HANNA-LOTTA HANHELA

Make
— creative expression through construction in the garment creation process

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School of Arts, Design and Architecture

Aalto University

Advisors
Maarit Aakko
Veronika Abbrederis

Supervisors
Anna Ervamaa
Pirjo Hirvonen

Aalto University
School of Arts, Design
and Architecture

MASTER OF ARTS THESIS ABSTRACT

Author Hanna-Lotta Hanhela

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ABSTRACT

This master’s thesis addresses ‘make’, namely the technical phases in the garment creation process. The work presents a collection through a personal artistic concept utilising the development stages as a source for design ideas. The main aim for the thesis is to show how knowledge of ‘make’ can influence and strengthen creative expression rather than as merely a means to an end.

The thesis consists of two parts: a theoretical and a practical component of a collection. The research was conducted through a literature review and a practice-based approach, where the creative process, development of, as well as the finished outcome, holistically highlight the benefits of integrating make into the core of the design. This opens up the discussion around the separation of designer from production, and the possibilities that can emerge with the designer having an integrated role.

The theoretical component seeks to define the make-process, its connectedness to craft and craftsmanship, the rejection of it in favour of art connotations and to analyse the technical roles present in garment creation. The image making aspects of fashion are called to question and the prevalent emphasis on the fashion designer as a main figure, are challenged. Approaches that embrace the make-process are introduced, and pose alternatives with potential for systemic change (slow fashion), centralising the designer’s role (artisanal fashion), for embracing heritage and traditional craft (couture & tailoring), and by featuring it in the aesthetic (deconstruction).

The thesis presents a collection titled ‘Strength of Body - Fragility of Mind’, an eight look collection designed around a personal concept. The design stages from conception to finished outcome are shown, with the emphasis on the make-process. Such methods - draping, pattern cutting, fitting and tailoring - are potential tools for development, but also reveal design elements.

Overall, the research offers an insight into the make-process and its applications to the design process and as creative expressions within high-end designer fashion. Understanding of ‘make’ helps designers reflect more holistically around the garment creation process. Increased awareness has the potential to elevate the humanity and increase empathy towards the makers and doers behind garments.

Keywords *make, make-process, craftsmanship, tailoring, garment creation*

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SAMMANDRAG AV LÄRDOMSPROVET
FÖR KONSTMAGISTEREXAMEN

Författare Hanna-Lotta Hanhela

Titel ‘Make’ – konstruktion som ett uttryckssätt i klädesdesign

Institution Institutionen för design

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SAMMANDRAG

Denna magisteravhandling tar upp ‘make’ (tillverkning), det vill säga de tekniska faserna i skapandet av plagg. Verket presenterar en kollektion designad från ett konstnärligt koncept och använder sig av utvecklingsstadier som källa för designidéer. Det huvudsakliga syftet med avhandlingen är att visa hur kunskap om 'make' kan påverka och stärka ens kreativa uttryckssätt, istället för att bemötas som ett sista stadie.

Avhandlingen består av två delar: en teoretisk och en praktisk. Forskningen har genomförts genom en litteraturöversikt och praxis-baserad forskning, där den kreativa processen, utvecklingsprocessen, samt det färdiga resultatet, holistiskt förklarar fördelarna med att integrera make-processen i sin design. Detta leder diskussionen till designerns roll genom att ifrågasätta att design skulle vara isär från produktion och framställer möjligheter för en integrerad roll.

I den teoretiska delen definieras tillverkningsprocessen, dess koppling till hantverk och skräddarkonst undersöks, och orsaker till preferens för konst tas upp. Också de tekniska aspekterna inom skapandet av kläder analyseras. De bildskapande aspekterna av mode ifrågasätts och den förhärskande betoningen på modedesignern som ett ensamt geni utmanas. Tillvägagångssätt som betonar tillverkningsprocessen och alternativa lösningar introduceras med potential för systemisk förändring (slow fashion), centralisering av designerns roll (artisanal fashion), betydelsefullhet som kulturarv och tradition inom hantverk (couture & skräddarkonst) och presentation som en estetik (dekonstruktion).

I avhandlingen ingår också en kollektion med titeln "Strength of Body - Fragility of Mind", som består av åtta helheter designade kring ett personligt koncept. Designprocessen från idé till färdigt resultat visas, men betoningen är på tillverkningsprocessen. Sådana metoder - formgivning på en provdocka, mönsterskärning, provningar och skräddartekniker - är fungerande verktyg för utvecklingsprocessen, och kan avslöja element att tillämpa i sin design.

Sammanfattningsvis ger forskningen en inblick i tillverkningsprocessen som ett uttrycksätt, och exempel på hur den kan tillämpas inom designprocessen i high-end designermode. Förmåga att förstå tillverkningsprocessen hjälper designers att reflektera mer holistiskt kring hela kreativa processen från idé till färdigt plagg. Ökad medvetenhet kan höja mänsklighetskänslan och empati för de som skapar och tillverkar klädesplagg.

Nyckelord *‘make’, tillverkningsprocess, mode, hantverk, skräddarkonst, utvecklingsstadier i klädesdesign*

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Contents

Background

My decision to further study for a master's degree within fashion after 8 years of experience in the industry was not an easy one to make; I was earning enough money, had the opportunity to work with an array of interesting brands, was trusted and given many freedoms to better and improve design and garments through detail, material and construction. Working in technical roles, while highly regarded, never felt quite fulfilling enough. I could not help but feel I had more to give than purely my technical knowledge.

Ever since my grandmother introduced me to the sewing machine as a wee child, I have been interested in clothes and the making of them. This led me to study for my BA in the UK at the University for the Creative Arts in a town called Rochester, an hour's train ride south east of London. The programme I studied was a fashion design course heavily focused on traditional bespoke tailoring and flou atelier techniques as the base for design as an attempt to preserve and pass down these methods to future generations. The course still being in its infancy then, made everyone very determined to make it a success. At the time I did not fully grasp the benefit and privilege of learning from true experts in their fields. However, when working in the industry as a pattern cutter, in-depth knowledge of assembling clothing to an advanced degree has been vital. If not only for communication and justification of certain choices with machinists and designers, then certainly in terms of the unique selling point in an industry that seems more concerned by the superficial rather than integral and structural; how a garment looks, rather than the way it is made.

I was always interested in the opinion of the machinist more so than the designer's, especially when working with high street brands. The steepest learning curve for me was in the beginning of my career when I started working for a fast fashion supplier in North London. I quickly realised those designers were only interested in how the garment visually looked and they had little interest in what way that was achieved as long as it was within budget. This included things like fabric choice, fabric consumption and construction methods. This would ensure the design was more likely to be picked up by the client, usually a big department store or a prominent online fast fashion retailer. In these instances, it was more important to communicate with the machinists as they had more of an idea what is and is not possible on the assembly line when the stages of production are divided. Working in high street also allowed me to work with more realistic body measurements as well as plus size. This made me understand the importance of shape and proportion, as well as body to an even higher degree, because every decision in cut were amplified when the garment was graded. Therefore, it was wise to accommodate for a fuller bust or hip through darts to allow for a better fit, even in the smaller sample size.

A few years later, I had moved on to work for brands within the high end. These brands aligned more with my personal values in terms of material and construction choices as well as company ethics. My opinion at these brands was valued, my ability to interpret their vision was trusted. Here I was able to really find my own voice as a pattern cutter and perfect and hone my techniques and skill. Most of the time I was the only pattern cutter in the companies I worked with, or everyone was working independently in the team. I was often given free hands on the details, because I was trusted to pull it off and give the best result within the brand parameters of taste, cost and proportion. Looking back at these opportunities, they sound like a dream. But something was missing.

I started questioning my part in terms of the bigger picture. What I had been lacking in my professional life was the ability to fully surrender to creativity due to working in a more technical role, but somehow even more importantly, a deeper sense of purpose and justification for choosing to partake in the fashion industry. Around the same time, my grandmother had been diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease, which helped the decision to relocate. I came to the Aalto University's MA programme for Fashion, Clothing and Textile Design to try and figure out my voice as a designer after not actively designing for years. Even when I tried talking myself out of adding to an already oversaturated industry, I could not quiet the voice pestering me to at least try. Maybe I could somehow contribute in a better informed, meaningful way?

CHAPTER 1

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1.1 Introduction

Being a designer with technical and construction knowledge has its benefits. On the one hand, from a personal perspective, a holistic approach can be more empowering, as influence can be applied throughout the process. From a business perspective, it can be seen as a better investment to hire someone with the ability to execute the tasks in a way that can anticipate the result. On the other hand it could be seen as a hindrance, a limiting factor for creativity, to have to think about the execution at a stage of ideation. Is something inherently important lost due to being too technically minded? Restricting oneself to possibilities that are known to work and already familiar, is not generally the point of design and can therefore curb ambitions of being considered an artist. But where does this idea come from, of true creativity being ruined with the knowledge of craft, with the knowledge of how to make? And why the need to draw attention back to it?

In this thesis, ‘make’ - the process of making a garment - is proposed to be considered as a part of creative expression in fashion, and reframed as something essential to designing fashionable objects. In my experience, the physical execution of garments is somewhat treated as an after thought or a ‘necessary evil’ best kept hidden in the process of garment creation, among student colleagues and designers alike. This is evident in fashion programmes being taught under ‘visual communication’ that do not include implementation of knowledge into practice, meaning physical making and construction of the designs. Or an understanding of it is taught but not an understanding of how to do it, which further feeds into fashion’s ‘image making’-narrative (Kawamura, 2005).

This has allowed for a hierarchal structure, where the designer is at the top, feeding down ideas to be executed by the ones below. Low quality material, inherent obsolescence, section work, and unsustainable working conditions are all corner stones for the prevailing profit driven fashion system (Clark, 2008; Fletcher, 2010). This thesis sets out to question the linear way of garment creation and instead looks to discover more dynamic ways to approach the design process. Particular focus will be given to exploring processes where skills in making and construction are in just as an important role as designing in collection development. Examining ‘make’ in garments can be useful in the search for meaningful change.

1.2 Aim and Objectives

The thesis consists of two parts, a practical and a theoretical, where the suggested division between the two is 2/3 and 1/3 of the total credits. The emphasis is on the practical work; the creation of and the final collection of garments, following a personal theme informed by the theoretical research, but is evaluated as a whole.

The theoretical part will define ‘make’ as a concept in the garment creation process with emphasis on the high end and luxury perspective. A look into the designer’s role will be taken and the higher intellectual status of the designer within the fashion industry, that has lead to the separation from the production of garments, will be examined. Modes that centre and dialogue with craft and construction as an important aspect of the design will be highlighted.

In the practical part, a collection designed around a personal concept is presented. The title of the work is Strength of Body – Fragility of Mind where ‘make’ is explored in practice. This is apparent in the personal starting point and the choice of tailoring as one of the core methods. In the collection this is emphasised in both internal and visual aspects to demonstrate how construction and ‘make’ can be seen as strengths in designed garments.

The collection will work as evidence for the benefits of integrating ‘make’, and especially tailoring techniques, into the core of the design.

AIMS

— To establish the value ‘make’ presents to garments.

— To study how construction knowledge, here conceptualised as ‘make’, has been and can be used as a part of creative expression in the design process.

— To explore my design identity through a personal concept in the search for meaningfulness in garments.

1.3 Research questions

The main research questions this thesis seeks to answer are;

— What is ‘make’ in garment design?

— What potential does knowledge in ‘make’ have for the designer?

— How can ‘make’ be integrated into the garment design process?

1.4 Methods

‘Practice-based Research is an original investigation undertaken in order to gain new knowledge partly by means of practice and the outcomes of that practice. ... Whilst the significance and context of the claims are described in words, a full understanding can only be obtained with direct reference to the outcomes’
(Candy, 2006, 1).

The two main methodologies used in the thesis are practice-based research and literature review.

The literature review frames the theoretical context, but to fully understand the work, the make-process and the collection should also be taken into account. Therefore the thesis is following Candy’s definition for practice-based research, as the creative process and development of, as well as the finished outcome, here a collection of garments, is part of advancing knowledge in the field of fashion and fashion design (Candy, 2006). Its sibling method practice-led research, is often used interchangeably with practice-based, with the difference being that the outcome in practice-led research is not emphasised (Candy, 2006).

According to Valle Noronha and Chun (2018), practitioner-researchers in fashion can and should include new methodologies better suited to their field to describe their practice (Valle Noronha & Chun, 2018). Therefore I categorise the make-process: draping, pattern cutting, fitting and tailoring, as well as the documentation of it: photography and sketching, as methods generating knowledge for this thesis. These tools have also been characterised as reflection-in-action and reflection-on action respectively (Schön, 1983), further legitimising the methods. The make-process elicits reflection simultaneously on the development as the tactile stages progress, resulting in concrete action to improve the design outcome. Documentation of the process in form of photography and sketching allows for reflection-on-action when revisited after the fact, to take some ideas further, while dropping others (Mäkelä & Nimkulrat, 2018).

CHAPTER 2

CHAPTER 2

2.1 *Make* in the design process

In order to answer what the potential value of ‘make’ in garment design is, the definition for key terminology needs to be established. ‘Make’ in garments, can be understood through the more general context of craftsmanship in design practice (Frayling, 2012), through skill development of craftsmen (Sennett, 2008), its relation to art and craft (Dormer, 1994), as through the production of designer fashion (Aakko, 2016; McRobbie, 1998).

In this thesis, ‘make’ as a concept does not refer to the verb ‘to make’, as it is not only the action of making itself that is being highlighted. A quick look through on a search engine only shows the word in the context of the ‘make of a car’. Here instead the term is used as a noun adapted from the abbreviation CMT, or cut, make and trim, a service most often preferred by independent designers with small batch orders and specialised products. As the name suggests, the service provided consists of the garment pieces being cut out from the cloth, sewn and assembled, finished and quality checked (McRobbie, 1998). Another, slightly different interpretation of ‘make’, in the phrase ‘cut and make of a garment’, *cut* refers to the pattern, hang and fit, and *make* the construction, assembly, sewing, tailoring and finish. This is phrase is perhaps more colloquially used, but is closest to my intended definition for the purpose of this thesis.

Throughout this thesis, ‘make’ will be referred to as the technical phases of garments creation, namely pattern cutting, construction, and sample making, or the ‘craft of fashion’ (Aakko, 2016, 90). More specifically it addresses the role of construction knowledge as means for design expression in the design process. Generally, signs of ‘make’ are preferred hidden, and sewing and assembly are used as mere means to achieve a final garment (Aakko, 2016). The aim here is justifying ‘make’ as support to the design, enhancing it and making an individual look or garment stronger.

The concept of craftsmanship in the context of clothing might evoke a certain kind of imagery. What comes to mind is a dimly lit workshop environment with block patterns hung on the walls, shears and chalk laid on the table, a few machines difficult to place in time, possibly Victorian. A person in the space, a tailor, measuring tape around their neck, a thimble on their index finger confidently stitching by hand. This person might more often than not be envisioned as a man. And yes, it is no longer fair to assume someone’s gender based on their appearance, however this traditionally male dominated field often presents a very limited kind of representation (David, 2010).

While ‘craftsman’ and ‘craftsmanship’ have been declared as gender neutral terms (Frayling, 2012) and new versions like ‘craftsperson’, ‘crafter’ to describe the person and ‘artisanal’(Aakko, 2016) to describe the process and items, have been introduced as alternatives, the word ‘make’ still feels more suitable for the purpose of this thesis. By using the word ‘make’, the person performing the action is not centred or of concern, and instead puts the action of accomplishing the task in focus. Therefore a gendered connotation can be avoided, making it more inclusive by staying clear of set markers or limitations, albeit subconscious, what a maker is or can be.

2.2 Art, craft, skill, and talent

In this thesis ‘make’ is conceptualised as the construction stages in the garment creation process, or the ‘craft of fashion’ (Aakko, 2016, 90). Arguably, the image making aspects in fashion are closer in proximity to art than they are to craft (Kawamura, 2005). They are often presented as being opposites to each other, but somehow simultaneously shown to be intrinsically linked (Dormer, 1994; Sennett 2008). This warrants an investigation into the distinction between art and craft, however briefly, in order to understand their connection to fashion and clothing.

Already the ancient Greeks saw craft as being of a second order in comparison to art (Sennett, 2008; Loschek, 2009) and through out western history deemed as something ‘less than’ due to being classified as a ‘practical activity’ (Sennett, 2008, 21). The work of craftsmen is described as a repetitive, collective, and an unthinking practice (Sennett, 2008), and is seen as restricted. Craft is also tied to labour and service (Dormer, 1994), where the goal is to provide for others, rather than for one’s own enjoyment.

In contrast, an artists work has been classed as presenting something unique, distinctive or even fleeting (Sennett, 2008). However, craft has at times also been valued for its uniqueness, evoking a connection to authenticity, and for being made by hand (Osborne, 1977). Potential for self-expression makes art somehow free and anything creative with the intention of being art, therefore is (Loschek, 2009). However art activities also rank differently depending on their proximity to fine art (Osborne, 1977; Frayling, 2012). Even choice of medium used is hierarchal, with natural material scoring higher than synthetic for example.

Craft is seen as separate from notions of art, separating ’having ideas’ from ‘making objects’ (Dormer, 1994, 18). Because of the way knowledge in a craft is acquired, it has been described as something ‘unthinking and uncreative’ (Dormer, 1994, 40). However there is no art without craft (Sennet 2008). Craft skills are usually gained through rigorous repetitive training (Dormer, 1994; Sennett, 2008) over an extended period of time. This knowledge, also known as tacit knowledge (Dormer, 1994) is attained through experience or learning by doing (Schön, 1983).

This is in opposition with the concept of creativity that is said to be something innate (Sennett, 2008) or a talent someone possesses by nature (Kawamura, 2005).

In regard to fashion, art and craft have been described to have a mutually beneficial relationship (Tuite & Horton, 2019), but still the designer is regarded as having a higher status than others in the garment creation process. The association to art is visible in the ways designers express and communicate about their work in attempts to legitimise and gain prestige in the public eye (McRobbie, 1998; Svendsen, 2006). Curiously, several approaches in the context of fashion, craft is seen as adding value (Aakko, 2016; Almond, 2010; Clark, 2008; Fletcher, 2010; McRobbie, 1998; Loschek, 2009). These will be introduced later in this thesis.

2.3 Fashion and fashion industry

The context, when addressing the topic of construction and ‘make’ in reference to garments, is fashion. Fashion is not a straight forward term and has been categorised as having both conceptual and material meaning (Aakko, 2016). It has been described to signify belonging (Kaiser, 2012), to be ‘a collective activity’ (Kawamura, 2005, 1), to be an ‘embodied and situated practice’ (Entwistle, 2000, 344) meaning bound to a place and dependent on the body it is associated with. It has been described to be ‘never fixed, and everchanging’ (Kawamura, 2005, 4). Not all fashion is clothing and not all clothing is fashion, but they are intrinsically linked. It is the invisible and symbolic meaning communicated through clothing (Kawamura, 2005).

The fashion industry is predominantly an image making industry (Kawamura, 2005) with the emphasis on producing visual content. I would argue that it is comparatively easier to reproduce an image of fashion than a piece of clothing. In the superficial sense, it is possible to evoke the same mood through visual means, while having no intention of creating a copy of an existing garment.

A concrete and current example of this would be recreation posts on social media, where content creators (#designerbrandsbelike) use items found in their homes in order to recreate a look from the catwalk. There is no denying these being good recreations, they are however not functional as clothing, and rarely is the intention to achieve continuous wearability. While this is an extreme and specific example, it calls to attention the superficiality and ephemeral nature of fashion.

Clothing has the possibility of being interpreted as contributing to fashion. For a designer it is not as straightforward as simply separating themselves from it, because any type of clothing can be and is influenced by previous iterations, while the main goal might not be to directly create it. The theory of sociological dualism of simultaneously fitting in and standing out (Simmel, 1957) is still of concern for designers whose media are garments. The identity of the wearer as well as the designer, is influenced by their surroundings (Entwistle, 2001) and therefore do not exist in a vacuum.

The system is built to encourage a perpetual cycle of newness (Kawamura, 2005), where designers are tasked with copying, interpreting or reacting to or against. The general consumer seems more interested in how a garment makes them appear and is less aware, or less concerned with, how things are made and come to be. And why would they?

Through globalisation in the past century, clothing manufacturing has fractured into specialised processes performed across the globe (Gwilt & Rissanen, 2011), allowing for a comfortable mental and physical distance between the western ‘ideas’ societies and the global ‘manufacturing’ south (McRobbie, 1998). That can and does lead to exploitation of people and depletion of resources (Fletcher & Grose, 2012). The congnitive dissonance is almost justified, when there is no direct confrontation with reality and the concequences of one actions are not visible on a regular basis. The system is set up this way because it allows for the biggest profit margins. However there has been movement towards alternative approaches that put the prevailing system into question.

2.4 Separation of fashion design from garment production

As a result of globalisation, fashion design has been increasingly separated from garment production in search for cheaper resources and labour (Gwilt & Rissanen, 2011). The value has shifted to favour low-cost, fast paced, growth driven business models. In these instances, ‘make’ has value, when item can be produced cheaply and meet the window of desirability. All other properties, like quality or durability are not of concern. The lower the cost of a single item, the bigger the minimums and usually the more sectioned the manufacturing process (Aakko, 2016). The larger the company the less the designer is involved in the physical creation of a garment.

Brands can be categorised into fashion systems by market level; luxury, high end designer, premium and high street (Kawamura, 2005; Loschek, 2009), or depending on production method (Aakko, 2016) from couture to mass production. A designer’s job description is dependent on such aspects as well as the size of the company they are a part of (Sinha, 2000; Aakko, 2016). A designer for the mass market is more a trend analyst tasked to redesign the brand’s back catalogue of classic styles (Sinha, 2000), while a designer at a luxury or high end brand has more room to research original concepts (Aakko, 2016), experiment, sketch and illustrate (Loschek, 2009).

Commonalities across categories in how the design process is organised has been identified to follow a linear progression; ‘research’, ‘design development’ and ‘manufacture’ (Sinha, 2000, 27) and adhering to a similar hierarchal structure with the designer at the top (Kawamura, 2005). Typically, the fashion designer and the creative team, work separate from the technical team, comprised of pattern cutters and sample machinist, handling the making of garments (Gwilt, 2010; Sinha, 2000), and act as a supervisor (Sinha, 2000) in a network of collaborators (Kawamura, 2005). However at a higher price point, the designer is more involved in the whole development process from conception to finished product. The more centralised and involved designer is explored in a later chapter of this thesis.

In the next section, the role of the designer and pattern cutter will be investigated more closely, with the emphasis on high-end designer fashion (Malem, Miller & König, 2009).

2.5 The designer

The role of the designer is to come up with initial ideas. They are concerned with the shell of the garment, as well as guiding the overall visual aesthetic (Chun, 2021). The designer innovates, researches and illustrates (Loschek, 2009), chooses the shape and silhouette, fabric, trims and colour palette (Aakko, 2016), gathers and uses references from cross disciplinary sources (Ott, 2012). They should be good communicators to ensure their designs turn out as intended (Sinha, 2000), introduce enough of newness to stay desirable (Breward, 2003), and have an understanding of consumer needs and wants (Sinha, 2000, 36).

Designers seek legitimisation through art, to bring a layer of mystery to what they do (McRobbie, 1998). They have been described to be 'gifted and talented by nature' (Kawamura, 2005, 63) and a designer's talent has been portrayed as something that is 'innate' (Ott, 2012, 136). The concept of star designer (Kawamura, 2005) assists in upholding the myth of the 'creative genius' and helps in the packaging and marketing of a brand (McRobbie, 1998). By thinking of themselves as more of an artist they can distance themselves from the notions of labour, production and consumption. This way they present an image of their fashion as something more exclusive and sets designer fashion apart from the mass-market (McRobbie, 1998).

Designers are judged on the physical garments based on their designs and not their drawings (Sinha, 2000). This shows that the success of the design is determined by its physical attributes. To this includes of course visual appeal, but also, as is the nature of design, its functionality for its intended context (Ott, 2012), for example as formal wear or for hiking. Therefore, it is beneficial for a designer to have the ability to communicate specific information of the design to their team. Even better if the designer has a strong understanding of material and construction to efficiently guide the process forward without wasting time on concepts unable to be implemented (Potter, 1969/2002), due to cost, availability or pure physics.

In the public domain designers almost lean into the art connotation, but when describing the work itself pivots into technical language and many report participating in the development process (McRobbie, 1998).

The designer as purely someone with ideas stems from the first autonomous fashion designer Charles Frederick Worth. Before dressmakers and tailors executed the wishes of the upper classes (Kawamura, 2005). In present times, the design goes through a pattern and sample making team that carry out the physical realisation of a design (Gwilt, 2010).

It is not necessary for a designer to know how to make their own products (Loschek, 2009) and some designers might not even have formal training in the field. However it can be argued that the training has in those instances been acquired through doing (Ott, 2012; Schön, 1983) and therefore this skill has been acquired over time.

Figure 9. Same Same but Different by Sofia Ilmonen (above)

Figure 10-11. Self- Assembly by Matti Liimatainen (right)

2.6 The pattern cutter

'Pattern cutting is not all about mathematics and measurements : it's about space and balance'
(Roberts, 2013, 31)

A pattern cutter is tasked with interpreting the designer's vision into a 3D fully functional garment. It exists in between the design and sampling or assembly stages and requires both technical and craft knowledge to carry out (Almond, 2010). Design is often seen as a more desirable role (Almond, 2010) and is therefore placed above the pattern cutting phase, however both are required in order to develop usable and visually successful clothing (Aakko, 2016).

A pattern can be achieved through drafting or flat pattern cutting (Almond, 2010), usually done through a block pattern, that functions as an 'abstraction of the body' (Lindqvist, 2015, 69). This is based on a horizontal and vertical measuring system, that is altered to create new styles. Patterns can also be achieved through draping, by manipulating fabric on a dress stand (Almond, 2010). This mock-up is marked and annotated, dismantled and traced onto paper. The pattern is then finalised by adding the appropriate seam allowances for each finishing. Most commonly a mixture of the two methods, flat pattern and draping, are applied. The result is a blue print that can then be used for cutting out, assembly and reproduction.

This role can be categorised into creative and production pattern cutting, where the creative pattern cutter is responsible for coming up with the first patterns and developing the core silhouette of a design. Thereafter themselves, an assistant or production pattern cutter takes care of the alterations between toiles and fittings, overseeing the design to a sample garment. A production pattern cutter does the alterations that are required for the pattern to be ready for manufacturing. Sometimes it means simplifying or streamlining the pattern for easier cutting or assembly.

The above mentioned are the rudimentary tasks of a pattern maker, but other things are factored in when creating a pattern. Things like fabric choice and garment category are some of the more concrete aspects that affect the way a garment is cut (Di Lorenzo, 2016). After a toile or a prototype is produced it is tried onto a fit model or

the client themselves in the instance of a custom order. This stage will reveal if the designer's idea works in real life and allows for assessment on design, fit, proportion and relevance for the garments intended purpose (Gwilt & Rissanen, 2011). It also functions as a test to see if the communication between the designers, pattern makers and machinists has been successful.

Tacit knowledge plays a big part in pattern cutting and the success of a garment. The pattern cutter has to draw from a varied catalogue of fabric, finishing and construction knowledge as well as rely on social, historical, visual skills. This has prompted pattern cutting to be described as an 'essential' stage in the design process (Aakko, 2016, 188) and as 'the backbone of every collection' (Almond, 2010, 16).

As alluded earlier, there are other ways of approaching pattern cutting than purely a separated stage between design and sample making. Subtraction cutting by Julian Roberts coined a technique utilising the negative space, describing the process as 'DESIGNING WITH PATTERNS, rather than creating patterns for design' (Roberts, 2013, 15). Another approach is zero-waste pattern cutting, a technique used by Timo Rissanen (2013) and others who focus on pattern cutting for fabric waste reduction. The idea is to utilise the whole fabric, by feeding what usually would be thrown away, into the pattern itself in form of seam allowances, facings and features. Modularity also allows for a more dynamic design process and is evident in Sofia Ilmonen's and Matti Liimatainen's work (Ilmonen, 2021; self-assembly. fi, 2022), both utilising the means of assembly as a design feature.

While pattern cutting is still done manually within the high-end and independent brands, the role is becoming increasingly digital (Särmäkari, 2021). CAD Software like Gerber and Lectra are staples in terms of production pattern cutting, digitising and sharing of digital patterns for manufacturing purposes across the globe. Other software like Clo3D, with sophisticated simulations for fabric behaviour and digital draping, allow for a more and more hands-off approach when it comes to the garment making process (Särmäkari, 2021). This is a feat for digital fashion, by lessening the need for physical embodiment of clothing as a means for self-expression, as well as a more sustainable alternative for the often wasteful creative pattern cutting process (Almond, 2010). It is also a potential hazard in shortening the turn around time for reproducing trends, however that is outside the scope of this thesis.

Figure 12. Subtraction cutting by Julian Roberts

CHAPTER 3

CHAPTER 3

Modes of *make*

In this chapter modes that embrace the make-process are introduced. Some of these modes have been part of evolving clothing and fashion away from craft practice, towards the prevailing image making practice (Kawamura, 2005), however they might also reveal to help restoring them. These approaches pose alternatives with potential for systemic change (slow fashion), centralising the designer's role (artisanal fashion), for embracing heritage and traditional craft (couture & tailoring), and by featuring it in the aesthetic (deconstruction). In each mode, skilled practitioners or makers are required and also reveals potential other benefits.

3.1 Slow fashion

'Slow + fashion refocuses our attention on earlier definitions of the term "fashion" to do with making—clothes and identities, rather than only with looking.'
(Clark, 2008, 444)

The image making aspect of fashion has consequences in speeding up consumption, resulting in short trend cycles, high demand, low prices, therefore incentivising globalised mass-production (Clark, 2008; Fletcher, 2010). The reason being that our current economic system is built on a growth philosophy, prioritising the shareholders quarterly profits over other goals. Within fashion such a system has led to poorly made garments, from cheap fabrics, with the expectation of being destroyed in one wash, just in time for the next fad to be bought into (Clark, 2008; Fletcher, 2010). This has seen the advent of approaches challenging the old status quo.

One such ideology is the slow fashion movement. The concept of slow fashion is derived from the Slow Food movement started in Italy more than thirty years ago. It was a reaction towards the increasing popularity of fast food, prioritising speed and quantity over quality (Clark, 2008; Fletcher, 2010). More than anything the slow fashion approach operates on a systemic level, offering solutions for design, production, consumption and use to be carried out in more sustainable and ethical ways (Clark, 2008).

Strategies have been introduced to challenge and propose solutions for systemic change. One is to return to sourcing raw materials and fabrics, as well as production locally (Clark, 2008), bringing know-how back into communities and utilising craftsmanship already there by encouraging collaboration. This increases awareness of the design and make-processes for designers and customers alike, creating transparency (Clark, 2008; Fletcher, 2010). This calls into question the hierarchal structuring prevalent within fashion companies (McRobbie, 1998), that puts the designer at the top, manufacturing at the bottom, and the customer without so much as a say (Clark, 2008).

Slow fashion thinking encourages redefining the existing roles in the fashion design system, rethinking globalised manufacturing, as well as reassessing quantity and speed determined growth, towards meaningful systemic change in fashion (Clark, 2008; Fletcher, 2010).

3.2 Artisanal fashion

One such approach offering an alternative to the current system is artisanal fashion. The word artisanal evokes something made by hand, through traditional methods and done with care (Aakko, 2016; Heim, 2019). Often designers striving for a more meaningful approach to fashion, with a desire for more creative control and flexibility (Aakko, 2016; Heim, 2019), might opt for an artisanal approach. Production quantities are usually limited, collaboration with local artisans favoured and a high quality standard in material and make are paramount.

However it is worth noting that while artisanal fashion sometimes exists in the margins of the conventional fashion system, it is less of an overarching philosophical ideology like slow fashion (Aakko, 2016). Purely having a focus on longevity, heritage and timeless design is not enough to be considered slow fashion if still existing within the conventional seasonal model of two, four or more seasons a year (Fletcher, 2010). Additionally, designers may feel discouraged to align themselves with an ideology that potentially limits creativity and leaves them susceptible to scrutiny if not continuously adhering to the principles (Aakko, 2016).

The research on the artisanal approach places artisanal fashion in the context of contemporary high end designer fashion (Malem et al., 2009) highlighting craft and craftsmanship (Aakko, 2016). The qualities that define artisanal fashion are: ‘skillful materiality, designer’s integrated role and freedom for creative control‘ (Aakko, 2016, 73). These characteristics are difficult to describe separately from each other because how intrinsically linked they are.

Materiality in the context of artisanal fashion refers to tactile aspects like the make-process and fabric itself, and a preference for using materials of the highest quality made from natural materials, has been observed (Aakko, 2016). The designer having a centralised role allows for an involved approach. This is evident in the hands-on participation of the designer, be it in an atelier within a collaborative team or skills in a variety of craft-based tasks from knitting to pattern and garments construction. They are actively involved in every aspect, having to decide on anything and all from creative to business (Aakko, 2016; Ott, 2012).

While there are commonalities between the artisanal and couture ways of production, like the amount of hand making and crafting involved at various stages, it does not have to adhere to rules set by Haute Couture (Aakko, 2016). Brands that follow an artisanal approach might appear less formal or even casual, compared to the extravagance and formality of couture (with exceptions, like Balenciaga’s Fall 2021 Couture collection presenting jeans, albeit handwoven). There is not a recognised common look within artisanal fashion, however the make-process plays a significant role in moulding the aesthetic (Aakko, 2016). The idea of ‘the touch of the human hand’(Aakko, 2016, 100) is a common design method also in deconstruction fashion.

The artisanal approach puts high value in quality, craft and skill, and is both labour and time intensive. However it is favoured by a designer that desires to reclaim creative control and has the ability to perform many or all stages from design through production themselves. By this reclaiming a humanity aspect that might have been overlooked before.

3.3 Tailoring

'The alchemical role of the tailor in translating paper, chalk, tacking thread, pins and cloth into a suit of clothes fitted to the frame of the customer represented a magical form of skill, but one that has generally remained invisible.'
(Breward, 2016, 25)

In the 1804 Dictionary of English Trades, tailoring is described as a means to 'bestow a good shape where nature has not granted one' (Anderson, 2018). Tailoring is not just specific garments, like jackets, trousers and coats, but the purpose is to provide garments that have been meticulously fitted around the body to either enhance, improve or help a person look the part (Di Lorenzo, 2016). Early tailoring was passed down through an apprentice system, from master to apprentice, and was taught by doing. Tailoring has practically remained unchanged for the past 150 years. The largely by-hand performed methods are still considered to produce the best results in terms of fit, form and quality (Cabrera & Antoine, 2015).

An important marker of the quality of a tailored piece is the fabric (Breward, 2016), but it is through the knowledge and execution of construction the true benefit and beauty of tailoring is realised. The structure in tailored pieces is achieved through layering different types of materials (Breward, 2016), like canvas and felt. However, the way the layers are laid and attached to each other, and how shaping through steam and pressure is applied, all help create the finished piece. Tailoring methods can be separated into the following categories: 'the traditional, the machine, the fusible, and the mass-produced' (Di Lorenzo, 2016, 9), however it is possible and common to utilise one or more methods combined.

Tailoring plays a key part in the development of pattern and cut. Drafting with chalk onto cloth directly, evolved into the grid based measuring system, or the tailoring matrix, from which the most common pattern drafting methods are derived from (Lindqvist, 2015). This helped the standardisation of measurements, eventually leading to the invention of the measuring tape. When a pattern is recognised so is repetition and therefore potential for reproduction.

Longevity and quality are values baked into tailored garments, which gives them an edge in extending their life-cycle. It is common to leave room for adjustability in tailoring for when the wearer ages and the garment changes when worn (Gwilt, 2011). This is something that is still implemented even in premium high street clothing, and particularly in menswear. Extra seam allowance is left in the centre back of trousers to allow the waist to be expanded in case the wearer so requires. The trousers are also constructed in a way where this adjustment can easily be made with minimal unpicking.

Another way this is implemented is through dress-shields (Gwilt, 2011). The purpose of them is to shield the clothing from getting stained by bodily fluids. Usually these are placed in the underarm of jackets and in the trouser crotch to minimise direct contact with the main fabric. Frequent laundering is not recommended for tailored pieces, but the shields can easily be washed or replaced when needed.

3.4 Couture

Couture is seen as the highest form of craftsmanship within fashion (Loschek, 2009). The couturier is a designer that works with the most exquisite materials combining them with the most exclusive and specialized techniques the industry has to offer (Loschek, 2009; Shaeffer, 1993). However it is not a prerequisite for a couturier to know how to ‘make’ themselves (Loschek, 2009). One garment might have several people working on it at the same time and can take dozens or even hundreds of hours to complete (Shaeffer, 1993).

Being a fashion designer is a fairly modern concept. It is only within the last 150 years the occupation has become legitimised, with the founding of Le Chambre Syndicale de la Haute Couture in France in 1868 (Kawamura, 2005). The organisation is the gatekeeping institution of couture, making sure the rules are followed and high standard is kept. The guidelines for example state how many fittings are required or how many full time employees a Maison must be employ. This is in order to continuously preserve and support Haute Couture.

Worth, active in the late 19th century, is recognised as the first modern fashion designer. He was offering a collection of original designs ready to be produced for clients in-house (Breward, 2003; Hollander, 1994). The novelty was that dresses were available to be seen ahead of ordering and were then made to the client’s measurements. This was the first time the creators and makers of the clothes were no longer mere servants to the upper classes, but had agency over their own work (Kawamura, 2005).

For the first time those who worked with garments were seen as ‘creative and intellectual’ (Loschek, 2009, 20). Before, the cloth was brought in by the patron themselves, while the cutting and making of the clothes were performed by dressmakers and tailors (Aakko, 2016; Kawamura, 2005). Dressmaking was also seen as a domestic activity and was commonly performed by women themselves, their maids or in all-female workshops. However, tailoring as a service was all conducted behind closed doors with great mystery surrounding the creation of the finished product (Hollander, 1994). Dressmakers and tailors would stay anonymous and were thought to have no real impact in changing trends (Breward, 2003; Aakko, 2016).

In couture, craftsmanship is used as a way to demonstrate quality and add status, whereas art is what designers themselves want to associate with in attempts to legitimise their work (McRobbie, 1998; Kawamura, 2005). However, couture does not automatically mean good quality. In the beginning the insides were not paid as much attention to as they are now. Competition drove couturiers to improve their make in order to gain and retain more clients (Gwilt, 2009). A clean-finished inside of a garment is also more often a requirement in garments that are of a Pret-á-porter or lower standard, in order to hide the cheap and quick machine-sewn solutions, opted for to achieve a better profit margin.

3.5 Deconstruction

'Clothes ebbed and flowed along continuums between luxury and utility, complete-ness and unfinished-ness, innovation and tradition, craft and technology.'
(Cambridge, 2013, 123)

Derived from Jacques Derrida's writings and the philosophical movement, deconstruction as it pertains to fashion is often synonymous with the works of Martin Margiela. While Japanese designers like Rei Kawakubo with Commes des garçons and Yoji Yamamoto pioneered the aesthetic, when bringing their collections to Paris, it was designers like Margiela and the Antwerp six that brought it to mainstream attention (Maksimova, 2020; Loschek, 2009; Gill, 1998).

The movement has been called to be fashion's attempt to be seen as art, however Margiela himself insists on labelling his work as craft (Svendsen, 2006). Tailoring techniques are often featured in his work, but rarely utilised in an explicitly traditional way (Gill, 1998). Seams are left unfinished, lining is used as the main fabric in garments, and inner structures are left exposed. These are all examples of Margiela's approach to design in his collections. The techniques allude to a knowledge of craft and tradition that only a skilled and experienced maker would possess (Aakko, 2016; Gill, 1998). Svendsen likens this to the way modern artists expose their process sketching in their final work, bringing attention to its materiality (Svendsen, 2006).

Construction related terminology for deconstruction has been defined as: 'the displacement of the garment elements', 'the inversion of the inside out', and 'adding of unconventional elements' (Maksimova, 2020, 137). These three key methods are helpful in recognising and categorising the design approaches, but purely relying on concrete aesthetic techniques, can leave design on a superficial level. It is not as simple as the 'dismantling of clothes' or an 'aestheticized non-functionality' (Gill, 1998, 26). While this definition is true on the concrete level, deconstruction also has meanings separate from the making process and craftsmanship alone (Aakko, 2016).

Deconstruction is considered more than an aesthetic movement in fashion. Links have been drawn to artisanal fashion (Aakko, 2016) and Maison Margiela's aptly named couture line 'Artisanal' further highlighting that association. It has also been ascribed a way to intellectualise the design process by not only demonstrating knowledge of making, but also social and conceptual awareness (Loschek, 2009). Margiela's work, specifically his 20th anniversary showcase was described as drawing 'attention to the contrivances the fashion business generally seeks to conceal' (Cambridge, 2013, 123), working as a way for social commentary or even activism (Kawamura, 2005). However, it is not known, if the intention of the work always is the same as how it has been interpreted.

Figure 14. Maison Martin Margiela Fall 1997, Photo: Condé Nast Archive

CHAPTER 4

CHAPTER 4

Collection development

CONCEPT STATEMENT

The concept for the collection Strength of Body – fragility of mind is a personal one. In the collection, I reflect around my complex relationship with my grandmother. In many ways she was an important influence in me finding my interest in making and creating at a young age. Being a short woman, she would often have to shorten the hems of sleeves and legs of her flea market finds for her not to drown in the clothes. Simultaneously, she has played a part in contributing to my own anxiety issues and insecurities around body image, through scrutinisation of her own body, frequent diet talk and commentary around my size.

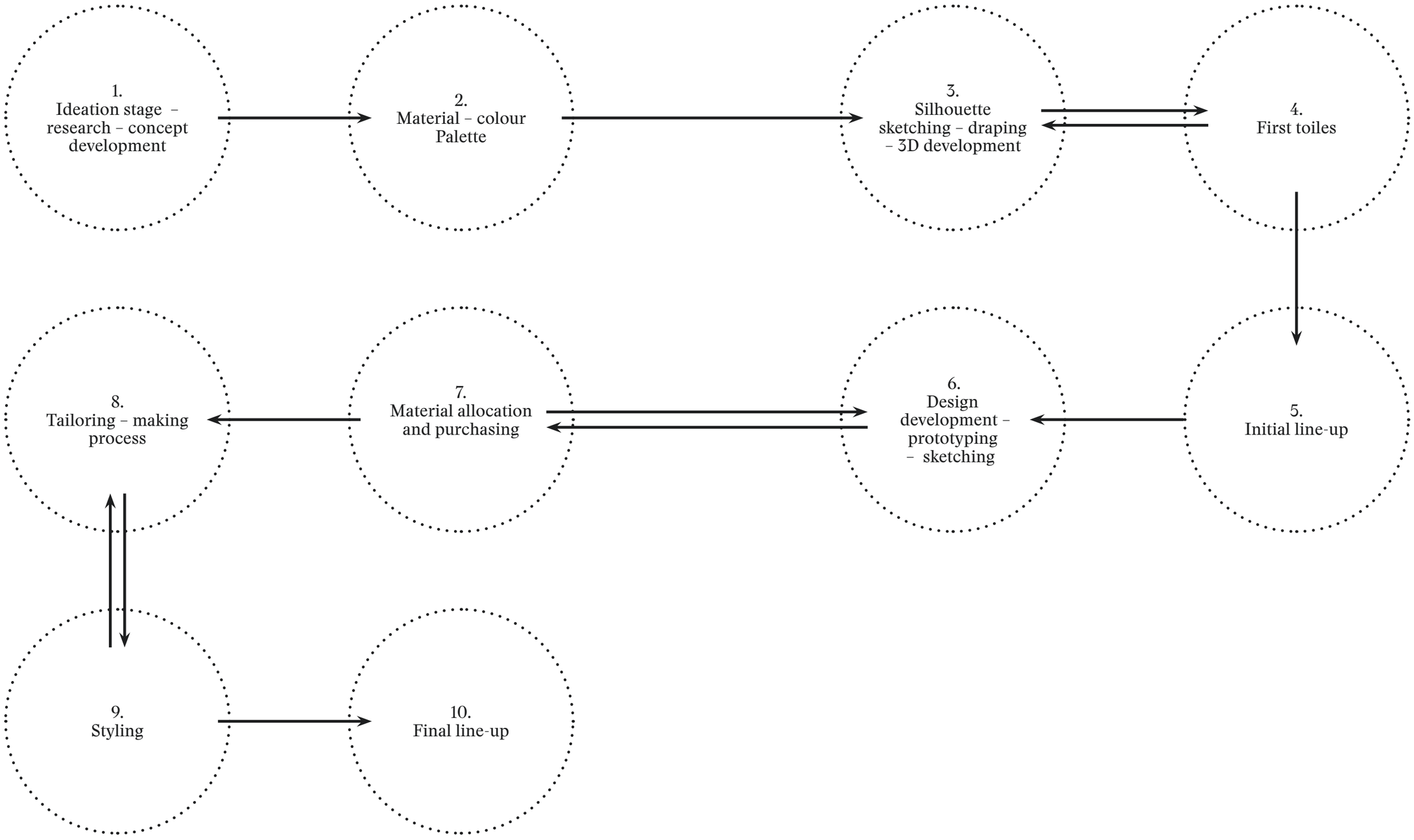
Her diagnosis with Alzheimer's disease affected how I remember her; it feels bittersweet. Memories of actions, events and people start to deteriorate and eventually disappear, but the strength of body remains. This evoked feelings around body and mind, legacy, fragility and strength. This influenced me to design the collection from the perspective of a tailor losing their memory. Initially the garments look familiar. They are warped, contorted and manipulated into less and less recognisable ones, similarly how the mind abandons some memories while keeps others. Fragmentation is subtle, first interpreted as mistakes, never losing the skill and precision.

But gradually the regression is more severe, the making becomes more confusing, twisted, delicate.

Tailoring traditionally represents authority, control and restraint. In the collection I attempt to subvert these notions. I took inspiration from clothing installations and sculptures by artist Kaarina Kaikkonen, where she utilises suit jackets and blazers. These are posed in distorted ways, thus challenging the authority, while exposing the vulnerability. Tailoring to me is an expression of skill and knowledge, but it also allows me to give meaning to garments. It offers me a frame in which to subtly subvert the expected, while honouring the tradition, integrity and purpose of the methods.

Sculptured silhouettes and elongated features, paired with fragile finishing are apparent in the over garments and tailoring, while the under garments, slips and knits are delicate, sheer and close to the body. Transparency of process is visible in salvages, construction lines, and seam allowances are peppered throughout the collection. The materials are traditional wools and cottons, mellowed out by the soft, muted colour palette. A glint of silver in the trims resemble sudden inexplicable glimpses of clarity. Red representing the lost vibrancy of a person I once knew.

TIMELINE FOR DESIGN DEVELOPMENT



4.1 Concept

The concept of my collection discusses personal themes around body and mind, legacy, fragility and strength, prompted by my grandmother's diagnosis with Alzheimer's. This led me to design the collection from the perspective of a tailor battling a similar fate. I approached the development process with the assumption that the body remembers, while the mind abandons. This coincidentally reflects the opposite of the narrative that an intellectual, inactive approach would be inferior to that of an unintellectual or active one.

I wanted to rely on intuition, which I have rarely allowed myself to do or perhaps more accurately, regarded as something I would be incapable of doing. I wanted to dive straight into the process, because I was afraid over-analysis at an early stage would restrict and stifle it by narrowing the design direction too early.

Not many direct visual references were used as the base for the design process, as the intention was more a matter of interpreting emotion into something concrete through the make-process. This presents an array of symbolic qualities that can be adapted into design methods, like twisting, folding, scaling, elongating, deconstructing, unpicking, and fraying.

These terms describe the way the features of a classic garments were manipulated to achieve the feeling of confusion and deterioration, which were concluded through journaling and reflection. It was also essential to include this thinking into the construction and making process in order to demonstrate the value it presents in the overall garment design.

Figure 20-21. 'Pikkutakkeja' by Kaarina Kaikkonen

4.2 Visual reference

A tailor being the main character in the storytelling, already gave a strong frame of reference in terms of garment types to work with. The only concrete garment reference included were two installations from artist Kaarina Kaikkonen's 'Pikkutakkeja' installations making use of jackets and blazers. The first, a jacket posed distortedly. Twisted. The red lining visible, suspended effortlessly mid air.

The second, a landscape in muted earth-toned gradient, fading to white in the horizon. But wait. They are jackets and shirts holding each other by the shoulders, as if propping each other up after a merry evening. These were used as representation of the movement I wanted to achieve in the final garments. Still, but still in motion.

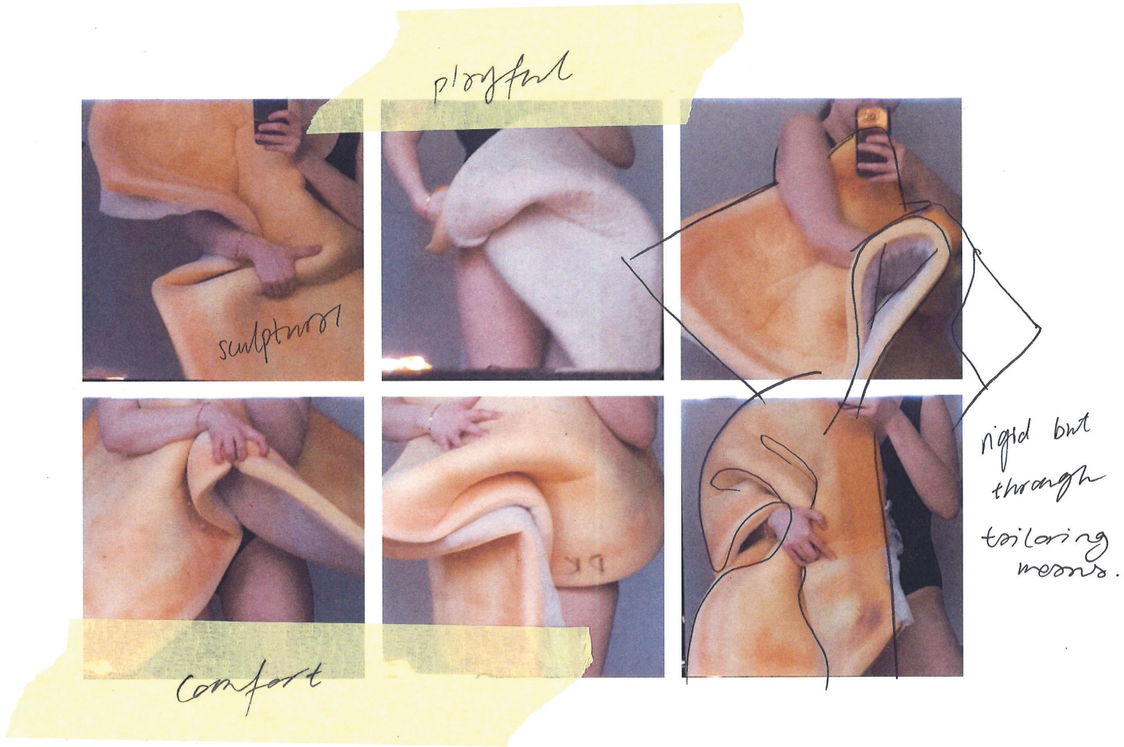
Any more in terms of visual inspiration would have confused the aim. I personally find it unimaginative to reference from images directly, when designing from a concept. I try to stay away from a too-literal approach. I am much more interested in finding methods though the concept that then inform the design process.

Although, I do find the merit in using direct references in instances where they are appropriate for the aim, like evoking associations through very specific details. But for me, if the concept is purely about referencing visual sources, rather than analysing something deeper or inspiring methods through which to design, then it, in my opinion, is a superficial project and perhaps not worth pursuing.

4.3 Ideation stage

In what I call the ideation stage, I reflected on what is currently relevant for my wellbeing, what is catching my eye, but more importantly what is moving me personally. What is making me emotional, what is making me feel? Recognising key artists and artworks that correspond with my mood, or colours that speak to me.

In lockdown April 2020, I pursued a simple personal artistic project to practice being more comfortable with self-expression, in order to feel less self-conscious being physically more involved within the process. In the past I have had the tendency too being overly in control to the point of stifling my creativity.



4.4 Silhouette sketching

As opposed to traditional drawing or illustration, I personally much prefer working in 3D. Not only because I think I am weaker at drawing, but because of the potential to test out what is possible and how different fabrics act, rather than allowing one's imagination to be limited to one specific idea too early on. With fabrics and clothing I already own, I started sketching out shapes, by twisting, draping and holding fabrics to a mannequin, to myself and together with a model, to map out different interesting silhouettes.

The intention is not to create something amounting to anything concrete, but to feel out potential fabrics for achieving certain silhouettes, unexpected volumes and interesting shapes to inspire something down the line. In hindsight, this stage was a bit of a shot in the dark to allow me to do something tactile, rather than getting stuck in patterns. Through this process I was able to start visualising a very rough first line-up proposal that would be useful in furthering designs.

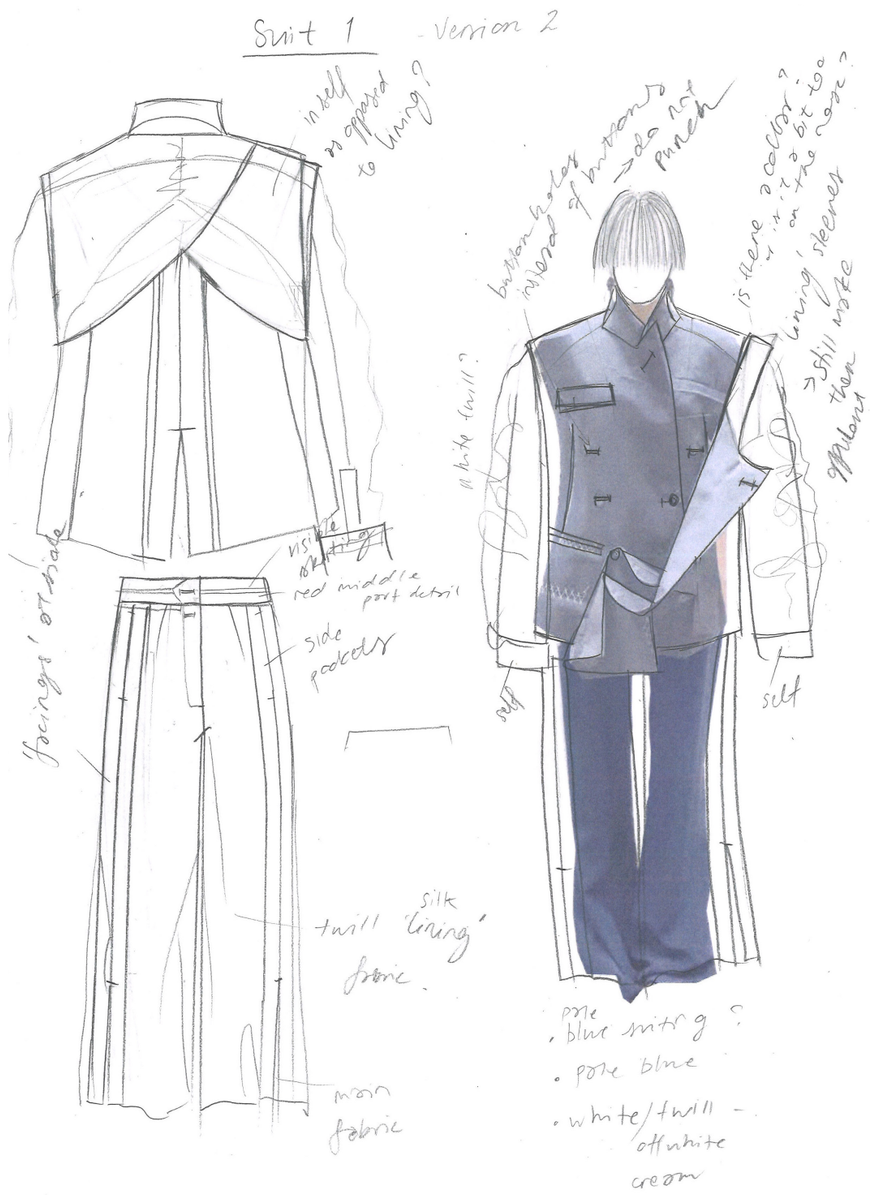
With the help of first toile silhouettes and images, through photoshopping images together, development of the first line-up was possible.

This was a new method for me and I found it a useful tool for this stage to visualise some sort of cohesive collection, even if it most certainly would change. I would call them more visualisations of what could be, instead of representations of real garments, because a sketch is not truly functional as one. It is not yet the real thing, it is just an idea.

4.5 Design development and prototyping stage

In this stage, I intended to interpret the initial stylised line-up into physical garment types, starting from what garments they would represent. In the first major review of the collection back in the end of February ’21, menswear designer Martine Rose suggested this way of designing, while my personal thesis collection advisor did not think it was necessary to limit my designs into certain formats of clothing quite yet.

I knew that I wanted to have suits to bring in the tailoring into the collection in a central role. I allocated those garments out to silhouettes and started drawing out what the true workings of those garments would be. At this stage I also started utilising garments I already owned, purchased in flea markets, or found discarded at the university campus in developing pieces for my collection. Suit jackets are very easy to find in flea markets at 1 or 2 euros a piece, and have been a tremendous help for deconstructing, manipulating and mocking up new interesting versions of them for my collection. Menswear suit jackets in particular, are structured and made to hold their shape, even when made from lower quality materials.



4.6 *Make* in Strength of Body - Fragility of mind

The following methods were identified as following the principle of 'make' in the developing process of Strength of Body - Fragility of Mind.

— Draping
— Pattern cutting
— Fitting
— Tailoring

4.6.1 DRAPING

A process of manually modelling fabric on a mannequin or a live model to generate ideas in 3D. Gives a good sense of proportions and an idea of the capabilities of the materials in terms of drape and structure, and initial clues on what types of construction would have to be implemented in order to achieve certain shapes and silhouettes. Draping can be done with pieces of cloth or by utilising existing garments. The outcome of drape can be transferred to a paper and a pattern can be drafted from it.

4.6.2 FITTING

In a fitting session issues concerning fit can be straighten out, evaluation of the garments in movement can be made, and an opportunity to see the look as a whole is given. It can be revealing for issues with proportion and allows for adjustments accordingly. Fittings were held at regular intervals to review and adapt the collection line-up. When fitting final garments at different stages of completion there are still many opportunities to improve, enhance and change the garment, which allowed for many design changes along the way.

4.6.3 TAILORING

Tailoring in the collection was conducted through a traditional way that included many hand finishing techniques. Different types of canvases and felt were used to create structure in the chest areas of the jackets and gown. Customised shoulder pads were created for each by layering various materials, found and borrowed from felt to cotton wadding and canvas. All the outer edges of the lapels were secured by hand stitching, utilising pieces of rigid thin cotton and selvage edges of linings. Lapels were meticulously pad stitched to create sharp roll edges and bridles holding the roll line from stretching were attached by hand. Many of the construction lines - the white hand stitch lines holding layers together while under construction - were kept as an embroidery detail.

First fitting April 2021 , Pandora

1. Corset dress

2. Twisted suit

3. Balloon sleeve jacket

4. Formal tailored suit

5. Folded tailored gown

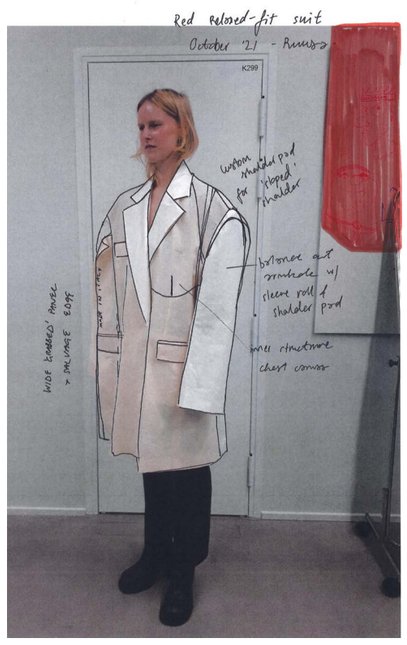
4.7 Key silhouettes

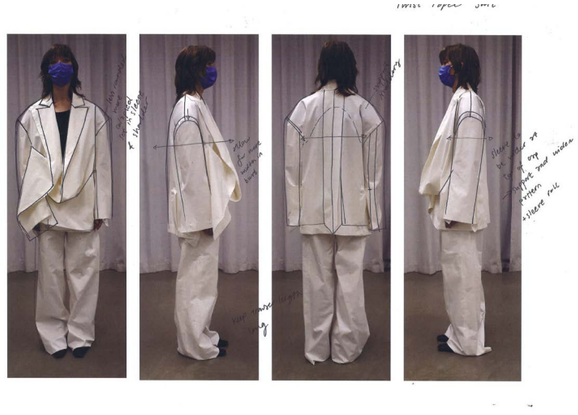
Having landed on the idea of a tailor struggling to accept their fading memory, it felt natural to choose garments one would be familiar with. This narrowed, or perhaps clarified the nature of the pieces, and allowed me to identify key garments in the collections. What gains them the title of key silhouette is that they are the defining pieces from which the rest are adapted. You will notice that they are all more or less asymmetrical, which was a conscious choice. This allowed for a very challenging design process in searching for shapes that work from every angle. The trick in asymmetry is to maintain a certain amount of balance, which was achieved through the monochromatic colouration in most looks. However, the distribution of weight is an important aspect when considering the success of an asymmetrical garment. An out of balance garment does not hang right on the body, is difficult to look at, and is even more uncomfortable to wear.

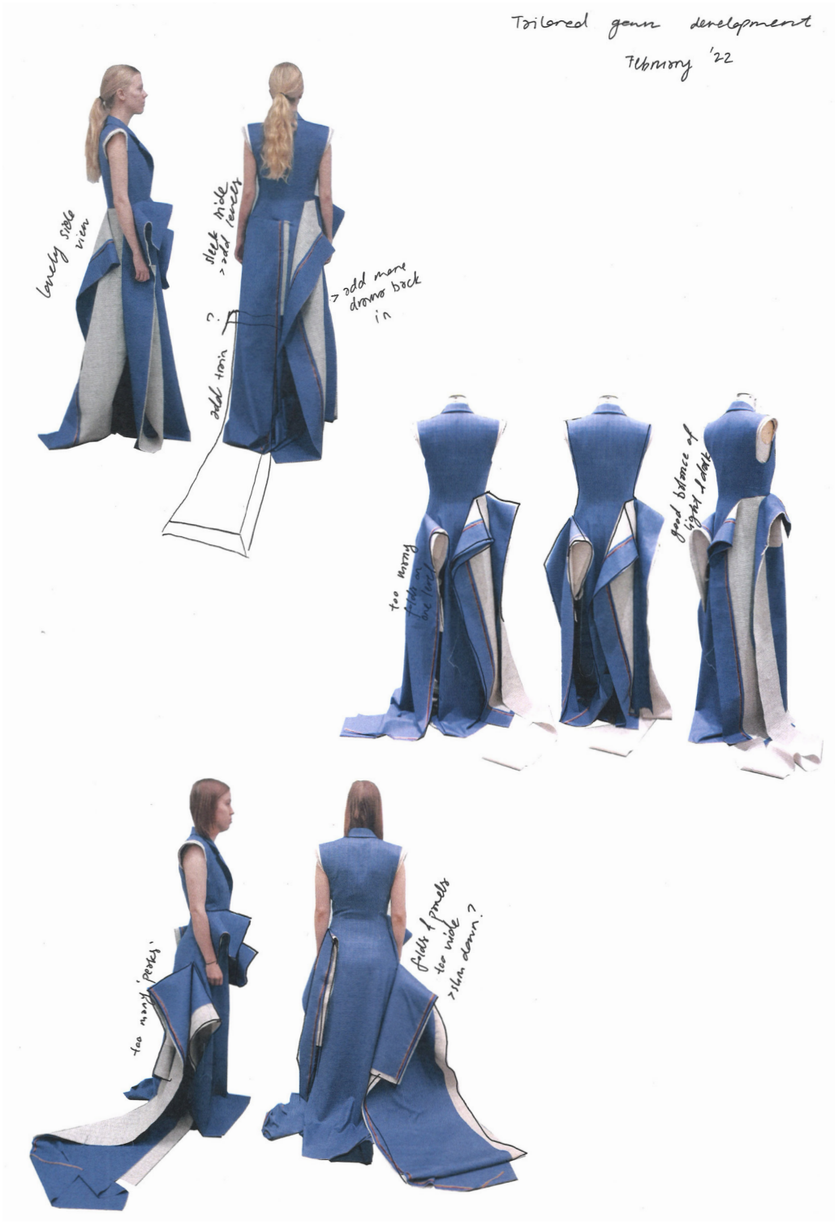
4.7.1 TWO SUITS

The decision to include two different types of suits felt natural, one of a formal cut and one casual. The formal suit is based on a double breasted, sharp shouldered 1980's men's blazer found at a flea market. The pattern was drafted and altered to accommodate for a fuller hip than a traditional menswear jacket, which gives a similar feel to the original reference, however is of a better fit and allows for a wider range of wearer. The suit is of a heavily tailored nature, which in my terms means that a heavy canvas has been utilised, as well as a substantial amount of hand-stitching techniques.

The second suit revealed itself to be a challenge and was one of the later pieces to be fully determined. The two suits had to be distinctive enough from each other for there to be a reason to include both in a similar category, but also function as suits. Many attempts of the more casual version were made, but was always declared 'too forced' or had a weight imbalance issue. Eventually the look was solved by simplifying the shape and adding one point of interest, which was found in the element of asymmetry. This jacket is not as heavily tailored as the first, allowing for a more casual feel. A softer chest canvas was applied and a custom pad was made to create the wide and slightly sloped softer shoulder. Overall, the fabric and make of this suit allows it to drape and move in a fluid manner.







4.7.2 TAILORED GOWN

The tailored gown is built like a fitted coat, with many folds and drapes. In this style the make is very apparent, and required a lot of development. The folds were constructed through layering of different canvas weights, carefully hand-stitched to the main fabric to avoid stitch marks showing through. In this garment the distribution of weight had to be carefully planned to not cause visible torsion and pulling under the weight. This was solved by regularly checking on both a mannequin and in fitting sessions that the garment hang was correct. Also an inner canvas structure was created to diffuse the weight across the whole bodice to avoid pulling. An added challenge was matching the check pattern in all the many seams, but with careful planning and cutting, mistakes were largely avoided.

4.7.3 TRENCH COAT

I knew I wanted the trench coat to have an elongated feature and some kind of soft drape. Because of the large amount of fabric in this style, I needed to add certain grounding elements. Without them the garment would just look like a pile of fabric. These details were the classic trench collar with a hook and eye closure at the neck, raglan sleeve, sleeve ties and waist belt. The elongated feature is the exaggerated storm guard at the back, draping from one sleeve along the back, cascading to the floor. The edge is finished with a raw-edge binding detail to distinctly outline it.

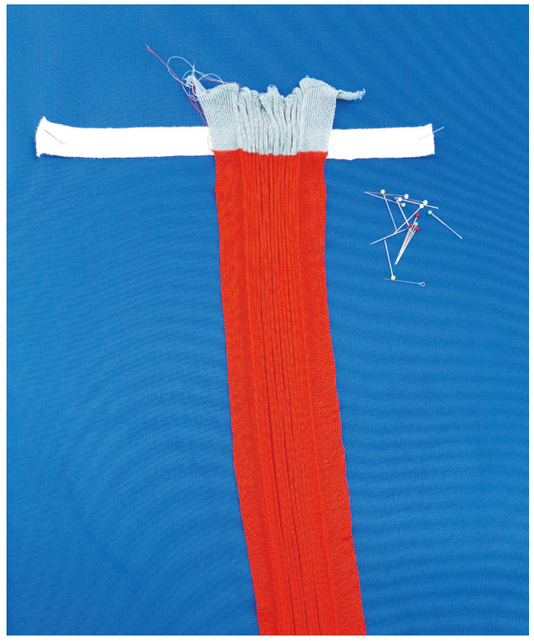
4.7.4 CORSET DRESS

The silhouette was started from a single corset that developed into a three corset sculptural dress. The main corset is attached to a base corset held in place by hand stitches. The third, floating corset is placed on top and stitched securely, creating interesting movement to the garment. This material was created by heat bonding a checkered wool with a stiff cotton taffeta, which allowed for the sculptural look. The folds are also helped by boning inserted into the channels stitched in every seam in the corsets. The garment looks to be cinched together by a drip rubber coated metal clip at the back.

4.7.5 OTHER GARMENTS

The rest of the garments then fell into place, many of which are remnants from other classic, originally menswear pieces, complementing and expanding the variety in the collection. This translates into the interpretation of familiar, some might say classic garments (Verbic, 2019) commonly seen as a part of a contemporary designer collection. The white shirt was a safe piece to add at an early stage, but did not find its final place in styling until much later. A version of the shirt was also made in a red shift cotton twill, paired with casual jeans-like trousers, evoking a more casual ensemble to balance out the collections overall more formal look. In turn, fluid, shear knitwear with a light lustre was developed to counter balance the heavy, opaque and structured tailoring.

The flesh coloured knit set adds a different type of lightness and organic feel, still missing from the collection. And the fire red knit top styled under the casual suit takes the whole look away from a yuletide undertone. The very last garment to be deciphered was the double slip dress that would eventually be styled with the white shirt, cinched with multiple drip-coated clips. The garment first started as a simple slip under the corset dress, but developed to consist of a graded up overlay version attached. Multiple raw-edge straps and bindings were added to highlight the fraying edges, while still being finished and thought out. All garments were based on recognisable clothing items, understood even when changed and distorted in subtle ways. Familiar, but slightly odd. From a garment point of view, still very wearable, but more expressive.



4.8 Colour palette and material choices

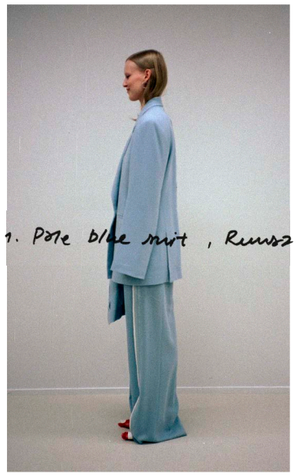
As early as November 2020 we emptied my grandmother's house to move her to a care home due to her deteriorating state. I was able to take a look at her old photo albums and found images from the lake by our summer place in Kuusamo, slightly below the Lapland border. The sequence of photos from the same spot, each the same but different. These images have a certain stillness which encapsulated my feelings as well as the change in my grandmother's disposition over time. This worked as an inspiration in deciding on the muted colour palette for the majority of the collection early on in the process. This turned out to be helpful as well as a hinderance in the collection development process.

On the one hand, it allowed me to focus on the material sourcing well in advance as I had set out clear boundaries. On the other hand, it happens to be challenging to find suiting materials, that are not your standard navy, grey or black, first of all in Finland and second of all, at a price point I could afford. Therefore, I ended up using a very light weight wool crepe in my suits. Without interfacing and fusible, these would have been too light for this purpose. However, because of my knowledge of make, I managed to layer and construct the fabric in a way that supported my vision for the design. Someone with perhaps a more limited skill set would have been discouraged from using the fabric, maybe opted for a different one and ended up compromising for a different quality and colour, in order to match their abilities. While I was able to judge my ability and adapt my construction appropriately to the fabric.

In a review of the collection, materials and colours up to that point, me and my advisor agreed that the collection needed a pop of colour to liven up the otherwise very muted tonal palette. The addition of red was introduced. I purchased the same light weight wool crepe also used in the pale blue suit. Red was also brought into the knitwear and later to the stocking shoes and accessories.

When choosing fabrics for each garment I wanted to keep them grounded and traditional, something that a tailor would choose without thinking, in some sense mundane but still full of recognisable character. I consciously aimed to use high quality natural materials, utilising English and Italian wool suiting and high-density Swiss made cotton fabric. Working with materials of quality is not only satisfying on a personal level, they are also known for being durable and age well in wear.

Line-up April 2022



1. Pale blue suit, Rumors

2. Tailored gown, Meri

Styling session April 2022 Rumors & Meri

3. Workwear, Trench coat, Meri

4. Knit dress, slip dress, Rumors

5. Corset dress, Rumors
Red suit, Meri

4.9 Final outcome

The final outcome of the practical part is an 8 look collection, consisting of garments, shoes and accessories.

CHAPTER 5

CHAPTER 5

Discussion and conclusion

5.1 SUMMARY

This thesis sets out to search answers to what ‘make’ is, its value for the designer and how it can be integrated in the garment creation process to generate design ideas. Through the literature review ‘make’ is identified as the technical stages of the garment creation process, also conceptualised as the ‘craft of fashion’ (Aakko, 2016, 90). The context is defined by recognising the current state of the fashion industry and its relation to art, craft and craftsmanship. The role of the designer and the pattern cutter within the prevailing system is investigated, which reveals potential benefits with merging aspects from each and challenges the prominence of the fashion designer as a figure head.

Modes that spotlight the make-process are analysed and identified as slow fashion (Clark, 2008; Fletcher, 2010), artisanal fashion (Aakko, 2016), couture, tailoring and deconstruction. The main point within slow fashion is to redefine the existing roles in the current fashion system, offering solutions for design, production, consumption and use to be carried out in more sustainable and ethical ways. The notion of ‘make’ as a central aspect to design is seen in artisanal fashion, putting a high emphasis on skillful materiality (Aakko, 2016). It is favoured by a designer that desires to reclaim creative control and has the ability to perform many or all stages from design to production on their own.

Both couture and tailored garments are defined by skilled craftsmanship and exquisite materials, created specifically to meticulously fit the wearer. These modes are steeped in heritage and traditional craft, and teach us methods that have potential for longevity and high quality in clothing, encouraging long lasting wear. Deconstruction, which as an approach is more philosophical, can be seen as a continuation from tailoring and couture in the ways craftsmanship and materials are skilfully applied. However, in the latter the technique used are meant to appear effortless and go unnoticed. This is in contrast with deconstruction, where traces of make are often heavily utilised as a part of the aesthetic in garments, but also the potential for bringing attention to and demonstrate social and conceptual awareness (Loschek, 2009).

In the artistic part of the thesis, an eight look collection designed around a personal concept titled ‘Strength of Body - Fragility of Mind’, is introduced. In this work, ‘make’ is explored in practice, and the full collection

development process, from concept to finished outcome is presented. Because ‘make’ in this thesis is defined as the technical phases in the garment creation process, the following methods allowing integration are identified; draping, pattern cutting, fitting and tailoring. These methods, based on construction knowledge, were utilised in generating design ideas, and furthering the collection development along. These approaches were applied to evolve the overall look of the collection and strengthen individual garments designs.

5.2 ANALYSIS

The idea of the designer resting firmly as the figurehead above other actors in the fashion design process goes back 150 years to the first couturiers (Kawamura, 2005). The common consensus is that design is the starting point and the make is adapted to realise the desired garment according to the designer’s vision. A garment developed in a linear design process would follow this principle and ‘make’ suffers risk becoming an after though. A more dynamic process can allow for a more involved approach where the designer, pattern cutters and sample makers together, have the potential to contribute to the final outcome. Having a sense of each others roles and tasks can in turn lead to better design outcomes and practices. For the designer, understanding the make-process helps giving a holistic view of garment creation. This awareness can contribute to elevating the humanity and increase empathy towards the makers and those who produce clothing, with potential for a more equalised structure.

The modes investigated reveal the potential for alternative approaches to the often linear progression of design (Sinha, 2000) by repositioning the role of ‘make’ as part of the design process instead of a mere stage in garment creation. A linear garment development process is useful for efficiency with time and cost constraints, but rarely satisfying for the designer or the makers. Keeping the different stages in the garment creation and production separated from each other, increase chances for miscommunication. With manufacturing split across continents and teams working remotely, communication has more chances to break down. This is where a big part of the foot print is witnessed, most potential for waste and exploitation has room to exist.

The term ‘craft' can trigger feelings of false nostalgia for when things were made by hand. However clothing manufacturing is still heavily reliant on human involvement in guiding the pieces of fabric through the sewing machines, due to the nature of the materials. While this activity can get mind-numbingly boring, it is still a human operated action, which perhaps the general public has become less and less aware of, making it easier to turn a blind eye. The price of production is determined by the quantity of items produced, therefore the process being fragmented into small, almost automated tasks is beneficial in keeping the cost down. This is why automation in certain areas is welcomed, and factory machinists are replaced with machines and robotics, and retrained as machine operators.

Utilising ‘make' in an involved way requires a high budget and is accessible to designers working at a higher price point, high-end designer or on a couture level. It has also not been in the scope of this thesis to investigate ‘make’ in a product for sale or how (or if) ’make’ would influence customer decisions in any way. Osborne (1977) states: ’There is no merit, no increment of aesthetic quality, merely in the fact that a thing was made by hand, nor even in the act that it bears the evident signs of having been made by hand. The sole benefit is to the worker not the consumer’(Osborne, 1977, 142), referring to personal meaningfulness. However, this is not necessarily true. Having an insight of the products origin or a sense of ‘human touch’, might influence how something is perceived. Like standing in front of a painting and seeing the brush strokes, gives a feeling of the artist being present. Similarly, involving and displaying this work in garments have to potential to evoke closeness, humanity and empathy towards an inanimate object. Knowing where a product originates helps humanising it, which can result in an emphatic bond with the purchased item. This in turn can increase the longevity of use of that crafted good.

The value in ‘make’ does not have to exist in the physical execution of a garment. ‘Make’ could also be extended to apply to digital creation of garments. With softwares like Clo3D, pattern cutting and draping are executed completely digitally (Särmäkari, 2021) and utilised in garments that do not exist in a physical sense at all, but on an online platform or a character in-game. This does not have to be seen as a threat, it is but a tool like any other. Such skills still have to be practiced, honed and mastered for them to reach their full potential. However, the software is still out of reach for many due to the high initial investment and licensing fees. Justifying the costs is only possible for high quantity manufacturing companies, as the initial investment is divided across consecutive items produced.

One aspect that has not been addressed due to the scope of this thesis, is how gender and class factors into how ‘make’ is valued and especially in the context of fashion and garments. It would be an interesting prospect to research more, as a large part of manufacturing is occupied by female identifying individuals, and so are many head office positions, while top positions are held by men (McRobbie, 1998). This is however a larger societal issue, that would warrant an investigation of its own.

In this project, the process was able to be more dynamic due to its artistic nature, conducted by the researcher-practitioner themselves, which allowed for certain flexibility and freedom from adhering to an outside-determined critical path. Being an involved designer was also by default, as all the stages were carried out by a sole individual. Therefore the findings

are speculative and personal, and not generalisable. It does however show that the topic is of interest in many aspects in understanding the complex system of fashion, and reveals the potential for further research into 'make', its benefits and applications in the garment creation process.

5.3 PERSONAL TAKEAWAYS

I was curious to research my feelings of inferiority within the fashion industry and was relieved, justified yet not surprised, for them to also be observed by others. Through the literature review I discovered my hunch regarding attitudes toward craft skills to be more than just personal insecurity. The fashion system (Kawamura, 2005) enables the grounds for the hierarchal structures with the designer and their ideas at the top and us makers at the bottom, while garment creation inherently is a joint effort.

For 'make' to have value, it has to be of a high standard, be carefully considered and executed. I discovered that for me, this is most apparent in the so called key garments of my collection. These garments are usually the ones to inspire the rest of the collection and often present more than one key technique that carries through in other garments in a more subtle way. These for me meant tailored garments. Utilising traditional tailoring methods, a lot of them done by hand, rather than in a mass-produced way, felt empowering. It was also a very intuitive, fluid process, guided by the senses, informed by the material.

The make-process has also shown to be valuable in developing asymmetrical silhouettes. The trick in asymmetry is to maintain a certain amount of balance. This can be done through monochromatic colouration, but even more vitally in the weight distribution to avoid torsion.

Understanding of 'make' is not something that can be taught through theory alone, but it must be trained, practiced and experienced (Dormer, 1994; Sennett, 2008), which I have had the privilege of gaining through my experience as a pattern cutter. This is something I have tirelessly worked on for more than 10 years. When I feared becoming too technically minded would hinder me from being truly creative, the experience was always something I could come back to appreciate. Throughout this thesis I started to realise that the reason I was a strong creative pattern cutter and was able to interpret designs to my clients taste, is because I approach the work from the perspective of a designer, not the other way round. This process has been an exercise in patience, exploration of my abilities in craftsmanship and tailoring techniques, and a vanity project to push myself in conceptual thinking and practical application.

5.4 CONCLUSION

'Make' is defined as the technical phases in garment creation. These are usually the stages hidden away and most valued when invisible in clothing. The concept of 'make' is linked to theories around art, craft and craftsmanship, where many of the attitudes are derived from. In the fashion industry, designers and their makers are usually operating separately, due to pure physical distance or due to a systemic sense of superiority and hierarchy. By bringing 'make' to the level of, and even considering it equal with design, challenges those preconceived notions.

There are approaches that have a favourable relationship with 'make'. They see in it the potential for solutions of a systemic nature and as an opportunity for the designer to become more involved within several or all stages of creation. Some approaches welcome tradition and heritage craft, embracing the prospects for quality and longevity. Others look to aestheticising 'make' by displaying construction on the surface, exposing what is normally concealed.

When a designer is knowledgable of 'make', elements can be discovered and implemented to the design the whole duration of development. Key findings in the practical component of creating a collection were that both design and make can happen simultaneously in the development process. Draping, pattern cutting, fitting and tailoring were identified as useful in forwarding the designs, solidifying the 'make'-process as a tool for creative expression.

Having an awareness of what goes into making garments helps designers acquire a broader perspective on the garment creation process. This offers valuable insight in fostering understanding and empathy for a frequently overlooked facet in fashion design encompassing a wide range of makers and doers.

'To know *how* is a much more powerful and enriching position to be in than merely know *of* something' (Dormer, 1994, 103). This poignant quote from Dormer encapsulates my personal feelings regarding 'make' and its applications. The knowledge of how something is done, in a way grounds the often-conceptual design process. I do however want to propose that knowing *why*, empowers the designer, artist and maker to an even greater extent. Acknowledging what has previously been and currently is, takes it just that one step further.

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Figure sources

Cover page
Collection editorial 2022
Photography Bernhard Forstén
Model Ruusa Vuori

Figure 1. (p.2)
Collection editorial 2022
Photography Bernhard Forstén
Model Ruusa Vuori

Figure 2. (p.7)
Kuusamonjärvi 2021
Photography Hugo d'Alte

Figure 3. (p.10)
Hanna Hanhela 2021
Photography Hugo d'Alte

Figure 4. (p.12-13)
Collection editorial 2022
Photography Bernhard Forstén
Model Zamzam Mohamed

Figure 5. (p.14)
Collection editorial 2022
Photography Bernhard Forstén
MUAH Meghna M Lampi,
Siiri Hämäläinen, Elin Sigfridsson
Model Ruusa Vuori

Figure 6. (p.17)
Collection editorial 2022
Photography Bernhard Forstén
MUAH Meghna M Lampi,
Siiri Hämäläinen, Elin Sigfridsson
Model Ruusa Vuori

Figure 7. (p.20-21)
Collection editorial 2022
Photography Bernhard Forstén
Model Zamzam Mohamed

Figure 8. (p.28)
Collection on rail
Photography Triin Tint

Figure 9.
Same Same but Different by
Sofia Ilmonen
Ilmonen, S. (2021). *Same Same but Different: Sustainable Possibilities of Transformable Design*. Master's Thesis. Aalto University
Photography Juho Huttunen

Figure 10-11.
Self- Assembly by Matti Liimatainen
Available online at https://self-assembly.fi/
Accessed on 13.12.2022

Figure 12.
Subtraction cutting by Julian Roberts
Roberts, J. (2013). *Free Cutting*, 3rd edition. https://researchonline.rca.ac.uk/3060/. URL: mediafire.com/?10d8kgbkp1yxc88 [Accessed: January 2022].

Figure 13. (p.36-37)
Collection editorial 2022
Photography Bernhard Forstén
Models Ruusa Vuori, Zamzam Mohamed

Figure 14-15.
Maison Martin Margiela Fall 1997
Available online at https://www.vogue.com/fashion-shows/fall-1997-ready-to-wear/maison-martin-margiela/slideshow/collection#8
Accessed on 13.12.2022
Photography Condé Nast Archive

Figure 16. (p.48-49)
Collection editorial 2022
Photography Bernhard Forstén
Model Ruusa Vuori

Figure 17. (p.51)
Photomontage by Hanna Hanhela
17.1.Hanhela family album (Unknown). *Kuusamonjärvi*.
17.2. Hanhela family album (Unknown). *Maija-Liisa (neé Moilanen) Hanhela*.

Figure 18. (p.52-53)
Collection process timeline
Table by Hanna Hanhela

Figure 19. (p.55)
Photomontage by Hanna Hanhela
Hanhela family album. (Unknown). *Maija-Liisa (neé Moilanen) Hanhela*.

Figure 20-21.
'Pikkutakkeja' by Kaarina Kaikkonen
Kaikkonen, K., Dacci, M., Kivirinta, M.-T., Herzberg, J. P., Miesmaa, K., & Martin, H. (2014). *Kaarina Kaikkonen*. Parvs.

Figure 22. (p.59)
'Body' - Lockdown project, April 2020
by Hanna Hanhela

Figure 23. (p.60)
Silhouette sketching
Photography Hanna Hanhela
Model Kadri-Ann Kivisild

Figure 24-26 (p.62-63)
Tailoring development
Photography Hanna Hanhela

Figure 27. (p.64)
Corset dress development
Photography Hanna Hanhela

Figure 28-39. (p.66-67)
Fitting, April 2021
Photography Hanna Hanhela
Model Pauliina Friberg

Figure 40. (p.68)
Blue suit, fitting, December 2021
Photography Hanna Hanhela
Model Ruusa Vuori

Figure 41-47. (p.70-71)
Casual suit development
Photography Hanna Hanhela
Models Ruusa Vuori, Pauliina Friberg

Figure 48-52. (p.72-73)
Tailored gown development
Photography Hanna Hanhela
Models Ruusa Vuori, Linda Kokkonen,
Tuuli-Tytti Koivula, Pauliina Friberg

Figure 53-58. (p.74-75)
Trench coat development
Photography Hanna Hanhela
Models Pauliina Friberg, Ruusa Vuori

Figure 59-62. (p.76-77)
Corset dress development
Photography Hanna Hanhela
Models Ruusa Vuori, Pauliina Friberg

Figure 63-66. (p.78-79)
Garment development
Photography Hanna Hanhela
Models Ruusa Vuori, Linda Kokkonen

Figure 67-74. (p.80-81)
Material samples
Photography Hanna Hanhela

Figure 75-89. (p.82-83)
Fitting April 2022
Photography Hanna Hanhela
Models Ruusa Vuori, Meri Malminen

Figure 90. (p.85)
Collection Editorial 2022
Photography Hanna Hanhela
MUAH Meghna M Lampi,
Siiri Hämäläinen, Elin Sigfridsson
Model Ruusa Vuori

Figure 91-104. (p.86-99)
Collection Editorial 2022
Photography Bernhard Forstén
MUAH Meghna M Lampi,
Siiri Hämäläinen, Elin Sigfridsson
Models Ruusa Vuori, Zamzam Mohamed

Figure 105. (p.100-101)
Collection Editorial 2022
Photography Bernhard Forstén
MUAH Meghna M Lampi,
Siiri Hämäläinen, Elin Sigfridsson
Model Zamzam Mohamed

Figure 106. (p.102)
Collection Editorial 2022
Photography Hanna Hanhela
MUAH Meghna M Lampi,
Siiri Hämäläinen, Elin Sigfridsson
Models Ruusa Vuori

Figure 107. (p.108-109)
Collection Editorial 2022
Photography Bernhard Forstén

Back Cover
Collection Editorial 2022
Photography Bernhard Forstén
Model Ruusa Vuori


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