques. I ordered patterns that were beyond my skill level. I wanted to learn to use them in order to understand other methods and produce new results.

Gradually, I decided that I wanted to make my own patterns, so through trial and error, and simply by making, I developed them. I wrote out the patterns and

adjusted stitches until I was satisfied with the outcomes. Throughout the development of my own patterns I was intending that the clothes be for me. Thus, I would knit an entire garment and try it on only to take it apart to adjust it again and then again until the fit and the style were just what I wanted. I had a general image of what the finished garment would be like – the fit and style would be “right.” I did not have a detailed technical plan of attack, but I knew I had the result I was looking for when it appeared.

Posting items online as a record of what I was making and through that process people happened upon my page and I began to receive requests for commissions. The great advantage of working in this manner is that I could make something for someone personally and give the piece special attention. For over half a year I was knitting everything by hand. However, making a pair of pants would sometimes take weeks, which certainly limited what I could make. Accordingly, I decided I would learn to use a manual knitting machine. From the start I did not see this as a compromise so much as a necessity akin to using social media to connect with a market for my art (I discuss this question in chapter 4 as well.) Interestingly enough, using a machine rather than knitting by hand, made no difference in the experiential connection between the production technique and the finished garment. After all, Ghandi used a spinning wheel rather than hand-spin threads for his garments. I concluded from this that the major technical elements in the production of the garment were care, attention (or mindfulness) and skill.

To learn to use a knitting machine properly I studied and followed the available manuals and took lessons with a local knitting teacher. When I wanted to learn

something that was not available from the manuals or that the teacher did not offer, or if I did not know how to accomplish a technique, I simply practiced and prayed for the correct methods.

There was again an element of trial and error involved, but in addition I would practice patience and wait for inspiration before I attempted to make anything new. From the start, however, I knew that I wanted to use only natural and organic fibres in my work. Online research led me to a source that provided the correct weight of white organic cotton, so I set up a wholesale account with them. I will discuss my source in detail in chapter 8 on Basic Goodness Clothing.

Once I completed a garment, I documented it with photography and then archived the photos online. I included photos of nature with those of my garments, and often attached a quote from sacred texts. The point of bringing nature, an artwork and a text together is to illustrate how these three elements reinforced one another. For example:

Along with this photo I posted this quote by from Rumi:

“This silence, this moment, every moment, if it’s genuinely inside you, brings what you need. There’s nothing to believe.”³



Figure 2. Meg adoring a Basic Goodness cardigan and wearing a Basic Goodness dress. 2020

³ <https://www.goodreads.com/quotes/983605-this-silence-this-moment-every-moment-if-it-s-genuinely-inside>. 5/6/2021

Implied in the harmony of text, clothing, and context is what today is called sustainability. To be clear, however, unlike the modern and largely political use of the term by contemporary environmentalists, the focus here is on spiritual harmony, not on the material control of the natural world for long-term exploitation, which, in practice, environmentalists' advocacy of "sustainability" has come to mean.

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The next three chapters deal, in order, with the three pillars: Dharma art, Yogic science, and the anthroposophy developed by Rudolf Steiner.

CHAPTER THREE

Meditation + Dharma Art

Dharma is a Sanskrit word meaning “to hold,” “to maintain,” “to preserve.” Especially in Buddhism Dharma refers to the cosmic law that created an ordered universe from chaos. Dharma holds that there is a true way for all beings to live out their lives, and it is only through living the Dharma that harmony throughout the world is ensured. By living their Dharma, all beings, beyond ensuring harmony for the whole, find self-realization and enlightenment, living in joy and fulfilment.

Many of the artists whose works resonate the most deeply with me have developed a solid foundation for their artwork in their spiritual practices. Artistic inspiration is said to be mysterious, but the concept of Dharma art gives form and stability to the evocation of an otherwise vague notion of inspiration. At its simplest, it means living and creating in harmony and joy. But it is not simply about art and life as two distinct spheres of being. It also includes how we handle ourselves in the most specific ways, “how we hold a glass of water, how we put it down, how we can hold a note card and make it into a sacred sceptre, how we can sit on a chair, how we can work with a table, how we do anything.”⁴

Dharma Art, Basic Goodness, Discovering Elegance, all are concepts developed and taught by Tibetan Buddhist monk and artist, Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche

⁴ (Chögyam Trungpa 1996,128)

(1939-1987), who sought to bring, in his words, “art to everyday life.”⁵ This, for me, is the element of “thought” that I introduced in the first chapter of this thesis as being a necessary part of an artwork *per se*. In this respect as we shall see there is an equivalence between “eastern” and “western” formulations of artmaking.

The language is not identical, but the meaning of “eastern” and “western” formulations is very close. This is why, it seems to me, that Chögyam Trungpa was able successfully to found Naropa University in Boulder, Colorado, where I completed a degree in art with a minor in the psychology of health and healing. Before each art class, the students and teacher sat in silent meditation for five minutes, with the result that we learned about the value of meditation as a prelude and thus the beginning of a methodology for artmaking. I was influenced immensely by Chögyam Trungpa and his teachings and I have used them in my daily life since. I cannot conceive of art making, or for that matter, of life, without my spiritual practice.

As Chögyam Trungpa taught, “Dharma art is genuine art.” It is Buddhist, to be sure, but that does not mean that it simply represents and depicts familiar Buddhist images and symbols. If you make an image of the Buddhist Wheel of Life, for example, or try to represent the story of Gautama, that alone does not make Dharma art. Rather, Dharma art “refers to art that springs from a certain state of mind on the part of the artist that could be called the meditative state.” Such a meditative state of consciousness combines an attitude of “directness”

⁵ <http://www.buddhanet.net/masters/trungpa.htm> Accessed 10, 20, 2019

with a kind of “unselfconsciousness in one’s creative work.”⁶ This sounds paradoxical: “directness” seems to imply a perceptual focus, which seems to be in tension with “unselfconsciousness.”

In practice, however, meditation resolves this tension. Meditation for me is at once the framework, the foundation, the theory, the methodology, and the essential element of any pattern that arises in the creation of any artwork. Meditation in practice allows my ego, any personal identification, any preconceived concepts, and any personal emotions to take a backseat. I become “unselfconscious” precisely to allow for what arises in my consciousness to be fresh and clear. It is as if meditation allows me to become an instrument of art. This too is part of my biography: when I was a Waldorf student, we would open each day with eurythmy, a kind of dance that was, in retrospect, more a form of moving meditation. The purpose of eurythmy is to open young students to inspiration and creative expression. That is, for children, eurythmy is equivalent in its purpose to meditation: it allows the child to be unselfconscious, to forget about dancing according to the right steps, for example, in order to be receptive to inspiration and to be able to act creatively, but also with a kind of discipline.

By following the initial teaching of Chögyam Trungpa regarding daily meditation, no matter with which art form I engage, I have learned over the years that my ego cannot be involved. Whenever my ego and “its uprisings of

⁶ (Chögyam Trungpa 1996,1)

personal desires”⁷ is involved and I attempt to do something I think I *should* do, it does not usually work. The reason, very simply, I believe now, is because *should* automatically and unfailingly involves judgement. I cannot create authentically when judgement looms in the background, even if it is not explicit. Creating through inspiration is the only way.

This is not some kind of Buddhist idiosyncrasy. Others who have reflected upon the creative process in artmaking have made similar observations, which is why I said I thought there was an equivalence between “eastern” and “western” formulations of a common human process regarding sources of creativity. (The previous use of quotation marks regarding “eastern” and “western” is to suggest that this division is only provisional, conventional or derivative of a more fundamental unity.)

For example, Agnes Martin (1912-2004) was an abstract painter who has influenced my work and art practice not least of all when she said “she would sit and wait to be inspired.”⁸ In a 1977 interview Martin said, “I would say, ‘what am I going to do next?’ That’s how I would ask for inspiration. I don’t have any ideas myself. I have a vacant mind in order to do exactly what the inspiration calls for. And I don’t start to paint until after I have an inspiration.”⁹ This is, in a nutshell, Dharma Art, and this method is one I follow.

⁷ (Yogananda 1946, 245)

⁸ <https://www.masterclass.com/classes/annie-leibovitz-teaches-photography> Accessed 3/9/2020

⁹ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-JfYjmo5OA> Accessed 3/9/2020

It is generally believed that meditation is about quieting the mind. And it is, but it is also about knowing that the meditator is not just comprised of thoughts running through the mind that need to be slowed down. Meditation is meant to dissolve illusions, such as those that inform the structures of society, and to take one into what the Buddhists call the boundlessness beyond such illusions, from which place the artist is able to create genuine artworks. When the rigid lines of conventional roles and identities can be dissolved in a way that allows the artist simply to look, observe and inquire with a fresh gaze, then something inspired can be shared with and within the world. It is as if the world appears through a clear lens, not "through a glass darkly" as the Christian Bible puts it (1 Cor., 13:12). Chögyam Trungpa is famous for reminding us that "artistic mind is fresh and precise." Those are the conditions necessary to me to produce what in western terminology might be called honest or authentic art. I have found that without that practice whatever I produce does not have the quality I wish to bring to the world. It is not "right."

There is a moment when one awakens in the morning, coming slowly into consciousness before one dons any identifying labels and is reminded of the tasks ahead, where one simply is alive, where everything is fresh and where the world is brand new. This is my experience of the artistic mind of which Chögyam speaks. I have no agenda to be or do anything specific quite yet. There is no pressure to produce or to act. It is possible to enter this sacred space through meditation. Meditation, one may say, is a preparation for Dharma art, and so (as noted above) is the initial element in a methodology, the opening event in a process that eventually leads to the production of an artwork. Or, to repeat an

earlier formulation, it is the beginning of thought that eventually coheres in an artwork, a concrete reality that finds a place in the world of things.

When one simply sits quietly with eyes closed and focuses one's attention on breathing, one can enter into a metaphorical "space" or a "state" that fosters creativity. In their work with a/r/tography as methodology, Springgay *et al.*, assert something similar: "It is about dwelling in a space of inquiry that resists formal naming."¹⁰ That state or space of inquiry is also one of quietude, of waiting to see what arises from the spaciousness, of letting preconceived notions drop away and of being, just simply being.

In my own experience this is an essential space from which to create because from within that space, what I produce is not a forced statement manufactured by the ego. On the contrary, from the space of innocent inquiry the ego "softens." What then springs forth tends to be, or aims to be, Dharma Art or authentic art. When I am in that space then I hold a sense of wonder with respect to what I have created, as if it sprang forth from some ethereal space that has nothing to do with me personally or with my ideas.

Accordingly, this particular project is not about me doing something new or about my innovation or even about fashion for that matter; rather I am more inclined to try to avoid authorship and exhibitionism, that is why I have named it Basic Goodness Clothing, rather than using my own name. That name, Basic Goodness Clothing, is meant to evoke the *universalist* teaching and thought of

¹⁰ (Springgay, Irwin & Kind 2005, 900)

Chögyam Trungpa rather than the individual who produced the art or even the *particular* personality of Chögyam, however admirable it may be.

To use another “western” source, Richard Tuttle, who was a fellow artist and a lifelong friend to Agnes Martin, explained that, artmaking “has very little to do with artistic signature, about me expressing myself to you. It’s an attitude about getting beyond both of us.”¹¹ In this respect, Chögyam Trungpa and Tuttle echoed one another: “The basic problem in artistic endeavour is the tendency to split the artist from the audience and then try to send a message from one to the other. When this happens, art becomes exhibitionism.”¹² What is exhibited on such occasions is merely ego.

When artist Iris Häussler¹³ spoke in one of my graduate art classes, I resonated immediately with the methodology she described as central to her artmaking: she eschews authorship and ego in her work, she said, often creating in what she called absolute anonymity. In that context, she spoke of the freedom allowed in her artistic process by not identifying with self at all.¹⁴

These artists, Martin, Häussler, Tuttle and others, inspire me and my work. They help me to remember why I make anything at all. I didn’t start this Basic

¹¹ (Morris, Bell, et al. 2015, 105)

¹² (Chögyam Trungpa 1996,1)

¹³ www.haeussler.ca Accessed 11/16/2020

¹⁴ OCADU Contemporary Research Methods class, November 15, 2019

Goodness Clothing project for any reason other than that I felt inspired. Chögyam Trungpa said something very similar: “Dharma art is not showmanship. It is not pretending to have an unique talent, a talent that nobody had before, or having an idea that nobody had before. Rather, the main point of Dharma art is discovering elegance. And that is a question of state of mind, according to the Buddhist tradition.”¹⁵ It is also, as we have seen, a state of mind according to Martin, Tuttle and Häussler.

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Fundamental to creating Dharma Art are both Buddhist traditions and yogic science. In the next section I will discuss yogic science in relation to colour.

¹⁵ (Chögyam Trungpa 1996, 5)

CHAPTER FOUR

Yogic Science + Colour

There exists today a widespread understanding of a basic insight that “everything is energy.” This quote is often attributed to Albert Einstein and his famous formula, “Energy equals mass times the speed of light squared” ($E=MC^2$). It arises as well in the observations and conceptual discoveries of modern physical scientists, primarily quantum physicists. Their mathematical language can be translated into cosmological observations. For example, one can say that energy vibrates at various frequencies that keep our world and our universe balanced and harmonious. These cosmological observations derived from mathematical physics have become metaphors for spiritual states as well. Here one can speak of “higher” frequencies, such as those of peace, forgiveness, humour, love, and calmness, that express “lighter” vibrations.¹⁶ According to this spiritual teaching, humans are responsible for calibrating their individual frequency and the frequency that we are exuding in the world. In this context, the goal of yoga-meditation is to quiet the mind, to move into the higher frequencies, and to discover our own innocence and elegance, which are innate to each of us and lacking in none. I aim to work from these higher frequencies, having learned from many teachers who have been committed to helping students to bypass ego and to invoke the pure centre of themselves. From that pure centre I am able to create and put forth into the world something that is genuine and harmless (in yoga, that is the practice of ahimsa – non-harming).

¹⁶ (Cooper, 2000, 115-116)

Yoga by this understanding is not simply the practice of asana (postures) but is an ancient and practical theory on “how to live” and how to attain the higher frequencies. This is why the term “science” is applied to this comprehensive account of authentic living.

Yogi Bhanan (1929-2004), who also taught extensively about the mind and meditation, said that human beings are not already living at “higher frequencies.” Our mental projections can be positive or negative and can result in lower as well as higher frequencies. One is by nature neutral and beyond the mind. One’s mind will magnify each tendency and will project it using many facets.¹⁷ This formulation corresponds to the “western” notion that human beings begin their existence “in-between” – in between male and female, left and right, up and down, good and evil, life and death, and so on.¹⁸

Everything that he taught, whether yoga, meditation or spiritual or “esoteric” knowledge was intended to assist us all to live a life of excellence.¹⁹ I believe that Yogi Bhanan’s goal of excellence was perhaps the same as Chögyam Trungpa’s goal of living a life of elegance. Both spiritual masters, one a Buddhist and the other a Yogi, offered methods for living gracefully, elegantly and with excellence.

¹⁷ (Yogi Bhanan 1998, 18)

¹⁸ (William Desmond, 2008)

¹⁹ (Yogi Bhanan 1998, iii)

Yogi Bhajan's teaching has a bearing on this project because he encouraged the wearing of white only, from head to toe. He provided many explanations for this. One of them is derived from an ancient yogic theory that delineates three kinds of behaviours or three qualities called gunas. Gunas are inherent to everyone and they determine the frequency or resonance of one's life. These three gunas, are: tamas (animal), rajas (earthling human), and sattva (angelic human – high frequency).

If one's mind is governed by sattvic guna, "then regardless of conditions, with all things as they are, one will be angelic and will sail through every situation as a saint," experiencing only peace, tranquility and contentment. One's life, in every situation, will be filled with grace, honour and discipline. He connected this spiritual state with "the traditions of simple dress." Insofar as "simple dress" becomes a habit to support the mind and the basic guna as angelic: to walk lightly upon the earth, to walk firmly in one's spirit.²⁰

This is the basic theory on which I have based my thesis and my artwork.

Dr. David Hawkins, MD, PhD., devised an equivalent theory,²¹ which he called levels of consciousness. At the lowest levels of consciousness, according to Hawkins, humans live in shame, guilt, fear – a state of inertia – that would be similar to the tamas guna. At the highest levels of consciousness in which one lives in joy, gratitude, love and peace, one experiences sattva guna, which allows

²⁰ (Yogi Bhajan 1998, 30-31)

²¹ (Hawkins 1995, 3)

for synchronicity and extraordinary outcomes, and where one's personality is united with one's spirit. It is the source of creativity, and it is the place from where I aim to create my art.

These are the reasons that I have chosen to work in white fibre for this thesis. Wearing white becomes an awareness practice, so that one can begin to grow in awareness of one's life, to become mindful of what one is doing, of one's intentions, of one's actions, and even of one's gestures.

After seeing photographs of yoga classes held in India, from several lineages and styles, where all the students/practitioners are wearing white, I decided to reach out to a particular ashram in India, run by a living guru, Sadhguru, to ask about that practice.

His response to me included an article that he had written about colour. In it he wrote,

“normally, a person who switches to orange [orange robes are often worn by Buddhist monks and yogis] drops everything that was old — his name, his identity, his family, his looks, his everything – and shifts into a different life.” This is a conventional practice and may be compared to the practice of Roman Catholic priests and nuns in the recent past to wear black cassocks and habits to distinguish their spiritual way of life from that of the “lay” communities they are supposed to serve. Sadhguru, however, wished to move beyond colour, which in his tradition meant orange. White, he said, was “all-inclusive. The white light



Figure 3. Sadhguru teaching in India, 2018
Photo courtesy of @sadhguru 2018

that you see contains all of the seven colors. You can refract those colors and separate all seven of them. White has a good impact on you.” Those who wear orange, he said cut themselves off from family and from social relations. “The one who chooses white walks the spiritual path but is still involved in the other aspects of life. Those who are on a path where they don’t want to gather anything will wear white.”²²

I interpret Sadguru’s teaching to account for why the use of a knitting machine or in developing contacts over social media are compatible with Dharma art. This teaching, I believe, is similar to that of Jesus of Nazareth who instructed his disciples to “be in the world but not of the world” (John, 15:19). That is, in my artmaking I aim to follow a “white” rather than an “orange” life. This is what I mean by a “specific *modern* lifestyle” that the Basic Goodness line of clothing is intended to help support.

Colour is important in another respect as well. Yogi Bhajan identified white as an element in what he called “auric colour therapy.” Colours, he said, “create an uncontrollable action in your subconscious mind of inspiration, productivity and expansion. Colors have an effect on consciousness.”²³ This insight was brought home to me as an undergraduate. The final requirement of my undergraduate degree at Naropa University was to mount a solo exhibit of paintings that were an in-depth study of the character of colour. I used the teaching of Chögyam Trungpa, not Yogi Bhajan, to provide the theoretical context. According to

²² <https://isha.sadhguru.org/us/en/wisdom/article/meaning-of-colors> Accessed 4/6/2020

²³ <https://www.3ho.org/ecommunity/2012/11/yogi-bhajans-words-on-wearing-white> Accessed 2/2/2020

Chögyam's account of the Five Wisdom Energies, each colour (red, yellow, green, blue and white) holds unique energies. Chögyam Trungpa developed a system of studying these energies by creating solid-coloured rooms called Maitri rooms, in which one may immerse oneself in one colour (paint colour, carpet, lighting) in order to study the energy of that colour and to examine how it might be manifest in the individual. In order to deepen my understanding of this practice, I painted with only one colour for weeks at a time. Spending time in each of the Maitri rooms and then painting in only one colour for an extended time helped me to understand the energies of colour on multiple levels, both rationally and experientially. From this experience, I came to see that white represents our Buddha nature (sattva guna), which is calm and expansive. To use the imagery introduced above, white expressed the higher frequency energies.

After completing my studies at Naropa and before pursuing a graduate degree in fine arts, I studied Chinese Medicine, including both Traditional Chinese Medicine and Five Element Acupuncture. In this type of medicine, white represents the Metal Element. The characteristics of this element are very much like the Buddha nature (sattva guna) in that they represent precision and excellence, and connection to the spiritual world. The Metal Element corresponds to the lungs and pertains to inspiration, in both the literal and the metaphorical sense of that word. The Metal Element is about reverence and Divinity, and guidance from the heavens. Invoking inspiration is one more way that working with and wearing white can enhance one's spiritual practice.

CHAPTER FIVE

Steiner—Waldorf + Knitting

In a lecture he presented in 1921, Rudolf Steiner said, “to arrive at an understanding of colour it is necessary to penetrate through to the being of the colours themselves and to bring the contemplation of colour into one’s feeling life.”²⁴ This chapter is dedicated to a discussion of the relevant works of Rudolf Steiner who has had a profound influence on my life; from attending Waldorf school as a child and beginning Waldorf teacher training as a young adult, I have been studying his work throughout my life. I feel that he has been my greatest teacher. Steiner (1861-1925) was a philosopher and educator, an architect, an agriculturist, an artist, and a visionary – phenomenal in every way. He created systems and theories for living elegantly, for allowing for the growth and development of children in a graceful way that is in harmony with nature, and in harmony with each child’s own nature. Appalled by the recent European carnage in the Great War, in 1919 he founded the global Waldorf/Steiner school system. Waldorf pedagogy is designed to engage the child’s head, heart and hands, (thinking, feeling, and doing). This translates to a curriculum that integrates the academics, the arts, and practical skills, and places a high value on imagination. Waldorf is an holistic pedagogical system in which art, Spirit, reverence and Divinity permeate learning in every subject.²⁵

²⁴ (Steiner 1996, 7)

²⁵ sunbridge.edu Accessed 2/26/2021

Art was central to Steiner's vision and spiritual teaching. "If you realize that art always has a relation to the spirit," he said, "you will understand that both in creating and appreciating it, art is something through which one enters the spiritual world."²⁶ Mary Caroline Richards, in her analysis of Steiner's work, said that he renewed the "knowledge of man," to which he gave the Greek name anthroposophy. For Steiner, anthroposophy was the "inner Language" of anthropology, literally the account of man (or better of human being). Anthroposophy deals with the perennial question: "what is human being?" Richards said Steiner attempted to reconstruct "the inwardness of man and the inwardness of universe, or of seeing how man and universe are parts of a common physical-spiritual linkage. In order to see how things are in their cosmic wholeness."²⁷ This is why I described Waldorf pedagogy as "holistic."

Steiner's entirely "western" approach to colour echoed the remarks we have discussed by the "eastern" sages. For example, when one walks into a Waldorf/Steiner school one notices the extraordinary use of colour that is not found in many schools or in buildings in general. The colours are soft, evoking comfort and calm. Classrooms are usually painted in light, delicate colours, and draped with cotton gauze dyed the same colour and draped in a very particular way. Steiner's architecture included soft, organic lines

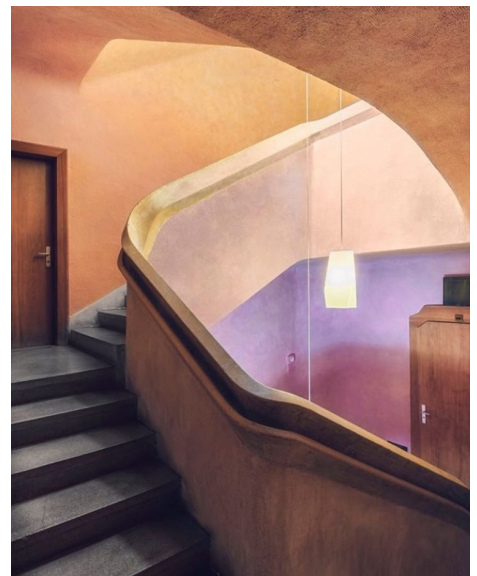


Figure 4. Inside the Goetheanum, Dornach. Switzerland. Designed by Rudolf Steiner. 1919.

²⁶ (Steiner 1996, 1)

²⁷ (Richards 1980, 5)

and curves, with hard right angles occurring rarely.

In the first years of a Waldorf education, the children learn how to knit. As I noted above it was in a Waldorf school in Calgary that I learned to knit, as well as to crochet, to stitch, to paint with watercolours, to draw, to work with wood and tools, to do beadwork, to make candles, and to learn a host of other practical skills.

As one Waldorf teacher expressed it: “A child who is knitting a hat or a toy kitten sees their will transformed into art. They see their focused, detailed work turn into something beautiful and purpose-filled.” Such activity enables students to see how a playful activity such as knitting can produce a beautiful work. Knitting is more than an aesthetic activity, however. “It also teaches simple and complex mathematics; hand, eye and brain coordination; sensory integration; and resiliency of habit... all while promoting peace of mind.”²⁸ Perhaps this is the reason I find knitting, or handwork in general, to be an essential piece of my art practice and life; it is a comforting practice for me.



Figure 5. Children knitting in grade 1 at Ak Lu'um Waldorf School, photo courtesy of @akluumwaldorf 2020

Recollecting my own experience of Waldorf education in art, it seems to me (again in retrospect) to be very similar to Dharma Art. Both aim to nurture the

²⁸ <https://phillywaldorf.com/why-waldorf-students-knit> Accessed 11/12/2020

inner essence of the child. Steiner, like Yogi Bhanan and Chögyam, was particularly interested in the human being's relationship to colour and the effect of colours on the human organism. He concluded that, "colour uplifts the human being from the material to the spiritual," and that, "white/light represents the soul's image of the spirit."²⁹ Once again, the similarity to Dharma Art is evident.

*

Let me summarize the argument of my thesis to this point. The spiritual life is the life one finds when one has taken the path of yoga/meditation to discover one's innate elegance, which these great teachers exemplified. Every action one takes has energy that vibrates out into the world, particularly when one produces a work of art that takes its place in the world.

Each piece of artwork one creates has its own frequency. My aim is to follow this path and to be careful and conscientious with my (art) expressions. As Richards said with respect to Steiner, but that I think could be said of Chögyam and Yogi Bhanan as well: the recovery in our daily lives of the sacred, of spiritual interiority (through anthroposophy in Steiner's case) is "exciting." We can renew our powers of perception by integrating science, religion and art and thereby create "a new quality of wholeness in human consciousness."³⁰ In the following chapter I show how artmaking and the pursuit of a yogic way of living is a spiritual life.

²⁹ (Steiner 1996, 7)

³⁰ (Richards 1980, 8)

CHAPTER SIX

Spiritual experience + Art

I have taken the insight that making art and pursuing a yogic way of living involves spiritual experience from Paramahansa Yogananda (1893-1952). He said: "intellectual satisfaction is not the highest goal"³¹ for art and life. I believe this is true. While I certainly enjoy intellectual pursuits, the essence of my approach to learning, to art, and to life is encapsulated by his follower, Meher Baba, in his book, *Discourses*. For him, spiritual experience deals with truths deeper than those accessible to the intellect. Spiritual truth may be expressed through the intellect, and the intellect may be of help for the communication of spiritual insights, but by itself the intellect is insufficient for human beings to access spiritual experience or to communicate it to others. "Spiritual experience," he said "involves more than can be grasped by mere intellect. This is often emphasized by calling it a mystical experience. But since mysticism is often seen as something anti-intellectual, obscure, confused, impractical and unconnected with the experiences of daily life, this characterization is misleading. For Meher Baba, true mysticism is a vision of reality, a form of perception that is unclouded, and "so practical that it can be lived every moment of life and expressed in every-day duties." When spiritual experience is described as mystical, that does not mean it is something supernatural or beyond human consciousness.³² What is important for me and for my

³¹ (Yogananda 1946, 410)

³² (Meher Baba 1987, 5)

experiences in making art, is Meher Baba's view that "true art expresses spirituality"³³ whether or not it aspires to or attains a mystical vision.

The process in which I engaged in this project, as in others, allowed me to experience the meaning described in the language of both Eastern and Western teachers. The point of keeping the sacred sciences and wisdoms with me as I work is that when I am working I can remove any limited sense of self, any selfishness, or small mindedness from my work. This allows me continuously to access my sources of inspiration, as I used that term in the introduction to this thesis.

³³ (Meher Baba 1987, 5)

CHAPTER SEVEN

Process

As an artist I practice prayer and meditation as an essential reminder to me to ask for inspiration and guidance, and to wait for an answer. This practice is hardly novel or new. For example, according to 15th Century Italian art historian, Giorgio Vasari, his contemporary, Fra Angelico, would pray before taking up his brushes to paint.³⁴ Long before the European Renaissance, Plato taught that all knowledge is contained within each human being and that prayer (contemplation) unlocks that knowledge in ways that it can be revealed to us. As noted above, I have practiced with success this methodology that has so many different names. When I have not known how to execute a piece of art and have attempted over and over without the proper result to create what I envision, when I have pursued outward research but have not found the right solution, I have simply stopped all activity, asked for the solution, slept on it, and by the following day the solution has almost inevitably revealed itself. Inspiration comes to me. I don't chase it.

A mundane example may illustrate what I have in mind regarding what one may call the source of inspiration: in teaching myself how to use a manual knitting machine, I was unable to master perfect buttonholes. I asked the instructor who had given me a couple of lessons, but her solution was not what I was looking for. I researched instructional videos online and I read some detailed written

³⁴ <https://www.theparisreview.org/blog/2019/08/19/fra-angelicos-divine-emotion/> Accessed 1/22/2020

instructions in a manual, but still I was not able to execute the buttonholes to my satisfaction. At that point, I decided to stop searching through external sources. I asked for guidance and then went to sleep. The next morning, I was able to create the buttonholes just as I wanted them. Creativity, I have to conclude, sometimes is just patience. Selflessness sometimes allows inspiration to appear, who knows from where? Here is another, rather remote example of what I have in mind. Designer, business magnate and innovator, Steve Jobs, was deeply engaged in Eastern spirituality. Jobs summarized his creativity with the following words: "I began to realize that an intuitive understanding and consciousness was more significant than abstract thinking and intellectual logical analysis."³⁵ This almost mystical insight came from an engineer and the tough-minded co-founder of Apple Inc.

In his book entitled *Making*, anthropologist Tim Ingold similarly writes on knowing from within. "That the only way one can really know things," he said, "is through a process of self-discovery. The mere provision of information holds no guarantee of knowledge, let alone of understanding. It is, in short, by watching, listening and feeling — by paying attention to what the world has to tell us — that we learn."³⁶ Ingold was describing his experience of learning in the context of Finnish anthropology, but I interpret his characterization more generally as a process of prayer; in other words, if we are able to listen to the knowledge that is within us, then we can know the responses to the questions we ask. Hence, prayer becomes a method of learning.

³⁵ (Isaacson 2011, 35)

³⁶ (Ingold 2013, 1)

Matias De Stefano, a contemporary philosopher, likewise speaks of the ancient way of teaching and learning: statements were not merely fed by teachers to students who learned by rote. Rather, “the wise people used to ask the students: ‘what do [you] think about this?’ The wise beings were ones to ask and not to lead. That’s the wisdom; allow the other one to see the truth from their own eyes.”³⁷ My understanding, from what I have described as belonging to the words of Jobs, Ingold and De Stefano, is also known, quite simply, as mindfulness, a concept central to the Buddhist teachings. Mindfulness in the Buddhist tradition, like prayer, indicates an inner awareness, an inner knowing that affirms that we will do no harm, that we will live simply and elegantly, and that we will seek solutions and balance from within.

Though mindfulness as I am speaking of it is a spiritual practice, there is also a psychological understanding of mindfulness. The psychological concept of mindfulness dictates that one becomes “aware” or “mindful” when external information or stimuli are provided to the individual or to a group. “Mindful design is based on two key principles: first, it requires raising attention through a ‘disruption’ of the object’s function, i.e., of our expectation of how the object at hand works. Second, it needs to direct this attention to the content to be reflected on through some feature, which is called ‘thematization.’”³⁸

³⁷ <https://www.gaia.com/video/transcending-through-5th-dimension?fullplayer=feature> 11/ 1/2019 10:10

³⁸ (Niedderer 2017, 104-115)

Since it depends upon external stimulation to achieve its goal of behaviour change – in Niedderer’s work on “mindful design,” change is brought about or rather is controlled through the design of objects, such as coffee mugs or mobile phones, for example. This is psychological mindfulness, which seems to me to be the opposite of spiritual mindfulness. “Embedding mindfulness within design is useful because of design’s ubiquitous role, which means mindfulness can be integrated directly into everyday life.”³⁹ Niedderer and her colleagues are most interested in understanding the ways in which design may “facilitate desirable behaviours.”⁴⁰ This type of mindfulness is manipulative insofar as it allows for one person or one group of persons to control another. As with all such concepts, it is based upon fear.

Spiritual mindfulness, on the other hand, is based upon love and trust. As I pursue and enrich my spiritual process, I am empowered from within and my artwork is empowered by my spiritual mindfulness. When I go out into the world, or when I send my artwork out into the world, I aim always to enrich the world; it is never my aim to control others, only to enrich their lives. Meher Baba has said that art undertaken for “the guidance and benefit of others” is the sole practice that “has intrinsic and absolute worth. All other happenings, incidents and attainments in themselves can have no lasting importance.”⁴¹ I believe art must aim at lasting importance. That position was what I attempted to justify in

³⁹ (Niedderer 2017, 104-115)

⁴⁰ (Niedderer 2017, 104-115)

⁴¹ (Meher Baba, 1987, 5)

the introduction to this thesis. It is exemplified in the Latin tag, *vita brevis, ars longa.*; life is short, art is long.

CHAPTER EIGHT

Basic Goodness Clothing

In the introduction of this thesis I mentioned having seen a photo of Jacques Cousteau and his woolen sweater that, in my imagination, must have been an old favourite fashioned by love as well as by skill. I thought: what if the clothes we wear are made like that sweater, made as a gift, made with love for the person who embodied them? This, too, is the methodology of prayer in art making. I hold to this aim for the articles of clothing that I make.



Figure 6. Basic Goodness Half Fisherman Rib Cardigan, 2021.

Basic Goodness is a concept put forth by Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche. He stated that basic goodness combines the qualities of heaven, earth, and human being. Most fundamentally, I think my thesis is about living in a state of basic goodness, meaning that we embrace our humanness and aspire to enlightenment and expansion and so aspire to live in harmony with nature. Basic Goodness is about preparing for a bright future, a sacred future. It consists of organic clothing to support a sacred, modern yogic lifestyle.

My artwork for this thesis evokes yoga, not simply as a western concept of yoga as exercise, but most importantly, as the most ancient and universally studied and practiced science of Yoga. Asana, which is the practice of posture and what

is practiced primarily in the West, is only one limb of eight, according to India's great sage, Patanjali, and demonstrated in his Yoga Sutras. "Patanjali explained this spiritual science in definite metaphysical terms in his renowned Yoga Sutras. His purpose was to get to the very core of yoga."⁴² The Yoga Sutras constitute an age-old scripture of 196 Indian texts that explain the yogic philosophy on how to live life and walk the path of self-realization. My project is about living the life of Yoga and about creating a clothing line that can supplement this way of living and that is made in synchronicity with this science. For example, the first limb of the sequential steps includes ahimsa, which means non-violence to ourselves and to others. Ahimsa is not just about physical violence, but it also concerns true kindness and care in our thinking, in our choices, and in our way of living on planet Earth. My aim is to create clothing from organic cotton fibres (which do not use harmful chemicals), which are made of white/light colours (as worn by devoted Yoga practitioners). Such clothing is comfortable for practicing asana, to sit in meditation, and to practice all eight limbs of yoga. I have focused on making sweaters, sweater dresses, printed t-shirts, knit pants, and hats.



Figure 7. Basic Goodness Clothing Collection hanging, 2021. Photo:

In *Wrapping and Unwrapping the Body: Lace, Magic, and Modernity*, Nicolette Makovicky writes that historically the ritual significance of wrapping and covering the body is connected to the belief that the body is permeable to the spiritual

⁴² (Yogananda, 1995, 69)

forces inhabiting the domestic, social, and natural environment. As a consequence, “textiles themselves could become imbued with the potency and magical efficacy of the human body itself.”⁴³ Of course, clothing is still clothing. Makovicky is saying, I think, that clothing is also not *just* clothing. It can also be art, a position I argued in the preface to this thesis.

As I mentioned in the Methodology chapter, I did substantial research to find sources of organic fibre yarn and fabric, examining companies and their supply chains, from cotton fields to my hands. For my yarn supplier, I chose a company from England called Wool and the Gang. I wrote to them about their sourcing, and while they would not disclose to me the exact location of the farm, they did tell me that they personally travelled to the source to create and maintain a rapport with the farmers.

This organic cotton yarn is from Peru where Wool and the Gang were able to obtain high quality, and ethical yarn.⁴⁴ Organic cotton, a natural fibre, offers a much better alternative to other fibres, especially when one considers these facts:

1. Its non-genetically modified seeds haven't been treated with fungicides or pesticides;
2. They use only organic-approved fertilizers, herbicides, and pesticides from plants, animals and minerals to avoid harming soil organisms;
3. They reduce environmental footprint by using 71 percent less water and 62 percent less energy than conventional cotton;

⁴³ (Harris et al. 2014, 101)

⁴⁴ <https://www.woolandthegang.com/blog/2018/04/chapter-2-shiny-happy-cotton> Accessed 1/28/2020

4. Plants are 80 percent rain-fed, reducing reliance on local water sources;
5. They reduce field emissions from fertilizer, and reduces nitrogen and phosphorus deposits into water;
6. They increase soil protection that in turn helps prevent erosion;
7. They promote safe work and better livelihoods for farmers. ⁴⁵

In addition, since 2007 Peru has imposed a general ban on GMO seeds. It is one of few countries prohibiting the entry of transgenic seeds across its borders.

“Farmers and their communities united to enact the moratorium law in 2011, helping protect biodiversity, family farming and cultural traditions.”⁴⁶ Their activity continues to this day. If this project is meant to continue beyond this thesis, then I intend to travel to Peru to source yarns myself and to develop a more direct relationship with those who actually grow and produce the cotton I will be using.

There is one final question to be discussed in my title: Why uniform? The word uniform means “the same.” In this context it expresses the reality that, in truth, we are all the same, not physically perhaps, but in our souls.

⁴⁵ <https://products.mercolamarket.com/organic-clothing/> Accessed 3/8/2021

⁴⁶ <https://www.organicwithoutboundaries.bio/2020/08/14/peru-fights-to-keep-gmos-out-of-its-soils/> Access 12/12/2020

CHAPTER NINE

Closing thoughts

How can I be a devotee of a yogic modern lifestyle here in the West, on my own, and with my work? How can I dedicate this work, all my work, in devotion to elegance? Here we are, wearing clothes and needing to, for protection, for warmth, for comfort. Why not wear white/light to be reminded to practice care and attention and purity of intention? The goal is to move away from body consciousness (tamas/rajas) and yet, at the same time, be aware and graceful in our lives. I am not in the Himalaya sitting in meditation all day, but I do intend to be devoted to the same extent. When we become aware of our movements and our thoughts, our bodies, our minds and our souls, then we emulate and perhaps become a beautiful art form. We transform our lives with dignity, and we follow the patterns for graceful living. Reflecting the basic knowledge that our thoughts have energy, that, so to speak, they are energy, then thinking beautiful thoughts will evoke beauty in our outer world. Wearing white/light is a tool for graceful living.

My thesis came about as a culmination of all of my studies and experiences with art starting in an elementary Waldorf school. It was not preconceived; in fact, it was not even the idea I had in my head at the beginning of this Master's program. But I can see now how it did come into being and why. I thought I would be painting, focusing on light and sounds and creating visual spaces; these were the ideas I had in my head. But as I noted above, I could not force

the direction, and I had to listen to the inspiration and then follow the inspiration. I felt inspired to knit, to make fabric and clothing that corresponded to my path of yoga. This thesis also records my experience of yogic living and art.

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