

A collage of fashion design elements including fabric swatches, a sketch, and a pattern.

Doing Fashion

BRICOLAGE, MESS, AND MULTIPLICITY



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# Doing Fashion

Bricolage, Mess, and Multiplicity

Astrid Huopalainen

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'We social scientists would do well to hold back our eagerness to control that world which we so imperfectly understand. The fact of our imperfect understanding should not be allowed to feed our anxiety and so increase the need to control. Rather, our studies could be inspired by a more ancient, but today less honored motive: a curiosity about the world of which we are part. The rewards of such work are not power but beauty.'

**BATESON, 1972, 269**



## ABSTRACT

What do fashion designers do when they *do* fashion? How are enchanting clothing objects stitched and pieced together behind closed doors? What happens when a designer is *not* performing on dazzling front stages according to certain culturally determined expectations, norms or embodied scripts? We are easily seduced by the exciting surface, fantasy and magic of fashion (e.g. Evans, 2001; Moeran, 2015; Soley-Beltran, 2012; Thrift, 2008). In fact, popular readings about fashion tend to emphasize its references to consumer dreams, seduction, spectatorship and glamour (Moeran, 2015; Stacey, 1994). Meanwhile, we know less about the mundane work practices and emerging activities of (high) fashion. This thesis explores what happens *in* and *during* fashion organizing, in the broadest sense. Written at the intersection of fashion studies and organization studies, this thesis focuses on the demystification, deepening and appreciation of ordinary fashion practice and its 'nitty-gritty-details' (Chia, 2004, 29). Previous work on fashion has rarely paid detailed attention to the micro-level activities through which fashion's daily organizing *emerges* and happens. As such, this thesis is in contrast to much of the existing theorizations of fashion that have, to a great extent, focused on 'still' surface, pleasure and consumption, to the degree that messy socio-material organization, embodied action and manual labour have been overshadowed.

In this thesis, I open up an intriguing empirical site for the detailed study of bricolage and organizing, phenomena that are always processual, moving, embodied-material and intertwined. Founded on a worldview that emphasizes action, multiplicity and movement (Chia, 1997), this thesis openly asks 'what goes on in here?' in order to capture a fashion designer's multiple 'here-and-now' forms of organization. By so doing, this ethnographic study considers the varied actions, *ad hoc* doings and organizing practices in the affect-intensive day-to-day life of a fashion designer working in the city of Helsinki, a specific cultural context. This piece of writing builds upon previous literature on critical organizational theory (e.g. Dale, 2001; Harding, 2011; Höpfl, 2003; Phillips et al., 2014) that challenges conventional representations of organizing as abstract, disembodied and purposive actions. In my attempt to not fall back on the dualism of materiality-discourse, appearance-reality or the Goffman-esque 'dichotomy



between front-stage and back-stage spaces' (Shortt, 2015, 655; Satama and Huopalaainen, 2016), I highlight the emerging, 'messy' and contextual qualities of organizing that have traditionally been overlooked within the field of organization studies in favour of more linear, rational and abstract accounts.

In this thesis, I also move physically across a range of fashion's workspaces as a researcher in order to illustrate glimpses of everyday action and fashion organizing, as these complex activities unfold over time. By closely following a designer inventing and integrating all sorts of resources – often inexpensive and improvisational ones – in order to organize himself and his work across time and space, this thesis offers deep and situated knowledge of the uncertain process of working towards the ideals of polished 'high' fashion. This study illustrates a designer and his team navigating complexity by regularly performing the art of bricolage in order to create affection, perfection and value in a context of great expectations, low budgets, surface manipulations, patchworks, exhaustion, and speed. The ongoing organizing in this empirical context includes never-ending capabilities to *affect* and to be affected, bricolage styles and practices, hard work and intense effort (Thrift, 2010), as well as improvisations, editing tricks and endless changes along the way. Rich in empirical data, this thesis shows how the stitching, sewing or piecing together of ideas, resources and materials – or the inventive manipulation and *transformation* of various surfaces, bodies and things – matter hugely in fashion. Fashion is essentially in the uncertain process of 'becoming'.

This thesis creates deeper knowledge on the dynamics of organizing (in) a particular hybrid economy that builds upon endless trials-and-errors, surface manipulations and uncertain technologies of enchantment. By shedding light on everyday, exceptional and celebratory actions, this thesis captures the fusion of 'magical' and 'mechanical' aspects of the fashion organization, and develops fashion as an empirical organizational phenomenon. The close-up empirical engagement with fashion organization can be viewed as one of the key contributions of this thesis. Also, this thesis contributes valuable knowledge about organizing *as* emerging doings, piecing fragments and performing bricolage, a surprising embodied-material process with no predetermined start

or end. Finally, this thesis challenges orthodox understandings of bricolage in the field of organization studies, and develops our understanding of fashion as a multidimensional and unfinished organizational phenomenon. Organizing 'for' fashion is essentially unfinished; an ongoing bricolage process of endless becoming where bodies, surfaces and materials intensely intertwine. In this context, substance and surface, image and reality, matter and mind or culture and commerce are never mutually exclusive, but always part of life and, as such, already intensely entangled and intertwined.

**Key words:**

*fashion, bricolage, organizing, affective economy, experience, ethnography*

## SVENSK SAMMANFATTNING

Som konsumenter förförs vi lätt av klädmodets glättiga yta, oändliga konsumtionsfantasier och konstruerade magi. I själva verket bygger idéer om mode ofta på hänvisningar till kapitalistisk bedrägeri, tjusning eller förförelse (se till exempel Moeran, 2015; Soley-Beltran, 2012; Thrift, 2008). Samtidigt vet vi rätt lite om modets alldagliga organisering, eller vad klädmodets vardag ur modedesigners perspektiv omfattar. Vad händer och sker då designers *inte* uppträder på den polerade catwalken eller under den explicit offentliga blicken? Hur skapar designers bestående intryck i en flyktig och föränderlig tillvaro av snabba cykler och knappa resurser? Vad sker *i* och *under* modets organisering, eller vad *gör* modedesigners de facto när de "gör" mode? Detta är en etnografisk studie om klädmode, organisering och bricolage. Jag ställer i avhandlingen avsiktligt den öppna forskningsfrågan "vad händer *här*?" för att komma en modedesigners mångsidiga arbetspraktiker och vardagliga organisering närmare. I avhandlingen förstår jag organisering som en dynamisk och pågående process som omfattar en myriad av kroppar och materiella ting inklusive deras handlingskraft och rörelser genom tid och rum. Med begreppet bricolage förstår jag här spontan, stundens organisering enligt principen "man tager vad man haver". I denna avhandling kritiserar jag vedertagna uppfattningar om organisering som abstrakta relationer och rationella, kalkylerade handlingar, och visar i stället på hur organisering i klädmodets kontext är tämligen rör(1)igt, föränderligt, kroppsligt, materiellt och mångfacetterat. I avhandlingen försöker jag därtill undvika att falla tillbaka på vedertagna distinktioner mellan yta och verklighet, yta och djup eller kropp och själ, och utgår i stället ifrån dessa dimensioner som tätt sammanflätade.

Genom mina egna förflyttningar som forskare genom olika för klädmodet centrala rum undersöker jag här – i detalj – hur en modedesigner bär sig åt för att organisera sig själv och sin verksamhet gentemot 'mode', och särskilt den högre skraddarkonstens flyktiga ideal. I detta arbete analyserar jag således dynamiska, kroppsliga och materiella aspekter utav organisering som traditionellt förbisetts av organisationsteorin. Avhandlingen skapar djupgående kunskap om klädmodets alldagliga organisering ur ett processperspektiv. Modets organisering präglas i betydande omfattning av kreativ manipulering av ytor, kroppar och rum i en kontext där man ofta handlar enligt principen "man tager vad man haver",

utnyttjar knappa resurser, eller återskapar resurser genom oändliga försök och misstag. Därtill kännetecknas modets organisering av uttröttligt kroppsligt arbete, spontana idéer och stundens bricolage, samt sammankomsten av en mängd olika mänskliga och icke-mänskliga aktörer i både tid och rum.

Avhandlingen utvecklar vår förståelse för organisering som icke-rationell, pågående och alldaglig handling. Avhandlingen ger oss också en mer nyanserad och djupgående förståelse för hur modets affektiva ekonomi – genom spontan handling och dynamiska relationer – de facto fungerar. Osäkerhet, improvisation, spelandet med knappa resurser och ständig rörelse är inbyggda i klämodets organisering genomgående, och ter sig helt nödvändiga för att tillfälligt skapa mening, ordning och värde inom denna flyktiga ekonomi. Det jag kallar affektivt värdeskapande inom modets ekonomi bygger därtill på högst osäkra medel så som manipulation utav kroppar, ytor eller materia. Avhandlingen illustrerar även hur mode som estetiskt uttryck aldrig blir "färdigt", utan alltid utarbetas i ett kretslopp av förändringar, normer och oskrivna regler. Ett underliggande 'kaos', rörlighet, osäkerhet och öppenhet verkar dessutom typiskt för klämodets organisering, och behövs för skapandet av den förtrollning, magi och perfektion som idéer om mode sedermera reproducerar. Slutligen utvecklar denna avhandling vår förståelse för bricolage som ett kroppsligt-materiellt fenomen och mode som ett tämligen mångdimensionellt, organisatoriskt fenomen både i teorin och praktiken. Modets ekonomi utgör en fascinerande och levande 'hybrid' utav upplevelser, handling, relationer, praktiker, kreativitet, estetik, affekter, improvisation, rutiner, kommers, kroppar och sinnen. Alla dessa handlingar, praktiker, relationer, idéer och intryck kan aldrig hållas isär eller separeras. Snarare verkar dessa dynamiker inom denna röriga ekonomi alltid tätt sammansvetsade och tillsammans.

**Nyckelord:** *mode, bricolage, organisering, etnografi, upplevelse, yta*

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Research is dear to me. It is a vivid, patchy and material exploration. I see research as discovery, creation and privilege; to me, it is an ongoing dialogue and a way of living and being in the world. Fueled by curiosity, excitement and happiness, as well as critique, determination, challenge and effort, this dissertation is a product of countless hours well-spent with inspiring and clever people, a versatile and thought-provoking body of literature, many cups of dark roast coffee enjoyed with chunky cinnamon buns, long walks by the sea with the most intelligent Labrador retriever, Saga, a deal of pregnancy anger and determination, but most of all, a great deal of joy, passion and love for research. Although I had the luxury to work independently on this thesis throughout, insights from supervisors, pre-examiners, colleagues, friends, family and critics have indeed shaped this piece of writing. The time has come for me to acknowledge all of you who have been part of my journey of growth, reflection and critique.

First, I want to thank my professor, supervisor and mentor Alf Rehn, and I do so for so many reasons. Your intellectual curiosity and remarkable knowledge in diverse areas is impressive, and has always been an inspiration to me. Thank you for supporting me, employing me and challenging me to both think and *act*. In particular, I am grateful for the freedom and space I have been given to grow to ‘become’ a researcher, and I am proud of what I have accomplished – so far – with your help. In practice, receiving the freedom to study whatever I wanted without having to worry about funding is a luxurious privilege (and a possible constraint) for any PhD researcher. Your guidance and support have given me plenty of confidence along the way, and I am now both happy and ready to move on to the post-doctoral phase of an academic career. To my second, but equally important supervisor, Dr. Nina Kivinen, thank you for everything, really. Your enthusiasm made me fall in love with research as a young bachelor’s student writing a thesis about women and leadership. Back then, little did I know that you and your inspiring classes would come to influence my choice of career path to such a significant extent. Nina, you are a clever and sunny person, and I am truly grateful for having been supervised by you. I would also like to warmly thank the pre-examiners of my thesis, reader and Dr. Ann Rippin and Professor Clemens Thornquist for your encouraging and insightful reading of

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In Helsingfors, the city of my heart, November 2016

*Astrid Sofia Huopalainen*



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PART I  
INTRODUCTION

'You know the greatest thing is passion, without it what have you got? I mean if you love someone you can love them as much as you can love them but if it isn't a passion, it isn't burning, it isn't on fire, you haven't lived.'

**DIANA VREELAND**



## PROLOGUE – SETTING THE STAGES

'YOU'RE IN THE FASHION BUSINESS – YOU CAN'T HAVE KIDS!'

In mid-January 2013, I meet design assistants Elin and Pierre for the first time in designer Yat's studio setting, a fairly rough heart-of-craft basement located in central Helsinki. I help out with some random, practical 'hands-on' preparations and last minute organizing tasks for upcoming Copenhagen Fashion Week, which meanwhile signifies the beginning of a longer period of ethnographic fieldwork. It is a wintery day with only days to go to the international Fashion Week. I am excited as I have gained access to this close space surprisingly easily, and find myself in the middle of the creative studio, openly engaging in fieldwork. It is a setting with a surging and seemingly tight around-the-clock working schedule (Thornquist, 2005), just as I expected. Currently, I sit by the designer's desk and make myself useful by creating 'model cards' by adding the accurate bodily measurements of a model to an accompanying image. These cards include crucial details provided by the agency on the height, bust, hip and waist measurements of each model. Later, as the show outfits are decided and organized, the cards are attached to the outfits of the fashion show. I type: 'Name: Su, Age: 18 years, Height: 181 cm, Bust: 83, Waist: 60, Hips: 88, Shoes Size: 38. Camilla S, Height: 177 cm, Size: 34, Bust: 84, Waist: 65, Hips: 89, Hair: Blond, Eyes: Blue, Shoes: 37. Isabel C, Height: 175 cm, Size: 34, Bust: 80, Waist: 63, Hips: 91, Hair: Blond, Eyes: Blue, Shoes: 37/38'. I keep typing.

The radio is on in the studio. Elin and Pierre both look focused and disciplined as they work separately on their computers next to me. French Pierre is a newly recruited trainee from a private fashion school in Belgium, who started training for Yat in October 2012. I learn that Elin has worked three days a week for Yat since August 2012. She recently graduated, and currently performs three different daytime jobs to finance a house together with her partner. Suddenly Elin's mobile phone rings. It is her boyfriend calling about their construction site, and we discuss building as soon as their call ends. 'People have told us that if we manage to go through this together we'll manage anything', Elin puts it. Building a house shifts into a conversation about having children. 'You're in the fashion business, Elin, you can't have kids!' Pierre laughs. He indicates



that the exhausting and extreme world of fashion urges one to give up some things in life. To this, Elin promptly answers, ‘Yes I can – my boyfriend will be a stay-at-home dad!’ Pierre’s comment is apparently meant as a joke. However, I am left wondering if his saying reflects any of fashion’s underlying values or expectations. On her blog,<sup>1</sup> Sara Ahmed writes that something heavy might be going on ‘when people keep making light of things’, and I wonder if this might go for fashion, too.

In the afternoon, the two assistants suddenly rise from their computers to set up a quick and efficient photo session by transforming the back corner of the studio into a provisional photo studio. It is an ‘amateur’ setting made professional with a white backdrop, a strong spotlight directed towards this designated shooting spot, and a camera that Pierre has to adjust properly on a tripod. The purpose of the session is to create an interesting poster to hang on the wall of the stand at the upcoming fair. This is another crucial last minute task, which apparently happens a lot in fashion, I would learn. How, when and where the poster is created tells us something interesting about this work setting. With a thin and tall physique, Elin stands in as the fashion model. Pierre assumes the role of the session’s photographer. An explicit ‘you take what you have at hand’ idea of a bricolage, or Do-It-Yourself, is present here. Perhaps the designer, running a small company with limited resources, cannot afford to pay for a session with a professional photographer and an agency model, or perhaps he simply wants to invest his liquid assets elsewhere. Also, there is no time for complicated arrangements, as it is already the eleventh-hour before the fair. The assistants, cheap resources who maintain professionalism, are thus used instead.

Dressing is a bodily practice and performance in motion. Elin quickly changes into a set of yellow woolen ‘wing’ pants with a symmetrical cut and a zipped-up short woolen jacket, a brand new outfit from the Autumn/Winter 2013 collection. She then lets her thick, wavy chestnut hair fall loose. ‘My hair is all dirty’, she complains. This is not a session with a crew of assistants, carefully styled clothes, perfectly applied make-up or freshly washed hair. However, attractive Elin confidently moves to the designated spot and starts posing for the camera in what looks like an experienced, seemingly relaxed manner. She

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1 <http://feministkilljoys.com>, accessed frequently.



performs various bodily postures in motion. To me, these seem rather *learned*. For the label to attract future attention and to be seen, I believe Elin adopts fashion's common 'illusion of graceful nonchalance' (Moeran, 2015, 23). Her posture and expression communicate a desired, paradoxically 'effortless' look. I know Elin writes a personal fashion blog and is, of course, used to the presence of the camera. She occasionally jumps and shakes her head from side to side. Movement appears vital here, and Pierre tries to capture it on the camera. The clothes need to look flattering and photogenic. 'Can you see the pants?' Elin asks Pierre.

‘NEXT YEAR WE CERTAINLY NEED TO LEARN TO BEGIN  
A LITTLE EARLIER, OTHERWISE I GET THE ULCER’

One early morning in cold January 2013, I travel back and forth by ferry to the city of Tallinn in Estonia to pick up some clothing samples delivered to the harbour there by the designer’s local supplier. I encounter a young, seemingly shy and friendly Estonian man who hands me a shabby plastic bag stuffed with clothing samples, finished just in time for designer Yat. These material samples must quickly move with me from Tallinn via Helsinki towards Copenhagen in the afternoon, and I need to get them to the studio as soon as possible for eventual adjustments, minor corrections, preparations and finishings before departure. I feel the pressure, and things are running late. In the activities of samples production, coordination and teamwork, dimensions of space, place and materiality apparently matter hugely. Although Yat’s production is currently outsourced to Tallinn in Estonia, every piece and every seam, it appears, will have to go through the designer himself, at least at some point.

I sense that the final, in-studio adjustments of the sample prototypes in Helsinki are hugely important. During this process of full-blooded action – in the *here-and-now* hurry – flat clothing samples ‘become’ affective objects that should triumph. With only hours to go, however, the small design team is running late with at least a dozen unfinished clothing samples, which are all part of the novel Autumn/Winter 2013 collection, being finalized and put together in the creative basement under significant pressure. These material samples, ‘ordered fragmentation’ as Constantine and Reuter (1997, 91) would say, must attract, resonate and convince future consumers, *move* designated high fashion audiences at an international fair, and fiercely fight for attention on the Copenhagen catwalk, too. In this uncertain last-minute moment, however, no one knows which unfinished samples are more important than others, or even which samples are going to be featured on the designer’s strategically important premier international runway in only four days’ time (see also Korica and Bazin, 2015). Contrary to what I expected, this also goes for the stressed and pressed designer himself running around correcting things.

To seduce, astonish and move critical audiences, one might perhaps expect to find a meticulous order and careful ‘sculpturing of clothes’ (Thornquist, 2005, 16) present in the context of high fashion. Of course, I find plenty of orderly

perfection in my empirical context. In addition, however, I find loose threads, stains on sensitive cloth, torn and tired workers, patchworks (both metaphorically and literally), as well as images of chaos, uncertainty and mess. Unsurprisingly, films, documentaries and various representations of haute couture and other forms of fashion remind us of a sometimes absurd reality of speed, chaos and disorganization, where not being fully organized or prepared until the very last moment of a staging is totally normal (Korica and Bazin, 2015). Still, we easily think of fast fashion as though it is applied only to mass-marketed labels such as H&M, Gap or Uniqlo. However, speed appears equally present in this creative 'high' fashion context, too. I head over to the studio and ring the doorbell at 13.30. At full speed, hustle and buzz, Yat opens the door for me. Things in the studio have apparently been left to the last-minute, and are now being carried out in a swirl of hurry. Thornquist (2005, 211) describes auteur-driven design *action* at Vivienne Westwood's studio as a vital and kinetic process 'characterized by a bodily pragmatism and movement'. I find similar action all over the small studio in Helsinki. Yat's affective clothing samples *become* as a result of 'full-blooded action' (Thornquist, 2005, 211), uncertainty, speed and bricolage. Preparing for an international Fashion Week mobilizes the designer and his entire proximate team. Nothing is entirely ready yet, but it appears as if the three workers occupied with the present are continuously reminded of a pressing deadline: the afternoon's departure for Copenhagen. The team must soon leave the studio, a hidden physical space of production, preparations, material fabrics and vital tools that will result in a polished, presentational and strategic setting in the form of an important exhibition space and a premier fashion show abroad. The clothes – crucial affective objects that should attract, stand out and triumph – must be finished *now* and not later.

A seemingly busy designer welcomes me with his arms open and gives me another big hug. 'Poor little girl', Yat gently grins as he goes on about my early wake-up and five-hour trip to Tallinn, devoting my time to serve his interests. I am not at all offended by being called a 'little girl', particularly as the designer says it with kindness and care. He seems genuinely grateful for the help. However, societal gender roles impact the interactions in the 'trust' relationship between the experienced male designer and me, a researcher and female fashion novice. As I hand over the two plastic bags of samples, Yat continues, 'Do you mind helping us, Astrid?' There are still plenty of things to do before departure. I

agree, of course, and I am quite excited about getting to see further glimpses of the actions, doings and eventual 'becomings' behind the closed doors of this fashionable world. Designer Yat, continuously on the move himself, wears a grey beanie with a red dragon print on it, a pair of dark, baggy pants, slouchy, black high quality Italian leather biker boots, and a bulky black knitted cardigan from his latest collection. The black cardigan, wrapped around his boyish body, is fastened with an interesting belt of tassels. In addition, Yat has tied a black leather 'strap bag' around his waist. This bag is currently one of his most popular styles.

As indicated above, an appearance of uncertainty, chaos, disorder and continuous speed appears necessary to achieve (momentarily) order in fashion. Quick and vivid in his bodily gestures, there is almost something amusing about the designer's fashionable and busy habitus. Perhaps the two assistants present have noticed a similar aura around their boss who spins around the studio in a whimsical manner. They keep smiling at him behind his back in what I interpret as a well-meant manner. Meanwhile, the designer exhibits *the* fashion *auteur* and authority present that subtly gets his younger assistants to work like crazy for him. The chief designer and fashion master has the power to organize people and *initiate* action. Moreover, Yat must organize an international fashion show and a trade show exhibition, crucial events to him and his label. Despite the hustle, a distinct striving for perfection still appears to be present in the studio. There is something very interesting and inspiring about this creative, messy yet meticulous last minute world, I ponder.

Next, I need to run over to the bookstore to buy ink for the printer and 'the cheapest possible' paper, as a couple of important sheets still need to be printed before departure. It is almost two o'clock in the afternoon, and again, I am reminded that things are running late. As soon as I am back again, I notice design assistant Elin sitting by herself in the corner of the studio, rapidly sewing buttons by hand to the samples I just picked up from Tallinn. With less than two hours to departure, she has probably been instructed to finalize the pieces in an efficient yet careful manner. Long ago, Mauss (1972, 141) wrote that 'a magician does nothing, or almost nothing, but makes everyone believe that he is doing everything'. Although this description does not really do justice to hard-working Yat in my empirical context, chief designers are commonly treated as the stars of fashion's spotlight (e.g. Kawamura, 2005; Meadows 2012). Again, the master

designer has initiated action, and he is usually credited for the entire collection, although it is a collective effort and collaborative process throughout. In this moment, there is an apparent impact of societal gender roles and the hierarchies of fashion on the interactions I observe.

The clothes are finished in the here-and-now hurry, and little do I know that suppliers deliver garments free of buttons. Interestingly, the clothes are prioritized and handled with utmost care, as they need to look detailed and meticulously finished, even if they are slightly ‘improvised’ on the way. To me, it appears as if evidence of all previous needleworkers must be erased. No loose threads or flaws should show. All this effort is apparently significant for producing captivation in the affective face-to-face business of fashion (e.g. Entwistle 2010; Entwistle and Rocamora 2011). ‘Next year, we certainly need to learn to start a little earlier, otherwise I get the ulcer’, Elin murmurs as she works. Apparently, she feels the stress of fashion in her body, and the exhausting work might even evoke her body to react physically. In this moment, Elin’s working body ‘experiences sensations at the same moment it executes movements’ (Thornquist, 2005, 220). Adding buttons is relatively slow and time-consuming work, even for a handy professional like Elin, and ‘a jacket might have up to ten buttons’, Elin goes about explaining to me.

Suddenly, the designer’s phone rings. ‘Is a +46 number a Danish number?’ he asks and quickly glances at his iPhone screen. ‘It could be Swedish as well’, Elin responds. Apparently, it is a random buyer who calls to ask the designer about the Japanese market. ‘I am a little gypsy’, Yat laughs after finishing the call. Having worked for more than ten years in Japan, and having orchestrated design projects in London and Paris before establishing his company in Helsinki, Yat positions himself as a true globetrotter and an experienced creative auteur, familiar with the top-tier fashion cities of the world. ‘What will you wear for the show?’ I then ask Elin out of curiosity, as I assume that design assistants must also embody the design label they work for. I learn that Elin’s outfit depends on how visible she will be, and whether or not the designer wants her to wear something from his latest collection. If Elin’s hard-working body remains hidden backstage, no important guests or press representatives will notice her or her outfit anyway.

Elin shows me a cardigan with an asymmetrical cut made of black-and-red fabric with sparkling metallic threads woven into it. It is a ‘bling’ piece from

the previous collection, one she is likely to wear. ‘And then black pants and comfortable shoes. I have wedges. No extra pair of fancy shoes will fit, so it needs to be comfortable’, she promptly puts it. Elin is prepared to run around backstage where comfort goes before style. The assistant has also packed very lightly. There is limited space for personal belongings in the already overfull car, stuffed with all the Fashion Week essentials. The team has packed a lot to bring with them, particularly as everything Yat creates on site in Copenhagen is done on the lowest possible budget, without external contractors. ‘I guess at least Pierre and I will be backstage all the time running around like little maniacs’, Elin reflects upon the organizing on site, perhaps not yet quite sure about my role there as a researcher.

Elin has been to Copenhagen with Yat previously but has never done an international fashion show. At the moment, she seems all excited about getting to experience another Fashion Week from the inside. Meanwhile, Elin indicates that designer Yat is typically known to be the worst organized creative person, always running late with everything. With this, Elin supports the stereotypical image of a ‘messy’ creative worker who is at home with disorder (Barron, 1958). During previous trips, the two workers had managed to board the ferry to Stockholm just in time, before the gates closed, Elin explains. I get that it is more of a rule than exception for them to do things at the last minute, and perhaps this is all part of the fashion *performance*. Also, this hectic reality appears far from ‘festive’ (not that this was my expectation), and this is something Elin wants to address, too: ‘Everyone thinks it’s so glamorous, that we drink champagne all the time! The truth is that we work hard for 95 percent of the time, and very rarely, if ever, get to drink any champagne’. To this, Pierre, Yat’s other assistant present in the studio, points out that he could not leave the studio before ten o’clock on Friday evening, as if he wants to underline that hard work is a vital expectation in this setting.

Thursday’s fitting in Copenhagen is discussed next. A fitting is an informal yet important occasion organized with a couple of runway models who arrive at the designer’s stand to try out some of the exquisite, often difficult show garments before the actual staging. Interestingly, Yat gets the chance to judge his new makings on flesh-and-blood bodies for the very first time at the stand in Copenhagen. Interestingly, when and where the fitting has been organized make it difficult to change or modify the clothes drastically. Still, this crucial occasion

allows the team to envision how the newly produced, flat and 'dead' material samples look on living and moving human bodies with dynamic expressions. It is also an occasion of spicing up 'misinterpreted' pieces, as well as hiding possible flaws. How will different fabrics behave and move on the models' bodies? How are the garments sculpted, and how does the fabric balance and fall (Lindqvist, 2015)? How do the moving bodies interact with the fabrics, textures, garment shapes and totalities of dress? 'It feels more like we're only going there to do a fashion show', Yat ponders further. He is currently in the middle of an uncertain change process, and still has to organize plenty of people and things to produce his upcoming fashion show. Meanwhile, his first international show risks overshadowing the business activities of the fair with the crucial purpose of actually *selling* the collection, and establishing further contacts to important buyers. However, while Yat is away doing the premier show, his exhibition stand will not be empty. This would be too risky, I learn. One of his local friends has agreed to represent him. I sense that inexpensive solutions, connections and personal networks are essential in this setting, too.

The doing or 'making'<sup>2</sup> of fashion could be approached in terms of an uncertain organizational process allowing and demanding multiple humans and non-humans to become part of the work in progress. Yat continues to run around the studio in what looks like a slightly whimsical manner. Time, or perhaps the lack of it, plays a vital part in this unfolding of process organizing (see Orlikowski and Yates, 2002) that I get to experience. 'What time is it?' the pressed designer asks once more. It is a question frequently articulated in the studio, rendering visible fashion's close connection to time, speed and motion. Suddenly, Yat realizes he still needs to take care of a couple of bank transactions before departure. He lives in the moment or in what is currently happening, and suddenly grabs a bunch of receipts from a pile on his messy desk. He then carelessly waves these in the air in front of us, laughs and demonstratively says: 'Look at all these receipts! It's not fun having a company!' 'It's your choice...' Pierre mutters, but gives Yat a meaningful eye and smiles.

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2 The word 'making' is discussed and considered further in the theoretical chapter of this thesis.



'WE ARE IN A HURRY, BUT STILL ON TIME'

One evening in early June 2014, I attend an informal meeting and garden party thrown at Yat's place in Helsinki. It is another occasion of Fashion Week planning, project management and resource seeking where the two fashion shows scheduled for August 2014, part of the upcoming Spring/Summer 2015 edition, are both discussed and organized further. Present are the graduate students from Lahti Institute of Design and Fine Arts, their show tutor Minna, designer Yat, his assistant, Pierre, and me. After a nice evening of informal meetings, drinks and BBQ food, the students, Pierre and I leave the house. The graduate students, all smokers, light their cigarettes as we wait for the bus to take us back to the metro station. Everyone there has already moved from the city of Lahti to Helsinki in search of better job opportunities. Currently, no one works full-time for the fashion industry, which says something about this truly difficult and exhaustive career path. In Finland, young designers must either move abroad to work, work on a freelance basis or establish their own labels in order to make a living, I am told. Compared to Sweden with H&M, Acne Studio and other established design houses, there are worryingly few or no full-time positions available for young designers in Finland.

As we approach the metro, I ask Pierre how things are going with the novel 2OR+BYAT Spring/Summer 15 collection. 'We are in a hurry, but we are still on time' Pierre explains as we move ourselves as part of the creative process. Again, his saying exemplifies the production process as emergent, dynamic and collaborative, which I interpret as a means of foregrounding fashion's creative 'becoming'. Moreover, Pierre's answer again illustrates fashion's crucial connections to action and time. In fact, it appears that fashion is *defined* through its close, sometimes paradoxical relation to time (see e.g. Proust, 1913–1927; Van de Peer, 2015). As a designer, you are continuously *acting* or organizing various things on the move, always seemingly busy, pressed for or in lack of time, I ponder further. Moreover, it appears as if speed, hurry, stress and lack of time construct this entire business, and play a vital part in the performance of high fashion. Given how much the designer and his assistant always need to work, Pierre's answer does not really surprise me. Next, we get seated on the bright orange plastic seats of the metro.

'Looks like I'm not having any summer holiday after all', graduate student Tommi sitting next to me calmly notices. Today's meeting has forced Tommi to



shift his focus from leisure to disciplined work. He seems completely relaxed while saying it; it is only an observation. Instead of relaxing, chilling out and getting inspired as he obviously had planned beforehand, Tommi must discipline himself to produce more unique, one-of-a-kind showpieces for the upcoming Fashion Week. The same goes for the other graduate students, too. Yat, the fashion mentor and show producer in charge has just asked the students for more creative and bold pieces to add vision and edge to their show. It is crucial to try to stand out and to showcase exquisite talent as students, especially as an influential, mixed crowd, including international press, is likely to be present.

‘I’ve got all materials already. Perhaps I should start earlier this time. Last two weeks before the previous show were hell’, Tommi then calmly continues. As another true creative worker in the world of fashion doing things at the very last minute, Tommi explains how he could only afford two hours of sleep the night before the important KOE14 fashion show, an annual show staged in Helsinki by student designers a couple of weeks earlier. Apparently, he had managed to finish his last showpiece by hand at five o’clock the morning of the show. ‘I even had to change the pattern in the middle of the night!’ Tommi cries in a tone that does not crave our pity, but rather aims at giving a realistic account of his working process. Currently, Tommi appears to have a clear vision of how to add interest and movement to his graduate collection, and what to create next. He explains that a suit made out of a crispy and light windproof material will nicely complement his ‘bulky, Michelin-man’ made of stiff, hard fabric. ‘When I said I’ll only do showpiece after showpiece everyone in my class was laughing’, Tommi puts it. What he indicates is that others treated his quirky avant-garde collection as too crazy to produce, even for a presentational show. However, Tommi purposefully wanted to do an artistic installation rather than ‘ordinary’ or safer consumer objects. ‘I want to dedicate my collection to nerds – for the ones who think it’s unnecessary to express themselves, but instead want to let out the persona of what they fantasize of being’, his creative expression is described online.<sup>3</sup> Even if his fellow students treated this exquisite, eye-catching collection named “Alter Heroes and Super Egos” as somewhat utopistic and unrealistic, the collection worked to Tommi’s favour as the last entry in the KOE14 show. It certainly attracted attention. ‘Tommi is not designing for the

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3 <http://www.lamk.fi/ajankohtaista/Documents/240.pdf>, accessed 5.2.2016.

mass-market’, Yat had joked earlier in the evening as the exquisite one-piece suits were the subject of discussion around the dinner table. To this, Tommi had explained how he might still do something more practical, wearable and commercial later in his career.

## SCRATCHING THE SURFACE OF FASHION

How is fashion, commonly thought of as a phenomenon connected to surface, material objects, conspicuous consumption, spectacular images, symbols and surfaces, narrow ideals, visual pleasure and beauty, *done* as a matter of practice? What does it actually mean to be a fashion designer today: a contemporary creative maker mixing and matching impressions to inscribe vision, identity and affection to the delicate material clothing objects that one cyclically creates, again, and again and again? Or, why is there behind closed doors – as is rendered visible in the prologue – so much thinking, so much passion and so much care put into fashion, an often trivialized and fleeting phenomenon, commonly associated with an ‘enchanted fabrication of images of seduction’ (Lipovetsky, 1994, 182; Moeran, 2015)? What does the versatile ‘doing’ or making of fashion equip and involve as a mundane task, especially if we consider the notions of fashion and organizing broadly?

This is a book about fashion, organization, and bricolage. I am fascinated by the alluring, uncertain, ever-changing and performative notion of fashion and its diverse work practices, exciting events, material components, fabricated enchantment and window-dressing activities, flaws and errors, polished surfaces, interesting shapes, textures, punishing tight schedules, wholehearted dedication, expressive craftsmanship, traditions and irrationality, as well as the diverse meanings and expressions that we as consumers and theorists attach to fashion today. This book will address fashion as a theoretically important and empirically rich and meaningful topic – as a serious and legitimate matter *beyond* superficial, ‘feminine’ and frivolous. Before delving into a fascinating world that I have extensively researched, allow me to take you on a trip down my memory lane to my first day at elementary school in the city of Helsinki in mid-August 1991. I find this personal example relevant, particularly as I refuse to strictly divorce the academic study of fashion from my own lived and embodied experiences of

dress and adornment (see also Downing Peters 2014). As a multidimensional, personal and rich territory, fashion and dress intimately connect cloth to our skin and bodies<sup>4</sup> (Entwistle, 2009), self-image and the performing of identity and the staging self in the world (e.g. Butler, 1990, 2004; Evans, 2003). We actively shape our social worlds through dress, and become shaped by clothes and clothing consumption, too (James and Prout, 1997).

I have always appreciated craft, and I believe my wardrobe has always said something about me, who I am and who I want to become at a particular time and space. In this sense, I also believe our personal and emotional experiences become woven into the clothes we use, pick and wear (see also Rippin, 2012a, 2015). Perhaps I should stress that the following example illustrates the topic of children as consumers of clothing and fashion (Pole, 2007), often seen as vulnerable subjects within consumer culture. However, I approach children as *active* consumers of fashion, who knowingly construct self-identity (Pilcher, 2011) and fashion themselves within a broader context of parental-, media-, market- and other influences. Also, my example renders visible a privileged Western girl picking and wearing a branded outfit to school at an early age, which perfectly shows how children's fashion links to the influence of consumerism, gender, social class, the presence of commercial forces, the negotiation of femininities and sexuality, as well as me 'doing' young girl informed by certain fashion codes in a specific spatial and geographical location.

Like so many other seven-year-olds in Finland on that particularly important day, I was a well-groomed girl with butterflies in her stomach, equipped with a brand new, over-sized purple backpack walking to the neighborhood school in Helsinki with her mother. My dad would otherwise have joined us, but he worked as a lawyer for a multinational company and travelled on business close to 150 days each year. As a day typically sentimental for any child and her parents, I remember my important day through experiences of dress. Back then, my elegant 32-year-old mother and sartorial role model had bought me a set made up of

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4 In this thesis, I approach bodies not as 'singular, bounded, closed and fixed, but rather open to being affected and affecting others' (Blackman et al., 2008 at <http://www.palgrave-journals.com/sub/journal/v22/n1/full/sub20088a.html>, page number not available). Following Blackman et al. (2008), I am interested in 'what bodies are capable of *doing*', 'and what relational connections change and alter bodies as they move and sense in the world'.

a knee-length dress and a button-up cardigan, one designed by Japanese Kenzo Takada. First presented on the Kenzo adult Spring/Summer catwalk in 1988, if I remember correctly, and later modified for part of the label's children's wear collection in the early 1990s, this fashionable outfit represented something extraordinary to me. It was, indeed, something special. The pattern of the fabric portrayed large fuchsia poppies dancing on an intensely olive green surface, thus beautifully playing with complementary colours. Like mother, like daughter, I fell for the strong expression and proudly wore my Kenzo to school accompanied by white knee-high lace socks in white leather strap sandals. I performed girl, and I certainly performed 'fashionable' girl. I loved the dress and the excitement and expectations I still attach to it. Since this early act of (self-)fashioning and displaying myself through dress in the early 1990s, my fascination for the matter of fashion has only grown. Like Jo suggests below, fashion is about wearing and remembering personal experiences.

'The dress that you wore for that rite of passage will always carry that trace every other time you wear it. Wash it, scrub it, hang it out in the burning bleaching fading strafing sun, iron it, press it, bleach it, dye it, cut it up, cut it down, change the hem, change the buttons, it will make no difference. That experience remains imprinted on it. In it. You wear the experience again'. (Jo in Rippin, 2012a, 144)

Today, especially 'women's bodies are the subject of stringent discipline from 'inside' and 'outside', Dale (2001, 5) reminds us. Acting as something of an intermediate skin between 'inside' and 'outside' or 'us' and 'the world', the type of clothes we wear makes us *act*, perform and feel differently in our bodies. 'It almost seems that to be human is to understand the structure of cloth, its interlacings, and its feltings', Rippin (2012a, 144) suggests. Experiences, emotions, ideals, memories and meanings are – as emphasized above – woven into the clothes we wear (Rippin, 2012a, 2015), which connects fashion to identity, subjectivity, spatiality, embodiment and sociomateriality. Growing up in the 1990s in Finland, a time defined by a severe economic crisis, I normally did not wear branded designer gear to school. Also, my mother rarely purchased an expensive outfit for me to 'show off' or to enhance status. Rather, with her eye for aesthetics, beauty and detail – something I believe I have inherited – my

mother was moved by the strong and colourful expression she encountered, one rather typical for Kenzo. Again, this episode illustrates that fashion performs an intimate *affective* domain, an embodied-material encounter and a mixture of subjectively felt and shared experiences. My outfit sold at seventy percent off but was still a fairly expensive luxury item. Nevertheless (and perhaps exactly for this reason), my mother instantly knew she had to have it. If a Kenzo dress once seduced my mother to act and made seven-year old me feel smart, confident and pretty, this material object today remains a treasured possession that evokes affection, memories and carries along the history of a girl who (usually) loved going to school. As such, it appears justified to say that fashion and dress say something very interesting about our affective relations and personal experiences, cultural contexts, memories, processual identity and communication – or performativity, affection, desires, consumer cultures, class, materiality and our society as a whole.

#### THEORETICAL AND PHILOSOPHICAL STARTING POINTS – EMBRACING MOVEMENT AND CREATIVE ‘MESS’

Fashion is a fascinating multidimensional, multinational multi-million euro economy of aesthetics, affect, advertising, signs, codes, ephemerality, promises, distinction, moral suspect, media darlings, popular culture, glamour and entertainment that deserves our scholarly attention. Meanwhile, the phenomenon of fashion itself is tricky and elusive and appears to have an interesting ‘ontology of becoming’ (Deleuze, 2007; Biehl and Locke, 2010; von Busch, 2009). Here, I approach processual ‘becoming’ as the creation of what is not yet, but what *might* or *could* be in the future (Jeanes, 2006; Sergi, 2012). Meanwhile, it strikes me that people are often quick to dismiss, ridicule and underestimate fashion’s importance as a scholarly topic, a powerful artistic, cultural-commercial expression and a significant global economy. Of course, fashion has ‘always been a sign of exclusivity, a material sign of status and aspirations for the chosen few’, as von Busch (2009, 32) reminds us. Even if fashion has an air of ‘magical’ glamour, elitism and feminized irrationality to it that is simultaneously easy to condemn and trivialize, fashion engages almost all of us, whether we want it to or not. Specifically, most of us are part of a powerful

and ever-changing global fashion system. We all need to cover our skin to some extent or dress (up) in our everyday lives, although, of course, this does not apply to everyone, everywhere in the world. 'Instead of moralizing about fashion, we should be studying and trying to understand it', Czarniawska (2011, 600) once suggested, and I completely agree.

This thesis considers the varied, contextual, emerging actions and uncertain moments in the day-to-day life of a fashion designer, a man whose life, social recognition and possible success (or failure) as a designer is largely shaped by his 'social position and networks' (Fine, 2004, 100). Specifically, this thesis inquires into a wide spectrum of the mundane, embodied working practices of fashion usually hidden from the public view. In line with the practice perspective, I place 'the actual doings – what is done, what is said, what is used' – (Sergi, 2012, 345) of fashion insiders at my core, and focus on practices as they are performed in the moment by multiple actors involved in that very context. In other words, my research explores these varied, mundane, performative, staged as well as 'behind-the-scenes' micro doings (Contu, 2008). By following embodied-material organizing activities that are, in particular, tied to the creation of fashion and the organizing of audio-visual fashion shows – impressive presentations that use and create various illusions behind curtains – we might learn a good deal about processual fashion and contemporary forms of organizing in a deep, situational and intertwined sense. Surprisingly similar to the *skyscraper*, another modernist money-making (or not) 'organization of non-human and human materials which means various things' (Parker, 2015, 3), the fashion show, one of my empirical units of analysis, provides an interesting means of organizing of intangible, material and human resources, one where culture, materiality, affects and economy become intensely meshed together. Choosing to delve into the rich and multidimensional practices of fashion invites us to reflect upon the emerging, dynamic, 'messy' and inherently complex nature of work that address both practical and philosophical issues. These, I believe, could interest both researchers and practitioners alike. Moreover, it could be useful in theorizing fashion and organizing differently. Historically, the discourse of organization theory has privileged 'serious' theory over lived experience, rational over emotional, and objective over subjective (e.g. Gustafsson, 1994; Polkinghorne, 1983; Rosenau, 1992). I work from the assumption that an orderly or rational view of organizations hardly does justice to the complexities of life (see also Gabriel, 2001).



While not intended to be an *exposé* of complicated fashion creation (see Fine, 2004) or a specific lived reality, my thesis broadly asks ‘what is going on in here?’ in order to capture a fashion designer’s daily practices moment-by-moment, and say something meaningful about these doings in the here-and-now of organization. Furthermore, I critically ask what these situated actions, doings and dynamics can tell us more broadly. It is, I argue, crucial for us to better understand the (ongoing) organization of an under-explored *affective economy*, given that rich, rigorous and detailed empirical studies trying to understand and portray ‘how things are really made’ in this particular creative context are still surprisingly rare. Here, I am probably only able to scratch the surface of an intriguing empirical context, but it is worth doing for so many reasons. Moreover, the dichotomy between surface and reality or ‘frivolity’ and depth deserves to be addressed in this thesis. Here, I am not trying to uncover any objective ‘truths’ about fashion or organizing. Rather, I look into the moments, traces and fragments of organization (Parker, 2016a) in my empirical setting, a specific fashion ‘world’, and I do so from ‘a particular time and a particular place’ (Rippin, 2015, 113). With this approach, I might offer in-depth accounts of fashion work that are closer to actual lived experiences, and develop finer understanding of what happens *in* and *during* emerging fashion organizing more broadly. This thesis takes the creation and communication of fashionable ‘surface’ seriously. This also means that I try to move beyond dichotomies and divisions between thinking and doing, theory and practice, interpreting and making and so on (Montuori, 2003; Rippin, 2012a; 2015).

So, this thesis is a context- and time-bound piece of research shaped by my subjective bricolage-oriented thinking and doing (see also Collins, 2016), sudden jumps, uncertainty and my felt and inherently partial worldview. We all represent, perform and experience many subject positions through fashion and dress, and this thesis is *not* meant to be a comprehensive or linear piece in any sense. Rather than seeking closure or claiming to reveal hidden ‘truths’ as explained above, I wish to offer an assemblage of moving empirical scenes (Stewart, 2007) that tie to and develop the theorizations of fashion, organization and bricolage. The way in which I approach the relative theory and my empirical material mirrors my movements and curiosity as a researcher, and reflects the polysemic nature of research. Following Stewart (2007, 5; see also Rippin, 2012a, 2012b, 2012c), I prefer to write ‘as a point of impact, curiosity, and encounter’, and not as someone



'carefully laying out the links between theoretical categories and the real world'. I will return to discussing this relationship later. Indeed, I seek meaningful interplay and oscillation between different theories and my rich empirical material, and I feel my aim here is 'to evoke rather than to describe' (Rippin, 2012a, 139). As a researcher, I meanwhile experience, feel, struggle, wonder, gaze, sense and perform myself – all these subjective experiences are present in my attempt to 'create a contact zone for analysis' (Stewart, 2007, 5). In fact, I believe that we, as researchers, could do even more to find ways to write that are both personal and

scholarly (see e.g. Phillips et al. 2014; Pullen and Rhodes, 2008, 2015b; Rippin, 2015 for inspiration). Also, the versatile doings of fashion are not an instrumental and cleaned-up business, but rather surprising, intuitive and exhaustive creation in *action* (e.g. Thornquist, 2005), situated in the living sensory experience of the world (Stewart, 2007). Throughout, I wish to do justice to this ‘mess’, leave the reader with an embodied-material sense of the studied world (Stewart, 2007, 6), and also involve the reader in my affective research journey.

## THE MAGIC AND SEDUCTION OF FASHION

Why, then, should we care about fashion’s various mundane and perhaps questionable working practices? What is it in these dynamics that is considered intriguing and important for us to explore further? We are, I argue, easily dazzled and perhaps seduced by the thrilling surface, magic<sup>5</sup> or façade of fashion. In reality, we know less about what fashion designers do when they are not performing under the gaze of the public. Like artists in other fields, it appears to me that fashion designers must work fairly hard to ‘earn enthusiasm’ by engaging in various ‘strategies of self-presentation’ (Fine, 2004, 15; see also Zembylas, 2014). Fashionable personas, objects and spaces are given contextual meaning, enchantment and value through different attachments of affects. Moreover, I argue that affective processes and subjectively felt socio-material intensities – such as enthusiasm, concern, exhaustion, excitement and recognition (Jokinen and Venäläinen, 2015) – are crucial to the everyday doing of fashion, on all levels. Making and doing fashion is a spatial, relational process of social and

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5 Magic is an elusive and problematic word that comes up in the context of this thesis. Traditionally associated with witchcraft, astrology and divination (e.g. Wilson, 1987), I view magic not as distant or marginal, but as intrinsic to the fashionable world. Wilson (1987, 21) once wrote that ‘dress, like drama, is descended from an ancient religious, mystical and magical past of ritual and worship’. Many authors (e.g. Wilson, 1987; Moeran, 2015) have argued that this notion is central to fashion. To Moeran (2015, 58), fashion represents a form of magic. Here, I approach and define magic in line with Keith Thomas (1971/2003), an English historian and old-school theorist of magic. To Thomas (1971/2003), magic is a means of redressing and ‘the employment of ineffective techniques to allay anxiety when effective ones are not available’.

sociomaterial interactions. It is, it appears, ‘social, collective, affective, embodied and contextual’ (Cutcher et al. 2016, 4). Like all workers, fashion designers ‘are shaped by and shape those with whom they come into contact’, as Fine (2004, 15) quite nicely puts it. Moreover, it appears as if those who actually succeed in fashion (if ‘success’ here means surviving from day-to-day rather than glamour, extravaganza, fame and fortune) are the ones ‘who can endlessly re-invent themselves through surface reconstruction’, as Evans (2003, 208) points out. This becomes evident in my work, too.

For the purposes of this thesis, fashion is broadly approached as an affective and intense cultural and commercial practice (e.g. Breward, 2003; Evans, 2013; Moeran, 2015), or as varied *performative* actions, makings and manipulations situated in cultural, social and historical contexts that aim to seduce, captivate and engage different audiences and consumers in various sensory ways (Thrift, 2008; 2010). As such, one could of course approach fashion as a modern dream or fantasy that links to *zeitgeist* (von Busch, 2009; Wilson, 1985). By the practices of fashion, I widely refer to the complex creation of material clothing objects inscribed with artistic, affective, symbolic and felt ‘fashionable’ values, *images* and ideals. From an affective dimension, I specifically refer to fashion’s central intention to affect, touch and *move* designated audiences and consumers through various *acts of engagement* (Jones et al., 2004). Fashion’s intense processes *and* performances usually require hard work and significant effort (Thrift, 2008, 2010) to make material objects and surfaces appear magical, elegant or ‘effortless’, and establish their differences from the mundane. As such, fashion builds upon never-ending capabilities to *affect* and to be affected, or to attract and to be ‘attractive’. Finally, I work from the assumption that the fabrication and organization of fashion, magic and enchantment is spatial and temporal, and represents situated and affective value-creation within my empirical context.

## APPROACHING FASHION, ORGANIZATION AND BRICOLAGE

‘It is through various humans, artifacts, technologies, spatial elements and texts that an organization can be said to exist and act’, Vásquez and Cooren (2012, 192) once wrote. As my point of departure, I take this dynamic and somewhat

hybrid/fluid perspective on organizing as a process (see also Hernes and Maitlis, 2010; Hernes, 2014; Langley and Tsoukas, 2010; Schatzki, 2001, 2006; Simpson, 2009; Thompson, 2011) that is continuously under construction. Also, 'social practice is out of necessity always a sociomaterial practice wherein cognitive, embodied, and material resources are co-aligned and combined', notes Styhre (2013, 22; see also Orlikowski, 2007; Orlikowski and Scott, 2008). More specifically, the meanings, materials, practices and agents of our social world 'are embodied in a variety of forms' (Nicolini et al., 2003, 3) as they interrelate, entangle (Dale and Lantham, 2015) or intertwine over time. This insight figures centrally throughout my thesis.

Fashion practice, especially the interplay between fashion, organization and bricolage, has remained largely understudied and under-theorized within the field of organization studies. Arguably, there is a dearth of in-depth empirical research on fashion's mundane and *detailed* work practices including meticulous efforts, anxieties, insecurities and struggles present behind fashion's closed doors. These intense and often hidden organizing activities appear vital for producing smooth surface, the artificially constructed 'effortless', polished and glamorous images around the end product of fashion that we are perhaps rather familiar with (by which I refer to, for instance, a staged collection at Fashion Week, a particular dress depicted on the pages of a magazine or a designer's promoted glossy lifestyle), often celebrating *idealized* image and surface. Here, I argue that gaining a deeper and more critical understanding of fashion requires exposing the actions, actual doings of ordinary actors, encounters, entanglements, doings and interplays between the dynamics and interface of surface, humans and varied non-humans that occur in-between fashion's hyped front stages and its perhaps uglier backstage regions. Also, it involves trying to put multi-dimensional, affective encounters into words. By moving between the highly visible aspects of fashion and the hidden elements behind the scenes, we might also gain deeper insight into the particularities of this specific 'messy' world. This, in turn, might enhance our understanding of how *value*, an inherently elusive and slippery notion that is evidently socially determined (e.g. Fine, 2004; Khaire, 2014), is further created in the context of a particular kind of economy.

The notions of fashion and bricolage are central to my conceptual framework. Fashion is a multidisciplinary form framed differently across cultural

contexts, times and spaces, and I borrow ideas from various academic disciplines in order to approach this fitful phenomenon. Bricolage, then, appears helpful when it comes to making sense of fashion’s messy ‘real-life’ organizing practices, specifically, the dwelling or the ‘muddling’ through of fashion entrepreneurs. Here, I understand bricolage broadly as an *ad hoc* situated practice of organizing and making things with an underlying intention to create value. Contrary to the existing literature (e.g. Baker et al., 2000; Baker et al. 2003; Ciborra, 1996, 1997, 2002), I approach bricolage as a situated *embodied-material* activity framed across times and spaces, one between various humans as well as non-human agents involved (of course, this could apply to almost anything). Arguably, bricolage might sufficiently explain temporary, *ad hoc* and mundane forms of organizing in various situations where it can emerge through planned activities as well as uncertain way-finding in situations ‘defined by’ surprise, coincidence and pure luck (Rehn and Lennerfors, 2014). My aim throughout is not only to describe what I have carefully observed and experienced; as stated previously, I want to show *how* an affective economy of fashion actually builds upon techniques of enchantment, surface manipulation, meshwork and bricolage. In addition, I also intend to problematize certain underlying and taken-for-granted assumptions about the notions of fashion and bricolage.

## GETTING BACK TO THE LOW STATUS OF FASHION

‘You really explore the “doing” of fashion and the emergence of bricolage especially through the staging of fashion shows, those utterly trivial sites of a moment’s amusement, those anti-feminist, problematic and health-hostile performances, illusionary spectacles and provocative displays?’ you are perhaps still left wondering. ‘The fast, viscous dazzle, the empty *boom-boom-boom* parade of robotic de-humanized dummies, the *click-click-click* of flashing cameras, and then what...?’ You are clearly confused. What do fashion shows have to do with philosophy, management or any other truly important areas of research? What could these seemingly shallow and questionable audio-visual spectacles add to our *oh-so* serious research community? Why should we care about fashion now, and what can we all possibly learn from the organizing of clothing production and fashion shows? As mediators of magic (Moeran, 2015), dreams (Soley-

Beltran, 2012), images and desired objects to a global experience economy, driven by affective capitalism (Thrift, 2005, 2008) and fuelled by creativity and commodified emotions, fashion shows are widely considered important spectacles. Whereas this contemporary economy is fluid and ever-changing, fashion shows still serve as sources of fantasy, vital branding and sales boosting performances ‘for industry upgrading’ (Skov, 2006; Skov et al., 2009), as well as audio-visual media celebrations of the novel, edgy and avant-garde. Today, they provide one of the many spaces where fashion is socially created, celebrated and communicated. As such, fashion shows might, of course, silence or ignore everything that does not fit into a limited scope of what at a given time and space counts as edgy and cool. However, fashion shows could potentially perform important critical societal tools (such as the Serpica Naro catwalk did during Milan Fashion Week as discussed by Gherardi and Murgia (2013) and Vanni (2015)) for irony or commodity fetishism in a dazzling aesthetic economy (Entwistle, 2002; Böhme, 2003) or the beloved New (experience) Economy, which ongoingly promotes speed, constructed affects and simulated experiences (e.g. Du Gay and Pryke, 2002; Hjort and Kostera, 2007; Pine and Gilmore, 1998, 1999).

For instance, the ‘Monokini’ fashion show spectacle fairly recently performed in a communal swimming pool in Helsinki in August 2015 provides another example of a show with a critical message: to raise awareness of breast cancer, celebrate women who fight cancer, and – meanwhile – fight against narrowly defined beauty ideals. The powerful show featured a selection of designer high fashion monokinis on the catwalk worn by women who have battled or are still battling cancer. More critical voices (e.g. Evans, 2001, 2003, 2007; Gherardi and Murgia, 2013) have suggested that established structures or taken-for-granted conventions of fashion shows deserve to be scrutinized and problematized further. Quite interestingly, and as illustrated above, many recent fashion shows have functioned as powerful statements for political activism and societal critique rather than merely as traditional *objects* of critique. Ironically, perhaps, this development is also very much *in fashion* these days. This is, of course, nothing new. We have always had provocateurs and conceptual artists of fashion. For example, Alexander Mc Queen, a true visionary thinker, will always be remembered for his spectacular abilities to blur the boundaries between fashion and art. Raf Simons created a wall of flowers to enhance his debut

collection for the luxury house Dior in July 2012, which was also famously featured in the documentary film *Dior and I*. Similarly, there was Karl Lagerfeld's recent feminist demonstration in Paris on September 30th in 2014 (indeed, we must still remain critical about the idea of Lagerfeld as a pro-feminist designer), the presentations of Comme des Garçons, Yohji Yamamoto, Hussein Chalayan or the quirky non-humans of Bas Kosters on the catwalk. While world-famous avant-garde designers have always made powerful and critical statements through fashion shows associated with artistic aspirations and a desire for change, these performances could – meanwhile – still be viewed as commercial celebrations and branding attempts with a skilled, artistic framing.

Many books on fashion begin with stressing the low intellectual status of fashion. 'To be interested in dress places one on the edges of seriousness, threatening connection with the narcissism and triviality traditionally assigned to women', Twigg (2013, 4) argues (see also Tseëlon, 2001; Lipovetsky, 1994; Parkins 2012). One is left wondering why we need all these careful explanations of why we choose to study fashion instead of bravely *just going for it*. Writing as a fairly young woman with a 'superficial' interest, having experienced researching fashion, organization and bricolage as a source of great joy, curiosity and valuable knowledge, I have eventually also learned that my research interests – to some – stand for the lightweight, trivial and even awkward in academia. If I have truly enjoyed undertaking this research, it has not gone unnoticed that fashion and its 'fitful' presentations are still regarded intellectually subordinate to other 'more important' research topics. Fashion represents frivolity, nonsense, emptiness, commodity fetishism and conspicuous consumption – everything that is easily morally condemned and reduced to irrelevant feminine 'fluff' or superficial shop-window surface. If fashion still appears uncomfortable to many serious scholarly communities, fashion scholars could certainly benefit from a more confident *just do it*-mentality. Fashion is a rich, processual phenomenon, and we *need* loud fashion writing to understand our contemporary cultures and societies in deeper, more nuanced, critical and even more empathic ways.

With its bias towards strength, stability, growth, efficiency, dominance, 'success' (for example Dale, 2001; Strannegård, 2003; Rehn and Lindahl, 2007), masculinity, rationality and objectivity, organization scholars have also traditionally chosen to engage with various strategically *important* research topics





other than fashion. *Fashionistas* are still not welcome in the boys' club, Rippin (2015) articulates. Time has come for fashionistas to enter and *change* the boys' club, I argue. The field of organization studies has for too long preferred to deal with the supply and demand of various ratio-technical macho businesses (see for example, Gustafsson, 1994; Dymek and Rehn, 2003; Rehn, 2007). The obsession with the 'rational' organization of resources (see Dale, 2001 for a critique), managerialism, innovation, endurance, technology and preferably large-scale industries has resulted in a fair amount of literature on topics such as innovation systems, organizational development, mergers and acquisitions, corporate strategy, leadership skills, organizational behaviour, and motivation, O' Doherty et al. (2013) notice. In such 'serious' context, the playful masquerade of fashion has dominantly been overlooked as insufficient candy floss or girly glamour. This still appears to be the case despite the fact that our contemporary society is obsessed with fashions, appearance, performance, staging, surface, grandiosity, branding and image boosting, imitation and all kinds of impressive framings where people and things 'must look good' (Alvesson, 2013; Alvesson and Spicer, 2016), or preferably shine and stand out. In our society of spectacle, which is not a new idea in any sense, by the way (e.g. Debord, 1967; Bauman, 1997; Ritzer, 1999), different enhancement technologies (Bloomfield and Dale, 2015), acts of fashioning and surface polishings matter significantly (see also Gabriel, 2005, 2008; Gundle, 2008). Meanwhile – and perhaps paradoxically – narcissism, hype, manipulation, exhibitionism, deception, trickery, duplicity and cover-ups are largely considered 'the cardinal sins of today' (Gabriel, 2008, 312; see also Oliver 2004). Interestingly, these dimensions continue to be closely attached to 'frivolous' fashion.

Of course, much of the negativity around fashion has certainly been lifted as fashion has become a legitimate multidisciplinary academic discipline. Moreover, a 'practice turn' (Orlikowski, 2000; Schatzki, Knorr-Cetina and von Savigny, 2001) has in the social sciences been complemented with a specific 'turn to embodiment' (Dale and Burrell, 2000; Hassard et al., 2000; Dale, 2001) within the field of organization studies, contributing to an ever-growing body of literature on various detailed micro-level practices through which *embodied* activities of organizing have been explored (e.g. Dale and Burrell, 2014; Hancock et al., 2015; Mirchandani, 2015; Satama and Huopalainen, 2016). Also, the growing field of critical organizational aesthetics has provided opportunities to

investigate the careful manipulation and manufacture of surface and materiality (Böhme, 2003; Chugh and Hancock, 2009; Sørensen, 2010), or the landscaping of bodies and environments (Dean, 2005; Hancock and Tyler 2001, 2007; Hancock and Carr, 2003; Pettinger, 2004, 2005; Witz et al. 2003). Despite the rise of aesthetic dimensions and popular culture in realms of the economic (e.g. Rehn, 2008; Rhodes and Lilley 2012; Parker, 2011, 2013, 2014; Rhodes and Westwood, 2008), the ever-growing interest in the politics of desire (Brewis and Lindstead, 2000; Harding, 2007; Bojesen and Muhr, 2008; Hoedemaekers, 2009; Kenny, 2010a, 2010b), the ‘doing’ of decorations (Wolfram Cox and Minahan, 2005; Minahan, 2008) as well as explorations of how materials and objects (Lowe, 2004; Fleming and Spicer, 2005; Whyte et al., 2007) generate meanings within sociomaterial practices (Styhre, 2013) in organization studies as of late, we know fairly little about the *particularities* of fashion’s dynamic actions, organizing and affective economy.

Of course, the hype around the dazzling creative economy (e.g. Florida, 2002; Hesmondhalgh, 2007; Jeffcutt and Pratt, 2002), the almost perverted interest in various forms of creative work (e.g. McKinlay and Smith, 2009; Eikhof and Haunschild, 2006, Moeran, 2009; Rehn and Koivunen, 2009; Styhre and Sundgren, 2005), and the rise of emotional and affective forms of labour (e.g. Clough, 2007; Clough et al., 2007; Dowling et al., 2007; Fineman, 1993, 2008) within the field of organization studies, have boosted the study of fashion. Meanwhile, the field of organization studies has been far less interested in fashion’s everyday work, detailed practices, complex and messy value-creation processes, the affective and commercial interplay or the socio-materiality of fashion *per se* in comparison to its fetish for production (again, a serious topic) or management fads and fashions (ten Bos, 2000; Abrahamson, 1991, 1996; Abrahamsson and Fairchild, 1999; Alvesson, 2013). Although management fashions can tell us something very interesting about contemporary management ideals and practices (e.g. Abrahamson, 1991, 1996, 1996; Abrahamson and Fairchild, 1999; Kieser, 1997), such a narrow focus gives us a limited understanding of an intriguing and diverse phenomenon. For this reason, we need to broaden our scope regarding fashion.

## AIMS OF THE STUDY

As has become clear by now, fashion performs an affective, amorphous, ever-changing and even mystical concept (Esposito, 2011; Moeran, 2015), and it is not at all readily apparent how fashion in different contexts is ‘done’ or ‘made’ in practice, or how something that intends to be fashionable is produced (Esposito, 2011) across time and space. The approach I take follows the call for organization studies to pay more attention to practical work (Barley and Kunda, 2001; Sergi, 2012), and especially the ‘nitty-gritty-details’ (Chia, 2004, 29) of ordinary fashion practice. For Schechner (2006, 22), ‘academic disciplines are most active at their ever-changing interfaces’, and I completely agree. For us to gain a deeper understanding of how a situated and emerging *affective economy* is organized ‘in action’ – in all its ephemerality, hybridity and ambiguity – and furthermore how it might reproduce and represent certain popular values of our society, we need to widen our focus on fashion and delve into a variety of scholarly debates and research fields. I have chosen to write at the intersection of fashion studies and organization studies to create a multidisciplinary analytical lens for the present study to critically explore interactions of human and non-human actions and activities, aesthetics, affects, bodies, resources *and* capitalism as they become enacted and entwined. Of course, these notions are all very broad. However, taken together, I believe moving across and in-between these notions as they ‘come together’ allows me to gain interesting and even critical understandings of the particularities and constitutive elements of everyday fashion organizing.

As I have already expressed, I am not studying the production of fashions *per se*. Instead, this qualitative piece of research mainly explores micro-level actions and ordinary interactions of those research subjects I have had the privilege of studying. I aim to provide rich and close-up descriptions from my perspective, as a curious, critical and affected researcher, to better understand fashion’s temporary activities of bricolage, ordering and fleeting value creation *in situ* and ‘from the inside’. By so doing, I argue that we might gain valuable insight into how a very particular kind of affective economy is organized. Thus, this thesis has the potential to contribute rare empirical knowledge on how such an economy is organized, and actually builds upon techniques of surface manipulations, enchantment and bricolage. As such, my thesis might also add substance to a dialogue about what is, in common parlance, still widely considered frivolous, shallow and superficial.

In order to illustrate and do justice to the vibrant, spontaneous, spectacle-centred, image-saturated and intensely colourful world that I have studied, photographs constructed by me are included throughout this thesis. In addition to representing images constructed by me, I have also chosen to include some catwalk images from Copenhagen Fashion Week, and the source of all catwalk photographs is the Copenhagen Fashion Week image bank. These images – represented on pages 180, 200 and 219 – are published with permission. There is, I believe, added value in showing visual representations of the studied reality, especially as photographs possess ‘considerable emotional and rhetorical power’ (Gabriel, 2012, 232). Specifically, I have chosen to present and include untidy, spontaneous and perhaps even ‘ugly’ snapshot images from the field that intend to do justice to the studied world. These images indicate the social practice of the studied organization, and re-present the bricolage and mess I encountered. Also, these images largely contrast more popular, stereotypical, polished or ‘perfect’ fashion imaginary. Meanwhile, I am aware of the many critical discussions concerning the use of photographs in qualitative research and the field of organization studies, specifically (e.g. Bell and Davison, 2013; Bell, Warren and Schroeder, 2013; Shortt and Warren, 2012; Peltonen, 2014; Gabriel, 2011).

Constructing photographs is about objectifying reality in particular, often powerful ways (Bell and Davison, 2013). How I present photographs thus ‘speak[s] to my treatment and objectification of the other’ (McMurray, 2014).<sup>6</sup> Throughout this study, I aim to draw the reader into an affective world by representing those I have studied in empathic and reflexive ways. Rather than treating images merely as ‘accessories’ to the text, I allow them to take full spread or even ‘bleed over’ the pages. In this sense, I also make their placement more dominant in my text. By allowing images to take full spread and *move* the reader, I believe they can have a more cogent role in the argumentation of my findings, too. However, the photographs are deliberately *not* carefully analyzed in detail. Rather, they are presented as a visual bricolage with an intention to evoke, trigger and *move* the reader to sense and interpret (Gabriel, 2011). In other words, I knowingly include images for presentational and affective reasons primarily, and not as empirical material to be carefully analyzed by me.

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6 <http://robertmcmurray.blogspot.fi/2014/04/first-blog.html>, accessed 5.2.2016.



Also, it appears justified to say that we – as researchers – tend to reduce complexity, uncertainty and equivocality in our writing. Naturally, this is a common strategy for making sense of complicated events in the world. At the same time, in simplifying and reducing complexity, nuance, and subtlety, we also inherently substitute and reduce understanding (Alvesson and Kärreman, 2001; Montuori, 2003). Throughout this thesis, I take ‘mess’, complexity, nuance and multiplicity very seriously. I strive to not reduce understanding. Rather, I am at home with complexity, uncertainty and disorder. I believe I have what Montuori (2003, 242) calls a ‘preference for complexity over simplicity’ – I

am puzzled, intrigued, excited and triggered by complexity rather than afraid of it (see Montuori, 2003). Therefore, I have also decided to present plenty of detailed written extracts of the empirical material, such as field notes, interview material and secondary data. By so doing, I believe I might also provide somewhat deeper, richer and thicker descriptions (although, not ‘thick’ as in Geertz’ fairly traditional, objectivist meaning, see Linstead (2015)) of the empirical material and my context. Hopefully, this also gives the reader the opportunity to more thoroughly take part in the research journey and again, raise experiences of the studied world. By presenting thick material throughout, I also do justice to an ethnographic approach. Meanwhile, my deliberate will to let the empirical material ‘speak’ for itself reveals certain limitations: the material is not always carefully analyzed by me. As I wish not to assume powerful authority as a writer, I knowingly present stories and images from the field that perhaps only loosely connect to my guiding questions, but still illustrate the richness and complexity of the fashion context, and say something interesting about a designer and his proximate team trying to make their lives meaningful. In other words, I deliberately raise interesting ideas which are not always fully developed in this thesis. Meanwhile, I have continuously questioned my knowledge of what I present as meaningful, and hope this reflexivity is evident throughout the written text.

My selectivity has had a driving role in what I have chosen to present as meaningful, and in line with other qualitative work, my research focus has developed and changed along the way. This qualitative process has not been particularly linear, but rather analytical and ‘messy’, representing a reflexive and critical style of working. I have not been guided by positivist ideals or the often-dominant principle of ‘gap spotting’ of the social sciences. Instead, my aim has consistently been to capture moment-to-moment realities of organization and glimpses of organizing. Despite my empirical interest in everyday encounters, actions, events and the many things that fashion designers actually do in their everyday lives, this thesis is also driven by theoretical ambition. Evans (2003) notes that fashion scholars have rarely been able to demonstrate both theoretical *and* empirical deepness simultaneously, but rather have focused on one dimension or the other (see e.g. Thornquist, 2005, Evans, 2003, 2007 as exceptions). I hope this thesis reads as a serious effort in joining fashion practice and theorizing. Specifically, I have related my empirical observations to ideas about fashion, organization and bricolage by reflexively moving back and forth

between theories and empirical material in an open, incomplete and flexible manner. I will also ponder on those alternative ideas that this thesis could have developed further. However, to establish some clarity in my work at this point, the following questions are considered central for my study:

What do people *do* when they ‘do fashion’? *How* and through what kind of micro-level interactions, activities and practices is fashion ‘done’ in moments of organization, and how do these activities further organize, shape and construct a particular kind of economy?

The guiding questions as presented above evidently depend on a number of things. Influenced by process thinking in the practice perspective (e.g. Sergi, 2012; Maaninen-Olsson and Müllern, 2009), I have chosen to focus on the diverse, affective workings and daily activities of one specific fashion designer and his proximate team rather than trying to account for a plurality of different, situated fashion realities. Also, I do not raise the question here of whether all the actions, burning enthusiasm, manipulation of surface and hard work observed actually ‘work’ or not, or if my research subjects temporally succeed (or not) in achieving what they daily strive for in their context. It is also worth pointing out that fashion is still fairly new to academic research in Finland. Whereas fashion studies have become an established academic discipline globally (e.g. Gindt and Wallenberg, 2009; McNeil and Miller, 2014), plenty has happened behind the fashion design scenes in the Finnish context as I have carried out this study. For instance, Finnish high fashion design – if such a well-defined segment actually exists – is currently becoming more appreciated and known abroad than it has been before, and many debates are now being raised about the significance and value of fashion export as part of the creative industries and cultural production in Finland more broadly. Still, in Finland fashion has traditionally not enjoyed the high status of a *serious* form of export business or serious scholarly topic, but this seems to be changing slowly (e.g. Aakko, 2016). The paradoxically low status of (feminine) fashion in comparison to the appreciation of (more masculine) industrial design in the Finnish context has also triggered the studied fashion designer to speak up throughout, and I will return to these discussions later. In what follows, I present and discuss the theoretical framework of this thesis. Before doing so, however, I need to briefly explain how I approach theory and activities of theorizing.







PART II  
**THEORETICAL BLING**

'Bits and pieces of cloth sewn together curtain the world...'

**CONSTANTINE AND REUTER, 1997, 91 IN RIPPIN, 2012A**



## A NOTE ON THEORY

'A statement of relations among concepts within a boundary set of assumptions and constraints. It is no more than a linguistic device used to organize a complex empirical world ... the purpose of a theoretical statement is twofold: to organize (parsimoniously) and to communicate (clearly).'

(Bacharach, 1989, 496)

How is social reality produced and represented? What is theory, and what passes for theory? What do I mean hereby theory or activities of theorizing? Furthermore, what is research without theory? In the social sciences, there is evidently no single understanding of theory. What counts as theory is certain to depend on where we are, what interests us and also 'who we are *de jour*' (Parker, 2016b). Meanwhile, it is, of course, always impossible for us 'to mirror the world exactly' (Rippin, 2015, 124). The many understandings of theory within the social sciences depend on various ontological assumptions about the world, and quite unsurprisingly, these differ in both scope and depth. For instance, Bacharach (1989) approaches theory as 'a linguistic device' and incomplete organizing 'tool' that could offer us researchers some clarity, and help us make sense of a complicated and confusing reality. To Bacharach, theory is always shaped and bounded by language and vocabulary as illustrated above, although theory might turn out to be helpful in 'setting up' a complex world of context, phenomena and relationships in specific ways. Here, the very starting point, however, seems to be that theory and empirical research – or praxis – are somehow separated and divorced. This is an approach that I try to move away from. Rather, I view theory as closely connected to (ordinary) meaning, actions, politics, and practice, and in this way, the two domains become inherently blurred (see also Collins, 2016).

Theory might confuse, trigger and develop us. Meanwhile, theory is always an outcome of actions, practices, politics, language, ideologies and specific interests (e.g. Gherardi, 2015). What happens if we refuse an established and often taken-for-granted theory/empirics separation (e.g. Haraway, 2003, 2007; O'Doherty, 2016)? What if we see theory and empirical research as inherently intertwined, and seek to mediate and even break down oppositions between theory and practice? 'The taken-for-granted distinction between ontology and

epistemology collapses once we recognize the role of language in constructing the object of being', Gherardi (2015, 5) suggests. Building upon these assumptions, I approach theory broadly as being, doing, sensing and 'seeing'. To me, theory provides maps, reflection and inspiration. In other words, my understanding of theory involves conceptual thinking *and* embodied feeling, critique and perception as well as reflection and problematization. Theorizing as an *active* verb is, I believe, an outcome of curiosity, knowledge, ideas and assumptions, things and people, relations and intra-actions. As Stewart (2007) writes, knowledge and our experience of reality is always *situated*, emergent, partial and fragmented – and this evidently goes for theory, too. We all use our distinctive, epistemologically grounded vocabularies (Gherardi, 2015) as we construct and re-present social reality in different, subjective ways. At the same time, all theoretical lenses we use are biased, incomplete 'and potentially misleading' (Morgan, 1997, 5).

As Gherardi (2015) reminds us, we are always already 'inside the practices' that we choose to study, and therefore, as researchers we also *construct* ontology and epistemology through 'epistemic practices' (Gherardi, 2015, 5). Specifically, I work from the assumption that theory and practice are already always deeply connected. Throughout this piece, I theorize and *produce* practice at the same time. What is *my* practice, as a researcher? How do I produce my empirical material and theorize at the same time? To me, both theory and practice capture an ongoing dialogue between subject and object (Montuori, 2003), the rational and the emotional, discovery and creation, as they deepen and inform one another. As researchers, we are embodied and embedded in this world (Merleau-Ponty, 1962). We *participate* in the research process. We are not standing outside it. Therefore, in order to understand acts of organization, I believe it is important for me to address my subjectivity, to strive to be fully present in my work, and *not* leave out 'the messy context of discovery' (Montuori, 2003, 253). The challenge in this process of creative exploration, it appears, is making my self transparent: who I am in all of this messy context? (Montuori, 2003)

Bacharach's (1989) reflective approach emphasizes the always incomplete, political and inherently subjective nature of any theoretical 'statement of relations'. Not fixed, 'finished', neutral or stable ideas, yet not totally random statements about a certain subject matter, I sympathize with these ideas, and approach theory as a set of arguments *always* underpinned and bounded by

subjective interests, ideologies, as well as inherently limited and imperfect assumptions about the world. Following Dale (2001), I believe neat categories and ‘anatomized’ theoretical frameworks deserve to be developed, questioned and critiqued, and this is what research and curiosity is inherently about. Alvesson and Sandberg (2014) discuss how detailed and ethically collected empirical material holds potential for stimulating the creation of interesting theories. According to them, empirical work *should* have interesting implications for theory, and I totally agree.

To me, research is always an uncertain and complex undertaking: an intellectual, creative, affective, exciting and hopefully *surprising* journey. Moreover, as emphasized throughout, it is always theoretical and empirical, practical and abstract, affective and performative – all at once. Also, such ‘messy’ and inclusive journey must allow ‘my voice into the work’ (Rippin, 2012a, 143). So, this thesis reflects my journey, my experience and my representation of knowledge, at a specific time in a given context. My intention is also to let the empirical material gathered for this study ‘speak’, enrich, problematize and possibly critique existing theories or the underlying assumptions that these constructions might carry along. If theory provides us with (loosely) attached arguments with certain underpinnings about the world, theory becomes meaningful when it is actively problematized (e.g. Alvesson and Kärreman, 2011; Alvesson and Sandberg, 2013a, 2013b). Specifically, active theorizing carries the potential to expand our existing knowledge and question acknowledged ‘truths’ about the world, and change the world. Therefore, any phenomenon deserves to be scrutinized, questioned and illuminated further for us to gain what Rippin (2012a) refers to as multi-faceted levels of knowledge, and develop interesting and more critical theories (Alvesson and Sandberg, 2014). This, in turn, is crucial for producing interesting research.

Alvesson and Sandberg (2013a, 122) encourage researchers to use various *disruptive* modes to produce less predictable (and boring) research. Specifically, the authors suggest that ‘creativity, curiosity, boldness and intellectual commitment’ (Alvesson and Sandberg, 2013a, 122) *should* guide us researchers. Likewise, Hassard et al. (2008) encourage us to use eclectic methodologies that disturb and break up ‘the much-valued consistency of ontology, epistemology and research methodology’ (ibid, 2008, 176). In line with the authors mentioned above, I am also concerned about straightforward and standardized tendencies

in academia that often reduce, generalize, fetishize or simplify active theorizing/problematisation into a seemingly smooth, measurable and linear activity (see also the blog of Yiannis Gabriel). In this thesis, my analysis remains inconsistent, disorganized and untidy (Hassard et al., 2008), and I have been inspired by conceptually and ontologically quite different discussions. These inspirations include, for instance, non-representational theorizing (Beyes and Steyart, 2012; Thrift, 2007), the use of aesthetic approaches to organizing (e.g. Linstead and Höpfl, 2000; Strati, 1999, 2008; Sørensen, 2010; King and Vickery, 2013), Actor Network Theory (e.g. Chugh and Hancock, 2009; Whittle and Spicer, 2008), and the attitude of ‘critical affectivity’ (Stewart, 2007; Lingis, 2000; Linstead, 2015), present in my attempt to represent the ‘unrepresentable’, and capture the affects, felt experiences and tacit knowledges of research practice.

Also, my study has been guided by ideas central to critical ethnographies within organization studies (e.g. Alvesson and Deetz, 2000; Alvesson and Ashcraft, 2009), and the idea of problematisation (Alvesson and Sköldbberg, 2009) in particular. Of course, what counts as critical is also always certain to depend (Parker, 2016b). If portraying and exploring detailed practices and lived realities in a reflexive manner is arguably central to *all* ethnographers, a critical ethnographer might want to reflexively reflect upon these interpretations and constructions further. I believe many critical ethnographers approach both theoretical frameworks and methodology in a particularly self-reflexive manner, aware of generating particular constructions through research. Also, critical ethnographers might want to produce alternatives to standardized, textual formats (e.g. Ripplin, 2012a, 2012b, 2013a, Ripplin and Porter, 2012), performative, disruptive or ‘messy’ texts (e.g. Law, 2004) that involve affective responses and serious attempts to account for the voices of the researched without overlooking the researcher’s senses as a crucial part of the research (e.g. Warren, 2002, 2008, 2012).

To sum up, I wish to undertake curious analytical reflection throughout. If critical ethnographers often work ‘from the margins’ and ‘outside neat categorizations’ (Hassard et al., 2008, 176) trying to make sense of processes, paradoxes, boundaries, ambiguities, dimensions of power, control, oppression, resistance, struggles and politics, my work is critical in its attempt to spell out my research journey in an eclectic, perhaps playful, reflexive and hopefully non-mainstream way, and in my attempt to *problematize* and develop certain taken-



for-granted assumptions about fashion and bricolage. Throughout, I intend to gather interesting insight into the world by curiously moving in-between slippery theories and my diverse empirical material. More than anything, I strive to keep alive the dynamics in these analytical, multidimensional encounters. This, I believe, is crucial for my research to become valuable, novel and interesting. Next, I turn to the notion of fashion, a complex phenomenon that is found at the heart of my research.



## FASHION, FRILLS AND FRIPPERIES

*'Wavering between the profit and the loss*

*In this brief transit where the dreams cross*

*The dreamcrossed twilight between birth and dying.'*

(T.S. Eliot, 'Ash Wednesday', Selected Poems, Faber and Faber, London, 1954, 92)

*This chapter explores and approaches fashion, a wide, dynamic and intriguing phenomenon where (the dreams of) the past, present and future cross (Evans, 2003). Inspired by insights from the multidisciplinary academic fields of fashion studies and organization studies, I discuss certain underlying assumptions about fashion that matter for my study. By so doing, I strengthen my own approach to this vague and slippery notion. As previously indicated, I cannot give a 'complete' or 'true' representation of fashion, a rich notion with multiple layers and diverse, contextual cultural associations. Rather, I intend to point towards some more critical ideas that hold potential in further developing our theoretical and practical understandings of fashion.*

### SCRATCHING AND STRETCHING (THE SURFACE OF) FASHION

Characteristic of restlessness, emergence, transformation, movement, multiplicity, attraction, temporalities and change, fashion is today part of the performance of a hugely powerful, affective and global capitalist system. A thesis concerned with the 'doing' of fashion<sup>7</sup> must certainly make some effort to open up the ambiguous, multilayered and polysemic notion of fashion. When we think about fashion, we easily think of Western consumer capitalism, material clothes, resource exploitation, (young) women, irresponsible consumption

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7 Whereas I will here meditate further on the fashion concept itself arguing for a kind of deconstruction or 'picking apart' of some of fashion's central underlying assumptions, I must leave many interesting debates and connections outside my scope. These include, for instance, the ethics of production, commodity fetishism, ecological discourses, gender performance, postcolonial reflections, and relationships between fashion and art, film and celebrity.

as well as 'irrational' retail behaviour. We tend to think of a hugely popular form of mass culture, neither low nor high culture. Perhaps we do not think of history, philosophy and modernity, although these concepts are certainly closely associated with fashion (Evans, 2003). If consumers of fashion around the world have traditionally purchased fashionable objects to decorate bodily surface and adorn dreams (Wilson, 1985/2007), experience moments of enchantment in the ordinary life (Moeran, 2010, 2015), fulfill, perform and communicate idea(l)s about identity, femininity and masculinity, or simply feel good about themselves, today's (Western) fashion industry – if we for now limit our understanding to the production of fashionable clothing *objects* – has, according to some, been accused of becoming an utterly unethical, exploiting, fast-paced and replaceable kind of industry (see e.g. Fletcher, 2008, 2009, 2010; Fletcher and Grose, 2012; Gardetti and Torres, 2013). According to a common view, (mainstream) fashion has been charged with becoming an economy with speed and 'tear-and-toss' surface that lots of people across the globe suffer from.<sup>8</sup> At the same time, alternative paradigms, such as slow – and sustainable fashion movements and ecological discourses are increasingly responding to the prevailing fashion system, and growing in popularity (Fletcher, 2008; 2009; 2010; Fletcher and Grose, 2012; Niinimäki, 2014). Today, many designers oppose 'fast' fashion or increasingly do work that is based on collage techniques, for instance, and the use of recycled, ecological or vintage fabrics (Gardetti and Torres, 2013).

What is (a) fashion? What are the ingredients of fashion? How could we approach this diverse phenomenon to begin with, given that fashion is said to equip various oppositions, such as consumer dreams, desires, beauty and horror, pollution

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8 Due to the dominant expectations of pace, speed and fast fashion principles 'dictating' this economy, fashion houses increasingly produce multiple annual collections in an endless, exhausting and often ethically questionable circle of production. Presenting an increasing number of annual collections has become an unsustainable expectation for many fashion houses across the globe. For instance, this cyclical global industry produces and demands pre-fall, fall-winter, pre-spring, spring-summer and resort collections in addition to the established Autumn/Winter and Spring/Summer collections. Not surprisingly, this worryingly short and hugely expensive 'contract' gives rise to a number of serious concerns. Still, the constantly shifting core of fashion appears to be change and movement. The entire point of fashion is, it appears, to express continuous movements and novelty, which positions 'whimsical pointlessness' (Wilson, 2003) and unreasonableness at the very core of fashion.

and damage, child labour and misery, exploitation and luxury, elegance and status, as well as performance and attraction? Both individual and collective, frivolous and serious, often more harmful, ‘bad’ and irrelevant than ‘good’, beneficial or intelligent, fashion is a powerful notion with strong associations to time, bodies, surface, space, youth, class, speed, transition, appearance, image, consumerism and branding (e.g. Breward 1998, 2003; Craik, 1994, Evans, 2003, 2010; Svendsen, 2004). Any artefact, idea or concept could become fashionable at any given time and space, and this is quite evident – for instance – in the popular management literature. Nevertheless, fashion ties strongly to material objects, surface and different forms of clothing. What constitutes a garment or a piece of clothing? What is the difference between clothes and fashion, then? I need to discuss how I approach these interrelated notions in the context of this thesis. To me, the notions of fashion, dress, clothes and the body are always intimately connected and intertwined. In the realm of this thesis, I position fashion as a broader and more including concept than dress or clothes. I view fashion *not* as a synonym to clothes, dress, style or consumer trends, but as a profoundly hybrid, symbolic and communicative phenomenon. Clothes are here seen as the material objects we wear. What we call fashion and eventually wear (as clothes), however, is a mix of individual taste preferences, styles,<sup>9</sup> technologies, commercial decisions, felt experiences, comfort, dominant ideals, moving influences and, uncertainty and serendipity.

Dressing and dress – as a verb and a noun – indicates how the ‘self’ is always in a state of self-mediation, expression and representation, and this activity is determined by fashions, King and Vickery (2014) explain. Dressed and adorned *bodies* have an intimate relationship with fashion, body politics, self-performance, weight management, staged performances and various *embodied* practices. Plenty has been written about fashion, dress and the body (e.g. Bordo, 1993; Entwistle, 2000a, 2000b; Grimstad Klepp and Rysst, 2016; Harvey, 2007). This diverse literature shares an understanding of ‘the fashioned body’ (Entwistle, 2000a) as no ‘natural’ or neutral construct, but rather as a representation co-performed,

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9 Style is another notion closely connected to fashion. Following Hebdige (1979), I view style as (intentional) communication through bodily adornments over a longer period of time than perhaps more short-lived and cyclical fashions. Style could also be viewed as a materialization of bricolage, or the outcome of performative acts through which consumers modify, assemble, combine and act towards specific activities and objects.

moulded, controlled, adorned, produced, performed, cultured, classed, sexualized and gendered in a variety of different ways (e.g. Butler, 1993, 2004; Skeggs, 2004). 'Fashion is Dead', said Li Edelkoort fairly recently at an international design summit.<sup>10</sup> An interesting, quite a dramatic and powerful saying, isn't it? In addition, Suzy Menkes, a beloved contemporary American fashion journalist, recently wrote the article, 'Why Fashion Is Crashing', for Vogue.<sup>11</sup> When Li Edelkoort, a globally-known Dutch trend forecaster and *the* grand old lady of design talks, the entire world of contemporary Western fashion listens. This appears to go for the influential Suzy Menkes, too. What is going on with fashion, then? Is the notion of fashion no longer 'in fashion' among practitioners and industry insiders?

What counts as fashion is certain to differ and depend upon context. "What an organization is" always depends on who is speaking *in its name, on its behalf, or for it*', Stohl and Stohl (2011, 1207) remind us, and I believe this goes for fashion, too. In common parlance, a fashion is apparently often viewed as a popular manner of doing things (Czarniawska, 2011). Today, there are up to nine different definitions of the *f-word* present in the Oxford English Dictionary. These include definitions relating to manner, dress, habitual practice, form, consumer goods as well as 'the latest and most admired style'. The cultural meanings of fashion have changed throughout history, and likewise, our subjective and *situated* understandings of fashion always vary and differ. However, it seems to me that the negative image of fashion contributes to *positioning* fashion as an ethically questionable, harmful, unintellectual and shallow scholarly topic. Fashion remains an ideological and political construct, and this is evident in academia, too. Yet, we tend to forget that fashion is a powerful socio-historical product open for interpretations and critique, political consideration, change and re-creation. Historically, fashion has been viewed as an entirely *serious* and philosophical topic (Simmel, (1911/1923), a modern phenomenon evident and powerful in Europe since as far back as the 17th century (Czarniawska, 2011; Evans, 2003; Svendsen, 2004). Could we strive for an open-minded, constructive and critical approach to fashion, today?

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10 Specifically, Li Edelkoort famously declared this at the Design Indaba summit in Cape Town in 2015.

11 Suzy Menkes on Vogue UK, see <http://www.vogue.co.uk/suzy-menkes/2015/10/raf-simons-why-fashion-is-crashing> (accessed 26.10.2015).

FASHION'S 'BECOMING' AND MULTIPLICITY

Does fashion refer to pleasure and consumption, image or object, cultural production, a capitalist trigger, an institutionalized system, a verb that implies social performance and action, narcissistic self-improvement, fleeting affects, a cult of luxury or merely a shallow surface? Rather than picking one, I approach fashion as a multilayered and complex phenomenon ever-changing, moving, dynamic, hybrid, subjective, relative and contextual. Fashion is often approached as 'the deep structure of economic life under consumer capitalism' King and Vickery (2014, 2) suggest, where fashion acts as a profit-oriented capitalist practice with the primary purpose of *selling* (Falk, 2011). Breward (2003, 15), then, views fashion as 'the outcome of a precarious marriage between the processes of creative authorship, technological production, and cultural dissemination'. To Czarniawska (2011, 599), fashion is an 'experimental field in which new practices are tried before they get institutionalized'. To me, these approaches all suggest that fashion brings together diverse ideas, practices and processes. Specifically, I work from the assumption that fashion *per se* always represents a paradoxical, fleeting and restless process of 'becoming' (Deleuze, 2007; von Busch, 2009), and as such, remains impossible for us researchers or practitioners to ever fully experience, capture, manage, organize or govern. Von Busch (2009, 38) approaches fashion as a process of 'producing intensities of difference', a view that seems close to my own. To me, fashion is about processes of making, masking and manipulating as well as various performative doings with an impact, such as endless re-inventions of *surface* reconstructions (Entwistle, 2000; Evans, 2003) through different 'techniques of the body' (Mauss, 1973, 70, see also Sweetman, 2001; Tsaousi and Brewis, 2013). In the spirit of process philosophy (Rescher, 2012), I approach fashion as a means of foregrounding intensity, change, becoming, and fluidity. This approach also suggests that processual fashion is emergent and never comes to an 'end'.

Following von Busch (2009, 38), one could state that fashion represents 'difference in its purest ephemeral form', although this difference always shifts shape, transforms and 'becomes' in a restless, non-linear and never-ending cycle. If processual fashion is about constant 'becoming' through imitation, producing 'intensity and difference' (von Busch, 2009) as well as performative effort and surface manipulation (Thrift, 2008, 2010; Moeran, 2015), there is an

important time-space dimension present in the cyclical creation, communication, presentation and circulation of fashion, as I will also illustrate empirically. Interestingly, the dominant literature suggests that fashion requires *certain* spaces, places and means for it to emerge and spread. Much of the mainstream fashion literature has focused on the well-known, most powerful, hegemonic and celebrated (Western) fashion locations (see e.g. Kawamura, 2004b; Charpy, 2012; Saillard and Zazzo, 2012). As I have previously argued, we need to include more *marginal* spaces, places and practices, in the study of fashion. If the construct of fashion always ties to time and space, we also need to address dynamic spatial relations more carefully in order to approach and make sense of fitful fashion. For instance, everything that at a given time and space represents 'anti-fashion' is important for the construction of fashion (Twigg, 2013) at a given moment, and the perception of 'anti-fashion' could evidently become fashionable in a specific context, too. I tie my study to the critical fashion literature (Evans, 2001, 2003; Thornquist, 2005) and intend to present a less polished story of fashion creation and becoming 'in the making'. This story, written 'from the margins', includes spaces in-between (Shortt, 2015), such as stairways, cars and ferries. These liminal spaces are dominantly overlooked but surprisingly crucial for the creation, communication and possible spread of fashion, as I will also illustrate empirically.

In this thesis, I take the multiplicity of fashion seriously. Fashion performs an intriguing juxtaposition of a notion with different dimensions, actions, values and elements woven together in its inherently complicated meanings and practices. If fashion includes contradictory practices, performances, movements, bodily postures, behaviours, attitudes, looks, scents, rites and rituals in continuous movement, change and flux, is impossible to approach fashion with a single, theoretical framework in mind. What happens if I take fashion's multiplicity and fluidity seriously? If we cannot directly 'see' fashion, we might see events, fragments and traces of fashion, or the 'display of the materials and events' (Parker, 2016a, 100) that we choose to label as fashion in a given context. 'Seeing' and trying to make sense of fashion's traces and events calls for curiosity, openness and problematization. Also Wilson (1985/2007, 11) suggests that we should approach fashion broadly: 'the attempt to view fashion through several different pairs of spectacles simultaneously – of aesthetics, of social theory, of politics – may result in an obliquity of view, or even of astigmatism or blurred view, but it seems we must attempt it'. Here, I will attempt to do so.

Again, I underline that I take as my starting point this theoretical multiplicity, ‘mess’ and ambiguity. To me, fashion is always a mixture of affective, cultural *and* economic influences and intensities, and I hope my allowing for multiplicity and hybridity is evident throughout my writing. Fashion connects to contemporary cultural studies, classical sociological literature, affective economies, embodiment literature, performance studies and the very rich literature on material culture. As no theory alone captures the complexity of fashion, we must tolerate uncertainty and complexity, and draw upon diverse and varying theoretical discussions to make sense of this slippery phenomenon. I argue that multiple theoretical perspectives are needed, perspectives that work to challenge and complement each other and the multiple ‘truths’ we know about fashion. Following this logic, the broad question of ‘how fashions are made and by whom?’ is both complicated and context-dependent. Below, Flicker (2014) illustrates the complexity surrounding the many and widespread practical *activities* tied to fashion, which perhaps also make it inherently difficult to ‘pin down’ this wide assemblage of practical activities:

‘Creating, producing, exchanging, selling, marketing, seeing, touching, listening, wearing, watching, admiring, discarding, demonstrating, performing, commenting, blogging, painting, picturing, imaging, spacing... The complexity of fashion is overwhelming; in it we find all aspects of modern societies.’  
(Flicker, 2014, 23)

## IN CRITICAL SEARCH OF FASHION

### – FASHION’S ‘MESS’ AND COMPLEXITY AS A POINT OF DEPARTURE

In this section, I present certain mechanisms of fashion that I use in this thesis and argue that we need to problematize further. ‘What is an organization but a moving flux of people and things?’ Parker (2016a, 109) critically asks. ‘What is fashion, then, but a moving flux of ideas, representations, names, magical rites, intensities, commodities, affects, attractions, performances, people and things?’ I ask. So far, all I have been able to say is that fashion remains an elusive, vague, complex, contradictory and problematic construction (see also Breward, 2003; Evans, 2007; Kawamura, 2004; Wilson, 1985/2003) at the cross-section

of various cultural, economical and everyday performative practices. Fashion is about creating feelings, intensities and various sensations, the felt, embodied experiences of dress(ing), as well as the sociomateriality of fashion and dress per se. That is to say, I work from the assumption that fashion's central practices are always and *at once* embodied, cultural, commercial, material and affective. Similar to Parker's approach to organization, I work from the assumption that we can only 'catch fragmentary signs' (Parker, 2016a, 100) of fashion's presence. As previously indicated, I also believe we must tolerate and embrace mess, movement, dynamics and complexity in so doing. Thus, with fashion's multiplicity, our understanding is always partial, fragmented, context-dependent and subjective.

Despite this creative mess, 'the study of fashion has tended to privilege elite phenomena', write Skov and Melchior (2008, 4). In other words, the contemporary field of fashion studies<sup>12</sup> has tended to focus on a rather limited 'ultra fashionable' core of high-end fashion (Twigg, 2013) produced under specific conditions, usually quite ironically prioritizing exactly what is found at the heart of today's fashion shows staged across the globe: the novel, stylized, smooth, perfect, polished, dazzling and young rather than the incomplete, messy, unfinished, patchy, 'falling-off', dangerously creative (Rehn, 2009), disturbingly freaky, mundane and old (Twigg, 2013). In fashion theory, the presentation of haute couture (e.g. Bancroft, 2011; Bartlett, 2014; Bourdieu and Delsauf, 1975; Evans, 1998, 1999; Rees-Roberts, 2015; Steele, 2013; Troy, 2003) and other 'elite forms of dress' (Twigg, 2013, 11) have received plenty of scholarly attention, whereas the less celebrated fashion organizing remains insufficiently researched. If fashion represents 'a conglomerate of the current' (Loschek, 2009, 205), then plenty remains outside what is approached as fashion. Given our interest in the prestigious and 'fashionable', we know surprisingly little about the everyday work, processes and mechanisms *behind* the fashionable surface. This thesis wants to further this line of research. Also, everyday bricolage, anti-fashions, fashion resistance, stains and errors, disabled, old (e.g. Twigg, 2010 as exception) and 'fat' bodies (e.g.

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12 Today, the academic field of fashion studies is a field loosely grouped around cultural studies, dress history, gender studies and business studies, to name a few disciplines (see Gindt and Wallenberg, 2009). Unsurprisingly, this field takes fashion very seriously, as opposed to many other academic realms, which treat fashion as inherently bourgeois, superficial and anti-intellectual.





METTE

Shoes: Red 38

Downing Peters, 2014 as exception), ‘the bulk of mainstream’ (Twigg, 2013), ‘pornification’ and sexualized dress (e.g. Gibson, 2014 as exception) and what ‘ordinary’ people wear in the day-to-day have been topics surprisingly overlooked, scholarly. These research areas deserve to be further problematized, I argue.

The field of fashion studies has recently debated the lack of critical engagements in fashion (McNeil, 2010; McNeil and Miller, 2014), the lack of sustainable approaches to fashion (e.g. Clark, 2008; Joy et al., 2012) and the limits of linguistic conceptions of dress (e.g. Carter, 2012; Farren and Hutchison, 2004). It is today claimed that (Western) fashion continues to present itself as elitist, excluding and hegemonic and thus deserves to be critiqued and developed for several reasons (see e.g. Akou, 2007; Almila, 2015; Cheddle, 2010). Throughout history, fashion scholars have ideologically tended to divorce fashion ‘from its crude economic context’ (Beward, 2003, 14), obviously favouring *artistic* (e.g. Johnson, 2015), aesthetic and glossy (e.g. König, 2006) aspects over flaws, imperfections and ‘non-fashion’ dimensions (e.g. Evans, 2003 as exception). This might be a dangerous thing to do. ‘Art, in our society, is still often seen as being objectively good – a dangerous conflation of ethics and aesthetics’, Warren and Rehn (2006, 81–82) remind us (see also Warren and Rehn, 2007). Much of the contemporary academic fashion writing has failed to do justice to fashion’s multiplicity, mundanity, hybridity and diversity, and its inherently processual and dynamic nature. We obviously fail to do justice to fashion-*in-action* if we merely choose to approach and perceive fashion through shiny objects<sup>13</sup> or polished surface.<sup>14</sup> Taken together, I believe we need to ask more difficult, disturbing, philosophical, ontological and epistemological questions about fashion to engage with fashion *critically*. Instead of maintaining binaries, we could do more to do justice to fashion’s multiplicity as a starting point, although approaching/understanding this complexity may seem overwhelming in practice. Regardless, I want to build on the mentioned ideas further. In what follows, I will briefly discuss the ‘mechanisms’ or paradoxes of fashion further. To me, these paradoxes appear helpful for us to approach fitful fashion, and therefore deserve to be clarified in the context of this thesis.

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13 What constitutes a piece of clothing is, I believe, a complicated, multilayered and philosophical question in itself.

14 To me, surface is not a static, immobile and ‘flat’ construct.

PROBLEMATIZING CERTAIN ‘MECHANISMS’ OF FASHION FURTHER

‘Its constitutive paradoxes are invention and imitation, variation and uniformity, distance and interests, novelty and conservatism, unity and segregation, conformity and deviation, change and status quo, and revolution and evolution.’ (Czarniawska, 2011, 601)

Above, Czarniawska (2011; see also Czarniawska, 2008) introduces what she calls fashion’s ‘constitutive paradoxes’. Regardless of fashion’s multiplicity and paradoxical nature as elegantly illustrated above, fashion is often reduced to ‘effortless’, potentially noisy staged self-expression or an *individualistic* phenomenon celebrating the personal and ‘unique’ (e.g. Styles, 1998). Likewise, we must remember that fashion is completely dependent on editing, making, tricking, or social imitation, acceptance and response, for something to be *legitimized* or accepted as fashion.

Fashion is an ideological, political and gendered construct. As such, performing or ‘doing’ fashion through the presentation of the self mediates complicated relations between sexuality, identity, gender and class (e.g. Evans, 2003; see Skeggs, 2005 on performing ‘glamour’). Here, I understand both femininity and masculinity as fragmented and performative (e.g. Butler, 1990; Skeggs, 2005), and this goes for fashion, too. Fashion could also be manifested in the uncertain performance of socially constructed, normative *expectations* of femininity (Skeggs, 2005) or masculinity. To Baudrillard (2005, 277), the body has become a dazzling fetish, a form of capital or ‘the finest consumer object of salvation’ surrounded by a fetishized cult. If Dyhouse (2011, 4) illustrates glamour not only as oppressive objectification of women but as ‘defiance rather than compliance’, fashion could likewise be a bold performance that gives agency, strength and empowerment, but could also be degrading if not coded in the ‘correct’ ways.

Today’s fashion scholars are often obsessed with fashion and youth. In her excellent book on fashion and age, Twigg (2013; see also Twigg 2010) argues that fashion’s dominant discourses are nowadays first and foremost *youthful*. Specifically, fashion is preoccupied with youth in idealized, elitist ways by silencing ages and excluding bodies that are *not* youthful according to certain culturally accepted norms. As today’s Western fashion is obsessed with youthful

femininity and images of envy, desire and objectification, Skeggs (2004, 2005) discusses how women in particular must carefully discipline themselves and code fashions through complicated tensions between sexuality and respectability to be perceived as 'glamorous' (see also Coy and Garner, 2010; Entwistle and Mears, 2012; Entwistle and Wissinger, 2012; Huopainen, forthcoming). Whereas the intersection of fashion and class are present in the classic writings of Veblen (1899) and Simmel (1907) and widely discussed as such, it appears as if the assumption of class acting as fashion's dominant ordering principle is becoming subject to ever-growing critique (Twigg, 2013). Perhaps other dimensions, such as that of age, affect, materiality and embodiment, are becoming more powerful principles. These deserve to be more thoroughly explored and discussed, I argue.

Finally, some authors (e.g. Wilson, 2007) are willing to treat fashion as a mystery, impossible for us to ever fully understand. While I do agree with researchers who claim that fashion's processual flows, changes and movements might go beyond 'our reach', I am not willing to treat the entire phenomenon as something that we cannot problematize, deconstruct or try to explain. On the contrary, we need to make serious efforts in order to better understand fashion at the heart of culture and capitalism, affect and aesthetics, order and chaos, temporality and continuity, as well as creativity and routine. Fashion *deserves* philosophical and critical problematization. Therefore, we should approach fashion dynamically from a multiplicity of angles with a variety of theories and research methodologies in mind. By so doing, we have some ground on which to base the argumentation, but we might also construct a generous framework that accepts complexities, ephemerality, movements and tensions. To me, trying to understand fashion means taking the reality-making properties of surface seriously, trying to get *beyond* shallow or shiny surface, and move beyond dichotomies in a variety of ways, as well. This is what I try to do throughout this thesis.

## THE FASHION ECONOMY

*What is it that people do when they 'do' fashion? For us to better understand how a particular designer and his proximate team actively practice and 'do' fashion from day to day, how they reflexively engage in action, and how they engage with social complexity (Edwards and Meliou, 2015), this chapter meditates further on the fleeting affective economy of fashion. Specifically, I intend to shift the explanatory focus toward an emergent, interactional dynamic (Uhl-Bien et al., 2007) – a meaningful context – from which various actions and outcomes emerge. By so doing, I might better explain the connections between social context and bricolage actions. Here, an affective economy refers to a truly global yet situated capitalist economy of social orders, professional norms, commodified desires and intensities, aesthetics, attraction and affection. This 'messy' economy includes various activities, dreams, commodified fantasies, skin-to-skin encounters, embodied actors, objects, spaces, bodies, surging affects, relations, paradoxical expectations, failures, stakeholders, (conflicting) interests, different organizations, temporalities, processes, and working practices. Discussing actions, practices and relations involved in a joint global activity shaped by larger structural and institutional forces, trends and changes is, of course, hugely challenging to begin with. Again, I can only discuss limited aspects and certain contextual 'practices that go to making up the phenomenon of fashion' (Entwistle, 2009, 3). Aware of these limitations, this chapter still intends to place my empirical material in meaningful context and by so doing, sets the foundation for the story that unfolds.*

### THE AFFECTIVE ECONOMY OF FASHION

As stated before, I take the hybridity of processual fashion as my point of departure. Specifically, I view the dynamics of order and chaos, precision and improvisation, depth and surface, front stage and backstage, as well as exclusivity and imitation hugely intriguing here. The fashion economy, it appears, builds upon capacities to *affect* and to be affected, capacities to excite and circulate excitement, as well as capacities to seduce and be seduced (e.g. Ahmed, 2004a, 2004b; Spinoza, 1677/1989; Thrift, 2008, 2010). In other words, fashion is a

complex, highly differentiated economy where generating enchantment, passions and creating ‘value’<sup>15</sup> is an uncertain, relational and inherently collective project, one demanding continuous actions from various embodied agents (such as producers, suppliers and consumers) moving, interacting and ‘working around’ various circumstances across a variety of different spaces. This economy is, of course, an inherently complex, political, dynamic, non-linear and messy affair. How could we approach this complicated mess, then?

Economy here widely refers to a capitalist market order, although other orders evidently exist (e.g. Taalas and Rehn, 2004). As a social construction of different human and non-human agents and exchanging values, the economy performs the ‘dominating paradigm of our age’ (Rehn, 2001, 3) in which we all actively participate as we *do*, perform and ‘play the markets’ (Rehn, 2001, 3). Specifically, I work from the assumption that the *affective economy* (Ahmed, 2004a) is always fleeting and moving, political, subjectively felt and experienced, and also actively *done* from day-to-day. The economy is, of course, no stable construct; it is subject to continuous movement and change. As part of the affective economy, the social construct of fashion has already undergone major changes that affect the everyday work of every fashion designer in the world (e.g. Meadows, 2012; Volanté, 2012). Fashion is consumed and co-produced over a variety of organized spaces that are material, physical, imagined, virtual, digital, affective and experienced. It is today claimed that the rise of e-commerce, digital showrooms and virtual spaces are becoming more influential in fashion than before (e.g. Rocamora, 2009; Meadows, 2012). The creative environment has changed dramatically, especially during the last years as the production/consumption dualism has been falling apart, for good, some say (Marion and Nairn, 2011; Meadows, 2012).

Traditionally, a number of divisions that used to define industrial modernist capitalist systems have been regarded as central to fashion (von Busch, 2009). Specifically, von Busch (ibid.) discusses a number of ‘linear principles’ that have always mattered to fashion. These include a dualism between ‘passive’ consumption and ‘active’ production, a clash between professional work and ‘amateur

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15 Following Fine (2004), value is here approached as a complex symbolic construction not only limited to monetary value but something larger, negotiated in an ongoing manner. Here, value relies upon aesthetic, affective, economic and symbolic constructions (see Fine, 2004).

hobbyism’, the meditation of culture by specific ‘gatekeepers’ rather than more hybrid user-driven meditation. This division is perhaps not surprising as fashion is widely considered a *modern* phenomenon. However, if these assumptions used to matter to the construction of fashion, these boundaries are nowadays eventually being blurred (e.g. Khan, 2000; Khaire, 2014; Löfgren, 2005; Meadows, 2012).

Today, the ‘new’/different/fashionable does not necessarily replace the ‘old’ or the existing idea(l) in the market. Rather, we are frequently said to live in a spectacular, post-postmodern age of montage, bricolage, multiple cross-references and crossovers (see e.g. Meadows, 2012; Löfgren and Willim, 2005; Rocamora, 2009), where different fashions and trends co-exist and emerge dynamically, relationally and in interaction with each other (see e.g. Marion and Nairn, 2011; Meadows, 2012). The global economy of fashion has been affected by a global financial crisis, the rise of timely discourses of ethics, sustainability and e-commerce, an ‘increase in the cost of raw materials’ (Meadows, 2012, 5), and a hugely influential social media revolution (Rocamora, 2011). A global fashion economy includes various macro-societal forces and structures, cultural intermediaries such as companies, agencies, marketers, designers, freelancers, journalists and cultural workers, and all their meaningful and joint, inter-related and sometimes paradoxical activities. Meaningful doings include, for instance, production, retail and buying, self-expressive bodily aesthetics and performance, image-creating, branding, and surface polishing. These actions are not reserved to humans exclusively. Rather, ‘entities with variables ontologies’ (such as human, nonhuman, discursive and material) (Vásquez and Cooren, 2012, 191), that is objects, values, images, texts, hopes and principles, all participate in this messy economy altogether.

## FROM FASHION SYSTEMS TO AFFECTIVE ECONOMIES

In a society of spectacle, ‘every business becomes showbusiness’, Gabriel (2008, 277) suggests. To me, fashion is an almost cliché-ridden example of a loud and vivid showbusiness, spectacle and performance. Fashion’s broad ‘system of stylistic innovation’ (Entwistle, 2009, 8), which includes aesthetic, affective and seductive stimuli, has been approached theoretically and practically in a variety of different ways. There is, for instance, established literature on the ‘fashion system’ as a semiotic system of signs, as was originally presented by

Barthes (1967/1983), and later developed by both Fine and Leopold (1993), as well as Kawamura (2005). Moreover, the ‘aesthetic economy’ (Entwistle, 2002; Böhme, 2003; Gaugele, 2014) has become an established scholarly notion. Here, I view the philosophical field of aesthetics as a multi-sensory field of inquiry *not* limited to the sphere of the visual or to questions of ‘beauty’. Rather, aesthetics broadly compasses a philosophical and sensory approach to life (e.g. Linstead and Höpfl, 2000; Sørensen, 2010). In the context of fashion, the significance and importance of aesthetics is rarely surprising. Also multi-sensory, tacit and aesthetic experiences are vital to fashion’s production and consumption practices, and fashion’s various agents, individuals and institutions tend to take various aesthetic matters very seriously (e.g. Entwistle, 2002, 2009).

How fashionable things appear, appeal, look and intend to *feel* on the moving body matter hugely. In an economy based on fabrics, textures and bodily experiences, the idea of the haptic sense (e.g. Classen, 2005; Garrington, 2013) is greatly important. In the fashionable world, touch and tactility are, it seems, fairly neglected areas of affect. This might come as a surprise, given that tactility and sensuous relationships are *formed* through fashion’s everyday organization and work practices; designers are entirely reliant on touch, sensing and feeling yarns and physical materials as they create something (Baugh, 2011). More specifically, designers create garments by interacting their creativity and imagination with fabric, texture, shape, form and surface, by feeling ‘from the inside’ or by training their eyes to sculpt while regarding matters of taste and aesthetic judgement as important throughout their work (Baugh, 2011). This is something I want to address in this thesis, too. Specifically, I work from the assumption that touch and tactility intersect with the everyday actions and activities of ‘doing’ fashion, and my understanding of the haptic includes touch, kinaesthesia and proprioception (Garrington, 2013).

Fashion buyers and consumers, then, are often drawn to the magic or enchantment of certain material objects (Gabriel, 2005, 2011); they must aesthetically encounter, sense and touch the garments they buy (e.g. Entwistle, 2009, 2010). These encounters are always embodied, tacit and affective, particularly as affect is inherently material (Massumi, 2002). ‘Yarn is both rough and smooth; soft and hard to the touch; it is symbolic of warmth, passion, joy’, Vachhani (2013, 96) exemplifies. The sensuousness of fashionable objects and materials, the softness of fabrics such as silk or wool, the tactility of yarn, the density of cloth



or the feeling of crispy cotton on one's skin not only evoke (pleasurable) feelings and invite action; they create affective relationships and subjective value to both consumers and makers themselves (Vachhani, 2013). Such affective relationships appear central not only to the fashionable world but to cultures of making more broadly, as they provide self-identity, meaning and sensuous relationships with objects (Vachhani, 2013; see also Rippin, 2007, 2009).

Interestingly, fashion's sensuous qualities and especially fashion's appeal to touch has remained relatively under-explored both theoretically and empirically. Perhaps this disregard could be attributed to the low-status of the sense of touch in comparison to more dominant senses (e.g. vision). Unlike the other senses, touch 'acts upon the world as well as registering the action of the world on you', Connor (2004, 263) suggests. Vachhani (2013) reminds us of the considerable literature on touch in feminist theory, philosophy and literary theory (e.g. Connor 2004; Sedgwick 2003; Taussig 1991). Taken together, the aesthetic economy intends to capture the felt, sensual, bodily and expressive ways of knowing that go way beyond rational, disembodied and logical (economic) knowledge. This perspective is an absolutely crucial yet always incomplete approach (like any approach, of course) to understand the complexities of fashion creation, circulation, production and consumption today. In order to gain deeper understandings of the lived experiences central to the doing of fashion, I believe we need to address aspects of affect. Therefore, my next section discusses the centrality of affect in the social sciences more broadly, and the fashionable world in particular. I will attempt to provide answers to the following questions: why is the study of affect gaining in popularity in the social sciences, why is it relevant for the field of OS in particular, and finally, why is affect relevant in this dissertation?

## POSITIONING AFFECT

'affect arises in the midst of in-between-ness: in the capacities to act and be acted upon' (Seigworth and Gregg 2010, 1)

Why do I prefer to approach fashion as an uncertain, open and *affective* economy (Ahmed, 2004) rather than merely an aesthetic one (Entwistle, 2002, 2009)? Although aesthetics should not be reduced to vision or 'mere' decorative surface,

this has often been the case. I believe that the intense, embodied, expressive, elusive and emotionally vested notion of fashion cannot be problematized further from a purely discursive, symbolic, semiotic, aesthetic or materialistic point of view. Also, I agree with Keevers and Sykes (2016, 6) who notice that 'the effects of affect are evident both within bodies and in social and political phenomena and, accordingly, are part of what constitute everyday organizing practices'. By departing from our embodied experiences and by taking affect seriously, we might actually 'unveil how the social is experienced and negotiated through the body' (Adamson and Johansson, 2016, 6). The phenomenology debate seems to be a fruitful way of gaining deeper understandings of the versatile processes of fashion, including that of doing fashion or making fashionable clothing objects.

Today, 'the literature addressing aspects of affect is extensive', Thompson and Willmott (2015, 3) remind us. Even if affect is currently becoming one of the more fashionable notions in the social sciences, this is not why I have turned to it now.<sup>16</sup> Rather, I work from the assumption that affect highlights the inter-connectedness of social forces and lived embodied experiences through inter-relations between bodies (Adamson and Johansson, 2016). Here, I work from the assumption that sensing and seeing are closely connected to embodied experience, feeling, affection,<sup>17</sup> emotions and memory. In the constitution of embodiment, *relationality* and *context* play a significant part (Adamsson and Johansson, 2016): the body is not separated from an external objective reality; rather, the body 'is both acted upon and active, both situated and situating' (Casey, 1993), and always in a relationship with others (Satama and Huopalaainen, 2016; Trigg, 2013). According to Hansen (2001, 83), a 'fundamental shift in the "economy" of perception from vision to bodily

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16 At least two essays are widely regarded as cornerstones for the emerging interest in affects in the academic realm. These include Sedwick's and Frank's (1995) *Shame in the Cybernetic Fold* and Brian Massumi's (1995) *The Autonomy of Affect*. Moreover, Jokinen and Venäläinen (2015) discuss three central strands of affect theory, and I want to mention these briefly. These include Tomkins' psychological theorizing from the 1960s, Massumi's material-processual theory on the potential of affect based upon readings of Spinoza and Deleuze, and feminist influences on the study of affect.

17 In this thesis, I conceptualize affection as the process of affecting and being affected (see Oxford English Dictionary).

affectivity’ has relatively recently occurred. In my understanding, this shift is grounded in a phenomenological epistemology of the body (Merleau-Ponty, 1962) that theorizes the self as always already situated, embodied and interconnected in the world (see also Mirza, 2013; Young, 1980). In other words, a phenomenological epistemology highlights a co-constitutive relationship between the lived, experiential body and the society (Dale, 2001) around her. Here, I conceptualize lived experiences broadly as ‘the body’s interactions with itself, with others, and with the world’ (Weiss, 1999, 119).

An ‘affective turn’ has occurred within the fields of feministic studies, cultural studies and sociological studies (e.g. Ahmed, 2004a, 2004b; Clough, 2007a, 2007b; Sedwick, 2003), and what we understand by such a turn is – usually – a manifold of theoretical developments and directions (Jokinen and Venäläinen, 2015). Here, a turn is not understood as a turn ‘away’ from something, but rather as rethinking and re-visioning feelings of scholarship. Moreover, what does the ambivalent term ‘affect’ refer to here, and how do I conceptualize affect in the context of this thesis? I am well aware of the many different theorizations of affects in both the field of organization studies as well as the social sciences more broadly. For instance, Seigworth and Gregg (2010, 1) approach ‘affect’ as ‘the name we give to those forces – visceral forces, beneath, alongside or generally other than conscious knowing, vital forces beyond emotion – that can serve to drive us towards movement, toward thought and extension’. To me, affect relates to felt, emotional and embodied ways of sensing, feeling and experiencing moment-by-moments in the world, which provides a much-needed reaction to distant, disembodied, linguistic or ‘linear’ constructions. Widely informed by the phenomenology of the body, disability studies, psychoanalytics, cybernetics and Spinozan processual philosophy, only to name a few important theoretical approaches (see Seigworth and Gregg, 2010; Venäläinen and Jokinen, 2015), the study of affects is currently gaining ever-growing scholarly interest, also in the realm of organization studies (e.g. Beyes and Steyaert, 2013; Borch, 2010; Fotaki et al., 2012; Kenny, 2012; Pullen and Rhodes, 2015; Vachhani, 2013; Thanem and Wallenberg, 2015; Thompson and Willmott, 2015).

Following Thompson and Willmott (2015), I conceptualize affects as intense, intersubjective, intertwined and relational forces. By affects, I understand specific yet shifting, intense and sensible auras, atmospheres, tones or spirits that



are subjectively experienced socio-material flows throughout the body, yet are interdependent on other bodies for their circulation (e.g. Ahmed, 2004a, 2004b; Pullen and Rhodes, 2015). Specifically, I view affects in line with Jokinen and Venäläinen (2015, 221) as ‘intensities that both bind humans (and even things) together and divide them’ apart. These interdependent forces ‘can either lead to unexpected potentials or they can get captured’ (ibid, 221). Affects connect us and perform powerful multilayered means of experienced, embodied, sensitive

and non-verbal communication. In this sense, I view an affective approach as a much-needed, more mobile, processual and ‘non-mainstream’ alternative to perception and knowledge more generally. Meanwhile, affects closely connect to subjectivity, agency and embodiment (e.g. Jokinen and Venäläinen, 2015; Stewart, 2007; Pullen and Rhodes, 2015; Thompson and Willmott, 2015). Affects also tie together lived experiences with social and experienced spaces. The fashion show is an illustrative example of a powerful affective arena, but this also goes for the designer’s flagship store, the exhibition hall and the more hidden spaces of work.

We have for too long witnessed a discursive dominance in the social sciences. This dominance largely ignores what is felt and subjectively experienced in and through our bodies. Affects, rooted in intersubjective experience, might help us to better understand comings together and how these feed each other and circulate in the context of contemporary forms of precarious, global capitalism. ‘Social relations are immanently conditioned by actors’ affective states and associated identifications and dis-identifications – and thus attends to the mutually constitutive, and analytically revealing, relationship between affect and power in organizational practice’, Thompson and Willmott (2015, 2–3) write. The authors propose that an ‘affect-based ontology of practice’ holds radical implications for theoretical development. In this way, the study of affects might capture ordinary and intimate moments that say something very interesting about how the world ‘works’ (Berlant, 2011). In other words, affects might also help us to capture the relational dynamics of the ordinary, *moving* world that includes diverse embodied and emotional experiences, relations with others, movements, bodily skin-to-skin encounters, anxieties, ambiguities, touches and feelings, not to forget bodies capable of acting, affecting and being affected. Furthermore, we might want to consider moving away from arguably limiting, Cartesian modes of thinking that tend to separate the body from the mind, and build upon other dualisms in life. Perhaps we also should move towards more expressive, engaging and open-ended forms of knowing and expressing research. ‘Affect allows us to see, anew, the ‘texture’ of the world, as it is lived and experienced’, write Fotaki et al. in a call for papers in 2013, and I agree that this is why affects matter.

As my ambition is not to develop the notion of affect, here I will not problematize the ontology of affect further, or debate if affects are ‘autonomous’

(Massumi, 2002) or not. To be a bit more conceptually clear, however, it is helpful to position affects in relation to emotions and feelings. To me, affects and emotions are related but not interchangeable. Here, I distinguish between feelings, emotions and affects. Like Jokinen and Venäläinen (2015), I view feelings as individual bodily sensations that we usually recognize as emotions when they are culturally 'labelled' and articulated as such. Affects, felt intensities, highlight our interdependencies (Brennan, 2004; Linstead, 2015; Pullen and Rhodes, 2015) by making us sense and feel a variety of shared, powerful and intersubjective intensities that are experienced in and through the body. These cannot be ignored in the context of fashion. We can feel a pressing or competitive atmosphere as we enter an international fashion trade show, or feel the excitement in the air and in our stomach backstage at a fashion show. These intensities matter to us, and to the organizing of these particular contexts more broadly. These fleeting experiences might also be attached to objects and carefully manipulated for capitalist purposes (Thrift, 2008, 2010) – a regular phenomenon in the context of fashion (e.g. Moeran, 2015). Still, momentary and fleeting affects in-between bodies always appear ungraspable and 'out of bounds' to us in a multidimensional and moving reality, which is part of their fascination. Taken together, affect, as an informing, transpersonal energy or general capacity to inform (e.g. Clough, 2007; Spinoza, 1989), links to bodies, matter and economy. I also sympathize with feminist readings of affects (e.g. Pullen and Rhodes, 2015), especially as this diverse approach stresses the 'bringing back' of materiality, the body and the emotional to research. Also, a common assumption in the literature is that these dimensions are always already intensely intertwined.

#### AFFECTIVE INTENSITIES AS FASHION'S CORNERSTONES

Affects connect to fashion, and fashion is arguably an affective, fantasy-feeding sociomaterial practice that builds upon the feeling of being 'moved' and being affected, the circulation of intensities (e.g. Ahmed, 2004a, 2004b) and 'embodied meaning-making' (Wetherell, 2012, 4). Also, powerful intersubjective affects such as movedness, excitedness, restlessness, and contingency (e.g. Venäläinen and Jokinen, 2015) are seemingly vital for organizing the work throughout

this exciting economy. Turning to ambivalent affect thus offers me a moving, allowing and fleeting approach to fashion ‘from an ontology of flows and intensities’ (von Busch, 2009, 39) that holds potential when it comes to further developing our multiple understandings of fashion. The field of affect studies offers critical approaches to subjectivity: these approaches have the potential to problematize and disrupt dichotomies between the past and the present, human and material/technical as well as fantasy and reality. A turn to affect might also enable insight into moving ‘processes of becoming’, produce greater awareness of experiences and arrangements that have traditionally not been articulated ‘properly’, as well as invite new forms of writing. The emphasis on affect in fashion might also have valuable implications on how we actually *do* research on fashion.

Affective capabilities have become vital, manipulative elements in contemporary capitalism, and affective forms of labour are currently widely regarded as important in a global and precarious economy (e.g. Hardt, 1999; Hardt and Negri, 2004, 2009; Negri, 1999; Thrift, 2008, 2010). In a Western context, fashion is about creating value for a global experience economy (e.g. Thrift, 2005), often targeted at privileged consumers. Perhaps we often assume that fashion builds upon artfully concealed, affective techniques of manipulation towards idealized perfection. Specifically, fashion is typically said to speak a language of desire and seduction (Moeran, 2015), representing ‘one of many forbidden pleasures in which consumer society invites us to indulge’ (Wilson, 2013, 53). Affects are, of course, vital for fashion’s language of seduction and incorporated throughout fashion’s work practices. Affects might be attached to materials, surfaces, objects and subjects to become forms of *attachment*, such as glamour, longing or excitement. I acknowledge the presence and significance of affects in experiencing, staging and ‘doing’ fashion, on all levels. Affects might also be attached to fashion’s different persons, material things and spaces. Specifically, fashionable objects and personas become *bearers* of certain affects, such as that of glamour. In affective economies, affects ‘align individuals with communities through the very intensity of their attachments’, Ahmed (2004a, 118) points out. Importantly, affects *do* various things to us.

Fashion is far from emotionless and affectless, and commodities have, of course, long been understood beyond their economic value. Fashion’s imagery

connects to dreams, excitement, meshing,<sup>18</sup> beauty, irony, parody and perhaps also a lack of realism, which is all part of fashion's affective communication and wider value creation. Fashion represents an affective economy that is felt, intersubjectively experienced and shared. With affective objects intensely circulated, the strategic use of aesthetics, emotions, desire, affective means, illusionary arrangements, restless fluctuation and seduction as fashion's powerful means of communication connects to ideas central to a larger hybrid affective (experience) economy (Ahmed, 2004a). Understanding fashion's dynamics of *attachment* involves trying to approach fashion's affective intensities, and how these intensities exploit emotional capabilities or momentarily *move* and attach bodies, signs, images, emotions and media together as well as pull them apart (Jokinen and Venäläinen, 2015).

What Thrift (2005) calls 'affective capitalism' appears to function as a central driving force in the context of fashion, and relates to fashion's specific modes of production. In fashion, capitalism is perhaps not always economically lucrative (instead, often quite far from it). It tries to be desirable, tempting, and perhaps even sneaky.<sup>19</sup> Specifically, *constructed* desires determine the value of fashionable objects, and fashion performs an economy that capitalizes on these ambivalent tendencies. This complex production is often about the careful creation of highly 'branded', memorable, affective and commodified individualized experiences, where fashion brings forth the beauty of form and shape, joy, confidence and (a moment's or hopefully longer) consumer satisfaction. There is not always an explicit, identified demand for fashionable clothing, as we certainly do not *need* to cover our bodies in highly branded and often expensive clothes provided with a distinct fashion identity. Rather, the notion of desire appears vital here. We desire fashionable objects and follow fashions although we know they always fade out – 'indeed precisely for this reason' (Esposito, 2011, 607).

An affective economy – a complex network of human and non-human actors, shifting feelings, skin-to-skin encounters, dressing activities and performative

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18 Here, I approach meshing in the Ingold sense of enmeshment. Specifically, Ingold writes that the 'world we inhabit' is a relational field, a 'meshwork of entangled lines of life, growth and movement' (2011, 63, emphasis in original).

19 Here, 'sneaky' refers to fashion's central aim to artfully conceal, manipulate and transform certain things.





events – has plenty in common with an *experience economy*. Organizations part of the latter are frequently said to be ‘entrepreneurial, unabashedly eclectic, nonlinear and sometimes blatantly illogical’, as Hjorth and Kostera (2007, 289) write. Such organizations, the authors continue, ‘are enacted via immediacy, subjectivity, playfulness, and performativity’ (2007, 289). If the global experience economy has been described in rather grandiose, dynamic, eclectic and impressive terms, its organizations are frequently said to differ from not so dazzling, old-fashioned, industrial, product-oriented and ‘managerialist’ ones (Hjorth and Kostera, 2007).

Characterized by alienation, romanticized freedom, the intertwinement between commerce and creativity, emotional and affective labour and self-exploitation (Baker and Hesmondhalgh, 2011), these organizations are frequently portrayed as exciting, playful, edgy, rebellious, bohemian, self-managed and unpredictable (e.g. Eikhof and Haunschild, 2006; Hjorth and Kostera, 2007). This certainly also goes for fashion organizations, often romanticized and fetishized for being *oh-so-exciting* for us to further explore. Having discussed an affective economy, on a broader level as well as affects as central to the practices of fashion, I will now turn to the fashion show organization, a vital organization within the context of a fleeting, affective economy and an important unit of analysis in this thesis.



# ORDERING SPECTACLE – THE ORGANIZATION OF FASHION

## APPROACHING THE FASHION SHOW

‘Space is a doubt: I have constantly to mark it, to designate it. It’s never mine, never given to me, I have to conquer it’. (Perec, *Species of Spaces and Other Pieces*)

Although fashion shows are still significant media events in contemporary popular culture (e.g. Currid, 2007), the wider creative economy (e.g. Löfgren and Willim, 2005; Mears, 2011) and the fashion industry itself (Kawamura, 2005), the ‘greatest show on earth’ (Duggan, 2001, 2006) has apparently been too trivial for the field of organization studies to explore further. Fashion shows are largely absent from the field of organization studies (apart from Huopalaainen, 2015, 2016), and my aim is therefore to construct a ‘knowledge platform’ from which this particular organization can be critically analyzed. Specifically, this thesis needs to include quite a basal discussion on what a fashion show ‘is’ and ‘does’, as one cannot assume that someone not in the field of fashion is familiar with such specific features. Therefore, in this section, I discuss some crucial elements and the show’s careful mediation between affection, art and commercial profit in order to then focus on the uncertain ‘in search of excellence’ process of organizing a fashion show. Throughout, I argue that the fashion show, an overlooked organization in our field (again, see Huopalaainen, 2015; Korica and Bazin, 2014; Satama and Huopalaainen, 2016; Huopalaainen (forthcoming) as exceptions), offers an intriguing site for the study of temporal organizing, action, processual ‘becoming’ and spatial dynamics. As Korica and Bazin (2014)<sup>20</sup> quite nicely put it, fashion shows might be of interest to us in many respects: ‘as temporally-bound moments of functional spectacle, fashion shows represent a pivotal point around which multiple organizational

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20 Source: [http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/fac/soc/wbs/subjects/ohrm/events/seminar/ohrm\\_seminar\\_15\\_january\\_-\\_yoann\\_brazin.pdf](http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/fac/soc/wbs/subjects/ohrm/events/seminar/ohrm_seminar_15_january_-_yoann_brazin.pdf), accessed 3.6.2016.

tensions and paradoxes meet and occasionally clash: backstage and front stage, (particular) meaning and (particular) meaningless, temporality and continuity, order and chaos’.

#### THE FASHION SHOW – MEDITATING BETWEEN GLITTER, GLAMOUR AND HIDDEN, HARD WORK

‘It is extraordinary how sculptured and yet how fleeting and iconoclastic the catwalk series launch of the ‘catwalk’ actually is – brutal in its elementality. The most sophisticated and extraordinary designs can become mangled and ridiculous as they are walked down this aesthete’s ‘gauntlet’s run’. Fashion is both subject and object, art and commerce, supply and demand, retailer and consumer.’ (King and Vickery, 2014, 3)

Above, King and Vickery (2014) discuss the complexity of the catwalk, a seemingly trivial construct. Unsurprisingly, fashion shows are highly affective, aesthetic presentations, which are ‘difficult to gauge within the narrow confines of economic rationality’ (Entwistle, 2009, 134). They represent arenas of popular entertainment with hints of ‘magic’, impressive visual imagery, sound, and the central feature of noticing and being noticed. Through the *dynamics* of attachments, promises, hopes, insecurity, dedication, seduction and serious business, fashion shows become interesting means of affective communication by which material design objects, fleeting glamour, bodies, drama and entertainment are organized into powerful, temporal onstage presentations. Various affective processes are tightly connected to the organizing and presentation of the show. These include, for instance, excitement, enthusiasm, concern, passion, and recognition. Usually, fashion shows are staged once, and once only, yet memories and affects remain and ‘live’ on from one show to another. Parker (2011, 556) explores the circus as another dynamic space where economy and culture coincide, ‘visceral forms of sensation and expression’ are present and extraordinary bodies displayed. To me, Parker’s (2011) description of circuses as mobile, temporary and excessive organizations has plenty in common with the affective fashion show. Fashion shows tie to spectacle, performance and image, and anyone staging a show ideally wants to deliver an impressive, high-

voltage, ‘high art’ spectacle that affects and gives goose bumps. King and Vickery (2014) discuss the ‘paradox’ of the catwalk mediating tensions between the highly scripted and the sculptured on one hand, and the fleeting and floating on the other.

Löfgren (2005) describes the ‘catwalk economy’ as a fast-paced, boosting and dazzling economy run by continuous speed, desire, spectacle and excitement. In such context, the temporary fashion show organization matters hugely. Fashion shows, previously *the* most important fashion events, are, today perhaps not considered as important organizations in the fashionable world as they once were. There are plenty of reasons to this development.<sup>21</sup> Nevertheless, by introducing the expression ‘catwalking the nation’, Melchior (2011) introduces a possibility for a nation to build its image through fashion and runway shows. As powerful branding tools (see e.g. Rocamora, 2009; Melchior, 2011), these ‘enchanted spectacles’ (Evans, 2001) could even impact the creative economy of a nation.

‘Fashion shifts overall appearance into the order of theatricality, seduction and enchanted spectacle’ writes Lipovetsky (1994, 26). The fashion show is a temporal *organization*<sup>22</sup> with its own ever-changing, sometimes paradoxical logics, ideals and cultural norms. This ‘biannual presentation of a new clothing collection on moving bodies for an audience’ (Skov et al, 2009, 2) or *live portfolio* presented by a fashion house or a single designer, is usually only a brief moment where several months of creative work is exposed to public criticism. As such, the show performs an outcome of creativity and eventually, an approach to fashion (Skov et al., 2009). If the fashion show represents performative theatre – a certain type of ghostly and spectacular theatre (Soley-Beltran, 2012) – of course a multitude of organizational and management issues are relevant here. This

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21 As indicated previously, it is today argued that there has been a shift from somewhat ‘passive’ media spectatorship towards more complex forms of co-production (Engholm and Hansen-Hansen, 2013). Traditional fashion media is losing terrain to the quicker and up-to-date digital ‘snapshot aesthetics’ (Schroeder, 2012) of fashion, widely viewed as part of a powerful social media *revolution* (Engholm and Hansen-Hansen, 2013).

22 Following O’ Doherty et al. (2013), organization here is flexibly embraced both ontologically and morally, widely and loosely approached as a form of collectivity, an often temporal, fluctuating and ever-changing process of human and non-human actors enacting across times and spaces.

affective arena attempts to resonate and create widespread value through specific conventions, tricks, improvisational efforts, traditions, rituals and myths (e.g. Evans, 1999, 2003; Grundl, 2007). Evidently, we know something, or perhaps already a lot, about these pop cultural forms through the short publication cycles of the net media, entertaining reality TV-formats, Project Runways, fashion magazines, blogs, tweets and other affective materials in a fast-paced, overly media-saturated world (Bauman, 2000).

Historically important bourgeoisie society events for the cultural *élite* (Evans, 2001), the Western fashion show relates to the rise of modernism, industrialism, mass consumerism and the machine-like ‘aesthetics of early twentieth-century modernity’ (Evans, 2010, 472). However, the birth of the modern fashion show is a disputed matter and pinning its origins to a certain time and place is highly debatable. Evans (2001, 2010) suggests that the concept of parading was introduced in British, French and American private rooms of couture houses, department stores and as charity fund-raising events approximately between 1900 and 1910. Khan (2000) calls this classic branding tool a *defining* moment. Meanwhile, the fashion show is a social gathering often held behind closed doors ‘in a special place and at a special time’ (Skov et al., 2009, 27) in a never-ending fashion cycle. If fashion shows used to be closed events for a selected clientele in salons and Parisian couture houses exclusively (Evans, 2013), today’s shows have largely moved into virtual spaces, and have transformed from elitist events for a selected few into perhaps more democratic mass events distributed to significant crowds. Engholm and Hansen-Hansen (2013, 11) discuss this development of co-production in terms of a novel fashion hierarchy that mixes together amateur-driven Do-It-Yourself discourses with more established, professional ones. Also these authors note how the conditions for the production, distribution and consumption of fashion content has changed rapidly, particularly as ‘a 14-year-old blogger can sit on the first row of fashion shows alongside world-renowned editors from the established fashion media’ (Engholm and Hansen-Hansen, 2013, 11).

## ORGANIZING SPECTACLE

As local juxtapositions of different formats and formulas (Vilaseca, 2010), today's fashion shows, performances in the centre of transformation, draw upon varied sources of inspiration (Taylor, 2013). Paradoxically often 'fixed' in established conventions and structures yet simultaneously bound up with novelty, unpredictability and uncertainty, contemporary shows appear to share surprisingly many common features worldwide. Apart from the designer's latest clothing collection to be staged, a show usually requires a location, permissions, organizers, performers (e.g. Taylor, 2013) and an influential audience that secures (or not) the construction and spread of the staged 'Fashion'. Shows, similar to fashion, relate strongly to urban landscapes, cities, metropolitan hustle, buzz and the kind of hectic atmospheres that urban spaces are expected to offer. Despite the emergence of novel fashion centres all over the world, such as Copenhagen in Scandinavia or Dubai in the Middle-East, the elitism of fashion has traditionally accepted only a selected few European locations as 'fashionable'. Paris, London, Milan and New York are still considered top-tier locations despite the fluctuations of fashion that locations are also subject to. Furthermore, scholars exploring fashion shows (see for example Bancroft, 2001; Duggan, 2001; Kahn, 2000) have traditionally focused on quite exclusive, 'norm-breaking' shows of famous star designers in the old high status fashion capitals of the world, almost indicating that such a narrow segment is the only form of fashion worthy of our scholarly attention (Wilson, 2003).

The decision to stage a show is, rather unsurprisingly, usually initiated by a fashion producer (i.e. a fashion designer, a design collective, a fashion house, a specific brand or group of companies) who has created something novel for the market. Ranging from business, esoteric, commercial to fine art (Duggan, 2001), a contemporary show is often a well-prepared *thematic* live production aiming for the faultless, where the next season's (clothing) *collection* is attractively presented to professionals and stakeholders present. These include buyers, press, photographers, bloggers, celebrities and influential consumers. A show might include various theatrical elements and is often accompanied by carefully selected music. It normally lasts around fifteen minutes, usually not more than twenty to thirty minutes, and, roughly speaking, presents around fifty to seventy-five outfits in such a limited time (Entwistle and Rocamora, 2006).



Moreover, a show is usually fashionably late, and this accomplishment of order is all part of fashion's social theatre.

Many researchers have been critical about the dangerous ideals that contemporary fashion shows distribute (e.g. Mears, 2008; Neumann, 2012; Rundqvist, 2012). The show is – without a doubt – an often problematic site for utterly stereotypical gender performance (Butler, 1990), often *reproducing* limited and normative idea(ls).<sup>23</sup> I approach the show as more than just 'a form of eroticization of women in mass culture' (Evans, 2001, 273) or 'the theatricalization of fashion marketing' *par excellence* (Kaplan and Stowell 1994, 117). Evans (2001, 273) critically points out that 'to understand the fashion show solely as a symptom of the objectification' of women's bodies is, in fact, to miss its complexity. With this, I completely agree. As a creation of critical forms of aesthetics and agency (Satama and Huopainen, 2016), the fashion show relates to art,<sup>24</sup> rituals, theatre and film in nuanced ways – and therefore, in short, to the 'wider formations of commerce, desire, gender and image in our society' (Evans, 2001, 271–272).

## MEDIATING BETWEEN ART AND COMMERCE

The realms of the arts and the economy have become an inherently interwoven hybrid (e.g. Parker, 2013), and fashion shows are illustrative examples of such hybrid organizations in which the designer navigates the competing (or not) logics of art and commerce (see also Wikberg and Bomark, 2015). Fashion shows

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23 Specifically, the fashion show is easy to critique for its celebration of artificial 'beauty', and its often health-hostile ideals. The (Western) fashion show constructs and 'contributes to determine ideas of physical beauty', as Khan (2000, 114) puts it, where the 'fashionable bodies' (Khan, 2000, 125) on display read as impossible Western beauty standards of femininity and masculinity. Moreover, strikingly homogenous catwalk images are often produced through shows, contributing to the creation of businesses that exploit women and young girls, the 'sacrificial lambs on the altars of the fashion industry' (Rundqvist, 2012, 81). As such, the show often becomes what Evans (2010, 273) calls a platform dominated by the objectifying gaze and the 'tyranny of slenderness' (Bordo, 1993), where especially gender as image and idea is performed.

24 For a discussion on the symbiotic relationship between fashion and art, please consider e.g. Duggan, 2001.

are still largely viewed as the most artistic forms of fashion. ‘Often, the only element setting fashion shows apart from their theatrical counterparts is their fundamental purpose—to function as a marketing ploy’, Duggan (2001, 245) puts it. There are, of course, shows that intend to figure as (provocative) arts installations, sometimes deliberately keeping outside the realms of commerce and ‘dirty money’. Likewise, some shows intend to be straightforwardly commercial. Although fashion has historically tended to lack the status of art, the show performs ‘a means towards claiming higher status’ (Skov et al. 2009, 4). Both fashion shows and art installations are usually produced by networks of people, institutions and professionals cooperating (Becker, 1982). Some fashion scholars (Bancroft, 2011; Duggan, 2001; Taylor, 2005) claim that fashion shows referencing the performance art of the 1990s have changed the way fashion presents itself. ‘There has been an increasing emphasis on creativity, with fashion arguing its case as an aesthetic form instead of merely a product to be sold’, Bancroft (2011, 68) argues. I believe this could also be read as an explicit will to treat fashion as art and distance it from ‘dirty’ money.

‘Drawing on sources of inspiration as varied as political activism, performance art of the 1960s and 1970s, Fluxus and Dada performances, theater and popular culture, many contemporary fashion houses have completely transformed the runway show. What has resulted is a new hybrid of performance art that is almost completely removed from the traditionally commercial aspects of the clothing industry.’ (Duggan, 2001, 244)

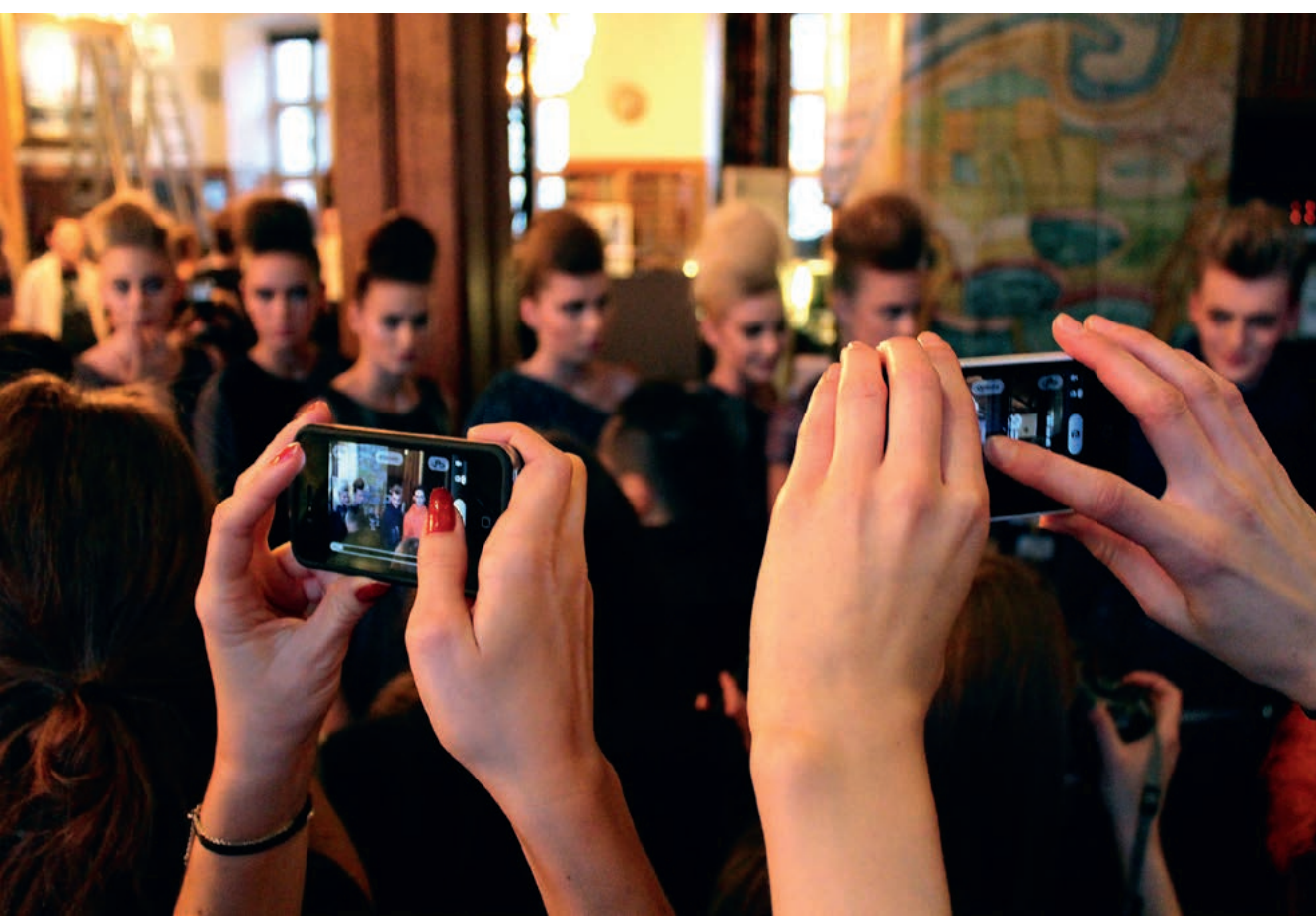
Individual designers invest amounts of money in fashion shows (Gruendl, 2007), despite the risks involved; this brief moment can really make or break a designer’s career (Khan, 2000). With certain visions and stories to be communicated for a strategically chosen *audience*, shows are performances with various elements which the designer could manipulate to a great effect (Duggan, 2001). Skov et al. (2009, 3) argue that the show allows a designer to ‘most fully control an aesthetic vision or concept’. Despite such intentions, it is not in the hands of the designer to determine if the show becomes a success or failure.

## THE CATWALK AND THE MODELS

‘One of the very basic movements of a catwalk show is that of young, classically beautiful and slim women walking up and down a runway. This tradition accedes to the idea of physical perfection – it is so elementary to the idea of the catwalk that it can easily be trivialised or undermined.’ (Khan, 2000, 119)

Some central features of the runway show are rarely challenged. Such an essential feature is the parade of moving bodies that has given rise to ‘a range of conventions of movements, poses and looks’ (Skov et al., 2009, 2). Fashion models, a group of professionals, are those who walk down a catwalk in the latest designs. ‘Producers are literally putting their best faces forward with the use of fashion models’, Godart and Mears (2009, 671) argue. The word ‘model’ is in itself interesting. Evans (2001, 277) argues that 1890’s dressmaker Lucile used the word for both the mannequin and the gown, thus ‘commodifying the flesh in the same breath as the fabric’. According to Frisell Ellburg (2008) today’s models are treated purely as abstract capitalist commodities for promoting garments; they need to perform ritualized objects to hang clothes on. Being at once unique and ‘serially reproducible’ (Mears, 2008), the exposed bodies of the models (Frisell Ellburg, 2008), are disciplined, moulded and exercised through a number of techniques. Therefore, they embody *contradictions*. Modelling work, an illustrative example of affective and aesthetic labour, comprises both material and symbolic matters. For shows and posing, models only need to express sexuality through stereotypic body language, Rundquist (2012) argues, but this is a rather limited view.

Plenty could be said about the catwalk, a rather ‘obvious’, simple, yet vital show construct where staging is usually put into practice. Historically referred to as the podium (Spanier, 1959), a catwalk performs a structure, stage or an aisle between seats, ‘an empty passage on the floor’ framed by the seats of the audience, Gruendl (2007, 250) explains. The most common format is supposedly the rectangular catwalk, a street-like arrangement with chairs disposed on both sides of it. At the end of this structure, photographers are given ‘privileged visual positions’ (Skov et al., 2009, 9) to mediate the performance for those who are not present. As fashion shows are typically accompanied by backdrops, video



performances or visual slides that enhance the designer's concept, a set design is usually found at the very back of the catwalk. Physically, the catwalk separates the *front* and *backstage* of fashion and keeps performers separate from spectators. A reference to Goffman (1959/1971, 1986) is probably compulsory here. If the front stage is bound up with glamour, a spell or a magic charm (see Mears, 2008; Wilson, 2007), it eventually vanishes backstage.

Models move in between the backstage and the front stage. The formalized walk of models is an established concept of presenting clothing, used worldwide

by haute couture as well as less expensive fashion labels. Moreover, the ‘ritualized’ and *learned* practice of catwalking is usually performed in a specific order, depending on the producer’s narrative, with only one or several models present onstage at a time. The choreography is often kept quite simple, and the format of a show relies, to a great extent, on simple features. This front stage parade is a carefully planned performance, ‘scripted down to each pose and turn’, as Skov et al. (2009, 5) write. However, as in any live performances, plenty of accidents happen. The walking styles vary from dramatic, fast-paced, robotic and dynamic to light, flirtatious and ‘feminine’ strutting (Evans, 2003). Skov et al. (2009) describe the movement pattern of this often ‘robotic’ walk: the legs lift the knees high while the upper body is kept passive, often causing the model to look like an idealized object. ‘Not all models know how to walk on a runway, therefore it is necessary to select models with experience’, Vilaseca (2010, 106) writes. Her statement seems underpinned with the instrumental approach to the body of the model itself, described as a commodity with a certain price and value in the marketplace (Rundquist, 2012).

The photographs of the runway shows are of huge importance to the designer. If commercial runway show photos are strikingly similar (Gruendl, 2007), they usually show close-up front shots of just one or two models. The involvement of young bodies, the catwalk and the use of the logo in the images all contribute to ‘confirm the power of the ritual’ of the ‘temple of fashion’, Gruendl (2007, 248–251) argues. The ritual of parading down the runway at the end of the show is a technique commonly used in contemporary *défilés*, precisely like the ritual of the designer coming out on the stage when the show is over (Evans, 2001, Vilaseca, 2010). The audience is expected to *look* carefully. Gazing is often emphasized over the haptic and audio-visual experiences. Evans (2001) talks of the audience as one of privilege, Gruendl (2007) in terms of a strictly limited, ritual bound group of people. Generally, a powerful *fashion elite* is invited. Others are excluded through badges of affiliation or ‘boundaries within boundaries’, Entwistle and Rocamora (2006, 741) point out. In this setting, to reproduce oneself through the events is key (Kawamura, 2004). The audience experiences the show from their (assigned) seats. The placement of the audience is usually no matter of coincidence as a seating hierarchy is present. Entwistle and Rocamora (2006, 743) discuss social visibility and the matter of ‘seeing and being seen’ in the catwalk theatre. Drawing upon their experiences

of research carried out at London Fashion Week, presence (or absence, if you are powerful enough), intercorporeality, dress and embodied appearances signal shared belonging to this world. Before and after the show attendants may often feel the gaze of being checked out and tend to do exactly the same as others, check out everyone else.

A fashioned self is often a networked and shared self (Rocamora, 2009). Smart phones and photographers, or a ‘forest of telephoto lenses and cameramen’ (Skov *et al.*, 2009, 9), make sure everyone present is under a constant watchful eye. Kondo (1997) refers to the ‘politics’ of seating, whereas Entwistle and Rocamora (2006, 744) discuss how seating arrangements map out power relations between those present. A seating plan is a strategic tool to rank the audience. The most important ones usually sit at the front, close to the stage (for example, influential fashion journalists, royals, celebrities, and bloggers often secure the best possible view from which to report on the show), the less important behind them and the least influential, but still lucky enough to be physically present, stand at the back. Nowadays, an ordinary consumer can easily gain access to online material or available streams, and in that sense, be part of the live fashion show experience.

As we have learned from Foucault (1977), spaces produce certain regimes of looking as they enable, construct and constrain actions. Physical structures and artefacts direct gazes, and certain ways of looking are emphasized over others. As such, the construction of the catwalk is intended to ‘control’ the gaze. Spectators direct their watching on the outfits highlighted by proper lighting on the stage. Showing clothing in this way demonstrates interactions between fabrics, cuts and the wearer, Skov *et al.* (2009) point out. Moreover, performance spaces produce affects and emotions. Shows are about *seeing* details and proportions and the fall of garments on living, flesh-and-blood models in motion in ways that a still picture fails to evoke and communicate. Models are, according to Entwistle and Rocamora (2006, 261), ‘not there to see but only to be seen’; their distant gaze does not generally watch. Sound is usually manipulated to perfectly depict the staged outfits, emphasize the rhythm of the bodily and cloth movements, and to block out other, possibly disturbing sounds from the overall affective show impression (Skov *et al.*, 2009).

Having moved across the many (but certainly not all!) layers of fashion’s complex economy and having included a discussion on the fashion show as a

vital organization within this fleeting economy, I now turn to the individual of fashion: the designer. Throughout the following section, I will open up the design profession and problematize the notion of the fashion designer further. In order for us to better understand the versatile ‘doings’ and makings of fashion in deeper and more nuanced ways, I argue that we need to problematize the designers’ central role in the current fashion economy. Here, I illustrate how the literature has largely fetishized the single ‘star’ designer in a manner that risks silencing the many other agents involved in the processual creation and doing of fashionable clothing. In this thesis, I emphasize the importance of focusing on the collective, uncertain, emerging, ‘messy’ and trial-and-error processes instead of the designer’s personality or unique qualities. In other words, I want to look beyond and beneath the popular fantasy of the heroic fashion designer – an extraordinarily creative and celebrated person that enjoys a life of fame and fortune – emphasizing instead those aspects suppressed or overlooked by this well-represented figure. Similar to the mythical figure of the entrepreneur who is frequently rendered ‘heroic’ (Steyaert, 2007) and divine (Sørensen, 2008) both in popular- and management literature, a heroic image of the fashion designer risks reproducing limited, outdated, stereotypical, Westernized, ethnocentric and gender-biased representations of a more versatile, nuanced and complex profession.

# THE INDIVIDUAL OF FASHION

## APPROACHING THE FASHION DESIGNER

In this thesis, I analyze some of the processes whereby fashion insiders go about organizing, making, manipulating and ‘working around’ things and surfaces in order to make fashion ‘work’ (see Atkinson, 2010 on ethnography and opera-as-work; Buscatto, 2008 on ethnography and art-as-work). Therefore, I must briefly discuss the fashion design occupation, and the practical workings of the designer. Who is the fashion designer, and what is it actually that (s)he does? Providing an all-encompassing answer to this question appears impossible to begin with, especially as the profession of fashion designer is certain to differ upon cultural and socio-historical context. Also, the complicated realm of fashion design includes and has always included the frequently overlapping activities of designers – both men and women – as well as skilled artisans, *les petites mains*, stylists, dressmakers and laborers (Delanoë, 2012; Tétart-Vittu, 2012). How can I say anything meaningful about the design profession, on a general level, then?

Today, designers are obviously a diverse and heterogeneous group of workers; there is no universal or unique ‘figure’ of the fashion designer (Volonté, 2012). Traditionally, however, fashion design is said to perform an exhausting and difficult career path (e.g. McRobbie, 1998; Larner and Molloy, 2009). Historically, fashion designing is a Western, modern and urban profession that emerged in (Western) cities the mid-nineteenth century (Beward, 2004, Kawamura, 2004). Although Parisian couture was renowned already in the seventeenth century (Tétart-Vittu, 2012), we usually credit English couturier Charles Frederick Worth (1825–95) with the invention of design profession as well as *haute couture*, an art form inseparable from fashion (Saillard, 2012). More specifically, Worth established his business in the city of Paris in 1858 in partnership with Bobergh (Saillard, 2012). He organized his outfits into annual collections, used lived mannequins to present them to Parisian customers, and ‘manipulated’ consumer desires in various ways. In this context, Worth became particularly known for controlling the design process himself and for creating a brand, cult and reputation to differentiate himself from his competitors and dressmakers.



He also changed the status of small-scale dressmaking by *naming* and exclusively signing his designs (e.g. Breward, 2003; Serrière, 2012). Moreover, he turned small-scale dressmaking into a larger textile *industry* (Milbank, 1985). Broadly speaking, Worth brought 'business strategy into the fashion salons (Saillard, 2012, 12), and he is still largely recognized as the 'father of couture' (Breward, 2003), and portrayed as *the* first modern fashion designer in the world. Today, we could think of his career as 'an ideal illustration of the evolution of the haute couturier', as Tétart-Vittu (2012, 19) critically suggests.

What is it, then, that a contemporary fashion designer actually does when s/he 'does' or creates fashion? To begin with, contemporary designers are known to work in significantly different ways, both conceptually and practically (e.g. Aaakko, 2016; Breward, 2004). Unsurprisingly, the responsibilities, interests and practical doings of the single designer depend – among other things – 'on the market position and the scale of the business' (Aakko, 2016, 34). Also, fashion's socio-cultural references, norms and situated industry practices, subject to continuous movement and change, are certain to shape the practical doings of a single designer in any geographical location of the world. In order to give a detailed insight into the workings of a single fashion designer, one could, of course, turn to the rich existing literature on fashion design autobiographies, as well as fashion designers' own accounts. For instance, the classic 'Dior by Dior' portrays the life of Christian Dior, and offers a glimpse behind the scenes of the classic Paris haute couture of the 1950's. Alexander McQueen's coffee table book 'Savage Beauty' provides another famous example of an account that voices a creative genius. However, we must keep in mind that autobiographies or similar accounts are not innocent texts. As these interesting works and accounts lie outside the scope of this thesis, I will not explore them further here.

As previously discussed, fashion seems to imply constant and varied actions, negotiations, improvisations, compromises, performances, noise and display to others (Moeran, 2015; Volonté, 2012). Suffice to say, a designer needs to find ways of working with the temporality and multiplicity of fashion, predicting, reflecting and *generating* change through various means. Fashion creation, much like artistic creation in general, is dependent on networks, collaboration, teamwork, bricolage, diverse value- and service exchanges, friends, family, gifts and other idea(1)s relevant for experience economies (e.g. Fine, 2004). A designer's personal involvement in the multifaceted design process in any

fashion house or design company might vary greatly: some designers are *actively* involved in design-related and 'hands-on' work (Sinha, 2000; 2002), whereas others act as visionary leaders or creative directors equipped with a team of assistants who proceed with the manual, practical workings (Aaakko, 2016). This thesis investigates a small fashion organization, where the chief designer is *intensely* involved in all work phases and everyday practices of work: those related to design processes, fabric manipulations, manufacturing, sales, retail, communication, PR and so on.

Besides being creative, a contemporary fashion designer must collaborate and communicate with a plethora of other human and non-human agents in his or her proximate environment. A designer who needs to stand out to important stakeholders and others in the 'right', noisy ways simultaneously needs to 'fit in' to the surrounding, ever-changing fashion context (e.g. Kawamura, 2005). Esposito (2011) discusses fashion's 'stability of transition', a paradox and tension negotiated in an ongoing manner by the designer and other fashion insiders in the field. Whereas features central to the organizations of an experience economy as discussed by Hjorth and Kostera (2007) arguably concern many of today's fashion organizations, a designer's working reality is certainly not always exciting, playful and fun. On the contrary, a designer might have to live from hand to mouth, struggle to survive, and lack income. Still, the design profession has an air of glamour and fascination to it that continues to attract attention (Kawamura, 2005). This grandiosity and excitement of popular fashion understanding might contrast with the mundane and lived experiences of people, and this becomes evident throughout my study.

## PROBLEMATIZING THE 'STAR' DESIGNER AS A HEROIC CONSTRUCT

Although 'creative work' in general is often described in terms of high devotion and involvement, 'a willingness to undertake extreme work' (Ekman, 2015), passion, insecurity, long and extreme working hours, self-entrepreneurship as well as sporadic project-oriented employment here and there (e.g. Eikhof and Haunschild, 2006; Fine, 2004; Moeran, 2009), these features are certainly shaping many fashion realities. Plenty has already been written about the individual fashion designer (e.g. da Costa Soares, 2011; Larner and Molloy,

2009; McRobbie, 1998; Volonté, 2012), and the literature frequently portrays the designer as a heroic, mythical and ideological construct preferably working in the exclusive salons of Parisian haute couture (or in another powerful, preferably *Western* fashion city<sup>25</sup>). In much of the recent fashion literature (see e.g. Park, 1998; Schlermer, 2010), the individual designer is often fetishized in a manner that eventually neglects the many other human and non-human agents, surprising actions and relations crucially present in organizing ‘for’ fashion. Fashion literature has arguably tended to focus on the glamorous, exciting, ‘exotic’ and self-expressive aspects of fashion production and its ‘individualized’ presentation in favour of its everyday motives and actions, dullness, routines, failures, manual labour, repetition and monotony. ‘[I]n today’s fashion, the focus is less on the actual clothing or its manufacturing process, but rather, on the designer who can produce and reproduce a glamorous, attractive image to the consumers’, Kawamura (2005, 64) exemplifies.

There seems to be something of a ‘cult’ of the individual present in much of the fashion literature; we are all familiar with iconic designers such as Coco Chanel, Alexander McQueen, Vivianne Westwood, Miuccia Prada, Donatella Versace, Martin Margiela, Cristobal Balenciaga, Rei Kawakubo, Karl Lagerfeld or Rick Owens. We encounter these stars in a variety of media representations and popular accounts. Of course, the ‘cult’ of the individual as an ideological construct is apparent in other contexts, and it maps onto other literatures, as well. For instance, I think of the popular management and leadership literature, in particular, where the individual leader has long been largely fetishized. This fetish surrounding the individual seems to apply to the ‘heroic figurehead of capitalism’ (Williams and Nadin, 2013, 552) in entrepreneurship literature, too (see Armstrong, 2005; Jones and Spicer, 2005; Rehn, Brännback, Carsrud and Lindahl, 2013 for a critique). Taken together, it appears suffice to say that we are drawn to narratives about heroic individuals and idealized portrayals that risk lacking correspondence to ‘real life practices’ (Drucker, 1985, 127). More specifically, we are drawn to entrepreneurial dreams, success stories and fantasies rather than routines, repetition, happenstances, mistakes or failures. Perhaps, it is still difficult for us to think of actual, unromantic and ‘failing’ entrepreneurs

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25 Arguably, the majority of the literature on fashion remains culturally specific, bordering on ethnocentric (e.g. Moearan 2015; Wilson 2007).

beyond the *fantasy* of the heroic entrepreneur. Perhaps this apparent fascination with heroic individuals is typical for our time and is part of our human desire to reduce complexity, collectivity and mess to more simple and less comprehensive representations. Perhaps it is largely perceived as difficult and uncomfortable to attempt to go beyond a polished surface. However, we need to explore what images of heroic individuals signify beyond and behind their surfaces.

In this thesis, I try to move away from the narrow focus on the individual designer and his or her doings. Specifically, I believe overemphasizing and even celebrating the doings of a 'successful' single 'star' designer or what is 'in' the designer's head is hugely problematic. To illustrate complex everyday life and more deeply understand *how* designers organize (creatively) for fashion therefore requires a broader approach to fashion as a *collective, mundane, repetitive* and relational phenomenon. By exploring a fascinating world constructed *on the margins* of what is dominantly positioned as hyped, exciting or 'ultra fashionable', my intention is to demystify the spell around the individual, and reposition fashion studies closer to the less idealized. It is, as previously discussed, not in the hands of the individual designer to create what is later *recognized* as fashion, and valued by others. Designers struggle to navigate complexity in their attempts to create long-term fashion value in a plurality of different ways.

Today, we are often said to live in an era of change, where many taken-for-granted fashion roles are changing (e.g. Bhardwaj and Fairhurst, 2010; Collinson, 2015). For example, the rise of influential fashion and street style blogs have shown us how bloggers and consumers have become powerful fashion *curators*, rejecting, dictating and co-producing fashions, acting as sartorial role models, sharing trends and doing commercial collaborations (see e.g. Pedroni, 2015; Rocamora, 2011; Tutton, 2015). Also, emerging bloggers with huge social media presences sometimes become actual designers (for example Elin Kling for H&M, Garance Doré for Kate Spade or Romy Neely for Forever 21). Today, formally educated designers with degrees from prestigious institutions are perhaps no longer necessarily the undisputed 'stars' in the spotlight (Meadows, 2012). If 'anyone' can design today, what does it mean for the reputation, pride and professional identity of a fashion designer?

Perhaps the success of a designer or a fashion label at any given time and space not only depends on the creative, emerging and sometimes totally random bundling and marshalling of resources, but also on how well the fashion

bricoleur manages to continuously negotiate, balance and *perform* this particular tension. In this thesis, I address the interesting observation that a designer needs to make noise and *perform* – to others – in order to stand out and be seen. Performativity and camp seem to go hand in hand – and with fashion. The notion of performance has been theoretically and critically approached in a variety of academic fields. Here, I view *performing* as deliberate, sometimes exaggerated, (physically) staged or somehow socially played forms of organized action in movement (Schechner, 2006). Especially since the 1990s, critical research has elaborated on Judith Butler's (1988; 1990; 1993; 1998; 2004) construct and theory of performativity as the repetition of stylized acts that are simultaneously 'intentional and performative' (1988, 522). Specifically, Butler's (2004) work advances our understanding of subjectivity. To me, the subject position of the fashion designer is evidently no stable construct. Rather, this position is shifting, relationally 'done, undone and re-done' (Pecis, 2016, 7) in the everyday interactions among people and materiality in a specific socio-cultural context. The position of the designer is also *situated*, both culturally and historically (e.g. Ashcraft, 2006; Bruni and Gherardi, 2001; Gherardi, 1995; Pullen, 2006), and I must avoid 'fixing' this fleeting position in my own writing (Riach, Rumens and Tyler, 2016).

Feminist researchers have been especially critical of how gender is performed in contemporary organizations, and how gendered norms are reproduced *in* and *through* acts of organizing (Pecis, 2016). Building upon insight from this critical perspective, fashion and its performance are also reproduced through culturally and historically situated acts (see also Ashcraft, 2006; Bruni and Gherardi, 2001; Pullen, 2006). In this sense, one 'becomes' (or not) a fashion designer through a series of receptive and stylized acts that are carried out in a specific spatiotemporal context. To Butler, gender is not only done through interactions (West and Zimmerman, 1987), but under the constant influence of societal norms, expectations and discourses. These shape the doing and undoing of the (gender) performance in any spatio-temporal context (Pecis, 2016). Evidently, this insight seems relevant for the fashionable world. There are plenty of imperatives, norms, authorities and 'regimes' that the fashion designer continually needs to consider, relate to, perhaps overcome, and even trick, in order to perform for others. Meanwhile, these norms 'reproduce' the performative constitution of the designer subjectivity. To Butler (2004), there

is no pre-existing subject. Rather, gendered identities take form through a repetition of (embodied) acts: individual subjects are not born gendered but 'become' gendered through their acts. Building upon these assumptions further, someone 'becomes' a fashion designer through the repetition of intentional and performative acts in the context in which they are produced.

The spatio-temporal context, then, is influenced by multiple processes both in the place of origin and that of destination (Pecis, 2016). This links to Butler's (1990, 3) insight about gender: it is 'impossible to separate out "gender" from the political and cultural intersections in which it is inevitably produced and maintained'. Interestingly, the fashion designer continuously needs to perform in his or her everyday life and 'keep up appearance' despite often working from the harsh realities of 'low budget' or 'no budget' (Huopainen, 2015, 2016). Pecis' (2016) study on gender in innovation processes shows us how these processes are 'corporeal, discursive and practical' in an intertwined sense. I would suggest something similar for processes of organizing fashion, and I will illustrate this ongoing performance empirically. Finally, fashion is about 'commerce, culture and identity in a particular (post)-modern formation on the runway', Evans (2001, 304) once suggested. Here, I assume that Evans regards the entire world as our performative runway. In what follows, I turn to bricolage, another crucial theoretical concept in this thesis.



## BRICOLAGE – PATCHWORKS AND PIECES

*This chapter explores bricolage, a notion widely used across various practices and academic disciplines. Specifically, I discuss conceptions of bricolage over times and spaces in order to establish my own approach to this dynamic notion. Here, I position bricolage as a form of organizing where embodiment and socio-materiality intertwine, a kind of practice 'within practice'. In order to better understand real-life 'creation in the making' and spatial organizing in action in deep and nuanced ways, this chapter argues that a contemporary, critical and dynamic approach to bricolage needs to include affect, embodiment, materiality and spatiality in its wider scope and definition. Specifically, I argue that these perform crucial yet under-theorized dimensions in existing bricolage theory and practice. Considered together, a more critically informed approach to bricolage is relevant for illuminating the emergent, embodied and relational everyday qualities of organizing, and matters to us if we want to understand bricolage in deeper, more nuanced and situated ways.*

### KINDS OF BRICOLAGE

The meaning of any concept is situated, historical and relational, Parker (2016b) reminds us. What is the connection between fashion's affective economy, an inherently large and messy practice field with lots of actions happening 'here and now' (Gherardi, 2015), and bricolage, another spontaneous *ad hoc* form of organizational action? Why is the expression of bricolage introduced here? As an ethnographer, I am keenly interested in mundane organizational doings, situated actions and meaning-making as these things unfold in everyday life. In other words, I am interested in practices as empirical phenomena. Nonetheless, I need to explain how I approach the complex relationship between bricolage, practice and an affective economy. This also relates to the question of how the relation between the bricoleur, an embodied and affected subject, and the socio-material environment around her is conceptualized. Whereas I approach an affective economy as a complex, dynamic socio-material network of different, interrelated



and sometimes contradictory work practices and emergent ‘embodied meaning-makings’ (Wetherell, 2012, 4) inscribed with varied affects, moods, sensations, emotions and feelings, I argue that a critical understanding of bricolage might help us to better uncover and understand fashion’s *in situ* activities, emerging actions and practical workings in motion within this broad context. In other words, bricolage appears helpful for us to better understand the everyday, socially organized activities, work practices as well as fashion’s continual ‘becoming’ in action.

Before discussing interpretations of bricolage in the contexts of fashion studies and organization studies further, on a broader level I need to establish my approach to practice theorizing.<sup>26</sup> Broadly speaking, practices usually refer to those versatile situated actions, interactions, negotiations, knowledge, doings and behaviours of practitioners that are tied to living communities (e.g. Chia and MacKay, 2007; Gherardi, 2015; Zembylas, 2014). What do I mean by ‘practice’ as a scholarly notion, and how do I define practice theory in the context of this thesis? To me, practices are what people do, and practices shape and are shaped by day-to-day activities and their organizational context. Moreover, practices form identities, create situated meanings, and produce social order more broadly (Nicolini, 2011). In the realm of this thesis, I include individuals, embodied-material actions, artefacts, contexts, embeddedness, rules, symbols, texts and discourses as ‘elements’ in my conception of practice (Gherardi, 2015, 3). Following Gherardi (2015), I approach practice as a mode of organizing the sociomaterial in which knowing and doing are never separated. Rather, I work from the assumption that humans and non-humans emerge in situated intra-actions and ‘connections-in-action’ (Gherardi, 2015, 6). Although human action has arguably often been privileged in the study of work practices, I believe we need to pay further detailed attention to the actions and agency of non-human agents in our conceptualization of practice.

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26 Inspired by the writings of Pierre Bourdieu (1977), Anthony Giddens (1984), Michel de Certeau (1984), and, more recently, Theodore Schatzki (2001) and Andreas Reckwitz (2002), practice theory is today an established theoretical field. Within OS, a distinct ‘practice turn’ (e.g. Schatzki et al., 2001; Corradi et al.; Nicolini, 2012; see also Gherardi, 2009; Jansson, 2013) has resulted in an ever-growing interest for practice theorizing and various contextual working practices. Taken together, these studies have widely explored behaviours, activities and everyday understandings in and of organizations in different contexts (see e.g., Miettinen, Samra-Fredericks and Yanow, 2009).



‘The term “practice” is not just another fancy term that suggests something radically new’, writes Zembylas (2014, 13). Today, practice theorizing is a vital, huge and diverse field under continuous construction (Gherardi, 2015) and the practice-based literature has been around for long. Practice theorizing assembles different practice theories and streams with differing epistemological roots, features and tensions (e.g. Chia and Mackay, 2007; Gherardi, 2015; Reckwitz, 2012; Schatzki, 2006). According to Keevers and Sykes (2016, 4), practice theorists tend to approach practices as ‘embodied, material and situated activities informed by shared understandings’ (see also Schatzki, 2006). Organizations,

then, interweave ‘bundles of practices’ (Keevers and Sykes, 2016, 2). I work from the assumption that bricolage, a broad assemblage of embodied-material, *ad hoc* and transformative activities, are spontaneously ‘done’ as part of a larger socio-material practice field, which I approach as an affective economy. This economy is not a neutral, apolitical or disembodied construct. Within the larger context of multiplicity and bundles of practices, inherently *different* social and spatial practices intertwine and produce the social world (Nicolini et al. 2003, Nicolini, 2012). In the context of this thesis, I explore bricolage on a ‘micro’ relational level by recognizing the active (culturally and socially formed) body of the bricoleur, as well as the significance of other bodies (e.g. Thanem and Wallenberg, 2015) and non-human agents present in relational bricolage activities. As Barad (1998, 2003) remind us, it is in the here-and-now that subjects and objects are co-constituted through ‘intra-action’. Hence, I work from the assumption that exploring and analyzing situated bricolage actions is particularly important for us to more comprehensively understand emerging *organizing*. By also paying attention to movements through (physical) space and non-reflective, affective processes involved, I wish to enrich and deepen our theoretical and practical understanding of this meaningful organizational practice.

#### APPROACHING BRICOLAGE

‘Vocabularies of motive, vocabularies of emotion and codes of convention, both discursive and semiotic, are actively identified and invoked in the course of ordinary action. Symbolic, discursive and material resources are marshalled and worked on in order to generate coherent actions and situations.’ (Atkinson, 2010, 17)

Why turn to the notion of bricolage in the context of this thesis? What do I mean by the expression of bricolage, and how does bricolage enhance our understandings of *in situ* workings, organizational practices and everyday life, more broadly? Bricolage, a notion that privileges (ordinary) action, creativity, playfulness, serendipity, subjectivity and relativity (Stokes, 2011; see also Rhodes and Westwood, 2008), ‘sits well within a postmodern framework’ (Stokes, 2011, 15), although today, postmodernism is largely considered *passé* (Parker, 2016b).

As indicated in the quote above, the broad expression of bricolage might capture various *in situ* and *ad hoc* actions, lived practices, improvisational doings and disorder in organizational life. These aspects have often remained overlooked in mainstream organization theory. In other words, the bricolage notion, grounded in the everyday, provides a seemingly rich analytic tool through which *some* emerging processes in everyday life are rendered visible (Atkinson, 2010, 17).

Bricolage, an originally French term, is quite literally said to capture random resource combinations, bric-à-brac activities of ‘making do’ or knocking up. Specifically, bricolage is to fiddle about with or to tinker with (Perkmann and Spicer, 2014; Rhodes and Westwood, 2008; Stokes, 2011), using whatever resources, artefacts, scripts, surfaces, elements or materials an engaged actor, or group of actors, happens to find convenient and close *at hand* in their proximate environment. In other words, bricolage results in something meaningful and valuable, but it is accomplished ‘by having a go at it’ (e.g. Stokes, 2011; Rhodes and Westwood, 2008). In my conceptualization, bricolage emerges and ‘happens’ when individual bodies *relate to* other bodies and material things by bringing together somewhat random ideas, materials and physical objects, and then actively trying to put these together in ways they were not originally intended. In practice theorizing more broadly, ‘the knowing subject and the known object emerge in their ongoing intra-action’ Gherardi (2015, 6) puts it, and this goes for bricolage, too. Here, it is worth pointing out that the emphasis on the emergence, relationality and intertwinement of embodiment-materiality is not entirely common in more traditional bricolage theorizations.

In the context of organization studies, bricolage appears to have plenty in common with the well-established ‘garbage can model’ of organizational choice (Cohen et al. 1972) and decision-making. How does this theoretical model link to bricolage? In this metaphorical model, the problems, solutions, participants, and opportunities of an organization are claimed to flow in and out of a metaphorical garbage can. The model argues that it is largely chance that determines whether or not problems get attached to solutions in organizations. In this sense, this model largely assumes that decision-making builds upon serendipity, chance and randomness as well as the principle of literally taking whatever one finds in a garbage can. Bricolage also links to the broad literature on improvisation in the field of organization studies (e.g. Moorman and Miner, 1998; Hatch, 1998, 1999; Montuori, 2003). Improvisation, then, is within

the field of organization studies commonly defined as ‘the degree to which composition and execution converge in time’ (Moorman and Miner, 1998: 698). Similar to bricolage, improvisation indicates a reliance on spontaneous action and temporality rather than careful planning. However, the literature largely overlooks the connections between improvisation and the lived experiences of complexity (Montuori, 2003), and fails to problematize agency. To me, most studies have also considered improvisation as a ‘front stage’ activity, rather than a more multifaceted activity with an unseen, backstage dimension.

‘The existing literature on bricolage in organizations has mainly focused on practice’, write Duymedjian and Rüling (2010, 148). If bricolage and practice are commonly viewed as closely interrelated, the significance of embodiment, affect, space, emotions and moods, has been surprisingly overlooked in this literature. In a fairly recent article, Thompson and Willmott (2015, 1) request for a ‘temporally-sensitive’ theoretical framework ‘grounded in an affect-based ontology of practice’. This framework appears to hold potential for further bricolage theorization, too. In this thesis, I try to develop a theoretical approach to bricolage that includes these overlooked dimensions. Although I acknowledge ‘practice as a medium and outcome of relations of *power*’ (Thompson and Willmott, 2015, 4), power dimensions remain under-explored in my investigation. Nevertheless, my interest in bricolage *in action* over times and spaces, carried out by affected, kinetic and sensing bodies, links to the broad field of Critical Management Studies (CMS) and Practice-Based Studies. My intention is to show how the techniques, expressions and everyday activities of bricolage might sufficiently help us to explain and *analyze* emerging organizing, as well as the ongoing ‘doings’ and situated practices of an affective economy on a micro level.

## THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN BRICOLAGE AND MAKING

*The action of Make:* production, creation, construction, preparation;  
conversion into or causing to become something (Oxford English Dictionary)

One of my concerns in this thesis is to think again about bricolage. Before opening up the notion of bricolage further, I want to discuss the relationship between bricolage and *making*. Here, I approach making as a creative experience

and craft practice that intertwines body and mind (e.g. Vachhani, 2013). At a first glance, bricolage and making seem to have much in common. Both say something interesting about transforming materials into something meaningful, organizing as a unity of body and mind, craft and the importance of sensing materials to produce something (Vachhani, 2013), embodiment, materiality and temporality. To me, both capture intentional and unintentional human- and non-human acts and aspects of culture, emerging relations as well as processes of ontological transformations, movements and ‘becomings’ (Ingold and Hallam, 2014). In particular, I want to explain why I have chosen to ‘stick with’ the notion of bricolage throughout this thesis rather than picking the notion of making, to which I associate affective relationships and the intention to *affect* and beautify (Vacchani, 2013).

Whereas the notions of bricolage and making both embrace craft, practice, re-use, embodiment, materiality, surprise and action, making is among the most polysemic words in the vocabulary of English (Ingold and Hallam, 2014, 3). What is making to begin with, where does making begin or end, and what is then *not* making (something)? Making could, in fact, refer to almost anything and the concept can be defined and approached in a number of different ways. How do we make sense of this slippery, extremely broad notion? Given the almost overwhelming multiplicity around the notion of making, I have decided to turn to bricolage, a rich and multifocal notion that is defined enough for me to approach and make sense of. Also, I have come to realize that my thesis could make a stronger theoretical contribution to the literature on bricolage than to that of making. As Ingold and Hallam (2014) eloquently show us, making has for long been approached as an uncertain process of transformations, addressing embodied, material and affective dimensions. This is something that the ‘traditional’ theorizations of bricolage have often failed to address. In this sense, certain insights from literature on making, such as the as relational and emerging affective relationships with objects, have inspired me to rethink bricolage.

Affective relationships are central to cultures of making. ‘Anthropological studies of material culture have devoted much attention to questions of making (involving artefacts)’, Ingold and Hallam (2014, 18) write. To make is to socially construct, and to make is to tell stories. Vacchani (2013, 92) approaches making as a feeling central to being a human (Gauntlett, 2011): ‘making is part of thinking and feeling and thinking and feeling are part of making’ (see also

Dormer 1997). Items of clothing, for instance, emerge from the ‘caressing and cradling hands of the maker, who is literally inaugurating a new life-cycle through his work’, Ingold and Hallam (2014, 4) suggest. Here, connecting with nature appears central to this argument. Central is also how affect circulates in, with and between objects.

## THE MULTIPLICITY OF BRICOLAGE

The metaphor and expression of bricolage has been interpreted in a variety of creative ways within an impressively broad range of academic disciplines. For example, bricolage is present in anthropology, art theory and practice, fashion studies (e.g. Hebdige, 1979; Barnard, 2002), consumer culture theory, the field of cultural studies (e.g. Atkinson, 2010; Steinberg, 2012), entrepreneurship (e.g. Baker and Nelson 2005; Baker 2007; Duymedjian and Ruling 2010; Senyard et al., 2009), philosophy of science, political science, women’s studies, sociology, and the field of organization studies (e.g. Ciborra, 1996, 1997, 1999; Pina e Cunha, 2005; Rhodes and Westwood, 2008; Halme et al., 2012; Perkmann and Spicer, 2014; Rehn and Lennerfors, 2014). French anthropologist Lévi-Strauss introduced bricolage in ‘The Savage Mind’ (originally published in French in 1962 as ‘La Pensée Sauvage’, the English translation is from 1966), a broad anthropological investigation of myths and rituals of modern civilization. Originally, Lévi-Strauss presented bricolage as a metaphorical concept of mythological and mythical thought, and an alternative to rational and scientific thought characteristic of the time the book was authored. Specifically, Lévi-Strauss introduces ‘ideational’ bricolage symbolically as a ‘mode’ in which humans broadly relate to their context. In addition, Lévi-Strauss uses bricolage more explicitly as a *material* concept by emphasizing bricolage as a material practice. The latter represents an understanding of bricolage that the majority of the existing literature has adopted. Lévi-Strauss also portrays bricolage as a broad game involving human activities of ‘making do’ by heterogeneously using whatever happens to be available at hand.

Lévi-Strauss (1966, 16–17) defines a bricoleur as ‘someone who works with his [sic] hands and uses devious means compared to those of a craftsman’. Although Lévi-Strauss never offered a specific definition of bricolage, the bricoleur engages in various physical and bodily hands-on activities, and acts

as a ‘handy manipulator’ in a given context (Rhodes and Westwood, 2008). ‘In its old sense the verb ‘bricoler’ applied to ball games and billiards, to hunting, shooting and riding’, writes Lévi-Strauss (1966, 16), and thus connects bricolage with stereotypically *masculine* material practices. Here, the presence of *movement* appears vital: ‘it [bricolage] was however always used with reference to some extraneous movement: a ball rebounding, a dog straying or a horse swerving from its direct course to avoid obstacle’ (Lévi-Strauss, 1966, 16).

Quite surprisingly, the classic approach to bricolage actually neglects how embodiment is mobilized through the *active* and acted upon body (Dale, 2001), a concept overlooked in later bricolage theorizations as well. Also, questions of matter and materiality appear vital to Lévi-Strauss, although they are treated as static, solid, naturalistic and given. In line with this traditional view, ‘material objects are identifiably discrete; they move only upon an encounter with an external force or agent, and they do so according to a linear logic of cause and effect’, Coole and Frost (2010, 7) explain further. Again, this is *not* how I approach the expression of bricolage. Rather, I work from the assumption that materiality *materializes* and ‘matter becomes’ (rather than ‘is’). ‘Materiality is always something more than “mere” matter: an excess, force, vitality, relationality, or difference that renders matter active, self-creative, productive, unpredictable’, Coole and Frost (2010, 9) remind us. The same goes for embodiment, the sensation of inhabiting a body that moves and feels (Davis, 1997; Noland, 2009), and the movement of bodies, physically *active* and central sites where both agency and meanings are continually created and processed (Borgerson, 2005).

Moreover, mainstream bricolage literature has largely focused on the *individual* bricoleur as a self-made man (!) or entrepreneurial hero, someone with paradoxically plenty of ‘freedom to act’ (Rehn and Lennerfors, 2014), obviously not *feeling* and experiencing much tension, anxiety, friction or struggle. If bricolage evidently implies (embodied) agency (Davis, 1997) and out of necessity involves the presence of materiality, it is surprising to not find deeper and more critical references to embodiment, materiality, space and mobility/movement within existing bricolage theorizations (see e.g. Atkinson 2006, 2010 as exceptions). Despite fundamental connections to these ‘hands-on’ bodily and material aspects as illustrated above, bricolage has rarely been approached as an inherently ‘messy’ embodied-material project. What I am trying to say here is that ‘fundamental questions about the nature of matter and the place



of embodied humans within a material world' (Coole and Frost, 2010, 3) have remained largely under-theorized in this context. To me, this is problematic for several reasons, and I will soon return to these questions more explicitly.

Lévi-Strauss (1966, 17) once suggested that bricolage can 'reach brilliant unforeseen results' from 'odds and ends', 'remains and debris' or 'fossilised evidence of the history of an individual or a society' (1966, 22). Any physical artefacts, tools, skills or immaterial ideas could serve as valuable 'odds and ends'. From this perspective, however, the bricoleur relies upon given, fixed and seemingly 'pre-existing' elements. Again, this is a fairly traditional view I wish to move away from. Finally, by contrasting bricolage with more rational engineering approaches, Lévi-Strauss (1966) distinguishes between the bricoleur and the engineer. If 'engineering' involves *specific* tools for certain rational purposes, bricolage is about the random, improvisational use of tools 'at hand'. Derrida (1978, 285) questions such division by pointing out how all discourse is bricolage: 'if one calls *bricolage* the necessity of borrowing one's concepts from text of a heritage that is more or less coherent or ruined, it must be said that every discourse is *bricoleur*'. More nuanced, critical and inclusive readings are necessary to develop our understanding of bricolage.

#### APPROACHING 'MESSY' BRICOLAGE PRACTICES

In the contexts of organization studies or fashion studies, it is not self-evident how bricolage differs ontologically from other closely related concepts such as organizing, montage, improvisation, pastiche<sup>27</sup> or retro. Organizing is, unsurprisingly, utterly central to the field of organization studies, and it is possible to generally think of organizing as a way of establishing structures (e.g. Burrell, 2013), introducing routines or 'arranging and ordering things' to achieve different forms of order (Stokes, 2011, 106), meaning and value. Here, I view 'organizing' as a notion even broader and more encompassing than bricolage. Specifically, I see bricolage as a non-linear, non-planned, mobile and sometimes controversial form of organizing. Therefore, bricolage is not necessarily about establishing or introducing order in a given context – it could also be about

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27 Pastiche usually refers to the imitation of other styles; retro captures ideas from the past.



introducing *disorder*, breaking with existing orders, or simply ‘giving it a go’ without any well-articulated, explicit purposes in mind. Equally, bricolage is not only about creating something or stitching things together, but it could also be about unfolding or picking things apart.

If the focus of much of the mainstream bricolage literature, surprisingly obsessed with functionality, has tended to see the bricoleur as a skilled *individual* actor acting in a ‘black box’, I approach bricolage as a ‘messier’, more uncertain, mobile, dynamic and embodied-material project with an important spatial

dimension. Bricolage evidently depends on practice, epistemology, and metaphysics (Duymedjian and Rüling, 2010), but there is perhaps more to it. As bricolage has traditionally not been linked to (physical, social and imagined) space, I intend to empirically illustrate how bricolage is enacted and co-performed throughout organizational spaces. Recognizing space is important for developing more a critical understanding of bricolage, particularly because space influences, enables and constrains *all* organized actions (Cutcher et al., 2016), including the performance of bricolage. Here, I regard space as ‘an excessive composition of multiple forces’ (Beyes and Steyaert, 2011, 4) not easy to grasp, ‘box’ or pin down. Following Beyes and Steyaert (2011, 3) the embodied, generative ‘everyday spatial becoming’ of organization is actually relevant here, as such a processual and performative approach to spacing considers complex dimensions and multiple forces of material, affective, embodied apprehensions as already intertwined, when it comes to the continuous performance of space (e.g. Cadman, 2009; Thrift, 2007; Anderson and Harrison, 2010; Beyes and Steyaert, 2011). Specifically, I acknowledge the potential of this aesthetically, affectively and bodily sensitive approach also in terms of understanding bricolage, a form of organizing *in action*, in novel, more dynamic and relational ways. If we wish to move towards more flexible understandings of bricolage embracing ambiguity, flux and multiple dimensions intertwined, this approach is worthy of our consideration.

The body always plays a fundamental role in action (e.g. Michel, 2011; Satama and Huopalaainen, 2016; Young, 1980), and this evidently goes for bricolage action, too. Our bodies are fundamental to us; they are temporal sites and biological forces where agency, body fluids, experiences and social meanings are constantly co-created, negotiated and processed (e.g. Borgerson, 2005). Bodies constitute our material ‘vehicles for journeying’ in the world (e.g. Meriläinen et al., 2015), and we *feel* joy, pain, anger, exhaustion, excitement, love and passion *in* and *through* our moving bodies. Likewise, our lived embodied experiences are inter-connected with the wider social context (Adamson and Johansson, 2016). The same goes for embodied agency. ‘Action and the body’s role in it are structured by culture’, Michel (2011, 330) emphasizes. Embodied experiences as well as bodily actions are dynamically shaped by a variety of social expectations, norms and ideals around us (e.g. Csordas, 1999; Dale, 2001; Satama and Huopalaainen, 2016). Furthermore, both active bodies and mobile things ‘incorporate and reproduce beliefs, values and culture(s)’ (Stokes, 2011, 12).

Existing theorizations have largely ignored the embodiment<sup>28</sup> and the day-to-day affective encounters (e.g. Stewart, 2007) of the bricoleur, as well as the significance of micro bodily actions to bricolage. Paradoxically, the active body has often remained unproblematized in the field of organization studies more broadly (e.g. Joas, 1997; Strauss, 2008). This neglect is equally apparent in the mainstream bricolage literature. Since Lévi-Strauss originally portrayed the bricoleur primarily as ‘someone who works with his [sic] hands’, it is somewhat ironic to find these fundamental and physical *acts of the hands* largely absent from existing theorizations. To perform any organizing activities, bricoleurs must often get their hands dirty, touch (Rippin, 2012c) and grasp various objects, move their bodies and things around in meaningful ways, *touch* various surfaces, and present themselves physically. The ‘orthodox’ bricolage field has rarely considered how meaningful and valuable embodied actions are carried out, but bricolage does not emerge without the diverse acts of embodied subjects involved in a particular socio-cultural context. Here, it appears vital to emphasize that bricolage always intertwines sociomateriality and embodied action, and this is something I will address empirically. By so doing, I challenge conventional representations of bricolage as disembodied actions.

*Situated* bricolage both shapes and is shaped by the context in which it occurs. Although bricolage is always a context-dependent action of a myriad of tensions and movements, the literature largely engages with bricolage ‘by pragmatic, utilitarian considerations’ (Perkmann and Spicer, 2014, 34). As emphasized previously, bricolage actions emerge through the *ad hoc* interface of both fleshy, corporeal human beings as well as non-human material things. Furthermore, I assume that bricolage, like any organizational action ‘in flight’, is often based upon uncertainty, serendipity and luck (see also Rehn and Lennerfors, 2014) rather than in-detail planned, ‘rational’ and intentional action. As such, bricolage might sufficiently problematize any fixed, formal and typically ‘masculine’ understandings of organizing and work (Rhodes and Westwood,

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28 Here, embodiment is understood as the experience of possessing a body that moves and feels (Noland, 2009: 105) and captures lived, subjective experiences of inhabiting a body that is capable of engaging in various activities of organizing in motion. Coaten and Newman-Bluestein (2013, 677) view embodiment as ‘the experience and awareness of the lived body’. Moreover, I view the body as both material and social, as ‘a culturally fabricated physicality in which matter and meaning are inextricably linked’ (Meriläinen et al., 2013, 6).

2008). If we construct bricolage as a linear *opportunistic* activity of resource utilization, treating both resources and their environment as fixed, ‘given’ and stable, then we ignore multiple realities, ambiguous and uncertain ‘real life’ trial-and-error occurring over performative spaces in flux – the movements in-between ideas and actions, felt bodily pains and struggles – and face the future no one knows anything about. Whereas straightforward and disembodied treatments of bricolage have rarely considered the significance of embodiment, affect, spaces, movements and temporalities, or eclectic entanglements between embodiment, materiality, affects and emotions, this is where I see a potential and relevant theoretical contribution. In what follows, I turn to discussing bricolage within the field of organization studies.

## BRICOLAGE IN ORGANIZATION STUDIES

Unsurprisingly, much of the practical work of various organizations rest on improvisation and bricolage (Rhodes and Westwood, 2008). Nevertheless, bricolage, a mundane form of organized action, is still something of a neglected ‘organizational inevitability’ (Rhodes and Westwood, 2008, 195), surprisingly often found at the ‘margins’ (Baker et al., 2003) of our field. The under-exploration of bricolage appears slightly surprising in today’s allowing and critical post-postmodern or poststructuralist frameworks, given how much bricolage has in common with dynamic organizing (Cunha, 2007), *the* core activity of our field. Bricolage cannot be treated as ‘some deviant organization practice’ Rhodes and Westwood (2008, 188) claim (see also Cunha, 2007). In fact, Rhodes and Westwood (2008, 188) suggest that bricolage is ‘more pervasive in organizations than commonly acknowledged’. The authors (see also Cunha, 2007) suggest that the traditional neglect of bricolage in the field of organization studies has to do with dominant interests in systematic, rational, structured and *ordered* activities (see also Dale, 2001) rather than improvisational, messy, insecure and practical doings, or the random, anxious and non-linear ‘muddling through’ of organizational reality. This, it appears, has changed. Although bricolage embracing ambiguity, flux, serendipity, disorder and improvisation has previously appeared too ‘messy’ for orthodox management studies, CMS-oriented scholars have for years explored these dimensions of organizing, also by looking into

bricolage. ‘The stability of an organization is pursued through change and not constancy’, writes Esposito (2011, 608), referring to Brunsson’s (1993) insights on reforms *as* routine. Today we know that reform, luck, insecurity and mess are necessary and even *productive* for organization. If we choose to ignore the presence of bricolage in organization, we can only ever capture fragmented, partial and incomplete representations of real-life organizing practices (which is, of course, always the case anyway).

As a popular notion, bricolage has been approached differently in various empirical contexts in the field of organization studies. Frances Wesley and Henry Mintzberg popularized the term in management as early as 1989, and it was discussed further in the article ‘Visionary leadership and Strategic Management’. How could bricolage work as an interesting, reflexive and performative analytical tool? Despite more recent critical considerations on bricolage in organization theory (e.g. Rhodes and Westwood, 2008; Perkmann and Spicer, 2013; Rehn and Lennerfors, 2014), I initially struggled to understand what makes bricolage an intriguing *analytical*, not just descriptive, concept, especially as I came across many studies that appeared rather ‘masculine’, linear, traditional and orthodox. Despite a relatively high number of studies, the existing literature says surprisingly little about bricolage on a ‘micro’ level in various organizational realities. To me, bricolage theorizing also lacks a critical feminist position.

A generally shared understanding of bricolage is present in the mainstream literature, promoting the opportunistic ‘nature’ of bricolage (e.g. Douglas 1986; Clemens 1996) in a seemingly fixed environment where resources are often mobilized ‘with ease’. Also, rather than portraying the disruptive, ‘messy’, affective, emotional and certainly – at times – truly difficult reality of bricoleurs, there is something rather heroic and macho about much of this literature, often constructing the bricoleur as a confident, clever and successful winner playing around and producing effective results, and not struggling too much to survive. The many heroic representations of bricolage appeared problematic (e.g. Stahl, 2005) and quite similar to images of the *entrepreneur*,<sup>29</sup> another character often

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29 My view of entrepreneurship is in line with critical research. To me, entrepreneurship is not a value-neutral means for promoting wealth, but rather a situated, classed and gendered activity of combining resources to create innovative solutions in an often-turbulent and ever-changing environment.

romanticized in literature as the successful, distant, mystified lonely rider and self-made *man* (e.g. Jones and Spicer, 2005). Furthermore, the many sweeping and general arguments constructing bricolage as a positive ‘politico-moral’ imperative initially worried me, and this also goes for the lack of rich, situated and thick empirical studies.

Bricolage has been widely studied regarding individual entrepreneurs in the context of small enterprises, thus connecting bricolage to *individual agency* (Rehn and Lennerfors, 2014; Stinchfield, Nelson, and Wood 2013) in existing organizations. Meanwhile, complicated networks, large multinationals, temporal, *ad hoc* organizations or the complexity of more recent organizational formations have received less attention. Perkmann and Spicer (2014) introduce ‘organizational bricolage’ as a surprisingly structured activity of organizational formation. Halme et al. (2012), then, explore intrapreneurship bricolage in innovation processes within the context of multi-national companies. Boxenbaum and Rouleau (2011) treat bricolage as the ‘epistemic script of knowledge production’ in organizational research, suggesting that bricolage actually underpins all theorizing and knowledge work. These few examples illustrate the many different treatments of bricolage in various organizational contexts.

Today, there is rich and emerging literature on bricolage in organizations spanning various empirical contexts and theoretical ideas (see e.g. Ciborra 1996; Baker and Nelson 2005; Duymedjian and Rüling 2010; Di Domenico et al. 2010; Lanzara and Patriotta 2002). ‘There is a danger of bricolage ‘losing any analytic specificity and becoming a catch-all term’, Atkinson (2010, 17) reminds us. Sometimes, bricolage has been approached as an individual activity (e.g. Weick 1998), sometimes as an organizational process (e.g. Ciborra 2002), and sometimes as a form of inter-organizational dynamics (e.g. Garud and Karnøe 2003). Duymedjian and Rüling (2010) discuss bricolage research in terms of variety, levels of analysis (including, for instance, individual activity, process or dynamics), motives, metaphors and stance. According to these authors, three sub-disciplines within the field of organization studies have dealt with bricolage more than others. These include entrepreneurship (e.g. Baker, 2007; Baker et al., 2003; Phillips and Tracey, 2007), sensemaking and improvisation (e.g. the classic works of Weick 1993, 1996, 1998; Weick et al., 2005), as well as ‘work on technical systems’ (Garud and Karnøe, 2003).

As mentioned before, normative assumptions underpin bricolage as a way to ‘bolster incremental innovation’ (Ciborra 2002, 51) or as ‘a source of resilience’ (e.g. Weick 1993). However, ‘bricolage may also involve the exploitation and manipulation of *symbolic* resources’, Perkmann and Spicer (2014, 7) remind us. Although Lévi-Strauss originally discussed bricolage not only as artisanal ‘making do’ (Atkinson, 2010) but reflected upon the semiotic dimensions of bricolage, these symbolic ‘whatever everyday meanings’ (Atkinson, 2010, 7) have remained surprisingly under-theorized in later bricolage investigations. Next, I will discuss bricolage and entrepreneurship in further detail, as this perspective is particularly relevant for my study.

## BRICOLAGE IN ENTREPRENEURSHIP RESEARCH

The broad field of entrepreneurship research has long embraced bricolage as a ‘recombination of *resources* for new purposes’ (Baker, 2005). Specifically, Baker and Nelson (2005, 333) define bricolage as ‘making do by applying combinations of the resources at hand to new problems and opportunities’. This complex ‘making do’ has, according to Baker (2005), usually ‘taken on a variety of meanings’ in research literature, categorized in neutral, positive or negative terms (ibid, 2005, 334). Furthermore, Baker (2005) emphasizes how making do usually implies ‘active engagement’ from the entrepreneur who must mobilize resources, deal with happenstances and problems, and still create (long-term) value. Consequently, Baker (2005, 334) describes ‘making do’ as ‘active engagement’ that could produce anything from trivial, ‘small’, mundane or highly imperfect improvisational ideas to ‘big’, economically valuable solutions or even radical innovations. This approach acknowledges entrepreneurial action, but not *embodied-material* action; it also fails to understand the complexity of dynamic space through which bricolage action occurs. In other words, bricolage as ‘making do’ usually treats space as a given black box, and the bricoleur as a disembodied, ‘unaffected’ and unemotional agent.

Bricolage is relevant in studies of entrepreneurial processes (e.g. Baker and Reed, 2003; Garud and Karnøe, 2003; Narduzzo, Rocco, and Warglien, 2000; Baker, Miner, and Eesley, 2003), social entrepreneurship (e.g. Di Domenico et al. 2010; Desa, 2012; Houtbeckers, 2013; Mair and Marti, 2009), innovation



(e.g. Fuglsang and Sørensen, 2011; Senyard et al., 2014), and the creation of new ventures (e.g. Baker and Nelson 2005; Baker 2007; Duymedjian and Røling 2010). Bricolage has also explained how skilled entrepreneurs might go about to construct something from ‘nothing’ (Baker, 2005) in daily situations. The latter practice is of great interest to my study, as well. ‘Much of what is interesting about bricolage comes from the combination – artful or clumsy – of various resources at hand’, Baker (2007, 699) writes. Again, the *active* but also sometimes confusing and irrational things that entrepreneurs do to combine, mix, reuse, reject or invent resources appear central here.

In the context of entrepreneurship research, bricolage is usually viewed as a ‘response to different kinds of resource scarcity’, write Halme et al. (2012, 747). Often portrayed as *improvisation* with whatever is available at the time, bricolage might, of course, occur in the absence of improvisation (Baker, 2003) or comprise structured, to some extent planned or *deliberate* activities that lie outside ‘free’ improvisation (ibid, 2003; one is left wondering if improvisation can ever be truly ‘free’ or ‘uncontrolled’). Like Perkmann and Spicer (2014, 7), I never view bricolage as entirely unstructured ‘freestyle improvisation’. On the contrary, there are always cultural, *political and power* dimensions to bricolage (Rhodes and Westwood, 2008; Rehn and Lennerfors, 2014), a never ‘a-mobile’, neutral or apolitical activity. Bricolage processes are always shaped by a variety of affected embodied agents with differing values and shifting feelings and spaces, as well as a myriad of powerful non-human agents and materiality. Currently, the nature of resources is also subject to debate, and this also goes for the recombining of resources (Baker and Nelson 2005) or ‘hijacking’ of resources (e.g., Stritar, 2012). Moreover, Rehn and Lennerfors (2014) argue that bricolage theorizations have not sufficiently considered the presence of misfortune, change, luck and serendipity. To me, it appears as if Ciborra (1996, 1997, 1999) is among those few researchers who has, in fact, explored accidental bricolage empirically in the field of organization studies. In what follows, I will shortly discuss bricolage in fashion literature.

## BRICOLAGE IN FASHION THEORY AND PRACTICE

'The use of materials and styles from the past to create new items of fashion and clothing is straightforwardly the work of the *bricoleur*.' (Barnard, 2002, 180)

In the arts, bricolage is commonly understood as a practical working *technique* of turning visual and verbal ideas into concepts or artefacts (Rhodes and Westwood, 2008), and this seems to go for fashion, too. Above, Barnard (2002) illustrates this significance in a rather straightforward manner. Similar to the visual arts with diverse possibilities, the three-dimensional creation of fashion also requires a variety of ideas, tools, surfaces, structures and material objects. In his brilliant study of self-taught artists, Fine (2004, 100) notes that all artists tend to 'work with materials that are at hand, and create in consistent styles and genres'. As it is common to compare the work of an artist or designer to that of a *bricoleur*, it is not surprising to find bricolage relevant to fashion theorization and practice. However, I notice that the 'darker' sides of a bricolage reality that relies upon creativity and innovation, including possible social dysfunction, exhaustion, stress or issues of mental illness (think of many world famous designers) are commonly ignored.

If bricolage has been widely used to describe various playful and *ad hoc* value creation *practices* (e.g. Baker, 2005; Duymedjian and Rülting, 2010), the field of fashion studies has turned to bricolage to describe design processes, by stressing the combining of existing physical resources 'at hand' to create shocking, pleasing or interesting fashion expressions, thus approaching bricolage as 'ultimately perversion of readily available signs and material culture' (Östberg, 2012). What troubles me here is that design is often treated as a surprisingly linear, rational and cognitive problem-solving practice. This ideological approach risks simplifying and romanticizing bricolage, and also ignores all the routines, complexities and everyday things that bricoleurs actually need to do in order to practice bricolage. Also, this approach says less about those who supply, gather and 'work around' (Atkinson, 2010) various materials, tools or resources. 'The type of art that can be produced is a function of social choices', and these are generally 'outside the hands of the artist', writes Fine (2004, 119). If many artists could be compared to skilled recyclers dependent on leftover materials (Fine, 2004), this might be relevant in fashion, too.

‘Design is clearly a process of sense-making that makes do with whatever materials are at hand. This is perhaps the sharpest point of departure from the architectural view, so it needs to be spelled out explicitly. From the perspective of improvisation, designing is synonymous with bricolage, and the designer acts like the bricoleur.’ (Weick, 1993, 351)

‘[The designer must] determine which of his tools and materials are suitable for his purpose, he searches his inventory and chooses among the possible answers. He does not decompose the problem: his purpose is not to examine it analytically; he recognizes his materials to create the structure of the envisaged artifact.’ (Louridas, 1999, 9)

Above, Weick (1993), a scholar *not* in the field of fashion of course, discusses design as bricolage in a fairly linear manner. Louridas (1999), who apparently agrees with Lévi-Strauss, views the practice of design as an example of bricolage, one where a designer constructs something by using situationally determined materials at hand. Again, I find these approaches too linear and shallow to represent ambiguous fashion reality. Despite the rise of bricolage in a framework ‘defined’ by parody, irony, multiplicity, cultural hybridity and the rejection of simplicity and functionality, bricolage has not been rethought in terms of this uncertain ambiguity and multiplicity. Again, I wish to emphasize how these treatments do not sit well in a polysemous, non-linear, open-minded reality where distinctions between ‘high’ and ‘low’ forms of fashion expressions mix together, hierarchy has often been parodied, and the roles of producers and consumers intensely intertwine. Rao (2012) concludes that designers rarely follow a rational and logical process when designing, and in a similar manner, Kimbell (2009) argues for an approach that does justice to iterative and messy ‘design-as-practice’. Rather than approaching bricolage as a linear practice, a more careful and less ignorant treatment of bricolage seems appropriate here. My uncertain approach suggests that we adopt a more disruptive approach to bricolage ‘in the making’, one that emerges through affective relations, performances, and practices and involves a variety of agencies. Bricolage represents a continuous process of transformation that seems to have plenty in common with hybrid and messy fashion. As such, bricolage is a practice continually made and unmade across time and space.

## FASHION'S VERSATILE BRICOLAGE PRACTICES

Fashion reality is inherently complex, and as previously stated, I fear that bricolage literature fails to do justice to this precarious reality coloured by uncertainty, ambiguity and the ongoing creating and negotiating of value. Obviously, it is not only the fashion designer who can be a skilled bricoleur. Rather, bricolage is present throughout fashion's many different work practices, spheres and spaces. In fashion, bricolage might capture temporary *aesthetic* orderings and self-expressions, as bricolage unsurprisingly ties to the Do-It-Yourself aesthetic. Moreover, bricolage is relevant to subcultures. For instance, punk is a classic example of bricolage. The same goes, of course, for any other stylistic manifestation. The everyday activity of dressing, process *and* performance at once, serves as another illustrative example of bricolage. It is today claimed that privileged and 'individualistic' fashion consumers facing endless choices have become powerful bricoleurs, often not particularly label conscious, 'loyal' or easy to please (Marion and Nairn, 2011). Specifically, Marion's and Nairn's (2011) study of French teenage girls portrays consumption as bricolage, a form of creative reworking where consumers blend together a myriad of different fashion impressions, trends, styles and DIY items by 'following some fashion directives and rejecting others' (ibid, 2011, 32).

Engholm and Hansen-Hansen (2013), then, approach bricolage through the fashion blog, another exciting virtual space that combines established fashion media with 'new' formats of amateur bricolage approaches. In this context, different aesthetic preferences affect and might even *determine* the emergence and performance of bricolage. The presence of aesthetics is of course vital for bricolage, as is the relationship between bricolage and aesthetics. Rhodes and Westwood (2008, 194) discuss sampling as a form of bricolage in music, where bricolage might challenge 'the formal regimes of music production', often 'governed by the aesthetics of the orthodox and the imperatives of the music industry'. Fashion's aesthetic economy is also governed by its own regimes, institutions, agents and gatekeepers. In my empirical setting, questions of aesthetics are always subject to careful consideration, and editing is crucial to how fashionable clothing is produced in a bricolage-like manner. A discussion of bricolage as various aesthetic illusionary arrangements follows in the analysis of my empirical material.

Bricolage and entrepreneuring as the real-life ‘muddling through’ consisting of various daily practices (e.g. Johannisson, 2011; Steyaert, 2007), are informed and *constrained* by a variety of mechanisms: the economic, symbolic and material resources available, the (tacit) knowledge and experience of the designer, aesthetic tastes and preferences, the specifics of the local context, the environment, physical spaces, norms, conventions, traditions and values, occupational cultures and interactions with various other agents in the field. All these agents participate in outlining ‘the actual process by which bricolage proceeds’ (Perkmann and Spicer, 2014, 7). If some of fashion’s bricolage practices appear seemingly ‘obvious’ at a first glance (for example, that of a designer using ideas from the past when creating something new), we know surprisingly little about *how* other ‘manipulations’ of surface, tricks or image-creating activities of great importance are created behind-the-scenes. Instead of solely focusing on the individual designer ‘blending’ and borrowing impressions, I view bricolage as an often collective activity of organizing, DIY (doing-it-yourself), sampling, tinkering and ‘making do’. Such ‘bricolage by chance’ (Rehn and Lennerfors, 2014, 6) could be best described as the intra-relational coming together of different resources, where ‘no single actor is ultimately responsible for the combination’.

Bricolage involves physical and imaginary engagements, but also actual, physical doings and active workings. Rhodes and Westwood (2008, 180) write that ‘sampling exhibits something of the complexities of the interaction of technology and human action’. This certainly goes for fashion, too. A fashion designer intersects with various design concepts and ideas, non-human technologies, cloth, machines and other agents in the field. To Barnard (2002, 179) the bricoleur is someone ‘who undertakes a wide variety of tasks and who is forever making do, not necessarily using either the correct tools or the proper materials’. The aspect of ‘forever making do’ is worth discussing further. In fashion, this could, of course, refer to the never-ending creation of new items in an endless cycle of production. It could also capture the struggle, stress, difficulty and possible exhaustion of trying to survive in this unsustainable and unreasonable business. A designer needs all the proper materials and tools to manipulate surfaces and fabricate things, yet communicating the ‘right’ abstract language of desire and seduction is not easy.

In fashion, bricolage could comprise any forms of *in situ* organizing, such as last-minute actions, improvisational doings, window-dressing activities,



exhaustive surface polishings, and so on. These varied, often affective activities, intended to move designated audiences, are interesting for us to explore in a context where the fashion designer continuously navigates in a complex ‘system of crossovers and cross-references’ (Engholm and Hansen-Hansen, 2013, 11) of cultural references that always change, similar to consumption- and production practices. *Resource scarcity* afflicts many small designer-driven fashion companies, as resources at hand are *always* limited. In fashion, various materials such as leather, fabrics, fibres, surfaces, artefacts and other physical things, such as tools, are necessary resources, but these diverse resources are by no means limited to material things. Bodies, emotions and affects are significant resources, too. Also, cheap or completely free resources, as discussed by Baker and Nelson (2005) and Garud and Karnoe (2003), are meaningful in this context. These ‘cheap’ or free resources in the form of cheap labour or the exchange of services are, in fact, common and interesting for us to explore (Huopalainen, 2015). Moreover, various symbolic, shared resources, ‘gifts’ or exchanged services seem utterly important to the emergence of bricolage in fashion, and are thus significant for how things are organized in this creative economy more broadly. For instance, trainees are valuable resources who come free of charge. However, trainees still need careful instruction in order to perform ‘correctly’ for a designer. To conclude, resources in fashion are often immaterial and shared, given that fashion producers, consumers and audiences *co-create* fashion. Resources are not measurable or mobilized ‘with ease’. Rather, these are often immaterial, fluctuating, and relationally and jointly produced.

### TOWARDS AN AFFECTIVE, EMBODIED-MATERIAL UNDERSTANDING OF BRICOLAGE

So far, I have discussed how much of the bricolage literature builds upon somewhat disembodied, ‘outdated’ and affectless assumptions of the modern, industrial economy with rationality, efficiency, individuality of agency, and resource scarcity at its heart. Contrary to such a stable construct, an affective economy builds upon the dynamics of uncertainty, personalized attention, passionate movements, embodiment, proximity and closeness. *Something* always happens to bodies and objects in physical encounters (Stewart, 2007), such as

that of bricolage action. Interestingly, practice theorists have largely overlooked the influence of affects as ‘shapers’ of practices (see Keevers and Sykes, 2016; Reckwitz, 2012; Thompson and Willmott, 2015 as exceptions). Following Keevers and Sykes (2016), I wish to do justice to affectivity in a way that emphasizes sociomateriality, too. In other words, I work from the assumption that affects shape bricolage actions and practices. Also, we cannot examine the lived experience of bricolage without bringing attention to affect (see also Keevers and Sykes, 2016).

Stewart (2007, 1) approaches the ordinary as ‘a shifting assemblage of practices and practical knowledges, a scene of both liveness and exhaustion, a dream of escape or of the simple life’. This approach could inform and develop our understanding of bricolage, too. Based on Stewart’s (2007), beautiful articulation of these sensations, contingencies and affects of everyday life that so often remain difficult for ethnographers and researchers to put into words, bricolage practices as temporal sets of activities, which include actions, relations, social interactions and ‘surging affects’ in motion. In line with Stewart (2007) and other affect theorists, I work from the assumption that bricolage practices comprise shifting temporalities, lived realities as well as ‘situated and connected’ activities (Wetherell, 2012, 13). Somehow, these complex bundles of dynamic activities are identified as ‘larger’ practices (see Schatzki, 2001, 2012). To Wetherell (2012, 11), practice ‘offers the best, bare bones, synthesising rubric for research on affect’. Moreover, Reckwitz (2012, 249) argues that sensing subjects ‘allows for their being affected in a practice specific way by other objects or subjects, which are in turn affected by them’.

In this thesis, I approach bricolage through an affectively-informed practice-based lens (e.g. Keevers and Sykes, 2016; Thompson and Willmott, 2015) as a relational and spatial organizing process in which bricoleurs are always ‘active constituents’ (Munro and Jordan, 2013). In the context of this thesis, I view bricolage as an assemblage of situated ‘micro’ practices and dynamic actions of different kinds. Specifically, I approach bricolage as an illustrative example of a practice that articulates affecting, knowing *and* doing (e.g. Gherardi, 2015; Strati, 2007). Thus, what practice and bricolage appear to have in common is agency, ‘spatiality’ and ‘fabrication’, (Gherardi, 2015, 3; see also Coole and Frost, 2010; Dale, 2005). ‘Some of the resources useful for examining affectivity and sociomateriality include a focus on *doing*, an emphasis on the *embodiment* of



practice by practitioners, and the *sensing, knowing, perceptive body*’, write Keevers and Sykes (2016, 4). All of these resources are considered and central throughout my work.

‘Affect and affectivity provide for multiple interpretations of a range of phenomena’, Keevers and Sykes (2016, 5) remind us. As has become clear by now, I argue that in order to deepen our understandings of bricolage we need to acknowledge the significance of (em)bodiment, affective relations, *bodily* actions and movements in the emergence and performance of bricolage, and preferably also pay closer attention to the wide repertoire of embodied-material *experiences* present in bricolage actions. Vásquez and Cooren (2102, 192) exemplify how passion, another *attachment* in action, moves in between objects and subjects, and ‘interweave[s] with a series of states and doings: accusations, frustration, anger manipulations, seductions, tortures, constructions of scenarios and so on’. Specifically, the authors illustrate how ‘action, passion, and reason are intimately tied to each other’ (ibid, 195), a concept that also applies to bricolage. Still, the topical literature has largely overlooked the significance of these intertwined affective and embodied states, responses and anxious doings, and failed to understand how they enrich our multiple understandings of bricolage, organizing and organizational reality on a broader level.

*How* do bricolage actions come about in practice, then? Whereas process philosophers have long encouraged us to pay closer attention to flows of actions in organization (e.g. Langley, 2009; Langley and Tsoukas, 2010; Helin et al., 2014), perspectives on affect and embodiment emphasize the intertwinement of moving bodies and the mind. Bricolage is no purely physical or purely mental skill (Atkinson, 2010), but a coordination of bodily action, doing, knowledge, thinking and feeling. Both deliberate and more improvisational *embodied* acts constitute the micro-level actions of bricolage. These basic, fine-grained and expressive actions are at the very heart of *all* organizing activities, as they enable us to conduct various activities and relate to others (Haddington et al., 2013; Huopainen, 2015). We are always both embodied and embedded in the world. In practice, bricoleurs must actively ‘enact organization through their corporeality’ in relation to a complex material world of organizational space (Strati, 2007), artefacts and non-human elements. As such, bricolage is dependent on the presence and performance of other moving, affected, active and inter-related bodies and things that produce meaningful actions in relation to others.

Bricolage represents a 'realistic way of understanding organizational practice' Rhodes and Westwood (2008 196) suggest, and I totally agree. Situated practices and 'meaningful interactions and relations between various agents' (Parviainen, 2011, 530) such as that of bricolage intimately involve all our senses (e.g. Meriläinen et al., 2015), are experienced in social life, and, are fundamental and, in a wider sense, political. In an era of 'machismo' research, emphatic, embodied and affective developments have traditionally not fit in, which probably still has to do with the human body having been attached to all that is awkward and abject in organization: emotions, leakages, sweat and blood (e.g. Höpfl, 2000; Pullen and Rhodes, 2008). Perhaps the body and its actions have also been viewed as too 'obvious' or trivial to be of further serious scholarly interest. An emphatic approach to bricolage inevitably includes a wide repertoire of emotional attachments, disagreements, frustration, anger and exhaustion.

Although plenty of ontological problems arise if we theoretically choose to approach bricolage as something of a moving bricolage [sic], a multi-dimensional 'mess' both open and polysemous, I suggest we do so aware of these limitations. Rethinking bricolage as an affective, embodied-material notion offers a much-needed path for further developing and getting 'under the skin' of the subject. By integrating thoughts and action, materials and bodies, affects and emotions, we might better consider bricolage within the multidimensional, open-minded bricolage-intense (sic) framework it requires. Instead of promoting idealistic, polished or political images of a complex phenomenon, bricolage is an insecure, relational, affective and embodied endeavor, one between various human *and* non-human agents involved. Bricolage is not viewed here as 'a negative and destructive challenge' *per se* (Rhodes and Westwood, 2008, 196). Rather, by highlighting the insecurities, struggles and the real-life workings of bricolage, we might simply better capture the complexities of organizational and everyday life.



## PART III

# METHOD

'When I read/write scholarship, I want to feel scholarship. ...  
I want to be personally and politically entangled by scholarship. ...  
Otherwise what is the autoethnographic point?'

**SPRY, 2011, 212 IN RIPPIN, 2012A**





## METHODOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS

'Bricolage does not draw upon diverse theoretical/methodological traditions simply for the sake of diversity.

Rather, it uses the different approaches to inform and critique each other' (Steinberg, 2012, page number lacking)

'To talk of someone's identity surely requires that, to a reasonable extent, we *get to know* them and the context in which they live and work' [emphasis in the original], Watson (2011, 204) once argued. This clever saying figures as a starting point for my ethnographic study. By getting to know those I have studied and by carefully following and relating to them and their doings over time, I have attempted to make a serious effort in this empathic direction. This study interprets and analyzes contextual bricolage, fashion-in-action and dynamic organizational actions in a qualitative, anti-positivistic, interpretative and – hopefully – self-reflexive bricolage manner as described above. As discussed before, I turn to bricolage to make sense of a variety of temporal and *situated* 'hands-on' doings, re-orderings, resource mobilizations (Rhodes and Westwood, 2008) and detailed organizational actions that are dynamically carried out through times and spaces, and relate to the staging and 'doing' of fashion in the widest sense. As such, my study has in part, been inspired by process philosophy (e.g. Helin et al. 2014), a relational epistemology, as well as aesthetic approaches to organizational life (e.g. Linstead and Höpfl, 2000; Strati, 1999, 2008, 2010; Taylor and Hansen, 2005; Warren, 2002, 2008). Here, I discuss the meta-philosophical approaches that have influenced my own methodological bricolage work, and also open up my own winding ethnographic path from initial ideas, contact and hugely interesting fieldwork to writing-up, analysis and beyond. Equally important here is to critically discuss what I have seen and experienced, as well as what I *have not*, while moving around, experiencing, observing and participating as a researcher in my empirical site (Huopalainen, 2015).

Van Maanen (2011, 218) describes ethnography as fieldwork, headwork and text work. Today, researchers across different disciplines position a variety of different studies as ethnographic, and relate to this body of work in a multitude

of ways (Eriksson and Kovalainen, 2008). What is ethnography, then? Watson and Watson (2012, 685) offer a common explanation: ‘ethnography requires researchers to go into the field of activity in which they are interested (often becoming participants themselves in those activities) and to observe closely the actions, meanings, artifacts and outcomes that constitute that field’. Rhodes (2007) emphasizes that ethnographic research strives to be open, pragmatic and progressive in its ‘study of phenomena in their real context’ (Hjorth and Kostera, 2007, 291). Gellner and Hirsch (2001, 1), then, regard ‘a commitment to methodological holism’ as central here, which in practice means that ‘anything in the research context can be relevant and could potentially be taken into account’. This includes people, activities, actions, non-human agents, environments and working spaces. Like Watson and Watson (2012), I view ethnography as an intense, participatory and experience-based approach; the researcher is active and affected by others in ‘the field’, constructing interpretations and representations of the ‘culture’ under study. She eventually finds her research questions along the way, affects and becomes affected by those she studies, and usually constructs a written outcome of these complex activities.

Throughout, I have been a privileged, curious and affected visitor on a journey of interpretation, knowledge creation and discovery, exploring a wide-range of fashion’s daily activities behind close doors. Specifically, I have been a researcher who employs both theoretical and methodological bricolage (Steinberg, 2012). By following ‘the goings-on of organisation’ (Helin et al., 2014) in a processual manner, I acknowledge the importance of performance, intra-relations, multiplicity and action in the study of fashion and bricolage. ‘We need to focus on how organizations are performed via acts of engagement and relations and the combination of homogeneity and heterogeneity through a process of difference and repetition, multiplicity, and alteration’, Quattrone et al. (2012, 3) once suggested. If this appears rather difficult in practice, Helin and her colleagues (2014, 10) encourage us to turn to process philosophy to discover ‘a world of swelling, falling away, erupting, and becalming without rest’. However, major challenges, problems and limitations remain. Given the richness and multiplicity of everyday social life, how can we actually express and do justice to this richness through ethnography (Stewart, 2007)? *How* can we as researchers actually capture those fluctuating daily moments, embodied encounters or processes ‘by which organizations are constantly made and re-

made' (Quattrone et al., 2012, 1)? This becomes a challenge, given that we seem to lack the vocabulary to sufficiently capture lived, complex relations and affective, dynamic interactions. Also, how do I avoid fixing or reifying the dynamic notions of fashion and bricolage in my own ethnographic writing and the analysis of the moment-to-moment lives of others? How do I interpret others and do justice to them? How did I come to know what I claim to know? I wish to turn to these interesting and important questions in what follows.

### APPROACHING ETHNOGRAPHY

'The ethnographic approach admits of surprises, of moments of epiphany, which can open new research agendas. It accepts serendipity and happenstance. It is fruitful, progressive and open.' (Rhodes et al., 2007, 209)

Often closely connected to fieldwork, ethnography is generally considered a common and appropriate method of studying various situated meanings, behaviours, practices and organizational actions. Broadly speaking, ethnography tries to make explicit the patterns of social behaviour, rituals and processes that culture members tend to take for granted (Steinberg, 2012). 'Ethnographers listen, observe, participate, converse, lurk, collaborate, count, classify, learn, help, read, reflect, and – with luck – appreciate and understand what goes on – and maybe why', Van Maanen (2001, 240) suggests. If we, however, view cultures as multivocal, polysemous and *dynamic* performances rather than straightforward products 'that can be acted out or expressed' (Linstead, 2015, 2), ethnographic studies become complex forms of research, mobile co-performances (Linstead, 2015), representational practices or dialogues with wider potential to affect and *move* audiences. This is something that 'dead', distanced, smooth, emotionless or straightforwardly linear texts have often failed to accomplish.

To Linstead (2015), Phillips et al. (2014) and Rippin (2012a, 2012b) among others, research represents a living thing, an engaging, relational co-performance 'in play'. Inspired by these ideas, I have tried to understand and relate to the doings and lived experiences of a fashion designer and his proximate team in nuanced ways, by closely following my research subjects 'on the move'. I never desired to spot specific theoretical gaps or provide 'full' accounts of my empirical



cases. Why would I? Rather, I was guided by the open question ‘what goes on in here?’ as introduced to me by Professor Mats Alvesson on a doctoral course in Lund. To me, this research question dynamically opens up towards experience, motion, process, spatiality and affective encounters, as it allows for surprises and openness throughout. We feel the world ‘as we go through the process of knowing it’ Pullen and Rhodes (2015, 360) articulate. So, ethnography as a broad way of experiencing, thinking, analyzing and writing about social life (Watson 2011) turned out to suit the purposes of my study.

What is it that we can actually ‘see’ and experience in the world and what remains hidden from our ‘living, feeling, material and sensate’ (Pullen and Rhodes, 2015a, 358) bodies? What kind of ethnographic research did I actually set out to do? What was I trying to capture and accomplish? To me, ethnography is not solely a descriptive, empirical approach with an aim to construct knowledge about a specific social context. This is, of course, important to ethnographic work, in general, as well as me in particular. Nevertheless, I believe ethnographic approaches might open up everyday life in ‘non-traditional’, creative, disruptive and even affective manners. Here, I consider ethnographic writing as embodied, ‘local and specific’ (Rippin, 2012a), possibly even performative. Also, well-crafted ethnographies allow us to deconstruct, develop, problematize and enrich theories and their often taken-for-granted assumptions about the world. In other words, ethnography allows us to conceptualize what it means to be alive in the world with others (Pullen and Rhodes, 2015a).

Ethnography is now widely considered appropriate for the study of everyday life in organizations (Barley and Kunda, 2001). With this study, I have aimed to perform situated, critical and explorative ‘what-goes-on-in-here’ ethnographic research underpinned by a holistic ideas (Gellner and Hirsch, 2001) of self-reflexivity, openness and curiosity towards the research context (Alvesson and Kärreman, 2011). I also have done my best to treat the empirical material carefully, allowing for it to ‘speak’ and surprise. By doing so, I consider the element of mystery, as discussed by Alvesson and Kärreman (2007, 2011), to be central here (meanwhile, I am well aware of the fact that I am entirely involved in constructing the research mystery). Today, ethnography is not only an established research approach (Eriksson and Kovalainen, 2008), a methodology, an activity, a text and a way of approaching research. However, it is not until surprisingly recently that ethnography has started growing in popularity within

the field of organization studies.<sup>30</sup> ‘Participant observation is slowly becoming recognized as a key tool for the understanding of business processes’, Moaran (2009, 964) wrote in 2009 (see also Ailon, 2007; Garsten, 1994; Kunda, 2006; Moeran, 2005; Watson, 2011 among others on the growing interest in ethnography). In recent years, this research approach has been widely adopted to better understand various actions and micro processes of organizational life (Kellogg 2009; Michel 2011). Organizational ethnographies have paid close attention to practices of talk and rhetoric within day-to-day situations, or how people make sense of talk (e.g., van Maanen, 1988; Martin and Baker, 1996; Kärreman and Alvesson, 2001), but less detail has been paid to embodied actions and affective dimensions of organizational life.

Also, it seems to me many organizational ethnographies are still influenced by surprisingly strong objectivist tendencies and a belief in the researcher as a powerful ‘singular scientific rationality’ (Duberley and Johnson, 2009, 345), an assumption that has remained surprisingly strong within ethnography throughout (Foley, 2002). Also, it appears as if the researcher’s personal experiences are better left unarticulated; the reader should not be too ‘affected’ or seduced by ethnographic writing. Although many ethnographic researchers regard themselves as detached ‘scientific observers of the world’ (Abbott, Wallace and Tyler, 2005, 366) as evident in the ‘realist’ stance (Van Maanen, 1988), my approach differs radically from such a view. Rather, ethnography requires an awareness of how a researcher constructs her constructions (Alvesson and Kärreman, 2011). ‘The researcher must be constantly aware of how her values, attitudes and perceptions influence the research process, from the formulation of the research questions, through the data-collection stage, to the ways in which the data are analyzed, explained and disseminated’, Abbott, Wallace and Tyler (2005, 369) remind us. I hope I have managed to be transparent in this regard, and also to account for my process in honest and emphatic ways. The empirical material has primarily been gathered, *constructed* and analyzed by me. Specifically, my study includes hundreds of hours of participant observations,

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30 Organizational ethnography (Schwartzman, 1993) usually refers to management or organization-related ethnographic research. Covering a wide range of topics in-depth since the late 1970s, there are also a number of classical works within this field (see for example, Kondo 1990; Watson, 1994; Ho, 2009).

formal interviews, photographs constructed by me as well as countless informal discussions with a number of fashion agents over various times and spaces. In addition, I have gathered as much publicly available material as I possibly could on the specific ‘case’ present in this study.

### ETHNOGRAPHY ON THE MOVE

Doing qualitative, ‘processual research’ (Alvesson and Kärreman, 2011, 97) involves being emphatic and open towards the empirical context. My mobile ethnography could be characterized as ‘multi-sited’ (Marcus, 1995), as I have moved across multiple field sites, spaces and places together with my researched subjects over time. Specifically, I have participated in a designer’s creative studio and two flagship stores, travelled to international trade fairs, been present at photo shootings, fittings, castings, crowded corners of back stages, local show rehearsals, informal meetings, glamorous (or not) fashion parties in night clubs, client sites such as sales events and design markets in various cities, both in Finland (especially Helsinki, Turku and Tampere) and abroad. This study has taken me to Stockholm and Copenhagen for their respective fashion weeks, and to Tallinn in Estonia to pick up garment samples from manufacturers. I have felt excited, affected, happy, tired, anxious, stressed and irritated during this process of ‘becoming’.

When it comes to accounting for the research process in transparent ways by allowing for plurality and ‘epistemological relativity’ (Duberley and Johnson, 2009, 346), questions of personal exposure, ‘confessions’ and emotions become relevant. Feminist researchers, among others, have discussed these matters for years. Not only will I shed further light on crucial aspects usually silenced by organizational ethnographers, but I also wish to participate in developing our research community in more emphatic and joyous directions. In line with Gilmore and Kenny (2015), I view the outcome of research as a *collective* effort rather than an individual project. This is fundamental to discuss from an ethical perspective. Gilmore and Kenny (2015) note that scholars in cultural anthropology, feminist anthropology and qualitative communication research have long understood the importance of these matters. Perhaps the dominant ignorance towards these matters in the field of organization studies relates to the suppression of ‘feminine’ matters more generally (see also the Special issue



on Feminine writing in *Gender, Work and Organization*; Phillips et al., 2014).

'We cannot avoid making philosophical commitments in undertaking any research', Duberley and Johnson (2009, 346) point out, and I agree. Having been influenced by divergent philosophical positions and differing theoretical assumptions, I cannot straightforwardly describe the philosophical commitments of my work. A philosophical bricolage 'plurality' is hopefully present throughout, and this does not have to be hugely problematic. Rather, it appears as if openness and philosophical 'pluri-vocality' (Linstead, 2015) are necessary for the kind of multidisciplinary qualitative bricolage research that I

have carried out. One must tolerate uncertainty, illustrate an awareness of the divergent theoretical positions one is influenced by, as well as openly discuss the incompleteness of one's knowledge. The ontology of affect, that of performance or practice, is a messy affair. Each perspective includes a multiplicity of different ontological assumptions. Throughout, I have deliberately chosen to embrace ontologically different notions in my work, particularly as I have sought out accepting, generous frameworks. However, I admit that I remain confused by the inconsistencies and pluralities present in my work. If affects, for instance, remain unreachable 'out of bound triggers' or pre-personal judgements perhaps resistant to structure (Massumi 1995, 2002), how can I manage to represent the unrepresentable in my own work? Furthermore, how does affect go together with performance, an ontologically quite different notion? Here, I hope it is sufficient to say that I knowingly embrace ontologically different notions and scholarly debates, and move in-between different positions. Taken together, all of these discussions contribute much insight and have inspired me throughout this study.

As discussed above, the distinction between ontology and epistemology remains fuzzy in my approach. This goes for theory and practice, too. If ethnography *performs* a curious and open way of approaching organizational life, then my philosophical commitments must allow for such flexibility and openness. This also goes for the two broad theoretical-practical notions embraced here: fashion and bricolage. As my intention has been to deeply engage with practices (Nicolini, 2012) and take a situated 'micro' relational view on bricolage, relational epistemology is relevant here. A relational epistemology emphasizes how agents continuously act in relation to each other, and by doing so, negotiate, co-create, define and temporarily organize themselves over and over.

Feminist values and critical theorizing have also informed my work, and these divergent and by no means universal approaches are important to me for several reasons. To me, research is 'a matter of relating to others' (Phillips et al. 2014, 326). The roots of ethnography go back to anthropology, a disturbingly malestream perspective with Western white men reporting studies of 'exotic' tribes. Meanwhile, feminine forms and other voices have often been suppressed in this patriarchal environment. In line with feminist researchers, Duberley and Johnson (2009, 352) encourage ethnographers to carefully 'reflect on their relationship to those they are studying', as well as illustrate an awareness of the underlying 'ideological imperatives and epistemological presuppositions'. As I

engage with a feminized and widely trivialized empirical field, I feel empowered by feminist thinking seeking to include neglected areas of research, and allowing for silenced voices to ‘speak up’. Also, women’s writing and feminine writing (as discussed by Cixous, 1975; for feminine writing practices in OS see e.g. Biehl-Missal, 2015; Phillips et al. 2014; Pullen and Rhodes, 2015b; Steyaert, 2015; Rippin, 2015) has offered inspiration and much-needed alternatives to conventional academic prose. Specifically, ‘unruly’ and unbounded feminine writing (e.g. Pullen and Rhodes, 2008) might *confuse* and challenge hegemonic masculine orthodoxy by ‘polluting of the very concept of organization’ (Phillips et al, 2014, 314). This is something that I hope to do throughout my writing, too. Whereas feminine writing might provoke and question masculine norms of theorizing and writing in and about organization, I embrace emancipatory values central for feminine writing and turn to aesthetic and affective perspectives, in particular (e.g. Warren, 2002, 2008, 2012).

#### SITUATED KNOWLEDGE

Knowledge cannot be value-neutral, objective or ‘true’, and fieldwork is necessarily embodied. I sympathize with feminist positions (e.g. Butler, 1990, 1998; Haraway 2003, 2007; Rippin, 2015) that assume all knowledge to be subjective, contextual and situated all of the time. Also, (embodied) writing is in itself inherently subjective and affective (e.g. Stewart, 2007; Pullen and Rhodes, 2008). Throughout my research, I have tried to stay true to my subjective way of writing, one that is perhaps not popular in more ‘traditional’ realms of academic writing. Instead of writing myself out of the thesis, my affective encounters and aesthetic experiences are central throughout, especially as I have become a research ‘tool’ myself. Research always produces and reproduces the researcher (Pullen and Rhodes, 2008; 2015b), and the researcher *always* produces situated, partial knowledge (Haraway, 2003, 2007). Also I create knowledge and construct an organizational reality in my subjective and incomplete way. However, I am left wondering if empirical material might be inscribed with ‘too much’ subjectivity (see e.g. Thompson and Willmott, 2016), given that self-reflexive research is often accused of being too confessional, naïve and even narcissistic (Whiteman, 2010). If my writing intends to affect and move the reader, one must also

critically ask if I am actually able to embody what I advocate (Linstead, 2015). Meanwhile, I have strived to let my subjects be properly ‘heard’ and seen, and have intended to give them plenty of space to express themselves. Here, questions about research ethics and validity (although following Linstead (2015), I guess I am one of those who actually rejects this particular notion) come into play, and I have needed to give critical consideration to *how* I should re-present my research subjects throughout, and how I have engaged with my material in reflexive ways.

Moreover, fashion and bricolage evidently connect to physicality and *performativity*, and the everyday realities of performance. Throughout, issues of performance have mattered to me. Especially within the broad field of cultural studies and anthropology, ‘preoccupations with performativity’ (Atkinson, 2010, 5) are common. For instance, there are plenty of analyses of everyday encounters, rituals, dance and spectacles (see Schechner, 2006). However, Atkinson (2010) notices that these analyses are, perhaps surprisingly, often not well grounded in empirical studies of performances. During fieldwork, I noticed the importance of always *performing* in the ‘right’ ways in fashion, for instance by keeping up appearances, simulating and manipulating bodies and surfaces, following (and sometimes rejecting) established norms and conventions, and by dressing and acting the part. To me, it appears as if physicality and performativity are absolutely crucial to how people act or organize to achieve ‘order’. Such performativity has much in common with Butler’s (1990, 1998) way of seeing gender performed. Butler provides another inspiration for this study, although her ideas remain fairly marginal in my analysis. If a performative approach to organizing matters to me, performativity becomes crucial for the methodology of the study. Again, Linstead (2015) and Rippin (2012a, 2012b, 2012c, 2015) among others discuss performative research as an alternative to more traditional one, and this strand of critical research has also inspired me.

#### ACCOUNTING FOR MY WINDING RESEARCH PATH

This thesis is the end-result of a winding, qualitative process, where I have been fortunate enough to experience a fashionable world. Having explored a wide range of everyday interactions, activities and doings across different spaces, I have observed that fashion *organizing* includes a multitude of phases, processes

and doings: a designer and his proximate workers deciding on materials and cuttings when creating a collection, ordering the samples, sending samples back and forth to factories with corrections, creating fashion show budgets, deciding on the show venue, attending castings, hiring models, holding fittings, choosing or creating the right music, inviting guests, and so on. I have had the opportunity to explore and depict these different activities in detail, including insight into back stage and front stage activities. Also, I have felt privileged to study something that I have remained sincerely curious about throughout. Whereas the ability to distance oneself is necessary to any critical researcher, today's researchers are often expected to be somewhat *dispassionate* observers (Whiteman, 2010) to count as 'credible'. To me, the added value of distance in this sense is debatable. Research is a *relational* activity and *collective* endeavor that always involves contributions of others, and we cannot escape subjectivity anyway. Could academic writing not produce knowledge in more affective ways, and if possible, even try to break boundaries between the academic, the poetic and the political?

My analysis exemplifies my own performance of bricolage in the field (Boxenbaum and Rouleau, 2011; Collins, 2016), and fieldwork as an embodied activity where I position my own embodied self in relation to the bodies of others. At the same time, I am aware of the difficulties of representing the field, voicing my researched subjects and engaging in a reflexive dialogue, all while accounting for this rather 'messy' process in transparent ways. In practice, my fieldwork cannot be divided into neat phases, and this journey was never meticulously planned. Also, this could have become a thesis about something completely different than fashion, organizing and bricolage. My approach was initially deliberately both vague and broad. As I proceeded, my focus shifted along the way. I continuously 'zoomed in' and 'zoomed out' (Nicolini, 2009) between empirical material and relevant theoretical concepts. Beforehand, I only knew I wanted to engage on a deeper level with practice (Nicolini et al., 2003; Nicolini, 2012), and entered my field without specific, pre-defined theoretical glasses. Rather, I was quick to openly explore the fashionable world 'in the-here-and-now', confident about eventually finding my focus along the way. In line with other ethnographers, I have experienced the fortunate problem of not being able to include everything that has intellectually triggered me throughout this journey.



As I began planning and conducting my study in late autumn 2010, the rather young and under-developed Finnish fashion scene was subject to growing debate.<sup>31</sup> With my broad interest in this community, in terms of co-production, communication and reproduction, I began reflecting on the current ‘state’ of fashion in Finland, and how its various actors, companies and institutions participate in creating aesthetic, symbolic and economic fashion value. What was fashion as work in this setting about? Could I say something about the practical work of fashion? Plenty had happened in a short period of time. Many designer-driven companies based in Helsinki had gone bankrupt whereas emerging young designers were establishing their own clothing lines. Others moved abroad to work for established houses. I was curious about this constantly developing contemporary scene, where few institutions seemed to hold strong positions. I had the idea to explore the organization of Finnish fashion critically through ‘sprawling methods’ (Wikberg and Strannegård, 2014); by conducting some in-depth fieldwork, interviewing certain actors, and by observing what occurs at happenings central to the materialization of this field. I was curious about the organization of such a ‘world’ spreading over time and space, geographically concentrated in Helsinki, the fashion capital of Finland. If Becker (1982) ‘defined’ an Art world through collectives of actors, institutions, networks, artists, critics, journalists, gallery owners, curators and researchers all co-creating ‘Art’ (see also Wikberg and Strannegård, 2014), I thought fashion creation could work from fairly similar premises. Hence, I engaged in ‘mapping’ this wide field throughout 2010–2012, which generated interesting and valuable insight.

This thesis could have become an analysis of the organization of a contemporary Finnish ‘fashion world’, especially as we still lack such ethnographically informed (yet always bounded) in-depth studies. At an early stage, I conducted open-ended interviews with self-entrepreneurial Finnish fashion designers on how they construct themselves as entrepreneurs. The insight generated triggered an urge to come even closer to fashion ‘reality’.

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31 Debates centred around the overlooked potential of fashion as a serious export product, the difficulties of breaking through internationally, the lack of investors and crowd funding, and the overall insecurities and struggles of the creative economy where a single designer should master ‘everything’ possible, such as the art of designing, selling and branding her or his makings.

More specifically, I wanted to experience fashion 'in action' or produce detailed accounts of fashion's mundane work practices, including a variety of known and less known doings. This curiosity finally determined the scope of my study. It led me to first negotiate access to an interesting local and low-budget fashion show production rehearsed in the city of Turku, which I followed for four intense months from September to December 2012. It then led me to contact one of the few fashion designers in Finland staging international fashion shows in December 2012, which gave me access to the designer's studio in January 2013. Specifically, I got the chance to experience what occurs behind the many curtains of fashion by following Yat's reality throughout the years 2013–2015. In this setting, I could closely observe actions, behaviours and interactions, and I experienced interesting clashes and intertwinements between fashion's constructed and fairly glossy surface, and its harsh, exhausting and even extreme reality.

### WRITING, FIELDWORK TECHNIQUES AND PRACTICES

Ethnographies perform fine-grained yet messy investigations, and I agree with both Law (2004) and Taylor and Land (2014), who approach research as a truly messy process. To Moeran (2005, 2009) 'good' fieldwork might reveal the discrepancies between what people actually do and what they say they do. To me, such fieldwork is ethically informed fieldwork, where the researcher analytically questions activities, happenings and discourse carefully documented in the field. Also, fieldwork is a physical and embodied activity; bodies inform the analysis of fieldwork in a variety of ways, and fieldwork can be a site for the production of the body, too (Coffey, 1999). Inevitably, working bodies were central to the content of my research. I observed detailed bodily practices from 2010 to 2015 by taking part in numerous events. As a researcher, I did not participate in the events as a fashion *industry insider*. Sometimes I observed people and moving bodies without them knowing I was studying them, which of course gives rise to ethical issues. Sometimes, I was one in the audience but more often my role was more active and involved, for instance as a helper, a 'hop-in' assistant or a dresser backstage. Quite surprisingly, I did not confront boundaries in gaining access to any of my empirical sites as Entwistle and Rocamora (2006, 2011) did at London Fashion Week. I always took plenty of notes and constructed

photographs of activities, people, surroundings and garments with permission. I occasionally used a voice recorder, and also gathered materials produced by others, such as written documents, photographs, media coverage and online material.

'Doing research is a rich, complex and multi-level experience that mobilizes the whole person conducting this inquiry', write Sergi and Hallin (2011, 192). Coffey (1999, 59) indicates something similar: 'our body and the bodies of others are central to the practical accomplishment of fieldwork. We locate our physical being alongside those of others, as we negotiate the spatial context of the field'. The centrality of the body became evident throughout my journey, which necessitated a close relationship between me and my researched subjects. Research is not a one-sided relationship with a powerful researcher. Rather, the researched subjects must always be treated with care and respect. I went into my field as an open-minded fieldworker with my entire 'sensory framework' open towards the context immersed through my senses. I was paying attention to how it felt, looked and smelled in the spaces I encountered (see e.g. Warren, 2002, 2008, 2012). At the risk of seeming naïve, I tried to attend to the immediacy of a sensual experience as I negotiated the context of my field.

The fieldwork techniques were experimental in the sense that I always tried out what worked for me in each specific context. In general, I was careful to present myself as a researcher to those present, and initially observed the reactions when I was around taking notes. In addition, I usually carried my heavy digital camera to construct photographs. Sometimes, I could only construct quick snapshots in the field with my lighter mobile phone. During my first trip to Copenhagen Fashion Week in January 2013, I did not have any fixed ideas before entering the field other than closely experiencing and observing the activities and interactions taking place. As it was my first journey together with Yat, the studied designer, I also experimented with taking notes openly. Despite a few occasional and curious questions of 'what are you writing?' I could always write openly. This was important for the sake of capturing actions, speech and doings in the field. My research subjects were genuinely interested in what I was doing and helpful when it came to explaining doings to me.

Ethnography is also the written story or the 'end-product' of my research. As an outcome, it is subjective and partial and cannot, of course, include all the fieldwork experiences. Language is a crucial medium, and it is also never neutral.



Throughout, I experimented with writing my field notes in Swedish, Finnish and English. The context determined my choice of language. If the material was collected in a setting where everyone present communicated in Finnish, it was natural for me to write my notes in Finnish, my second language. If the working language was English as in the case of the 2OR+BYAT label, I wrote my field notes in English to accurately capture the discourse of my subjects. In this context, the designer, his assistants and I were all non-native English speakers. I decided to write this thesis in English after having spent considerable time studying 2OR+BYAT. However, as English is my third language, I acknowledge facing numerous difficulties in expressing myself in ways that do justice to those I studied and the richness of the empirical setting.

#### MY FIELDWORK: CHOICES OF ORGANIZATIONS

Ethnographies are often ‘multi-sited’ investigations, and so was my study. As previously indicated, I took part in numerous fashion events across different cities and spaces, most of these organized in the city of Helsinki during 2010–2014. The events were to some extent chosen by coincidence, but they all ‘defined’ a wider Finnish fashion *community*. I first took part in a number of individual events, such as the bi-annual Finnish Catwalks<sup>32</sup> organized in 2011 and 2012, the novel Helsinki Fashion Weekend event<sup>33</sup> in 2013, Helsinki Design

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32 Finnish Catwalk was, until 2012, a bi-annual one-day fashion event staged in January and August, organized and financed by The Federation of Finnish Textiles and Clothing Industries. By covering all expenses of a location, a stage, performers, and by offering food and drink for a selected group of invitees, Finnish Catwalk was a public presentation promoting ‘Finnish fashion’ to wider audiences. Financed by the organizer, the participating labels only paid a symbolic attendance fee of 250€, hence it was no ‘risky launching’ for the fashion labels involved. Instead, the show could ideally be a cheap means for designers to showcase their abilities gain publicity and visibility as well as get good images of their creations taken by professional photographers sponsored by the organizer.

33 In August 2013, I volunteered for a brand new fashion event called ‘Helsinki Fashion Weekend’, a three-day fashion extravaganza staged in Helsinki, and got access easily. Approximately a month before the event, I e-mailed the PR-agency manager and offered my help. She forwarded my contact details to stylist Sofia, who was happy to include me in the team of dressers and helpers.

Market, as well as KOE14 fashion show. From late August until early December in 2012, I extensively studied KANSA,<sup>34</sup> a group fashion show production in the city of Turku, Finland. This study resulted in an article on the negotiation of embodied agency among fashion models in the field (Satama and Huopalaainen, 2016). The empirical material that turned out to matter the most to my study was collected throughout the years 2013–2015. This fieldwork phase comprised hundreds of hours of ethnographic fieldwork on a fashion organization based in Helsinki. Unlike most qualitative researchers who must protect anonymity, I was allowed and actually asked to name the organization my analysis is based on. Despite offering anonymity as I negotiated access, I ended up naming the organization I studied, as Yat, my primary data provider, desired recognition for his contribution to my research (Taylor and Land, 2014). This is rare, and of course, gives rise to a number of ethical and moral questions.

As Taylor and Land (2014, 106) point out, in-depth ethnographic expositions are ‘rarely, if ever, entirely uncontentious and free from conflict’. If I committed to ‘naming without shaming’ (Taylor and Land, 2014), this forced me to reflect on if naming allowed me to be as open and critical about the context as I felt I needed to be. Specifically, I questioned if I was able to write freely about 2OR+BYAT, its workers and stakeholders without worrying about the reactions to what I would publish (Taylor and Land, 2014). As the company and the individuals within it are identifiable from this text, I am of course not free to write entirely what I wish. Throughout, I have pondered how to construct representations in ethically informed ways by reflecting on questions like ‘am I doing them justice?’, or ‘am I describing them in honest ways?’ Meanwhile, I have realized there are several benefits to naming, one being a possibly more deeply situated and ideally less detached analysis (Taylor and Land, 2014).

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34 More specifically, I closely followed an ever-changing, low-budget creative project, or the winding process of putting together a fairly large fashion show production by observing rehearsing practices, formal project meetings, informal meetings, photo shootings and so on. The annual group fashion show was constructed as an inspirational ‘hybrid’ in which fashion, dance and other theatrical elements were woven together in ways that intended to challenge established and perhaps health-hostile fashion norms. Much of the work that I observed was non-verbal and expressive embodied work rehearsed before the onstage performance.



Access to 2OR+BYAT, the studied fashion organization, was gained partly by coincidence. I had initially engaged with 2OR+BYAT as a customer, most often buying the fairly expensive designer clothes during sale times, and appreciated the design orientation, style and range of clothing. I also knew, by earlier engagements with the Finnish fashion scene, the chief designer Yat to be an experienced international actor, with years of work experience from top tier fashion cities in the world, currently running a relatively small designer-driven high fashion label from Helsinki. I was impressed by his experience, and

curious about his company. It only when I noticed on the official web page of the Copenhagen Fashion Week event in late 2012 that the designer would be the *only* one from Finland both staging a fashion show and attending the trade show that I decided to contact him. I was curious to follow a fashion designer's preparations and activities towards a fashion week event, both those tied to the business of fashion and those connected to presenting fashion. Back then, I did not at all think of the designer's company as being a particularly suitable case for studying bricolage (nor did I know that this notion would matter), but merely as an interesting high fashion company in which to further study organizing.

Back then, I was also unaware that I would gradually get to know designer Yat and his assistants well, and that I would get to experience several intense and hugely interesting trips to Copenhagen Fashion Week together with them. My initial contact was by e-mail in early December 2012, as I offered my help at the fashion fair and during the show in January 2013 in return for gaining access. The e-mail written in Finnish was addressed to Yat and Minna, as I did not know that Minna, Yat's former wife, was no longer involved in running the 2OR+BYAT label. I did not promise my insight in return for the time I could 'distract' those I studied (Taylor and Land, 2014) and to be honest, I suspect Yat was never too interested in a researcher's insight and opinions in the first place. Rather, he needed an assistant, a pair of helping hands or someone useful with all the practicalities, and was therefore happy to let me in. I offered confidentiality, and immediately got a positive response by e-mail. As such, I was even surprised by how easy it was to gain access to this rather exotic and 'closed' space to begin with. Moreover, I felt warmly welcomed and got a big hug as I met Yat in his studio setting in Helsinki a couple of days later. The show in January 2013 was my first event with him, and the beginning of a longer period of fieldwork with several working weeks spent in the designer's studio setting, at international trade fairs and sales events throughout 2013 and 2014. This is how I describe my first impressions of Yat in my fieldnote diary:

'I meet Yat for the first time at 10 o'clock in the morning outside his studio, as we have agreed to discuss me helping out and following his work in Copenhagen during Fashion Week. I arrive outside the flagship store on Eerikinkatu, closed on Mondays. As I am about to take out my phone to call Yat someone sticks out his head from the building next door. It is Yat.



'Hiiiiii Astriiiiiid!' I am surprised by such an excited face, open arms and eager tone of voice so untypically 'Finnish'. Instead of formally shaking hands, the designer gives me a big hug and smiles with his entire face. He gives a friendly impression and appears easy to encounter. Yat is short and in my boots I am at least a head taller. He looks young and quite boyish. Yat is 46 years old! We enter the building and walk down the stairs to the studio. 'Welcome to our messy showroom! Do you want tea?' Yat asks. 'I am sure you have done some research on me in advance' he suggests, and I agree. I have read what I have found on him on the Internet, which is surprisingly little.'

'The designer has not been in the Finnish press too much. Yat finds it surprising that I know his brand and claims that ZOR+BYYAT is relatively unknown in Finland. This is interesting. We discuss freely and Yat tells me about having had over 80 stores in Japan. 'It's a totally different market, it is completely different to Europe and Scandinavia'. We then talk about the difficult economical times, and Yat says that major fashion houses in Paris are going under. The situation is not promising in Finland either. 'We were the only ones able to grow during the last two years'. Is he trying to make an impression or just pointing out facts? The times are dominantly quiet and fashion labels in Finland keep a low profile. Few can afford to travel to international fashion fairs. (I reflect around the concept of a fair – why is it so important to meet face-to-face, despite the rise of e-commerce?) Fairs seem fairly traditional and old-fashioned. 'It's a cruel and difficult business', Yat then says. We then talk about the upcoming show and Yat mentions he has invited some Finnish influential fashion people, like bloggers and journalists. His show music is custom-made and currently recorded in Canada. Apparently, Yat is quite well connected internationally. He mentions that all 'vip' swag bags will contain a 20€ gift card to the online store. 'Am I the only one with a fashion show?' he asks with certain pride in his voice. It is tricky to show already at 16 on a Friday, which means an entire day at the fair is 'wasted' and lost. Yat was born in Hong Kong, studied in London and has lived in Japan for a long time. 'Where are you from Astrid?' he asks. Apparently I don't look 'Finnish' to him and also my English pronunciation is apparently not typically 'Finnish'.

## CONDUCTING INTERVIEWS

To me, interviews represent a fairly *constructed* way of collecting empirical material, and following Alvesson (2011), I have always been slightly skeptical about the ‘praise of interviews’ in the social sciences. Interviews are artificial social situations where power relations are evidently present (Alvesson, 2011). These situations might, of course, generate valuable and rich insight. Like all methodological approaches, interviews carry strengths and weaknesses. I conducted formal semi-structured and taped interviews with both Yat and Pierre in 2014. Before that, I had conducted interviews with fashion entrepreneurs and fashion show producers during 2010–2013. My interviewees never saw the questions in advance, and the interviews always loosely followed an outlined framework (see appendix) allowing for spontaneity and flexibility. The two interviews with Pierre and Yat were conducted during a late stage of my fieldwork in 2014, and they actually marked the end of my study with 2OR+BYAT.

The interviews provided an important opportunity to discuss matters I had observed and experienced during the fieldwork. Due to my rich fieldwork experiences, I ‘knew’ plenty of things and could ask deeper questions about particularities that had triggered me in the field. The interviews were recorded on my mobile phone, transcribed by a professional agency, and I carefully listened to the transcriptions before I began analyzing this material further. In interview situations, power relations are present, personal chemistries might not work, people might refuse to ‘open up’, physical space might affect and restrict the situation, and so on. Also, I have often not felt like a powerful ‘authority’ while interviewing. Rather, I have felt like I am ‘interviewing up’, learning from more experienced individuals in working life. In this regard, it felt much more comfortable and less artificial to interview people I knew well. Of course, problems are involved in such situations, too. Nevertheless, I tried to create an atmosphere of mutual trust and to be an encouraging listener myself, giving the interviewees the space they needed to open up.

I interviewed Pierre in a calm corner of the flagship store in September 2014, and it was the first time for him to be interviewed by someone. Beforehand, Pierre joked about not being able to be as ironic and sarcastic as usual, due to the recording. The interview began late as Pierre needed to sort out some urgent production-related matters with Yat, who at the time was away in Canada for

family holidays. Despite the time difference and holiday, Yat was both available *and* working. While waiting, I checked out the new shop arrivals and talked to trainee Emmi about her internship. Interestingly, she told me about doing significantly longer working hours than the official 7,5 hours a day. I had heard similar stories before. While the interview was conducted in the studio section of the flagship store, separated by a couple of clothing racks, Emmi was present in the shop serving potential customers entering. The shop music was on, and the interview lasted for one hour and fifteen minutes. The interview with Yat took place on the morning of October 4<sup>th</sup> 2014. Yat prepared hot coffee as I arrived and then moved two chairs and a small table outside his flagship store. I believe he wanted to create a calm space for the two of us to discuss. Although people and cars regularly passed by in the street the designer was not too affected. Yat was talkative and clearly used to giving his opinions. I could listen carefully to what he said, observe his facial expressions and body language, and make further notes. This interview lasted for one hour and thirty minutes.

#### EMPIRICAL MATERIAL AND ANALYSIS

In ethnographic research, analysis and interpretation become intertwined as they ‘take place throughout the research’ process, Eriksson and Kovalainen (2008, 149) point out. The empirical material gathered is primarily based on my field notes documented in notebooks. In addition, I have kept a field diary of my experiences. Throughout the study, I have talked to fashion designers, designer’s assistants, dressers, models, light technicians, sound experts, model bookers and agents. Immediately after the data were collected, I wrote up and complemented my raw field notes, the fast and shorter comments written in my field diary, to fuller and more comprehensive narrative descriptions regarding the particular situations. Although I investigated several fashion show productions in remarkable detail and participated in four editions of Copenhagen Fashion Week during 2013 and 2014 (the AW editions 2014 and 2015, and the SS editions 2014 and 2015), I am aware of the limitations and the incompleteness of my approach. I have also not written this thesis in a linear manner but have worked simultaneously on the different parts in an attempt to remain close to the field.

Whereas my approach was never straightforward, bricolage was introduced at a surprisingly late stage of my work. If I had – in practice – broadly observed how organization is ‘accomplished’ in different ways, I did not quite know how to approach and analyze my thick material. I initially struggled to make sense of the complexity of my empirical data, and found the notion of organizing challenging to handle. It was in revisiting my field notes and experiences that bricolage emerged as an important theme. I paid closer attention to the pace, last-minute hurry, the many improvisational situations of organizing and the *ad hoc* forms of decision making that I had repeatedly described throughout my notes. These spontaneous activities appeared to have plenty in common with the idea of bricolage, and I found writings on bricolage that I could relate to my observations. Meanwhile, I noticed severe problems in the existing bricolage literature, such as the lack of embodiment, physicality, materiality and space. The data was ‘pulled’ from my detailed fieldwork and observation notes, researcher diaries and formal interview notes. I thus went through a process of close coding and interpretation of my notes, one that did not involve software, focusing on the key themes that I found and generating narrations in a critical dialogue with existing assumptions about fashion and bricolage.

Throughout, I concentrated my observations on social and material behaviour in the particular spaces and environments that I was part of, and to a lesser extent on recording conversations. The many backstage areas were also where I usually spent most of my time in the field helping out during the stagings of the different shows. Thus moving between the front of the house bound up with complex, cultural associations of glamour, spell or a magic charm (see Mears, 2008; Wilson, 2007, 2013) and the hot, smelly, sweaty and crowded ‘chaos’ behind the brightly lit runway, I was able to go behind the scenes to critically reflect on the specifics of fashion’s meticulous work towards *glimpses* of thrill and exhilaration in what ironically appeared to be never-achieved illusory perfection. The themes relevant for this study emerged as meaningful as a result of combining insight from my fieldwork with diverse theoretical literature. It was my Copenhagen Fashion Week (CFW) experiences that led me to further explore theorizations and speculations of bricolage. Meanwhile, the themes of aesthetic and affective labour, embodiment and performance were obviously also present and relevant. In line with other ethnographies (for example Griswold et al., 2013; Watson and Watson, 2012), I combined experiences from the

field with theoretical elaboration, seeking meaningful interplay (Alvesson and Kärreman, 2011) between these two connected spheres. I followed a mobile process typical of newer and critical approaches to organizational ethnographies, where researchers use, produce (Watson and Watson, 2012) and problematize theory as they move between considerations in a reflexive manner. Such a process involved a continual refinement of my interpretations of my fieldwork, analysis and presenting my conclusions in interaction.

What sort of representing is my empirical material doing, and what is it that it captures? To what extent is this just my story of a number of exciting journeys, personal encounters and Fashion Week experiences? The meanings and locations of organizations vary and ‘shift constantly as individuals experience them’, Rippin (2013a, 11) writes. My empirical material is indeed my subjective story based on my perceptions, illustrating interpretations of bricolage and fashion’s value creation as it was produced in the field, yet it is an attempt to take the *experience* of organization (Rippin, 2013a) seriously. I also have intended to capture what Burrell (2013, 73) critically encourages organization theorists more generally to do: to look intensely, listen carefully ‘and examine in detail what is to be found around us on a day-to-day basis’. Even though bricolage differs in the eyes and the mind of the beholder, ‘minds too are subject to processes of structuration that pattern our perceptions’, as Burrell (2013, 65) puts it.

### SELF-REFLEXIVITY

Reflexivity is a varied construct (Alvesson and Sköldberg, 2009; Gilmore and Kenny, 2015), and I will here shortly meditate on self-reflexivity based on my readings of Alvesson and Kärreman (2011) and Gilmore and Kenny (2015) in particular. These authors discuss the ‘rise’ of self-reflexivity within organization studies (see also e.g. Alvesson, 2003; Alvesson and Kärreman, 2011; Hardy et al., 2001) by critically pointing out that certain crucial aspects of the research encounter still tend to be downplayed. These aspects relate to the presence of emotions, intersubjectivity, power dynamics and the ambiguous ways in which these change ethnographers (Gilmore and Kenny, 2015). By self-reflexivity I also think of the importance of allocating my experiences to the research I have crafted, and meditating further on my different roles. Gilmore and Kenny

(2015) view self-reflexivity primarily as a collective process: the researcher is always inevitably involved and part of what is being researched, ‘identifying with’ those she is researching. This, in turn, involves being emotionally engaged, bodily present and reflexive. I have strived to reach these ideals, and meanwhile acknowledge the difficulties of practically carrying out research that always lives up to such ethical demands.

In reality, research always involves elements of reciprocity. What were the different roles I found myself performing, and what kind of value- and resource exchange did I become part of in my field? In order to be transparent, also these matters deserve to be openly discussed. I performed multiple identities in the field, such as interpretive researcher, employee, fashion novice, hard-working trainee and occasional customer. At times, I also felt more like one of the designer’s assistants than a researcher, as I was intensely involved in all possible organizing tasks in the studio and elsewhere, from arranging the stand, pricing the collection, taking actual buyers’ orders, packing, and stuffing gift bags to dressing models backstage at fashion shows. I did ‘everything’ apart from sewing buttons in my setting, as I cannot sew. Being active myself was, at times, stressful, and the designer expected me to perform well (see Huopainen, 2015 for a discussion of being intensely involved in organizing a fashion show myself). As I gradually got to know Yat better, I also became a privileged consumer invited to pick from the goodies at different ‘vip’ occasions before others. Rather than challenging practice in conventional capitalism (Taylor and Land, 2014) as a researcher, I was invited to consume, which is perhaps also problematic. In January 2014, Yat covered the expenses of my trip to Copenhagen, and this even included eating out. In exchange, I committed to working for him before, during and after Fashion Week while collecting my empirical material. Of course, ‘working for’ the designer involves power dimensions. To cover some of the expenses of my trip, I wanted to support the designer by buying his apparel. By so doing, I guess I ‘paid’ for my rather exclusive access, although I never felt obliged to do so. In addition, I always got a staff discount, and Yat sometimes gave me clothes and leather bags as gifts in return for my help. Below, I reflect upon this problematic exchange of resources:

‘During a sales event in January 2014, I reflect upon my attachment to the clothes and the feelings I associate with them. The samples have given the designer plenty of press exposure and visibility, thus ‘serving’ the designer

at different occasions in many ways. The value of such symbolic exposure is difficult to estimate. To me, the pieces evoke particular memories from different contexts such as the Design Market at Cable Factory, the odd blogger's gala in Helsinki in dark November, and the sweaty backstage of my very first 'real' Fashion Week experience in Copenhagen. I grab two dresses that I am particularly fond of and take them to the changing room. I have known these dresses since Fashion Week in January 2013, where they walked down the international catwalk. Backstage, I helped out dressing the two-fold sequin party dress with a grey, asymmetrical hem on 'my' model Ida-Sophie. Also, the same dress got significant exposure at the blogger's gala evening in Helsinki, when the event organizers all wore borrowed items from 2OR+BYAT. A few stains from spilled drinks on the silk reminds me of this gala evening. Yat does not recommend taking the dress to the dry cleaner's 'who only know how to charge'. 'Dry cleaners usually only use hot steam to get rid of the stains'. Hand wash and mild soap will do the trick. I also pick a quite stunning printed black and grey silk dress with origami influences. It has got sleeves, a big asymmetrical cutting and an interesting draping falling down the hem. Plenty of fabric, 'expensive silk' as Yat points out has been consumed in creating the special effects of the dress. Interestingly, Yat hesitates with selling the two-fold dress. Apparently, he is rather attached to it and explains how he likes the shape and cutting of it. 'We don't have that dress and it has given us plenty of coverage'. Could it perhaps still be useful for him in the future? Could he still show the style to potential buyers or press? When it comes to his creations, Yat cares about where his designs end up. He is an artist or fashion *auteur*: 'I prefer to sell to those I know'. 'Is 160 for the both too much for you?' Yat asks and offers two high fashion dresses for less than the price of one. When going through the AW 13 sales book I notice that these two items are priced 470€/188€ (suggested retail price/suggested purchase price) and 590€/236€ respectively. Knowing the designer results in a good deal for me, although it is another exchange of value. 'I know you will work hard for me in Copenhagen', Yat puts it.' (Field note extract).

## SILENCED EMOTIONS

Emotions and affects represent fundamental forms of knowledge always present in organizations and our day-to-day lives (e.g. Fineman, 1993, 2008). Also research is not a clean, neutral or unemotional experience. On the contrary, ethnography is a highly affective and personal, often problematic experience: it is exciting, fun, confusing, interesting and at times truly exhausting. Such an intense experience cannot ignore the wide repertoire of emotions that the researcher and the researched subjects undergo. Researchers always connect emotionally with those they study (e.g. Whiteman, 2010). Whereas plenty has been written on emotions in organizations in general (e.g. Barsade and Gibson, 2007; Fineman, 1993, 2008; Loseke, 2009), emotional encounters in ethnographic work remain surprisingly silenced, Gilmore and Kenny (2015) notice. Although emotions are part of the research as they are present elsewhere, organizational ethnographies have often *not* discussed these matters. Perhaps these ‘feminine’, soft, irrational, potentially dangerous and even shameful experiences are still not considered appropriate in ‘rational’ organizational research.

Ethnographic work is about creating (long-term) relationships, navigating social interactions and dealing with power relations, struggles and various emotional tensions. Being open about these political and ethical dimensions includes reflecting upon *how* the research was conducted ‘in reality’, by navigating these tensions and boundaries. In line with Gilmore and Kenny (2015) and Whiteman (2010), I believe these approaches have the potential to enrich our field. Specifically, reflecting upon our emotional experiences ‘can help to more authentically contextualize the subjectivity of our representation of both research findings and management theory’ (Whiteman, 2010, 335). Although I view the word ‘authentic’ as somewhat problematic, emotionally-laden reflection could help me to analytically connect with my empirical material. My own research experience has, of course, involved its own emotional ups and downs, ranging from the dominant feeling of anxiety as a newly enrolled PhD student facing huge complexity to experiencing occasional confusion, irritation, stress, and excitement while ‘working for’ the designer I followed. Of course, nobody asked to hear about my struggles in the first place, and I do not want to overemphasize these matters in a way that reads as narcissistic. Also, I try to remain careful about ‘sentimentalizing’ my relations to those I researched. However, the



fashionable world felt like an extremely impassioned arena with its wide repertoire of emotions constantly outspoken and processed. My empirical site was a powerful site for the production of emotions and bodies, too. Processing emotions openly often ‘cleaned the air’ and were crucial in phases of ‘letting go’ and moving on, such as after the staging of a fashion show. As ranges of these emotions were processed throughout my fieldwork, they deserve to be included and analyzed, too.

### FIELDWORK AS AN EMBODIED EXPERIENCE

I really enjoyed being around the people I studied, and usually felt comfortable and joyful in their company. After gaining access, I was surprised to be quickly accepted and included in the designer’s team. Closely observing fashion’s busy day-to-day work, hearing about different coping and survival strategies and *feeling* the pressure of a self-employed entrepreneur in difficult economic times certainly left marks on me as a researcher. I do not dare to say that I will ‘never be the same again’ after my fieldwork, but it certainly affected me. Despite expecting to encounter hard work, I was sometimes surprised by the extreme rush and bodily exhaustion. For instance, during the hectic days before Fashion Week, there was no time for lunch or coffee breaks. I wondered how the designer and his assistant could keep on working without eating. How could they just ignore their bodies in such manner, not even grabbing anything on the go? As my own body was reminding me of my starving hunger in the field, I eventually learned to bring along nuts, chocolate and dried fruits to survive. Although I faced a reality of long working hours and hard work, I was still surprised by the amounts of care expressed by the designer and his team working in an ‘extreme’ work culture. Laughing, jokes and humor were crucially present in this setting. Moreover, bodily proximity, touching and hugging was not at all unusual in this setting. It was a common way of showing appreciation and friendly care. The designer also often called me ‘dear’ and ended his e-mails to me with both hugs and kisses (on a friendly basis), not at all typical in a Finnish working context.

Fashion, as we often know it, involves disciplined bodily self-performance and expression through exquisite dress. Some personal struggles relate to the performance of aesthetic labour and bodily work in my field. At the international



fashion fair in Copenhagen, for instance, I could be present at the stand all the time. I was not expected to 'hide' in a corner or go elsewhere to give the designer space to focus on his business. Rather, I was visible and part of his crew constantly present at the stand. Moreover, Yat always introduced me to all his connections and friends stopping by his stand, and I always felt like I was included in his team. Perhaps I was surprised to actively be part of being 'on

stage' myself and represent 2OR+BYAT to the outside world, too. 'Of course I want you to be around and present all the time, as long as you don't do anything weird', Yat laughed about my presence as a researcher before the fair opened. I pondered what this 'weird' behavior might entail. I quickly learned what was crucially part of a desired aesthetic behavior: to stand in an upright but relaxed position, give a pleasant impression, smile at potential customers, encounter them professionally, but not too enthusiastically, and so on.

During Copenhagen Fashion Weeks, it was also important to Yat to dress me to represent his brand. This is, of course, when I performed aesthetic labour and explicitly 'did' gender myself. Gender is not only central to understanding organizations. As *all* researchers do gender (Katila and Meriläinen, 1999), gender shapes practices of organizational research and fieldwork (Martin, 2003; Pullen, 2006). During my first visit to Copenhagen Fashion Week in January 2013, I was dressed in designer clothes, wearing gold-sprayed, high-heeled catwalk boots under the hot and strong spotlights at the fashion fair, carefully adjusted to point at the racks and do justice to the commodities on offer, which made me explicitly aware of performing aesthetic labour, being 'under the gaze', and feeling slightly uncomfortable to begin with. However, I got used to this social and stereotypical gendered performance. Performing aesthetic labour while present at the stand and occasionally trying out clothes for the buyers at the stand felt odd to begin with, as this was all 'for real' and involved potential real buyers. Also, as there was no dressing room available, I had to undress behind a mirror in the stand at a crowded fair. This felt uncomfortable, too. Overall, I had to fit into my ethnographic context where I was aware of representing the fashion label. These experiences, including my emotional struggles navigating ambiguous power relationships cannot be ignored. As a pregnant researcher in my third trimester during Fashion Week in August 2014 I felt slightly 'out of place' with my maternal body. At times, the contradiction of 'working for' the designer while collecting my material became somewhat problematic to handle (again, see Huopalainen, 2015). Meanwhile, I have sincerely valued the opportunity to get so close to a particular kind of working reality, and I was touched by the ways in which my research subjects met me with openness, kindness and care, letting me in as a researcher. Besides discussing work and business, I discussed personal matters with those I studied, also sharing personal things about myself. As I got to know my subjects I eventually also gained their trust, met them outside their

working time and also was invited into their homes. At times, it was difficult to relate to personal matters told to me in confidence, and I have often felt for those I have studied.

## IMPORTANT SOCIO-CULTURAL CONTEXTS

As part of this methodology section, I will now briefly discuss the most important socio-cultural contexts of my study. Emerging global fashion locations such as Copenhagen in Denmark, Stockholm in Sweden and Helsinki in Finland are – of course – likely to generate quite different understandings of fashion, organizing and bricolage as compared to the more established locations, i.e. Paris, London, New York and Milan. The city of Helsinki is obviously important for my study. Today, urban yet peripheral Helsinki certainly has an emerging fashion buzz and design-related coolness to it, but the city does not (yet) have a ‘mainstream’ image of a trendsetting, cutting-edge place of high fashion and fashion conscious citizens. It is a fashion location less internationally renowned than, for instance, Stockholm or Copenhagen, and not yet a global *capital of chic*. However, Helsinki is currently becoming more interesting than ever, and this is very much thanks to the recent success of Finnish design talents abroad. Helsinki is the undisputed fashion capital of Finland, and it is where most of the everyday work, activities and interactions I observed took place.

The city of Copenhagen, ‘the Fashion Capital of Scandinavia’ and its official Fashion Week (CFW from now on), serves as another important context of my study. Each Fashion Week serves as a key fashion institution, a ‘nexus of commercial, design and media influences’ (Twigg, 2013, 119), embedded in the specifics of its socio-historical location. As an ever-growing international five-day fashion extravaganza, CFW is currently *the* platform for Danish, Scandinavian and other established designers to compete for attention. It is a space for fashion professionals and insiders to gather. Established in 1968, CFW is a relatively old Fashion Week, one that now challenges the ‘undisputed’ fashion capitals in Europe and the world. This Nordic institution is a gathering for fashion insiders, press, buyers, bloggers and other industry movers. CFW has, however, traditionally been considered something of a latecomer in joining the international circuit. Today, the labels attending CFW are a diverse, talented and

international crowd. Since August 2013, CFW is divided into two parallel show schedules: the official- and the off-schedule.<sup>35</sup>

[Copenhagen Fashion Week] 'has a great line of fashion shows, serious business relations, the most talented designers and a high level of inspiration and creativity.' (<http://cfw.dk/>, accessed 25.1.2013)

'Unlike other fashion weeks, what you see at Copenhagen is what you get. They do not bother with elaborate, and often wildly expensive "show pieces" that have no intention of making it on to the shop floors, unlike the majority of European designers. Instead, everything that walks down the runway will be available to buy. How refreshingly straightforward.' (<http://fashion.telegraph.co.uk/news-features/TMG10240405/Copenhagen-Probably-the-most-refreshing-fashion-week-in-the-world.html>, accessed 6.2.2014)

Despite having already become well-established, the international press loves to reproduce clichés about Nordic fashion. In February 2014, for instance, *Vogue UK* repositioned CFW as the not-quite-so-dazzling affair positioned in the mystified north: 'Taking place just before New York Fashion Week begins (three days and counting to go), you won't find the same frenzied fashion week experience here. Far from it. Copenhagen is relaxed and laid-back – to match the fashion that walks down its catwalks'.<sup>36</sup> The *Guardian* surprises with a fresher approach. 'Anyone expecting to splurge on monochrome minimalism left empty-handed; Scandinavian fashion, at least the more forward-thinking brands, moved on ages ago'.<sup>37</sup>

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35 Whereas the official schedule presents established local labels and the biggest commercial players, the 'off schedule' is perhaps more alternative, brave and experimental. The latter risks receiving less mainstream press exposure, but it usually attracts a dedicated, high fashion audience. Newcomers and the less known fashion labels tend to show on the off schedule, and this also goes for the label I studied called 2OR+BYAT, a designer-driven label, which I will introduce more thoroughly in the following chapter.

36 <http://www.vogue.co.uk/news/2014/02/03/copenhagen-fashion-week>, accessed 5.2.2014.

37 <http://www.theguardian.com/fashion/fashion-blog/2014/feb/03/copenhagen-fashion-week-six-things-learned>, accessed 5.2.2015.

PRESENTING GALLERY COPENHAGEN –  
THE ‘HIGH-END’ TRADE SHOW

‘Since 2007, Gallery Int. Fashion Fair CPH has become the biggest and best selected international trade show for Scandinavian design driven fashion brands as well as likeminded brands from outside the region’ (<https://www.notjustalabel.com/event/gallery-international-fashion-fair-ss-2015>, accessed 22.1.2104)

‘I didn’t expect any, when you do a trade show, I wouldn’t expect any order for the next three seasons. So you need to be able to survive for three season, without anything coming in. So that you need to, then, you feel a little bit more comfortable, instead of, some people, they will think they do one trade show, they are broke, they close the company already.’ (Interview with the designer, 4.10.2014)

Designers exhibit their creations at biannual trade shows held in spacious exhibition halls where networking, gathering of ideas and placing orders take place (e.g. Meadows, 2012; Shaw and Koumbis, 2013). Trade shows are often organized in conjunction with International Fashion Weeks, as was the case in Copenhagen. During CFW, four big trade shows<sup>38</sup> ran simultaneously. Although these fairs compete fiercely for attention, each one has its own scope and clientele. Gallery International Fashion Fair Copenhagen is a key Nordic fashion institution, a producers-meet-consumers space for three full days. On its website, Gallery is described as ‘an effective and unique order-platform for both men’s and woman’s wear’, with ‘quality, innovation and accessibility’ as its core values.<sup>39</sup> It is also a platform for performance and image creating, as it includes runway shows. When this study was conducted, Gallery had an ultimately cool fashion reputation. As Gallery is currently a ‘fashionable’ fair, it attracts by far more fashion labels than the exhibition halls can possibly fit in. The organizers might carefully handpick which labels and newcomers to welcome each year. Who is included and who is

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38 These were called Vision, Gallery, Copenhagen International Fashion Fair (CIFF) and CIFF Kids.

39 <https://www.notjustalabel.com/event/gallery-international-fashion-fair-ss-2015>, accessed 5.2.2016.



excluded is interesting, and the fair acts as a powerful ‘gatekeeper’ of designer-driven high-quality fashion, involved in socially constructing fashion worth. In Copenhagen, Gallery stands out as a design-oriented trade show with a dominance of prêt-a-porter. Some fairs merely present ‘socks, socks and socks’ or ‘Fruit of the Loom-college wear’ Yat says with a hint of sarcasm at the stand in August 2013. With around 320 labels present, clean ‘keep it simple’ aesthetics dominate Gallery, and nothing ugly stands out. In fact, Gallery attracts many fine designer names, and the exhibition is not strictly limited to clothing objects. For instance, I spot jewellery, accessories, scent candles and even solar-powered lamps among the exhibited goods. The buyers, then, are a heterogeneous group including small

boutiques, big online shopping portals and even multimillion shops. According to the organizer, currently, approximately half of the buyers are Nordic. The webpage mentions world-famous buyers such as Luisa Via Roma, Harrods, Liberty, ASOS, Net-à-porter and Galleries Lafayette. Of course, the webpage is promotional, and it positions Gallery as a powerful fashion institution.

Both exhibitors and buyers must carefully consider which trade shows to attend. Meanwhile, what is considered a worthy trade show is socially constructed and subject to change (Skov, 2006). Interestingly, many trade shows in Europe tend to overlap, which is perceived as difficult for many small fashion labels. 'They are designing them for the buyers, not the designers', Yat comments on the trade show cycle on the road in January 2013. In practice, trade shows are often hugely expensive, time-consuming and tricky for designers to attend. If one trade show begins on the same day as another ends, a small label with a small team cannot realistically attend both unless it splits up into two teams and brings along several set-ups of the collection. In reality, a label can usually only afford to produce one set-up of a collection, and not to go to multiple trade show destinations simultaneously. Among other performances, fashion trade shows *construct* symbolic fashion worth and credibility. For Yat, Copenhagen is a serious trade show destination less risky than Paris. In February 2013 Yat still did Paris although it is 'ridiculously expensive'. However, Paris used to be good to him, 'but that was before the crisis'. '2008 was still okay', Yat critically ponders on the ferry between Helsingborg and Helsingør in January 2014. Paris might cost a small label a fortune, or up to 14 000 euro only to attend, and a designer must sell garments to buyers for up to 46 000 euro for it to be worthwhile going, Yat explains to me. This is not realistic, I learn. In comparison, a decent stand of 24 square meters in Copenhagen costs Yat approximately 6 000 euro. 'Copenhagen is worth the money', he says and explains how the flexible and kind local organizer once did not even charge him for the stand. In addition, Gallery does not charge extra for a runway show, which makes the designer happy. We discuss different trade shows on the road from Copenhagen towards Stockholm in January 2014. 'Berlin is all right, not fantastic' Yat says about Premium, a fair that is an assemblage of street wear and casual sports labels. 'There is a lot of people but they are not buying' he continues, which appears to be common for many trade shows today. Times are still uncertain and the economy unpredictable: 'I think everyone is recovering now', Yat concludes.





A photograph of a cluttered room, likely a storage area or a workshop. In the foreground, a metal rolling cart is partially visible, with a white paper bag on the floor next to it. To the left, there are several cardboard boxes, some with labels like 'YAT' and 'BLACK'. A black bag is draped over one of the boxes. In the center, a clothing rack is covered with items wrapped in clear plastic. To the right, a black garment hangs on a hanger. The background shows a wooden shelving unit with various items on it, including a red bag. The overall scene is one of disarray and accumulation.

PART IV  
PATCHWORK AND  
BRICOLAGE

'Creating a life means constantly trying to stitch together these disparate ingredients of ourselves into something we can hold together and call our self'

**BAGGINI, 2011, 51**



## INTRODUCING 2OR+BYAT

'2OR+BYAT is a young, original and dynamic fashion brand based in Helsinki, Finland. The label is known for skillful unconventional cutting, poetic story of colors and inventive textures. Products are well made and a lot of attention is paid to details. The key factors of the 2OR+BYAT philosophy are creativity in symbiosis with wearability. The clothes are eclectic but they stand the test of time; the designs are made to last. The highly acclaimed fashion brand was established in Helsinki, Finland, in 2002 by brand's creative design director YAT.' ([www.2orplus.com](http://www.2orplus.com), accessed 23.11.2014)

'I think it's an outstanding brand. Really talented and smart designer. I think he has a lot of background, really good skills, technically, and he knows the fabrics, he knows what he's talking about. So this is a very nice workplace for that, because you can really learn a lot.' (Interview with the design assistant, 12.9.2014)

2OR+BYAT is a designer-driven high-end fashion label that was established in the city of Helsinki in 2002. Currently, the label employs two creative workers with international backgrounds: designer Yat and his assistant Pierre. The first quote above describes the label on its web page, a window to the outside world. The second quote illustrates Pierre's answer to my interview question, 'How would you describe 2OR+BYAT?' in September 2014. Interestingly, Pierre's answer portrays an understanding vital for fashion (e.g. Volanté, 2012), and present in many other working contexts, too: the assumption that more training equals more knowledge, skills and ability (Fine, 2004). Moreover, the quote renders visible a strong link between the inventive designer and his versatile materials, and another link between the master designer and his novice. Specifically, Pierre portrays his boss as a designer with tremendous design- and craft knowledge, credentials and work experience (Fine, 2004), and therefore, as someone he can continue learning plenty from. As such, both representations above depict and intend to *position* 2OR+BYAT as a highly acclaimed label with an outstanding and original design approach. Moreover, the label is self-portrayed as 'young' and 'original'. Interestingly, the choice of words reflects, if not *reproduces*, normative



(Western) fashion values, and exemplifies almost cliché-ridden key fashion dimensions (see e.g. Czarniawska, 2008, 2011). Meanwhile, I believe that ‘young’, ‘original’ and ‘dynamic’ say something interesting about how fashion worth is socially constructed in this context.

If Western fashion dominantly and largely intends to ‘move younger’ as Twigg (2010, 2013) suggests, 2OR+BYAT actually performs an *old* fashion label in the Finnish context. Established in 2002, 2OR+BYAT is, in fact, one of the few international designer-driven labels that still exists on the exhausting, turbulent and ever-changing market, which says plenty about the difficulties of this affective economy. Instead of old as in failed, outdated or expired (Twigg, 2013), I suggest that 2OR+BYAT represents old as in experienced. The chief designer, Yat, is fairly known to other designers, shop owners, journalists and bloggers in the small design circles in Helsinki. As an experienced fashion mentor, Yat also shares his advice and support with young and emerging Finnish designers. For instance, he regularly lectures at various design institutions in Finland, but to someone *not* into designer-driven ‘high’ fashion (business), his company is probably completely unknown.

With the frequent use of words such as ‘highly acclaimed’, ‘unconventional’ or ‘inventive’, a high-end fashion dimension is clearly present on the label’s web page, too. Of course, this polished, presentational window tries to promote the uniqueness, aesthetics and quality of craftsmanship of 2OR+BYAT in relation to other (similar or not) designer-driven labels in a hyper-competitive, glocal environment. Again, I believe this links to the importance of ‘being original’ in fashion, a strife difficult to accomplish in reality. In addition, 2OR+BYAT creations are portrayed as ‘eclectic’, ‘outstanding’, ‘timeless and long lasting’, a true paradox in fashion. If something is (in) *fashion*, it is by definition always elusive and transgressive (e.g. Czarniawska, 2008, 2011; Esposito, 2011) as moving fashion always changes and passes by. However, if it is *designer* clothing, it is – paradoxically and ideally – supposed to *last* over time. Still, in reality, even designer fashion typically materializes in fast-paced production cycles driven by ‘change for the sake of change’ (Esposito, 2011). Perhaps this is what fashion’s endless and restless ‘becoming’ is inherently about.

During fieldwork, I have paid close attention to daily activities through which fashion organizing actually happens, which evidently also ties to process thinking and ‘becoming’. I will return to these observations and discussions.

In what follows, I present the label's creative design director Yat further. I also intend to show how *bricolage* becomes manifested in his talk and appears central to his versatile work and organizing activities throughout. Here, it is crucial to point out that I never asked Yat direct questions about bricolage during the study, and he never knew that bricolage turned out to be a central notion for my work. However, by putting emergent action and ongoing 'doing' at the heart of my own ethnographic study (see also Chia, 1997; Rescher, 2012; Schatzki, 2006, 2012; Schechner, 2006), I could observe empirically how bricolage happened *in situ* and worked as a means of value creation, foregrounding change and 'becoming' in this setting.

#### PRESENTING YAT

Many socio-historical contexts, actions, happenstances and cultural aspects are likely to influence Yat's doings and everyday actions as a fashion designer, and this was evident throughout my study. To better understand Yat's versatile and sometimes conflicting 'motives and patterns of action' (Volanté, 2012, 402) as a designer moving around in a fragile, transparent and image-conscious contemporary 'glass cage'<sup>40</sup> (Gabriel, 2005, 2008), I need to approach and discuss a variety of different topics. 'You know I always do things, to make, to make a living', Yat Cheung, born handy, directly puts it during my interview with him. At one out of many occasions during fieldwork, Yat explains that creation – to him – is inherently about 'transforming form into another form'. At various occasions designer Yat talks about design and his work more broadly as a dynamic form of transformation, a creative destruction: 'I destroy, and I recreate', Yat exemplifies. To me, he talks of initiating various change processes – all the time – rather than seeking stability in life. He highlights the dynamic

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40 Here, I use the metaphor of the glass cage in line with Gabriel (2005). Specifically, Gabriel (2005, 9) writes that 'shared features of the glass cage of work and the glass cage of consumption are an emphasis on display, an invisibility of constraints, a powerful illusion of choice, a glamorization of image and an ironic questionmark over whether freedom lies inside or outside the glass. Above all, there is an ambiguity about whether the glass is a medium of entrapment or a beautifying frame.' To me, these features have plenty in common with the fashion world.

quality of creation, and his inner urge to modify, transform and recreate surfaces, forms and substances. Here, one could evidently tie Yat's ideas about creation and design to process thinking more broadly.

Yat was born in Hong Kong in 1965. During my interview with him, I am told a story of great possibilities, hard work, success and mostly happy and busy times. Specifically, I am told a story about a clever and creative business-minded young boy who was raised by relatively poor and hard-working parents with a plating workshop in Hong Kong. Moreover, I am told about a dedicated boy with good work ethics who learned to make a living at an early age, and who was usually the last one to leave work in the evening. Interestingly, I am also told a story about committing to work and intense, perhaps extreme work as a 'heroic choice' (Hewlett and Luce, 2006) or 'a badge of honour' (Bloomfield and Dale, 2015, 562), if you like. Taken together, I am told about the dedication, passion and excitement of getting into a bloody hard business of 'dispatching fantasies' and producing aesthetic experiences, beauty and spectacle (Gabriel, 2008, 277). During fieldwork, then, I encounter the complexity of fashion organizing, project management and bricolage action. This is when I face surprises, in situ struggles, continuous changes, movements, difficulties, mundanity, uncertainty, anxiety, anger, pain and some sad stories behind the seemingly polished surface of fashion. I find that I might come 'quite close to the actual experience of doing and managing' fashion, as Sergi (2012, 349) describes projects more broadly. Indeed, in this context, I think about movement, change and transformation as *defining* what fashion organizing is all about.

As the founder, CEO, 'creative design director' or designer-entrepreneur behind 2OR+BYAT, Yat must continuously *perform*, represent and personalize his label. Already the answer to my opening interview question as portrayed below represents an open-minded, philosophical and analytical stance towards life. 'Who am I? I am still asking that question all the time', Yat says. What if a processual stance embracing uncertainty, movement and transformation represented his way of being in the world, ontologically? 'I don't like to call myself an artist, and not a fashion designer', Yat puts it. 'I don't know who I am and what I am', he keeps saying, throughout fieldwork. Here, one could, of course, tie his answer and processual identity work to ideas about the self as a piece of cloth continuously worked upon (Rippin, 2012a). 'The fabric of the self is not a smooth continuous surface but a patchwork quilt' Baggini (2011, 51) exemplifies. To me, this view



seems inspired by the premises of process ontology and relational epistemology. At the same time, this mentality of rejecting certain titles and muddling through a patchy life consisting of moving bits and pieces, relates to *active* bricolage, an activity influenced by process thinking: if you want something in life, you must continuously *act, move* and come up with creative ways to accomplish it.

Throughout my study, Yat emphasizes that action, dedication and hard work is necessary for him personally and for fashion, too. He explains to me that the fashion insiders tend to notice all the research, thought, craft and *effort* that he puts into his designs, details, materials, shapes and colours: ‘People see what effort has been put into certain things. The people *in the field* will see the differences...’, he explains. Interestingly, Yat indicates that hard work and continuous effort might go unnoticed to someone *not* in fashion. To me, it also appears as if a mix of bricolage, determination and passion has been crucial to him as he ended up establishing his own company. Below, Yat describes working with his hands and creating various things almost from nothing at a very young age, which straightforwardly illustrates the relevance of physical, embodied-material bricolage: ‘I get to touch a lot of tools and using my hand to create or make a lot of things or fixing a lot of things’. Bricolage-intense creation was indeed present already in his childhood, and equally present later in life as we shall see. The interview extract below sheds further light on Yat’s background and his versatile bricolage actions as a child growing up in Hong Kong. Specifically, Yat discusses making and customizing clothes ‘from here and there’ from the time he was a young boy, which again, perfectly illustrates the presence of bricolage in his childhood. Likewise, Yat says that he ‘tried to get around to get the things that he wanted’, which I interpret as *actively* and creatively making use of bricolage techniques to produce situated value, or turning to bricolage as a way to accomplish certain things in life more broadly.

**Astrid:** ‘Could you tell me something about yourself? Who are you, and what do you do for living..?’

**Yat:** ‘Okay... It’s a little bit... complicated. Who am I? Yeah, I’m still asking that question all the time... [laughs] I still don’t know who am I. Do you?’

**Astrid:** ‘No [laughs].’

**Yat:** ‘Exactly, so that’s question’s answered and, then the next thing... No. Yeah, I’m... this is Yat and... [ponders]... complicated background. Born in Hong

Kong, left when I was a teenager, and... studying in the UK, studying, as far as I remember, I studied [laughs] art. I did a diploma in Plymouth College of Art, in Devonshire. Then, to, Surrey, outskirts of London, nowadays it's actually London. In Kingston, nowadays it's called Kingston University, Kingston Upon Thames next to Richmond, did my degree there in Fashion, Textile. Sorry, I went back to the Plymouth College of Art covering a lot of different things: art, fine arts, photography, painting, music... all kind of stuff. All kind of fun things you can do. So that's the general education background. Before that, when I was in Hong Kong I learned tailoring, I made clothes and I do, a lot of all kind of things and, I grew up in my father's factory. We actually lived in the factory. So therefore, you know, I get to touch a lot of tools and using my hand to create or make a lot of things or fixing a lot of things. And also, when I was a kid, I didn't have the luxury of toy or new clothes or anything so I had to... to, you know, to probably get what I wanted to have some imagination and then, trying to create something. And in cleaning clothes too, I mean, all the clothes. I didn't remember any new clothes I had but I think it's supposed to be quite, it's not... Back in those time, so it's hard but, life is hard so I was getting clothes from here and there, from relatives and from neighbours and.... So I just have to do some alteration and ... I did alteration and sewing when I was very young. Six years old or something like that.'

**Astrid:** 'Could you tell me about your company, 2OR+BYAT?'

**Yat:** 'What would you like to know?'

**Astrid:** 'Well... How was it born and how did you establish it..?'

**Yat:** 'Yeah, it is, you know. When I, I think probably it's based on my background that, I never... I have, you know... I never thought that I would need to get a job or find a job or... You know, it's not just in my mentality, not in my blood so, you know, I always do things, to make, to make a living. Let's say that when I was a kid, I wasn't really making a living [laughs] because, it was quite OK but, because I don't have, or a lot of things I don't, I didn't have when I was a kid, in terms of what the other kid have had, I didn't have. So therefore I tried to get around to get the things that I wanted [laughs]. So therefore, how do you get it? You have to make money [laughs]. So that's, probably that's for the mentality is all there, from long time ago already..'

‘So, I worked when I was very young and I made money when I was very young. And I used to make, with friends I used to make... the first collaboration I did [laughs] was making soya milk to sell in some festival. I was maybe ten years old or something. So... We made truckloads of soya milk and there was a disaster [laughs], we loose all the money because it was raining that day. And we were pulled in by some police and we had to move... [laughs]. And we hired, one of our friends, he was 18 and he has or his family had a car so, it was a big BMW so we had a BMW [laughs] taking our soya milk to the reservoir. There’s kind of a, festival that is. People were just hanging out for picnic at night time. It was a full-moon festival. [...] So we planned that, we make the soya milk, two days ahead and, *seriously* making soya milk from beans. Not the powder and, water it down but from beans with a grinder. So we made a lot of soya milk and eventually [laughs], we lost all the business. So that was my first collaboration in businesses [laughs]. And then, you know when I work, I think like whatever I do, even I did couple of times, training work, trainee work, in a factory or in a workshop. I was the last one to leave, and, even the manager was gone, everyone was gone, I was still the last one to be there. So it’s always like, you know when you do something you need to dedicate yourself to do things. You need to love what you do otherwise, you know, you might as well not doing it. I don’t see any point to do that if you don’t put yourself 100 per cent to do that things. You might as well, you know, do nothing. And, so because of that, therefore I always try to..., maybe this is how it naturally led to... entrepreneurship.’

## TRAINING AND STUDYING

Training is likely to influence ‘how a fashion designer interprets his/her profession’ (Volanté 2012, 409), and the ‘right’ educations, networks and connections eventually determine the future career of a designer. Above, Yat briefly discussed his own background, and during my interview with him, he shares a couple of stories from his early childhood. These somewhat heroic stories stress the importance of entrepreneurship, dedication, curiosity and a willingness to always be *active*. To me, it appears as if Yat wants to emphasize how he has always been a creative and curious person with agency, and how this

activeness has always mattered to him and his career. Yat got his BA Degree in Fashion/Textiles from Kingston University School of Fashion in 1991. 'It's not really London but they call it London to be able to charge more', he says to me about this college, and portrays his class as an interesting mix of creative minds from across the globe, who are again spread all over which illustrates fashion's truly global essence. Before Kingston, in 1988, Yat got his B/TEC National Diploma from Plymouth College of Art and Design. Later, he studied shoemaking at Clarks in Somerset, consulted for Mulberry, Nike and did different short-term freelance projects here and there in a bricolage-intense manner. Before graduating, Yat designed sportswear for Puma in London. In 1990 and 1991, he also designed textiles for Limonta Spa in Italy as part of a collection presented in both Paris and Milan.

With several renowned design education programmes at powerful key fashion institutions, London has always attracted gifted students from all over the world (e.g. McRobbie, 1998; Volanté, 2012). I have heard horrifying stories about fashion students being humiliated and moulded into the design profession through bullying rituals and shaming practices taking place at the most prestigious design institutions in London and elsewhere; this is *not* how Yat portrays his design education. On the contrary, Yat talks of his education with warmth, pride and a sense of nostalgia. In London, Yat tells me he lived what sounds like artsy, creative and relatively free student life. He shared an apartment with a 'very talented interior design student who began every morning with rolling a joint'. Apparently, a close friend dropped Kingston for a top crafts school in Manchester 'when she realized she had to make money out of textiles'. In a similar fashion, McRobbie (1998) portrays London as a city more closely associated with the *art* of fashion than business, although this positioning risks reproducing clichés and stereotypes. Fashion is always about art *and* business intertwined, and London is one of the most powerful global fashion cities in this respect, too.

Moreover, Yat's many stories about fellow students are often hilarious but dramatic, illustrating fashion's unpredictable up's and down's. In one moment, you live a glamorous life and open up stores around the world, in the next you are bankrupt or forgotten. To me, these dramatic stories capture what Gabriel (2005) calls the 'glitter' and the 'fragility' of image-conscious organizations in the experience economy. In the interview extract below, Yat discusses his

own project-oriented, bricolage-intense working reality as an emerging designer randomly ending up in Japan. This is all relevant for understanding the *necessity* of bricolage, change, openness and serendipity in his work setting. Moreover, the extract illustrates clashes and struggles in Yat's identity work, a mixture of entrepreneurial and artistic work. In addition, Yat constructed credibility through fashion awards as discussed below, and these actually mattered for his future career:

'Before moving to Finland, after graduating, yes, I was working in the UK. I was working, a little bit for Puma, in Leatherhead, which is outskirts of London. Actually, that was quite late stage and, quite soon, when I was in Plymouth already I was freelancing for Marith & François Girbaud. It's a French, house, very creative people, very creative a company, let's say, and the owner, Marith and Francois they were very creative people. Very original, conceptual way of thinking. We are talking about conceptual not just, making fashion. We are thinking about, we're talking about doing something that hasn't been seen before and hasn't been done... That's what we call concept, conceptual. So, that was freelancing in the, based in London, I freelanced for the French company Marith & François Girbaud and, in-between that I was also... did project for here and there, Louis Vuitton, Max Mara... Le Montagne and those kind of companies. That's in Europe...'

'And then I was, I went to.... I got quite a few scholarships or won quite a few awards, actually, while I was there. Already the second year I won award. The first year I won award for the... I did the RSA, no, sorry, Smirnoff Fashion Award, I forgot about that, which is the... is a national competition for fashion, really. It is sponsored by Smirnoff, and it was shown in Royal Albert Hall in London. So that was a long, long time ago and, after that I won some other, maybe more important award would have been this, the Royal Society of Arts, which is over 300 years old society that is sponsored by the royal family, obviously. It's a very prestigious award and, and because of that I went to, I took the bursary to, to Japan. I took the, I used the travel award, money to go to Japan. So, and then it was supposed to be for two weeks', three weeks' trips in Japan and I ended up staying for ten years. Yeah, so you never know what's gonna happen! Don't make any plan. Don't be too sure about your plan! [laughs] (Interview with the designer, 2.10.2014)

Yat explains how mobility, traveling and bricolage-intense ‘doing project here and there’ always mattered to him and his career. I interpret this *need* to be mobile and the importance to ‘show off’ mobility, versatility and restlessness as a way of identifying with the high-speed and high-end fashionable world, and actually trying to become part of it (Fine, 2004; Volanté, 2012). The employment situation in Central Europe was apparently fairly good when Yat graduated. Moreover, I learn that Yat was offered several jobs that he could say no to, and did what he wanted to make a living. In this sense, Yat was a privileged design bricoleur who did freelance projects ‘here and there’, as he puts it himself. Furthermore, it appears as if freedom of choice, anxiety and movement have always been significant for Yat’s work, and fashion in general. As Yat was fortunate to be able to do what he preferred, he chose not to show up at one summer job and went interrailing around Europe instead. To me, this perhaps bohemian unwillingness ‘to be tied down’ (Gabriel, 2008) perfectly illustrates a restless creative worker moving around in the age of glass cages (ibid, 2008).

Around this time, Yat was also offered a job at Max Mara’s factory in Italy. ‘Max Mara is in the middle of nowhere, far away from everything...’ Yat describes on the road to Fashion Week in January 2014. With his love for vivid urban buzz – truly important for the spread, performance and staging of fashion, too – he could not imagine moving to the empty, isolated and ‘dead’ countryside. Also, the company was apparently not attractive enough for a newly graduated male designer: ‘Max Mara before was like elderly stuff for ladies’. His saying illustrates how gender and age intersect problematically, and how a male designer constructing ‘elderly ladies’ as unthinkable to him. At the same time, Yat’s saying perfectly reflects the need to communicate what I interpret as self-fulfillment within his career (Bloomfield and Dale, 2015) as well as a distinct ‘ideology of work’ (Rose, 1999), given the explicit emphasis on freedom, illusion of choice (Gabriel, 2005) and individuality.

Perhaps, however, Yat’s intention was never to denigrate but to underline that if you work as an anonymous designer for someone else, you need to be truly passionate about the entire company. ‘Esprit... I could have worked for them. Or Marks & Spencer... but I’d rather work for free in Japan’, Yat nonchalantly adds. Although it risks sounding slightly arrogant, his saying illustrates choosing individuality, artistic freedom, creativity and insecurity over anonymous, safer and paid design work. To me, this interesting saying reflects

certain professional ideals present in high fashion and image-conscious work more broadly (Gabriel, 2005, 2008), where a designer is *expected* to hold onto spontaneity, imagination and eclecticism (e.g. Volanté, 2012). Taken together, Yat's comments and attitude render visible a restless and perhaps anxious self-employed 'chameleon employee' (Gabriel, 2008), constantly 'out there' looking for new, *suitable* opportunities. Moreover, I sense a willingness in Yat to always change, learn and reform to become an even more skilled, knowledgeable and – hopefully – celebrated designer. That these features matter for the design profession (e.g. Volanté, 2012) is, of course, rarely surprising. The interview extract below intends to shed light on what happened as Yat moved to Japan, again experiencing the unpredictabilities of a career in fashion:

'So, I... when I was in Japan, I was offered a lot of freelance, a lot of work and jobs actually. Paid very nicely. So I was doing, I was working for a couple of designers already locally there, including Yohji Yamamoto. [...] And, at the same time I was offered to create my own brand from other, existing brand. So I went into a kind of partnership to create my own brand. Very soon actually, very soon when I was in Japan. So, I... it gave me a lot of freedom... that lasted for probably three years, I think. Because in 1995 I've already started my own company. So it lasted for three years and then I decided to finish the partnership from the investor. Because it just, it's not... It's just not... We were doing really well, the turnover was massive. We had about 80 shops in Japan *alone* [emphasis]. The mother company, they have few hundred shops. So, with my kind of brand, my kind of style, direction and prices, 80 shops is a lot. And also in a short period of time as a foreigner there in Japan. So, the situation is quite spectacular. And... In Japan, they are quite close to their own culture. They are maybe a little bit more welcome to the Western... Western culture, Western society, but not the rest of the Asia. They have that kind of mentality.'

'So it was not... but I didn't think too much about that, you know, I just focused on the work and people appreciate it, and then the most importantly is the buyer, if the business works. So why, why think about other things? Eventually there's a business. I didn't think so much that, that was a business, because it's mostly, you know, I have tried to make things that, you know, I believe in. And 'til now I still think the same thing. You need to walk between

the fine line between... you know, making it as a business as well as, doing... doing the things that you really want to do. So if it's in the business, you don't have to do the things you love. You can just do, sell whatever rubbish. You still, you can do a fortune. And... But, is it what I want to do, I'm not quite sure. So maybe I'm not that desperate yet [laughs].'

In the somewhat messy interview extract above, Yat talks about making money, being successful and opening up lots of stores in a difficult Japanese market. At the same time, the extract captures his ambivalence between the anxiety of attaching to the art of fashion and seeking to do what you love to do on the one hand, and the need to survive on the other. In Tokyo, Yat worked closely with Yohji Yamamoto, one of the world's most influential designers, part of revolutionizing Parisian fashion in the early 1980s. Today, Yamamoto is still known for continuously exploring the possibilities of textile technologies (Evans, 2003), and this is something Yat does, too. Interestingly, Yat constructs social worth by attaching to Yamamoto, a contemporary master tailor and avant-garde artist. Equally interestingly, Yat refuses to explain why he eventually decided to quit the partnership with an investor before establishing his own company. He vaguely goes on explaining how he continuously seeks balance between commercial profit and artistic freedom or creativity and commercialism, which I interpret as an ongoing struggle that is typical for almost any designer.

Apparently Yat moved to Tokyo to seek novelty, inspiration and surprise as a designer, but he never planned to stay for long. Unsurprisingly, the times in Japan continued to shape his designer identity and aesthetic expression, further materialized in his makings today. By the late 1990s, Yat worked as the 'Creative and Design Director' for ISABURO 1889, the luggage manufacturer of the Japanese Royal family. 'Those were the days', Yat often says about the time. He was young, created his own brand at the height of his career and lived in a dazzling metropolitan environment. As part of the heroic story of ultimate coolness, fame and fortune, Yat tells me he used to go out a lot, and 'everyone' important knew him in Tokyo's nightlife. He also used to snowboard with his proximate design team during weekends. The domains of 'work' and 'leisure' mixed together, as the workers would spend their spare time together. Yat also proudly mentions that he designed his own snowboarding gear before such a global market actually existed. 'Why didn't you expand and start doing



snowboard gear?’ I ask him. ‘I thought about it...’ Yat replies, but explains how he was already busy doing high fashion and decided to stick with it. The story of 2OR+BYYAT could, however, have been quite different.

After many years abroad as a company designer, entrepreneur, design consultant and freelancer, the city of Helsinki might seem like an odd and peripheral fashion location for Yat. After Hong Kong, London, Paris, Milan and Tokyo, why would an ambitious designer decide to move to an unknown city with few prestigious job opportunities, and a lack of structural resources? How did Yat end up in a marginal fashion city with a seemingly limited high fashion clientele? In fact, 2OR+BYYAT was established in Helsinki for personal reasons exclusively: Yat met Minna, a Finnish designer and his would-be wife in London. Today, Yat has an 18-year-old son with Minna, now his former wife, who was involved in running 2OR+BYYAT with Yat for years. Interestingly, Yat’s former wife is still perceived by many regular customers as *the* face of the 2OR+BYYAT label. In a business of image and spectacle, ‘appearance, and emotional displays are a vital part of the organization on show’, Gabriel (2008, 277) reminds us. Also, researchers in the field of critical organizational aesthetics (e.g. Hancock and Tyler, 2001; Hancock et al., 2015; Huopalaainen, 2016; Satama and Huopalaainen, 2016; Warhurst, Nickson, Witz, and Cullen, 2000; Witz et al. 2003) have noticed that the faces, expressions, clothes, bodies, gestures and movements of employees matter hugely, and taken together, these expressions become part of a powerful corporate aesthetic. If Gabriel (2008) views this aesthetic as a significant creator of value in plenty of contemporary industries, this certainly goes for the fashionable world, too.

In a variety of organizations, employees are expected to perform ‘a living, breathing part of the organisational brand’, Bloomfield and Dale (2015, 562) emphasize, and this is rarely surprising in the performative context of fashion. Although designers, creators and artists, may be expected to act like narcissistic peacocks with ‘a big head and a big mouth’, as Yat sarcastically described John Galliano on one of our trips to Copenhagen, Yat seems to work incredibly hard without making much noise about himself. To me, he struggles to seek exposure and visibility as a designer. Although Yat has worked in Finland for years, the Finnish press has written surprisingly little about him. Despite taking part of the fashion scene in Helsinki, Yat is according to his co-workers not a well-known designer, and his ‘unwillingness’ to stand out is perhaps surprising. Again, I find



certain ‘anti-market’ associations and romantic artistic aspirations vital here (e.g. Fine, 2004; Wikberg and Bomark, 2015). To Pierre, Yat does not actively seek attention, although it would benefit him and his company. This paradoxical invisibility in a context with an underlying *expectation* to fiercely stand out was also discussed on several occasions during fieldwork. Below, Pierre reflects upon the chief designer’s unwillingness to actively brand himself. Having followed Yat’s everyday work extensively, I recognize an interesting ambivalence between defending privacy and prioritizing artistic work on the one hand, and craving for name and ‘fame’ on the other (Gabriel, 2008).

**Pierre:** ‘To be honest, it’s been there for ten years, in Finland, but still people don’t recognize our brand. I think it needs to change, to do something else. Before it was working well, but it’s also because of Minna. I think she has the known face of the brand, and people think she was the designer. I think if the brand wants to change or have a good future, then Yat has to promote himself a bit more than before. Even he doesn’t like it, this is for the brand. He has nothing to loose. Already the name of the brand is difficult for the Finnish people to pronounce. If they can’t put a name on the face, they can’t remember.’

## PRESENTING PIERRE

In what follows, I will present Yat’s only full-time design assistant, Pierre, more thoroughly. When I began following 2OR+BYYAT in early 2013, Yat employed one full-time and one part-time design assistant. Due to a particularly difficult spring, Yat told me he was losing sleep<sup>41</sup> at night and had to *act*. Eventually, he had to let one of his assistants go. Currently, Yat employs design assistant Pierre, who carries a significant responsibility of the design processes and the everyday work in the studio and the shop. ‘I graduated in 2012 and I started my internship in 2OR+BYYAT in October 2012 for six months’, 28-year-old Pierre tells me during our interview in September 2014. Interestingly, he presents himself as a fashion *designer* and not an assistant. ‘I’m a fashion designer and I work for 2OR+BYYAT. I am assisting the head designer and the owner of the brand’, Pierre promptly puts it. In this thesis, I call Pierre a design assistant to distinguish him from chief designer Yat. ‘Design assistant’ is also the official title on Pierre’s business card. Similar to Yat, French Pierre has an international fashion background. He used to study law but changed to a private fashion education in Belgium before moving to Finland to gain practical working experience: ‘I was

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41 Although we commonly tend to regard sleep as a barrier to capitalism (Cederström and Spicer, 2015), Yat repeatedly tells me that he processes various ideas while sleeping. Capitalism entered his sleep long ago (see also Bloomfield and Dale, 2015). In this sense, Yat also indicates that his working body and creative mind never get to rest properly. He explains to me how creation and design largely operate in the realm of the unconscious, and leave marks.

in Haute Ecole Francisco Ferrer in Belgium in Brussels, it's three years study. I got the Bachelor's. After that, I decided to find some internship because I really needed to work and see how it is to really work in this fashion business. Because in school you know the theory, but after you have to practice', Pierre explains during the interview.

In a small company, then, Pierre does everything from design- and production-related work to selling, creating promotional materials, cleaning the shop and the studio, photographing items, organizing and updating the web shop, representing the company at sales events, attending social gatherings, and promoting the label at international fashion fairs. He designs and creates samples or specific parts of them, designs new patterns and works with shapes, but as previously indicated, it is usually the chief designer who is credited for the collections and the overall design expression (e.g. Kawamura, 2004; King and Vickery, 2014). Below, Pierre sheds light on his previous education. Interestingly, he emphasizes that the expectation of hard work was crucial already to him as a student as well as vital for the everyday life as an actual designer later in his career:

**Astrid:** 'If you think back about your school, what were the best things you learned in school...?'

**Pierre:** 'The best thing...'

**Astrid:** 'Or the most useful..., I don't know.'

**Pierre:** 'I don't know. Maybe how to be creative, or maybe the working, because we had a lot of projects to do, so we had to work a lot and we had deadlines. I think it was a really good school for this. Technically, it was really interesting and I think the amount of work was good, because I think it's a three year process, that you have to work a lot, and when you arrive in the real work and you work for a company, I'm glad that I have worked that much also at school. Because now I have to work a lot, also. But I'm already prepared.'

**Astrid:** 'How did you become interested in fashion in the first place?'

**Pierre:** 'I don't know. I just wanted to try it, because I didn't know what to do. I was studying law before, for three years and it was boring. I needed fun, a little bit of fun, and I like to take pleasure in doing things, so I decided to stop. I still like it, and I'm still interested in the law but I needed something more funny and more creative and I need to work with my brain and do something

different every day. It was just a suggestion by my mother, because she knew someone that was in a fashion school. And she told me ‘why don’t you try it?’ I tried in a private school. It’s like one year, that you learn the basics. Of course, I didn’t know anything. I had some skills with drawing, because I was drawing when I was young, but that’s it. I tried it for one year, which I didn’t finish because I didn’t like the school, but I liked the fact that I learned a lot and had some really good teacher and stuff like this. I wanted to continue this way, but not in this school, because it was really expensive school and I realized that you don’t need to pay so much to learn those kind of things. So, I decided to go to Belgium.’ (Interview with the design assistant, 12.9.2014)

In a small company, the professional relationship between the chief designer and his only paid co-worker becomes close and intimate. Meanwhile, it is not always easy to work ‘cheek by jowl’ with each other. From what I have observed, the relationship between Yat and Pierre is close, fairly direct and coloured by humour. Before the trip to Copenhagen in January 2014, Yat sends me a text: ‘Today I’ve also got the car roof ski box, Pierre now has plenty of room up there :D’. This is just one random example of the humour between Yat and Pierre. When the sleeping arrangements are decided in Copenhagen, Yat and Pierre end up sharing the small bedroom with two separate beds: ‘So we are roommates... unfortunately!’ Yat jokingly puts it to Pierre, followed by a quick ‘oh shit, I have the radiator behind my pillow. Maybe I can sleep in the bathtub!’

Although Pierre and Yat run 2OR+BYAT together, they see each other surprisingly little. This was the case as long as Yat ran two flagship stores in central Helsinki. Pierre usually arrives in the studio every morning to work for a few hours before moving to open the shop in Kluuvi shopping centre at 11 a.m, and closing it at 19 p.m. Since September 2014, Yat and Pierre both have worked in the only flagship store and combined studio. Pierre often makes fun of Yat being extremely cheap and ‘unorganized’ to work together with. At times, these manners also truly irritate him. For instance, one of the disasters on the runway in Copenhagen in January 2014 could easily have been avoided with an extra pair of tights, a ridiculously small investment. Specifically, a star model had entered the catwalk exposing her pale and bare legs, as the dressers had misunderstood that they were expected to share and swop the tights between the models in the show. ‘He could have bought another pair of tights, but he doesn’t want

to', Pierre laments as we walk over to the apartment late in the evening, feeling empty, exhausted and slightly post-runway depressed. He indicates that Yat's greedy manners can be really annoying. During the interview with Pierre, we discuss his close co-operation with Yat and the power dimensions involved. Pierre compares working with Yat with being in a relationship: 'it's almost like being a couple.' Although the two creative workers continue to learn from each other, Yat usually acts as the more powerful fashion 'authority' in this relationship:

**Astrid:** 'Did you learn everything by doing?'

**Pierre:** 'Yeah, with patience. I learned also how to work for someone that is really close and has strong knowledge and a strong point of view. It's not all the time mine. I think this is the best thing that I learned how to 'own' someone else's point of view or even a character. Someone else's reaction like on a daily basis. Like, you have to work with someone everyday...'

**Astrid:** 'You see each other all the time.'

**Pierre:** 'Yes, it's almost like being a couple.'

**Astrid:** 'For sure.'

**Pierre:** 'So you have to make compromises at times. It's even more true when you are under, like he is the boss, so I need to follow his rules, even though I have my own point of view, we can talk and there is no problem, but the thing is that you have to put in your head, like, hey, this is not your company. And of course, you have to know that he's the one that was here for many years, in this fashion world, for many years, so he knows better than you. I think in a way, I'm learning from him, but he's also learning from me. Because I have a new view, a fresh view.' (Interview with the design assistant, 12.9.2014)

Pierre emphasizes how his experienced boss, mentor and fashion master is currently the main reason to work for the label: Yat teaches Pierre everything he knows, and working for 2OR+BYAT is the best practical fashion school. It is not possible to learn such tacit, aesthetic and embodied knowledge elsewhere, at least not in Finland. Working for an 'old-school' designer is, perhaps, what true fashion is about to Pierre. During my study, Pierre also emphasized how practical working experience compensates for a relatively low monthly wage and the long working hours.

'Of course, when I came here, I knew what school gave me, but all the things that I learned here about the fabric, about the consumption, about the price of the garment, how to make good price with good quality, what yarn they use, how they use, stuff like this... It's like, something that you can't learn in three years; you have to learn it by touching the fabrics and also being with the customers. I think for this, Yat, of course he's in this business for many years and I think he started in a good period of fashion, in the '90s. In this kind of period, they had time to learn a lot and they didn't have problem to find a job or anything, they could learn with the best. I think it is really nice to be next to someone like this. You can't find this kind of experience or knowledge nearby a young designer that just started, or started five years ago, it's impossible. So this is really the true fashion that you care about quality, you care about finishing, and how the customer reacts and how they see your clothes, not just the style, but the quality, too. I think this is really important to learn next to someone that knows all these things.' (Interview with the design assistant, 12.9.2014)

'I don't really have a dream... I think my dream would be to not work. I think various people say that they can't stop working. I can, I really can. I would find something to do that is not work. In the fashion business, I really don't know what is my goal. I could say, to be successful, but it's not really my dream. I don't need to be successful. I think my dream would be to have my own brand, my own shop and to make a living out of it. Not to be worried about money so much.' (Interview with the design assistant, 12.9.2014)

If Pierre currently works for Yat, he has realized that it will not last forever. Like most of us, he does not really know what he would love to do in future. Above, Pierre describes his dream of eventually setting up his own label at some point. I find this an interesting, affective read. In addition to Pierre, fashion trainees from various design institutions in Finland serve as additional, inexpensive resources in the 'bricolage-reality' of a small company. Trainees and interns help out with the day-to-day work assisting Yat and Pierre in and out of the studio, usually for up to three months at a time. During my study, I followed several different trainees at 2OR+BYAT who were being incorporated into the fashion culture of hard work. Despite an official contract of 7,5 working hours

a day, trainees were both *expected* and *directed* to work a lot more. To a designer, trainees are simultaneously time-consuming ‘commitments’ that require plenty of attention, supervision and guidance. Naturally, they train to learn and need to be carefully instructed to learn to do things in the ‘right’ ways. Meanwhile, interns are ‘multi-tools’ working hard and doing much of the hidden manual job of fashion, preferably around the clock. We regularly discussed trainees and the ambiguous ‘give something-get something’ relationship during fieldwork. Ideally, Yat could learn something valuable from his trainees and interns. Specifically, I learned that Yat was happy to work with curious, ambitious and motivated trainees that could potentially contribute to his company. However, by no means were all internships experienced as successful, and both Yat and Pierre told me about lazy, unmotivated or uninterested students considered a burden.

#### NEGOTIATING FASHION’S BOUNDARIES AND ATTACHING TO COUTURE

‘Markets need boundaries to determine which objects are included and which are excluded, and boundaries presume labels’, writes Fine (2004, 3). In reality, these boundaries are often blurred and hazy. 2OR+BYAT is on its web page referred to as high fashion brand instead of a design label, a clothing line, a studio, a creative house or a concept. Consequently, I approach 2OR+BYAT as a label that opposes inherently fast, ‘low’ and mass-marketed fashion forms but still continuously relates to *all* existing and ever-changing ideas about fashion in the market. Although customers might not always ‘get it right’, it appears as if the image of 2OR+BYAT is tightly tied to Yat, an individual master, maker and auteur, which is, of course, common in the contexts of art and high fashion (e.g. Becker, 1982; Bourdieu and Delsaut, 1975; Fine, 2004; Volanté, 2012). As a designer, Yat relates to his sense of himself and others in the business of spectacle (Gabriel, 2008) by negotiating, affirming, accomplishing and challenging ideas about fashion, clothes, production and consumption in different ways. This implies that both creation and his identity construction are always situational, ever-changing, temporal and spatial. Unsurprisingly, Yat’s creative visions, skills and experience get woven into the materials of his makings. Simultaneously, it is not apparent *how* his makings are valued by others, interpreted or included





(or not) in the ever-changing context of high fashion. In a society of spectacle, consumers are known to be seduced by various human and non-human agents over and over (Gabriel, 2008). Meanwhile, today's consumers are by no means passive victims without agency. Rather, they actively dismiss, ignore, filter out or mistrust 'beautifying frames' and the plethora of commodified, affective experiences they are frequently bombarded with (Gabriel, 2005, 2008). This, I believe, is evident in the fashion context, too.

Whereas clothes commonly refer to functional and intelligent dress aspects (von Busch, 2009), fashion is – in common parlance – considered frivolous, signifying, symbolic and by definition short-lived (e.g. Barthes 1967/1983, Czarniawska, 2008; Kawamura, 2004, 2005). In this thesis, I approach 2OR+BYAT as a *fashion* label, well aware of the theoretical problems of this fluctuating notion, as well as the chief designer's explicit, often determined will to work 'against fashion' (see also Volanté, 2012). Like other designers, Yat frequently rejects fashions rhetorically (Volanté, 2012). Specifically, Volanté (2012, 409) suggests that 'fashion is not always an ideal to pursue' among designers, and this certainly makes sense in my empirical setting, too. Yat says at various occasions that he does not actually do fashion. To him, fashion is simply not interesting. Rather, he intends to create original, authentic and long-lasting material *clothes* independent from fluctuations and short-lived trends. It seems to me that the chief designer dislikes fashion's strong references to change, irrationality and frivolity: this is not where he wants to attach *his* soul and designer identity. Instead, he wants to be associated with what is intellectual, bold and lasting. The ideologically underpinned division between fashion and clothes is evident here. Meanwhile, I interpret Yat's attachment to 'higher' forms of craft and artistic creation as a form of fashion resistance. Perhaps this explicit attachment and form of resistance might reproduce a discourse of *perceived* authenticity and status (Volanté, 2012).

By following Yat's processes of self-organized creative work over time, I have noticed ongoing aspirations towards 'high end' forms of fashion. This higher orientation is also manifested in the ways in which the 2OR+BYAT workers actively relate to others and *position* themselves in the 'right' fashion company. For instance, attending *certain* fashion fairs in highly acclaimed cities such as Paris in France or Copenhagen in a Nordic setting constitutes specific, culturally laden and worthy fashion associations. Although fashion may be considered to be a performative 'show off' phenomenon, there is – meanwhile – nothing

really unique about wanting to stand out, oppose low-status forms of fashions or ‘educate’ consumers to buy less fast-fashion rubbish. This, it appears to me, is inherently part of (high) fashion’s constitutive performance. Moreover, if fashion follows ‘the conformist tyranny of originality, distinction’, as Becker (2014, 77) puts it, it does so in a larger social framework of always relating to others. Anything *in fashion* is by definition simultaneously an aspiration towards originality and uniqueness, as well as something shared and imitated (Esposito, 2011). Quite ironically, perhaps, it seems to me that those who ‘do’ exclusive and craft-intense high fashion tend to end up performing the part, too. Also, the ‘by Yat’ signature eventually silences the many persons involved in designing and constructing the apparel.

In an era of spectacle, fashion has, at least according to some, lost plenty of its heritage and cultural value (e.g. Clark, 2001; Evans, 2001, 2003). Fashions are today assumed to move incredibly fast by endlessly introducing ‘new styles, new shapes, new colours, new designers, always the new must-haves’, as Meadows (2012, 5) writes. ‘We are actually only asked to like these garments, believe and be absorbed by a story for six months. Then we will be asked to see and like others better, and will be asked to be surprised and delighted all over again’, Clark (2001, 347) critically puts it. Li Edelkoort recently predicted ‘the comeback of couture’, and the death of (fast) fashion as we currently know it.<sup>42</sup> Meanwhile, if a designer wants to embrace a more sustainable and slow world of craft and craftsmanship, it is not necessarily what image- and brand conscious consumers ‘trapped’ in the glass cage are looking for. Consumers crave for mystique, style and innovation, not for craftsmanship, Gabriel (2008) once suggested. Taken together, there is always an ambiguity about what the designer desires and decides to create, and what consumers eventually desire and feel attached to.

Despite the hybridity of fashion and operating in a ‘mishmash’ or crossover reality, perceived hierarchies of different fashion approaches – such as haute couture, low-end, middle-market and high street – still flourish today and affect the doings of Yat. If Yat often emphasizes that fashion is too shallow, shifting and short-lived to do justice to what he intends to create, he symbolically attaches to high-end couture, professionalism and the ‘true’ art of fashion. To

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42 <http://www.dezeen.com/2015/03/01/li-edelkoort-end-of-fashion-as-we-know-it-design-indaba-2015/>, accessed 31.5.2016.

Endrissat et al. (2015, 1562), 'enchanted work provides a sense of meaning and fulfillment', and this self-fulfillment becomes evident in my setting, too. Specifically, Yat emphasizes seeking opportunities for artistic expression, creativity and authenticity (Boltanski and Chiapello, 2005). He signifies working outside the 'mainstream' (whatever that is) and its questionable agendas. Meanwhile, he cannot ignore or reject the dominant norms and expectations of the (fast-paced) fashion system. In a sense, he does what everybody else does, and is likewise affected by the constant pressure to create collection after collection under various pressures to perform. If we tend to attach speed with 'lower' forms of fashion, also 'high' fashion is *defined* and run by speed. Meanwhile, the aspiration of 'being original', quite interestingly one of fashion's most replicated clichés (Czarniawska, 2011; Esposito, 2011), is also at the heart of Yat's design approach. Although to Yat (mainstream) fashion may represent something sad and soulless, others still categorize his creations as 'fashion', more broadly. Below, I illustrate how Yat negotiates and deliberately opposes frivolous fashion forms by constructing *designer* clothes as timeless and lasting 'daily necessities'. The intimate connection between clothes and the body is also manifested below:

'I hate to call this fashion because we spend all the energy creating something original. Fashion that is a strong statement with a timeframe. Fashion is... it is only slot into a certain period of time. But I try, you know... but unfortunately, we are cat, we are being categorised as fashion. So, but for myself this is not fashion, this is clothes. This is some clothes, products that we put on the body and we use on a daily base, that's something that is special and something that lasts in terms of look, style, quality, and... So that is a fine line between that, I think.'

'So therefore with the fashion, after three months probably, no one... it will be embarrassing to use it again but we try not to do those things. And in our philosophy, in my philosophy, in my opinion, I'm not interested in those things. So it's all related to the body form, all related to, to... to the necessity, daily necessity about the product itself, so of course we are highly restricted by seasons. Especially in the weather like this and, you have, I think it's mostly the winter, you need to be able to withstand the weather here. So, you know in that sense there's a lot of limitation. So we have to create and design according to the limitations, too.' (Interview with the designer, 2.10.2014)

## 2OR+BYYAT AND READY-TO-WEAR

Although many consumer objects have recently ‘de-materialized’ (Gabriel, 2015), the fashion world remains physically oriented. Designer clothes – like any other material clothes and objects, really – are created within a framework of limitations and constrained resources (e.g. Louridas, 1999; Kawamura, 2004a; Meadows, 2012). What Yat produces in his company is *ready-to-wear* designer apparel for self-conscious women and men, in addition to leather goods, bags, belts and bracelets. ‘Ready-to-wear’<sup>43</sup> or *prêt-à-porter* fashion is often described as ‘a cross between haute couture’<sup>44</sup> and the mass market’ (Meadows, 2012, 10). It is accessible and affordable compared to made-to-measure, but still special in its materialization of design talent and artistic vision (Meadows, 2012). To most people fashion *per se* is always prêt-a-porter, ready-to-wear – and it just keeps flooding us’, von Busch (2009, 33) reminds us. Currently, the 2OR+BYYAT clothes are mostly fabricated in small factories in Estonia and Turkey, and Yat emphasizes that all his makings are ethically produced throughout. Meanwhile, one could critically ask if designer clothes are any ‘kinder’, better or more sustainable to the environment than other manufactured consumer objects. There is, however, an expectation to be transparent and ethical. Whereas it is apparently important for Yat to be ‘authentic’ and true to the craft of high-quality *designer* clothes, the 2OR+BYYAT label cannot, however, be too artistic, avant-garde or conceptual in its doings.

Although an advanced ‘high’ fashion dimension is important for the value of fashion construction, both Pierre and Yat carefully point out that prices need to be ‘right’ for people to actually buy their makings. They are also sincerely concerned about people being seduced by unethical, cheap, disposable clothes, a timely topic often discussed in the field. The sizes of ready-to-wear are

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43 Today, ready-to-wear is a common, branded and fairly expensive form of fashion. Moreover, ready-to-wear is an extremely diverse market (Meadows, 2012) with different price points, product offers, strategies, and sub-levels such as luxury, high-end, mid-level, and premium design.

44 ‘Couture’ refers to the most artistic forms of top end fashion. In fact, haute couture is a legally protected term in France, ‘which can be officially used only by the designers who meet well-defined standards set by the institution Chambre Syndicale de la Couture’ (Meadows, 2012, 9).

standardized, although the amount of the produced garments tends to be low, Meadows (2012, 10) notes. This limitedness also constructs worth and status. Producing few pieces in each style is also typical for 2OR+BYAT. Some of the makings are unisex, and Yat continually experiments with designing for men. In 2013, Yat launched a small men's AW 13 collection of selected pieces, and he also produced another selection in 2014. However, dressier women's collections that include tops, skirts, shirts, jackets, coats, pants and dresses are currently in focus and considered 'safer' to produce in turbulent economic times.

If Yat intends to sell profitable apparel and accessories both directly in his flagship store in Helsinki and indirectly through a few retailers in Finland and abroad, the primary market is the domestic. On one occasion, Yat said that fifty percent of his sales come from Finland and the rest from abroad, which I believe is an optimistic estimation. It simply *sounds* impressive to export internationally. In difficult economic times exporting is extremely challenging, and this was evident throughout my study. Also, estimating production volumes beforehand is risky and difficult. During my study, the global financial crisis that began in 2007–2008 still heavily affected 2OR+BYAT, its production volumes, actual sales and retailers. I followed a designer slowly trying to recover and strengthen his label. Besides running a flagship store in central Helsinki, a web shop was launched in September 2012 to ship leather goods worldwide. Selling accessories online is 'safer' than clothes that require a fitting. Also, dealing with customer returns is an expensive struggle. Apparently, the majority of 2OR+BYAT online customers are already familiar with the label, and Yat rarely receives orders from complete strangers. The extract below illustrates the need to always be careful in fashion. The one and only retailer mentioned below is the Louisiana Museum of Contemporary Art in Denmark:

**Astrid:** 'Do you know in what countries 2OR+BYAT is currently sold?'

**Pierre:** 'I know in Denmark, and I think that's it. But before I think it was in a lot more countries, like Sweden and France also, Japan, a little bit in the United States, in many countries. But now I think, since 2008 it's getting smaller and smaller because people are really careful about buying. Of course, there are a lot of brands popping up and making a lot of money, but they also disappear really quick.'

**Astrid:** 'But you still have the web shop, do the international customers find your web shop...?'

**Pierre:** 'Yes, but they are not international customers, they are mostly Finnish that live abroad, they know us because they are Finnish, or they are friends of our customers. Mostly they are not new customers that found us on our website. Because it's difficult to buy on a web shop, because if you've just discovered the brand, you don't spend 200 euro for a bag that you don't know and you're from Canada.' (Interview with the design assistant, 12.9.2014)

## ON NAME, SIGNATURE AND WORTH

Naming is part of fashion's constructed worth and enchantment (e.g. Moeran, 2015) and everyone in fashion 'is intent upon making a name, because names detach themselves from the physical world of people and things, and like fragrance, circulate magically in the air', Moeran (2015, 215) suggests. The 2OR+BYAT brand name, generally difficult for Finnish customers to get 'right', is pronounced 'Two or Plus by Yat'. The name intends to reflect the multiplicity of creativity, and the richness of creation in the world. 'In order to create and evolve in the nature, two or more elements are required', the label's web page communicates. This is also the short version of the story behind the brand told to curious clients asking deeper questions. Different to disposable 'fashion rubbish' poorly made, Yat always constructs his apparel as well-crafted garments created out of passion and affection: 'This is designer fashion!' he points out as he gently touches his makings in the finest fibre in the studio, or even 'This is couture!' while he proudly discusses his sculptured one-of-a-kind creations with me. These verbal constructions and physical, embodied acts are – indeed – intended to create fashion worth and distinction.

Specifically, affective naming equally *marks* creations as authentic, 'real' and worthy forms of fashion, thus distinguishing them from cheaper and anonymous goods (e.g. Meadows, 2012; Volanté, 2012). Throughout history, fashion worth has been constructed through naming practices by exclusively 'signing' garments in draper's shops, department stores and couture salons in Paris from 'as early as 1780', Serrière (2012, 26) writes. Marking is one way of creating aura (Fine, 2004) and positioning the chief designer as an *artist* of

clothing. Certainly the 'By Yat' signature intends to indicate such originality. Moreover, I would describe Yat as a traditional, 'old school' designer in the sense that he possesses deep knowledge about textile creation and the feel and behaviour of material cloth. He has also mastered various techniques of weaving, printing and finishing. 'The designer, like the bricoleur, does not only speak with his work, he also speaks through his work', writes Serrière (2012, 19). This evident artistic aspiration and personalized approach to work has been present throughout my study.

2OR+BYAT derives value from associations with the skills of chief designer Yat with a cosmopolitan training and fairly impressive curriculum vitae. As such, Yat's creativity is embodied in his designs inscribed with 'significant elements of exclusive handwork and craftsmanship', as Khaire (2013, 46) puts it (see also Craik, 1994). To Yat, particular cuts, shapes and forms materialize worth, design thinking and aesthetic expression. 'It's in me and it's my signature', Yat proudly says about his makings, always part of *him* and his designer identity. Furthermore, 'real' human interaction is often considered intrinsic to value creation more broadly (Comaroff and Comaroff, 2001). In this way, it appears suffice to say that *enchantment* is in the business model (Endrissat et al. 2015) of 2OR+BYAT. Below, I present an example of how the Autumn/Winter 2015 collection is described on the label's web page, and how this presentation makes use of seductive language (Moaran, 2015) and glossy words to create worth:

'With references to the nature in the form of textures, organic shapes and versatile colour palette the collection interplays with metallic-like fabrics interweaved with lurex and matte sequins and asymmetrical cuts representing the modern fast-paced world that never sleeps. Stretch python woven jacquard, alligator skin texture and lively shades of petrol blue, forest green and misty purple remind us about the wild unknown – a world that never sleeps either. The colliding of the two worlds create [sic] a collection that is inventive, yet feminine and easy to wear. The combination of flamboyant materials and wearable silhouettes has these garments fall into the most demanding category of interesting day-to-night clothing. These elements form a collection that symbolises both quality and creativity in the most harmonious way.' (<http://www.2orplus.com/site/portfolio/2orbyyat-autumn-winter-2015/>, accessed 31.8.2015)



## 2OR+BYYAT IN A GLOBAL AFFECTIVE ECONOMY

'I think the item has to breathe. If it's really packed, for example the clothes are really packed, the people don't see an item by item, and it looks like a bazaar. When it's more clear and more spacey, it looks more expensive and the item looks special and unique. That makes the item looks expensive.' (Interview with the design assistant, 12.9.2014)

'It's always nice when the customer realizes that you are the designer, or you work as the designer for the brand. They are happy to meet you and talk to you. It's a really good selling point. But you have to be on the front page to let people take pictures of you. Be at the events, and be all over the place. You have to do that. I can't do that, because it's not my brand. That's true. He [Yat] has to go to all the possible events. There is one every year, you *have* to go.' (Interview with the design assistant, 12.9.2014)

As has become clear by now, 2OR+BYYAT is part of a complicated global business that I approach as an affective economy. Above, then, Pierre emphasizes the centrality of performance anxiety, embodied encounters, space, visibility and standing out in the ever-changing fashion context. To be in fashion is about being *active* and being seen, Pierre indicates. Specifically, it is about constantly talking and being loud, moving, mingling and being 'all over the place' (impossible!), which sounds stressful. To me, a great deal of anxiety and uncertainty is present in the context of this affective economy. In this context, 'doing' fashion seems to be stressful and difficult. As a designer, artist, craftsman and entrepreneur all in one, Yat wants his creations to *move* a selected crowd that sincerely appreciates his handicraft. To him a dress is not 'just' a dress, but a mixture of aesthetics, affection, material quality, fabric, pattern, details, cuttings and form. A dress performs a moving entity that is supposed to look good on the body, reflect the wearer's personality and identity, and give long-term pleasure, confidence and joy. I learn that Yat values customers who understand the work that goes into each piece and want to pay for it accordingly. In this sense, affect and commitment is highly relevant here.

By designing clothes, a designer intends to create long-lived (or not) affection that materializes and resonates in clothing objects, and the consumer's

affective self-performance intends to respond to these affective things available. Naturally, designers intend to *affect* audiences through the circulation of (commodified) desires, and they want consumers to *act* on (buy, consume, enjoy) their design objects affectively and with a 'gut feeling'. A constructed, commodified 'fashion experience'<sup>45</sup> comprises not only the material product itself. Rather, emotions, atmospheres, spaces, encounters, the excitement around the brand of the designer and the accumulation of affect are all vital here. From a consumer's perspective, then, fashion often involves buying into specific lifestyles, consumer dreams and associations (Moeran, 2010, 2015), thus representing privileged, affective forms of consumer luxury bound up with intensity, *touch* and the feeling of the garment on the skin. In today's affective experience economies, privileged consumers are relatively free to choose which experiences to invest in or not. If doing in a highly individualized, self-expressive context is generally taking over from 'having' (Boltanski and Chiapello, 2005), consumers might ponder whether or not to invest in immaterial experiences or material joys, for example. Specifically, a designer's competitors are not solely the other design labels in the proximate environment, on the Internet or in any geographical corner of the world. Instead, the many agents of an experience economy, like the shopping mall that refuses to be an 'ordinary' mall (Murtola, 2011), the adventure tour, the local restaurant, the customized weekend trip, the rock club and the beauty parlor, have all become competitors.

If design often represents highly personal creation to the designer her/himself, Yat points out that shaping desires or creating *desirable* material things in uncertain economic times connects to the difficulty of creating 'services', or what I understand as creating commodified *affective* experiences. 'We try to present what... people might desire... what people may be looking for', Yat vaguely puts it to me, demonstrating a deliberate intension to produce affective desires for his products. Affect and fuzzy 'desire-production' is highly relevant here, and central to the society of the spectacle more broadly (Gabriel, 2005, 2008). Meanwhile, the production of desire in fashion, as I see it, is ambiguous and not necessarily associated with 'lack' or the lack of an object (see Johnsen,

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45 For instance, Schmitt (2010, 6) defines experiences as 'perceptions, feelings and thoughts that consumers have when they encounter products and brands in the marketplace and engage in consumption activities'.

2015). Deleuze and Guattari suggest that desire works like a complex ‘machine’ that ‘does not lack anything; it does not lack its object’ (1972/1983, 26). According to Johnsen (2015), who discusses the work of Deleuze and Guattari more deeply, the paradoxical and ‘circular logic’ of desire actually *connects*. ‘Desire is connections, to desire is to produce connections’, Sørensen (2005, 123) exemplifies. Producing affective desires that *connect* and *attach* human beings to material things becomes hugely important in my empirical setting, too.

Yat needs to survive in a capitalist system where his label would be ‘killed off’ if his affective makings fail to connect and *move* designated audiences, *circulate* among them, and sell through. Meanwhile, the fashion economy is highly unpredictable, and Yat regularly points out that people are currently quite careful to buy at all. He regularly complains about the underdeveloped Finnish scene, and how consumers, in general, lack design appreciation and deeper understanding for his makings. Yat often describes the economy as ‘bad’, exhausting and seriously difficult. ‘People have less reason to be crazy about shopping nowadays’, Yat also says, which we might connect to the emergence of larger, global consumer trends in our society (e.g. Gabriel and Lang, 2006). Also, the unpredictabilities of fashion have forced Yat to react, work around things, continually re-organize his business, and simply ‘cut a lot of things that we don’t need’. Meanwhile, it appears as if the designer remains both overworked and underpaid. In the second interview extract below, Yat touches upon the exhaustion and stress of being in a ‘bloody hard’ business of endless creation and innovation, which I relate to embodied experiences, emotions and the circulating of bodily affects:

‘I think, in our... in what we do, we rely on retailers; we rely on people to buy. We’re not doing, we are also kind of doing services, because we try to present what... people might desire... what people may be looking for. And I’m talking a little bit, abstract way. And... so, in that sense, the people, they have less... they do have desires but they have less, less reason... [ponders] to be crazy about shopping nowadays. So they do, there’s still the same, even the same gang of people. They think a little bit more carefully, and.... People do have money but they are not in such a rush to buy things, probably. So therefore, we have to restructure and we have to cut a lot of things that we don’t need. It would be a.... [ponders], because it’s becoming a little bit unpredictable, nowadays, with the businesses.’ (Interview with the designer, 2.10.2014)



'At the moment this is, yes, it's a business, yes; it's keeping us going. And, yes, it's bloody hard with the... Probably, this is some of the hardest time I have seen, in the whole career. Especially in this country, I think, is very slow and very... well, it's not slow but this is not, this is very hard time here in Finland so, and... but we are still continuing doing it, so...'. (Interview with the designer, 2.10.2014)

Pierre, then, regularly talks about doing 'true fashion' in a 'proximity business' or being in 'an honest business', which I find truly interesting. Does the emphasis on authentic, affective *ideals* relate to the positioning of the humble designer with an entrepreneurial self as 'a true self' (Johnsen, 2015)? Do these words also

capture the centrality of affect in playing the game in this context? Specifically, Pierre distinguishes between craft-intense, honest and authentic designer-fashion and less authentic, unethically produced mass fashion. Meanwhile, he indicates that many design labels are merely concerned with producing the latter. Unlike soulless and exhaustive fast fashion, 2OR+BYYAT creates timeless and craft-intense material objects inscribed with care, affection and authenticity. To Pierre and Yat, this is indeed ‘the real thing’. Again, I identify a significant yearning to create something outstanding that reveals both ‘soul and heritage’ (Fine, 2004, 275). Authenticity appears central to this high-end creation and the construction of fashion worth more generally, which meanwhile risks reproducing fairly romantic images of artistic creation as ‘pure’.

‘We are in a fashion business, but I think we are in between... Until now, I think we didn’t have the hype; we were not in every magazine or all the parties and stuff like that. I think it’s like the true fashion. The real one. Not the one that you see on pictures, it’s the one that you live, where you can meet the customer and the customer can meet the designer and you’re close to everyone. I think this is that kind of business we are in, proximity business. To have your own small shop, working there, makes you closer to the real customer. It’s good to meet the people and to be simple. Yeah, you might be the owner, or the designer of the brand, but you’re still like normal regular people. It’s not because your picture is in a magazine, you have to sell your product more expensive than the real normal price. I think our prices are good because we always try to make the prices according to our customers and not to cheat on them. I think we try to have an honest business.’ (Interview with the design assistant, 12.9.2014)

Researchers have illustrated how fantasies might be used or manipulated to constitute capitalist *desires* for authenticity (e.g. Gabriel, 2008; Johnsen, 2015). To me, what Pierre says here reproduce such ideals and fantasies about the authentic and pure *art* of fashion. By portraying his employer’s approach to business as honest, Pierre also reconstructs an unethical and dishonest picture of the mainstream fashion economy. The following examples pulled from my interview with Yat build upon these ideas further. Specifically, Yat explains how he carefully evolves his designs, reproducing certain styles from the past (rather

than creating something radically new each season), thus opposing and resisting an economy obsessed with the fetish of novelty only for the sake of novelty (see also Esposito, 2011; Volanté, 20112). Meanwhile, he illustrates the paradox and, perhaps, the impossibility of ever gaining a 'bigger audience' while staying true to craft, as well as certain 'authentic', artistic ideals that the designer himself believes in. To me, this constant tension between opposing 'bad' and frivolous forms of fashion and embracing craft and striving to create something *advanced* connects to contradictions about standing out vs. fitting in, which are found at the heart of the affective economy of fashion more broadly:

'I have to say that, if you want to have a, bigger audience, unfortunately, I have to say that, I'm sorry to admit that, you can't be too advanced, and you can't be too late. That is the sad part. This is what we call fashion. Because I'm not doing so much of a fashion, therefore I will never have that kind of future audience. Probably I won't. I don't know if it's good or bad but hopefully we will have a huge audience but it's still not doing fashion. That is the, fine line between that. So if you want to have a, huge audience, you can't do things too advanced and, you can't do things too late. Some of the items we're still evolving, we're still doing it, the wing coat and, certain cutting is ten years and I'm still selling it. So, at the beginning I didn't sell any for the first two seasons, but I believed in it. I think it is original, it's good, the item is flattering, on a body. [...] So it took two-three season before people buy it. When you know something, when you know this is belongs to you, why do you ignore it, why do you throw it away? This belongs to me, that particular cut, that particular way of thinking. It's in me and it's my signature. I'm not gonna change my DNA with that. So I think you need to be quite stubborn, to do that. Of course you need to afford to be able to be stubborn, in a certain sense. Stubborn in a nice way. So you need to have the belief in doing certain things and you need to know how to improve that too and how to evolve that. [...] Those certain elements that, you know, when you have been here for so long that you know how to evolve that. It comes with time.' (Interview with the designer, 2.10.2014)

So, 2OR+BYAT operates on the margins of a 'saturated' affective economy, and struggles for its existence among a myriad of other designer-driven labels

in Finland and abroad. Both Yat and Pierre emphasize their design expression as an outstanding competitive advantage, while both are realistic about the never-ending difficulties of doing what they desire and believe in for a living. ‘It is bloody hard’, Yat regularly puts it in a manner that I *feel*, too. If today’s fashion consumer is a privileged bricoleur mixing impressions and expressions primarily for (self-)presentational and performative reasons (e.g. Barnard, 2002; Marion and Nairn, 2011), then *all* labels in any price category are Yat’s potential competitors. Although Pierre remains concerned about 2OR+BYAT lacking of visibility, he indicates that 2OR+BYAT does not benefit from being part of an established design network in Helsinki. Quite interestingly, relationships with other designers are not considered that important, while certain forms of visibility in *certain* fashion networks still matter hugely. Interestingly, this rejection of others and emphasis on individuality is apparently part of the rhetoric of the fashionable world (Volanté, 2012), and perhaps typical for neoliberalistic values more broadly. Each designer wants to emphasize his or her difference ‘with respect to a system often censured for the standardization and conformism of behaviors’, Volanté summarizes (2012, 414).

‘I think there is this Finnish group of new designers, youngsters. It’s maybe because Yat is not Finnish, or the name doesn’t look Finnish, but we have our own identity, we don’t work the same way as they do. These people, they stick together and they do their scenes together, but it’s not really important to be in that kind of group, because these people don’t really sell their stuff.’ (Interview with the design assistant, 12.9.2014)

#### ‘YOU NEED TO LOVE US TO BUY US’

##### – ON CUSTOMERS, CONSUMER DESIRES AND DREAMS

‘But then, if it’s difficult to sell, it doesn’t mean that I will stop it. Otherwise, if I compromised too much I won’t be interested in this anymore, so I still like to do something, like the pants the lady was trying, the check pants. I still like to see those things. I know that it’s hard to sell it. And I still like to see that, and it’s so great that I saw the customer trying one of that interesting pants and, it’s not difficult at all! It’s not, crazy, it’s not strange! It’s all in your mind

how you're gonna put it together and how you feel when you wear things. So, it's also a psychology, that you are, educating a customer to... you are giving confidence to your consumer.' (Interview with the designer, 2.10.2014)

'You know, you can't apply the old strategy OK, you invite the people and you expect the people to come and see the collection and buy the collection. And it doesn't work like that. I have students coming from Aalto, they do the same pattern of what they learn, imitation. But you know there is nothing, there's no result, no one shows up. So it's not that simple. And... Because you need to evolve yourselves a lot and you need to... So you need to... keep up, with the, with what is happening. Of course you need to approach people and you need to sell, and you need to be active on the selling. But at the end of the day you need to have something special. You need to *be* special, you need to have something that is still desirable. Special maybe too special, people like to talk about it, people like to look at it but they don't buy. So it's all, you need to do everything correct, everything right to... , in order to be able to sell, yeah.' (Interview with the designer, 2.10.2014)

Firat and Venkatesh were already aware in 1995 that dualism between producers and consumers is completely out-of-date. Contemporary consumers relate to producers and vice versa in complex, ambiguous and hybrid ways (e.g. Gabriel, 2005; Gabriel and Lang, 2006), and this appears evident in my empirical setting, too. Building upon the ideas central to an affective economy as discussed previously but without turning to psychoanalysis, I believe Yat feeds his clients commodified fantasies, confidence, adorned dreams and even 'unrealized unconscious desires' (Gabriel, 2015). 'It's also a psychology, that you are, educating a customer', Yat vaguely puts it above. The fashion consumer experience is always fractured (Breward and Evans, 2005), affective and emotional. Like the bricoleur, Yat puts himself and his emotions into his creations. Also, he is not prepared to compromise too much in this regard. If his designs depart from his creativity, they must equally express him and his customer. Above, Yat talks about the difficulty of creating the 'right' kind of customer experiences: 'you need to do everything correct, everything right', he promptly puts it. To do so, he indicates that one must 'keep up with what is happening', and in this sense, constantly be sensitive to what is 'in fashion', really.



Although I focus on the production-side of fashion, consumers are a constant ‘present presence’ to Yat, and his customer experiences and encounters allow for ambivalence and nuance (Gabriel, 2005). In the two quotes presented below, Yat emphasizes, again, how his makings require deeper conceptual *understanding* and design appreciation. Hence, Yat’s clientele is rather limited to those who appreciate his creative work and conceptual designs, and are passionate about its distinct aesthetics:

‘...At the end of the day, we need to attract the people that understand this kind of work. There’s no point for me to, I have this interesting cut, coat, jacket ... The people in Haukilahti, yes, they have money, they will go to the Hanko regatta, but they will buy maybe Gant, kind of... as creative as Gant, or Tommy Hilfiger. So they are clearly not my kind of customers. To protect my things, I will just keep on evolving, keep on concentrating on what I believe is right to do and what I think is beautiful, affordable and looks good, as good as you can get, from that limitation.’ (Interview with the designer, 2.10.2014)

**Astrid:** ‘How about customers, how would you describe, I mean, you probably have a wide range of different customers?’

**Yat:** ‘It is... Actually, it’s not. In terms of the, I think our customer is quite, it is a little bit more clear. But nowadays maybe slightly wider, but not a wide range... Because for example we don’t have the lower income category people. Because they will not understand why the coat has this kind of big collar and things like that. My collection has a lot of abstract form and odd cutting. Something that is..., it’s not just clothes that you expect clothes to be. And so therefore we tend to attract certain, certain people, the people who might ask a little bit more questions, in a different perspective. So therefore, it’s actually... yeah, it’s not, we’re not... and also because of our price. So therefore it’s not the lower income category is... We have hardly had those kinds of consumers. But having said that, what is a lower income and how low cost the garment is? Some of the pieces we have, is actually very cheap [laughs]. So, it’s, it’s about the, there is certain mentalities...’ (Interview with the designer, 2.10.2014)

Quite interestingly, Yat’s clientele is constructed of a group of highly educated achievers in society and not the ‘lower income category people’ of suburbia.

If we discuss clientele, Yat often refers to career-oriented, urban women with good positions in society. He mentions architects, doctors and other high-status knowledgeable workers rather than ‘the underpaid polyester-class’ (Skeggs, 1997), fast food waitresses, cleaners or stay-at-home mothers. The clients Yat desires represent a contemporary creative class, and a class dimension is present in these constructions. His regulars are *busy* workers, which is arguably desirable in contemporary capitalism (Cederström and Spicer, 2015; Stewart, 2007). Yat’s customers do not necessarily have the time to shop, but they are important enough to dress up. Even the former president of Finland is a regular, a fairly proud designer mentions. Also Pierre frequently portrays 2OR+BYAT customers in similar ‘high-profile’ manners:

‘I think our customer is more like 30–50, 60 years old ladies that are comfortable with money and like designer clothes. We have designers, architects, lawyers, we have a big panel of customers, but I think they have their feet on the ground, they are not looking for the hype... They are looking for good quality and good price, of course. Even for some customer it doesn’t matter. They’re looking for a special design and quality.’ (Interview with the design assistant, 12.9.2014)

Yat often says that ‘you need to love us to buy us’. In this sense, 2OR+BYAT is not a label for ‘everyone’, and the clientele in Finland is geographically focused in Helsinki. If I have indicated that the 2OR+BYAT clientele is dominantly ‘upper middle class’ or relatively wealthy, it has been too narrowly and stereotypically portrayed, especially as I observed ‘ordinary’ women and men of all ages purchase the designer’s products at various sales events throughout my study. In addition, Yat often describes his customers as brave enough to stand out sartorially. In other words, Yat indicates that his clients have got style and guts to be ‘anti-fashionable’. Below, Yat explains how creation is about balancing between profiting and staying true to one’s certain design principles.

‘In terms of pricing we try to make as much profit as possible, as much margin as possible [laughs]. And now, this is business. Because a lot of things that, a lot of times that we can’t. Because of what we want to achieve, and, in terms of the product itself, in terms of the look, the style, the quality of cloth. You know some of the cloth is at the same prices what other brand can sell the whole

garment for, you know, so what can we do? So we need to do something different and we need to do something that, people can, people would not be able to do but... In terms of the pricing, yes, the profit margin, we try to make as much profit margin as possible.' (Interview with the designer, 2.10.2014)

#### EVERYDAY FASHION BRICOLAGE

'Every day is quite different. There is always a new task to do, so it can be designing, planning the production, choosing fabric, organizing the back room, organize and pack for an event, doing some design for the advertisement, uploading the web shop, updating the website. [...] Selling. Selling in the shop. This is like taking care of our production. E-mailing the supplier and the factory, ordering fabric, making patterns. Taking pictures, having a shooting. I mostly can do everything.' (Interview with the design assistant, 12.9.2014)

Designers, like all of us, 'live in a world of family, friends, coworkers, and acquaintances' Fine (2004, 124) reminds us. Doing fashion involves a designer and his proximate team coordinating manufacturing practices, organizing press events, sending e-mails, working from home, calculating production costs, estimating risks, taking chances, working on collections on tight schedules, arriving in the studio early in the morning and leaving late at night, performing photo shoots, giving interviews, serving customers, updating the web shop, packing orders, planning collections, cleaning up creative 'messes' as well as packing and unpacking things for business trips. Sometimes, doing fashion includes pretending to make huge efforts appear 'effortless', convincing critical gatekeepers of the design team's intelligence and taste, or selling affective dreams. In this sense, Yat and Pierre act as everyday *bricoleurs* in a small company continually facing constraints. In their work context, bricolage requires imagination, resources, connections and adequate skills (e.g. Atkinson, 2006, 2010; Baker et al. 2000; Baker and Reed, 2003; Baker and Nelson, 2005), such as creativity, a careful aesthetic and commercial eye, deep commitment and extensive (tacit) knowledge, excellent personal networks, good negotiating skills, appropriate business skills, creative problem solving skills and, above all, dedicated, persuasive hard work, as fashion is continuously worked upon.

INTRODUCING 2OR+BYAT



The two workers experiment and create three-dimensional forms for a living. Still, their day-to-day work tasks vary. Besides regularly creating new prototypes, forms, lines and cuts, Yat and Pierre decide on pricing, draw up contracts, write bills, update the website and sell merchandise in the shop. Their everyday running of business is tied to disciplined e-mailing, meeting certain deadlines, having ongoing discussions with factories, answering press and sales inquiries, sending collection photos to the press, cleaning the shop, updating Facebook, meeting customers, and so on. It appears to me as if the two workers often draw upon existing knowledge to go about solving problems. Also, they learn things by doing and improvise all along the way. As bricoleurs, they make do with materials, processes, helping hands, trainees or whatever just happens to be around them to create fashion value. Specifically, Pierre and Yat coordinate all of the production and the sales themselves, and this also goes for the PR, visibility and event planning. Design is actually only a small part of their daily work activities. Dealing with suppliers takes a great deal of time, relating to fashion's never-ending problem-solving of negotiating with existing suppliers, finding new and better ones, and trying to be flexible with the constant changes involved:

'Usually the suppliers tell us the minimum for production. But sometimes, they can also be flexible. And it changes every year. There are some suppliers that don't want to work with us anymore, because we order just a little amount, and they just skip us, even for the samples. They just tell us that we're too small and they don't want to work with us. [...] You have to find new fabric, or to skip that fabric. And in this line of work, if you're a small company, you don't have so many choices. But we are mostly using the same companies, because we know them and they have worked with us for a long time.'  
(Interview with the design assistant, 12.9.2014)

To Duymedjian and Rüling (2010, 146), the strengths of bricoleurs lie in their ability 'to assemble heterogeneous resources by following a performance logic rather than the accepted general principles of any particular profession'. Although it remains unclear to me what the general principles of the design profession might actually comprise, this 'performance logic' and practice of 'working around' (Atkinson, 2010) things applies in fashion, too. There is apparently also no 'typical' working day, although each day usually involves intensive working

time (Bloomfield and Dale, 2015): long hours, devotion, hard work and effort are emphasized throughout, whereas certain practices are prioritized over others. If Pierre views ‘image creation’ and branding as important, there is, in reality, not always enough time to engage with these affective and ‘immaterial’ practices. In everyday business life, production and sales are always prioritized over other less crucial practices. Pierre’s answers remind us how the manipulation of aesthetics and affects is hugely important for the creation of fashion value:

**Pierre:** ‘I like branding; I’m really picky about how the shop looks and how the image of the brand looks. But in a way, it’s really difficult to renew everything, because when you are only two people working together, this is the last thing you do, because you need to sell, you need to create the collection. You really need to take time and it takes money just to do the name tag and to do the advertisement, just to do the new logo, or do something else. I don’t know, just how simply it looks in the shop, it’s really important to me. And I know it’s important to Yat, but he doesn’t take time to do this. He cares, but he prefers not doing this, but doing other things. And it will be the first thing that I would do if I see that the shop is messy, I will just clean it and arrange things. Because I think that’s a good selling starting point.’ (Interview with the design assistant, 12.9.2014)

## WORKING ALL THE TIME

### – ON SELF-DISCIPLINING THE WORKING BODY

**Astrid:** ‘Since you’re an entrepreneur, what would you describe as your daily work tasks, I mean, what are you doing in practice, what can it be...?’

**Yat:** [laughs] ‘Too much. Too much or nothing. The daily tasks, oh gosh. I try not to have a routine but it’s true that there is, it is as simple as that. You always have that because again we’re living in a society and I have a duty of reporting the sales [laughs] and business and stuff like that so we are talking about invoicing and bookkeeping and all those boring stuff. But I think the, certain, ... that is about running the business, which is also important. But for me, and I try to focus on the creation of the collection, which is... I have to, I mean, I can tell you that I work all the time. Whenever, I’m awake, or even

when I'm sleeping, too. There is something clicking all the time and I'm quite, you know, I'm quite... I keep my eyes open all the time with a lot of things and, also talking to people and looking for certain things that it might, reflect me to, something else. I might evolve that into something else, so... it's all about, imagination and, curiosity and, you're asking yourself questions about certain things you need to be curious in order to create. If you don't, then... I don't know what people call creation.' (Interview with the designer, 2.10.2014)

Fashion is a devotion or *lifestyle* that blurs any boundaries between 'work' and 'leisure'. The interview example cited above, offers a glimpse at a seemingly busy working context that requires the designer to remain entrepreneurial and self-reliant. As a designer-entrepreneur, Yat emphasizes that he is 'working all the time', and in this sense, he is constantly self-managing his working body to *perform*. Interestingly, Yat argues that there is always 'something clicking', even when he is asleep. Specifically, Yat constructs himself as someone producing some kind of order (Rhodes and Westwood, 2008) out of the endless, diverse impressions he encounters in his sleep and while awake. To me, it appears as if anxiety is written on his working body, which carries out activities in 'the context of the dominance of neoliberal discourses' (Kenny and Bell, 2014, 4). These discourses encourage Yat to present and *perform* a responsible and hard-working entrepreneurial self through techniques of *self-disciplining* his body and mind (see Kenny and Bell, 2014). To others, his lifestyle might seem excessively work-dominated, and Yat tells me about how he is always working. 'I only believe in hard work, otherwise you don't deserve it', he says about possible success, and again, there is something very neoliberal and masculine in his expression. In a sense, Yat presents himself as a morally responsible human being to whom hard work is a dedication and a way of being in the world. This being 'always on', as discussed by Cederström and Spicer (2015), appears typical for fashion entrepreneurship more broadly. Nevertheless, it is difficult in practice to be 'always on', and still find new ways to *surprise* people:

'It's almost like 24 hours per day. 7 days a week. Because even when you're not in the studio, you still think about it. [...] It's really difficult to shut down when you have to do something, and you always have to do something, and something new, so you have to make your brain work all the time. Of course,

if you work in administration, you have to do paper, it's always new paper, but it's always the same kind, you know how to do it, but you don't have to be creative. Here, you have to be always creative. New ways to surprise people. It takes a lot of time.' (Interview with the design assistant, 12.9.2014)

Pierre's comments above convey values central to a discourse of neoliberalism. It might even be interpreted that both Yat and Pierre perform contemporary extreme workers (e.g. Bloomfield and Dale, 2015; Cederström and Spicer, 2015), inherently productive (and healthy) entrepreneurial bodies that must always remain productive (Cederström and Spicer, 2015) in order to meet norms of self-discipline, personal responsibility and entrepreneurialism (Kenny and Bell, 2014). Following Bloomfield and Dale (2015), I approach 'extreme work' as uncertain work that is carried out in unpredictable, high-pressure and risky situations, often causing experiences of stress, sleep deprivation, trauma and so on. Of course, how people tolerate various physical and emotional demands is certain to differ (ibid, 2015), and as researchers, we face difficulties and problems when we try to distinguish between 'extreme work' and 'normal work' (ibid, 2015, 556). Nonetheless, I approach Yat as a contemporary creative extreme worker who must continue to innovate and surprise his audiences in an endless and exhausting cycle of production. Despite lacking the finances, he must find ways to keep up with the demands, social expectations and speed of fashion

Paradoxically, perhaps, Yat is both constrained and relatively 'free' at once. During the course of my study, Yat has frequently considered the option of moving his company abroad. A desire for a 'free', bohemian life marked by spontaneity and creativity is manifested in his talk, and Yat's stance towards life in general appears mobile, flexible and restless. I wonder if mobility and unpredictability is significant for the fashion practice more broadly. 'The bricoleur does not have a clear end in sight, rather a vaguely defined project whose characteristics will be determined by what is available and how it can be assembled' Marion and Nairn (2011, 31–32) suggest. Yat's bricolage-like reality means doing different design projects here and there, always improvising, changing plans and usually, living from hand to mouth. Also, bricolage essentially unfolds over time (Atkinson, 2010). Yat regularly admits that working from Helsinki is not particularly good for him. I sense that he tries to live in the moment and does not, for instance, worry too much about his future to save for retirement or invest in Finnish



pension funds: 'I don't even know if I'm in the country anymore!' he rather carelessly expresses. As the interview extract below intends to illustrate, Yat makes up his future plans as he goes along sorting many sudden ideas. He cannot govern 'the rules of action' (Duymedjian and Rülmg, 2010) for himself, but moves along facing varied 'performance imperatives'. This ongoing sorting and picking of ideas in a bricolage-intense reality becomes manifested in the designer's speech below:

**Yat:** 'People are lazy, including me [...] and I don't have to be based here. It's not a great place to based I have to say, in terms of a company. I'm just telling very straightforward. [...] With all the things that... I'm giving I don't think it's worth basing here. But I'm lazy and I have been set up here. There would be a lot of challenge for me to reset up myself elsewhere. For example England will be a lot better place, particular in my case. [...] Tax reason and also exposure, the amount of traffic, the market, the volume of the market. Why Helsinki? You have totally five million people here, and you have 800 000 people in Helsinki, greater Helsinki area. But then when you go to Vantaa [a city next to Helsinki], when you go to Kirkkonummi [a municipality in the metropolitan area], or Tapiola... So, are they my customers? We are talking about just a fraction of this 800 000 people. So is there any point for me to be here? I would say no, I don't need to be here. But, again... This is also a process that I have been considering for a long time. A lot of time I have been thinking about consequences, what if... So, that is also in my agenda. I have been making quite a few assumption and calculation about moving away. It's still in my agenda, and it can still happen. At the moment, there is a lot of changes within, myself, personally as well as... personally and, not publically but... in terms of company. What's that term?'

**Astrid:** 'Professionally.'

**Yat:** 'Professionally, voilà. Professionally. So professionally, it's not much change really but I'm just scaling down and things like that. This is also, I believe, I'm doing it subconsciously, to cut down, the Kluuvi shop, the contracts end after three years, thank God. So that now I'm happy and I'm a little bit more light and mobile. So therefore, I think probably that's the reason. But this is all subconsciously. And when I say subconsciously yes and no, really. So I think that this is a path that I'm going to. So it's naturally, I am

proceeding with that path. Sometimes, when you go home, you don't think how do you go home. You just go home. That is the nature of what step I am taking. So I think, in that sense, yes. But then, having said that, going through all this process, about, re-establish myself, maybe in London or in France or even in, Asia somewhere, Hong Kong and I'm also thinking about, a show in New York also but... So, there's a lot of ideas but, to process the ideas is another matter, and does, require a lot of capacity. Meaning work capacity as well as financial capacity. So it's not about how many ideas we have but how many ideas we can realize and make that happen. You don't need too many ideas but you need to do one good thing, two good things is already enough to, rather than, trying to do so many things that eventually everything collapse.' (Interview with the designer, 2.10.2014)

Plenty could be said about the lengthy interview extract above, as it reflects subjective experiences of fashion in interesting ways. For instance, the extract renders visible the importance of change – and meanwhile – the desire to find provisional stability in the continuous changes of fashion. This contradictory desire to be flexible yet 'formal' to some extent reflects a common paradox in organization theory. Meanwhile, change and reforms are totally normal to Yat, and he constantly goes on reforming himself and his label. A willingness to be mobile and the necessity of scaling down to survive are significant. His life is not carefully considered, although it is passionately lived. 'Stress is the lingua franca of the day', Stewart (2007, 43) writes. 'Stress can motivate you, or it can puncture you, leaving you alone in times of exhaustion, claustrophobia, resentment, and ambient fear' (ibid, 43). Stress was constantly present throughout my study, and Yat often finds himself reflecting upon the positive sides of perpetual stress. To him, planning means being open and ready for any possibilities that are, in fact, unexpected and not part of any well-defined plan. During his career, Yat has experienced a repertoire of short-term projects, typical for creative work more generally (Eikhof and Haunschild, 2006). This previous project-based experience is crucial when it comes to shaping what 2OR+BYAT both 'is' and 'does' today. Duymedjian and Ruling (2010, 148) emphasize that the bricoleur's repertoire is 'closely tied to the bricoleur's knowledge and worldview', which is constituted over time. This appears significant to Yat, too.



PART V  
BRICOLAGE PRACTICES

'This is fashion business! This is crazy!'

(YAT ON SELLING FOR PRICES THAT DO NOT EVEN COVER  
THE PRODUCTION COSTS, FIELD NOTES FROM 7.9.2014)





## ANALYZING BRICOLAGE

Bricolage is a fundamentally common, spontaneous, emerging and embodied-material organizing activity, and a promising notion for us to analyze the dynamic actions of everyday organization in motion (Rhodes and Westwood, 2008). Bricoleurs find themselves acting spontaneously in the middle of 'messy' organization, experiencing moments of triumph and success, but also anxiety, failures, mistakes and happenstances. As previously emphasized, I approach bricolage broadly as a situated and embodied-material practice, a spontaneous reaction to the present. In this section, I uncover some of the complexities of an uncertain process of bricolage 'becoming' (Deleuze, 2007) that involves various activities, improvisations and *in situ* manipulations of surfaces and materiality. One might say that fashion design is essentially about bricolage, and that bricolage practices are at the heart of producing, editing, making and 'doing' fashion, on all levels. The abstraction of bricolage present in the literature tends to ignore these emerging micro-level aspects of bricolage, including practical doings, mundane meanings and the relational, physical movements of bodies and things. 'The distinctive feature of the acclaimed craftsman is the ability to react spontaneously', Thornquist (2005, 292) puts it, and I have – indeed – been able to observe endless spontaneous actions and *reactions* in my empirical context. Now, I need to analyze and make further sense of these doings.

In the following analysis, I will largely focus on the neglected aspects of situated bricolage action, as discussed in the theoretical chapter of this thesis. Throughout, I share empirical scenes, moments and encounters that link to fashion, organization and bricolage. By illustrating *different* bricolage practices enacted through everyday doings, embodied actions, social interactions and spoken language in a 'messy' site, where embodied-material relationships are certainly *intensified*, I elaborate further on bricolage as a fine-grained and multi-dimensional embodied-material practice. Specifically, I analyze bricolage actions from a rich 'hands-on' perspective in relation to fashion's crucial processes of creation, transformation, surface manipulation, presentation and 'becoming'. Hence, an important theme discussed throughout is that of effort, manipulation and improvisation that must go unnoticed. This is illustrated in the specific behaviours of the bricoleurs and the social-material organization involved.



Despite the possible mess, I highlight the need to consider these many interrelated and 'hybrid' themes and activities as important and neglected topics of bricolage research. Throughout, I also show *how* fashion bricoleurs perform and present themselves physically as they carry out vital bricolage- and organizing activities within their working context.

# STITCHING, SEWING AND PIECING TOGETHER THINGS

## CREATION AND MAKING AS AN AFFECTIVE FORM OF BRICOLAGE

'I think if you don't work in the fashion industry, I'm not talking about the PR, I think they don't know how it works, how to create a garment, how to create something, I'm not talking about them, I'm talking as a designer, if you don't work in this kind of fashion where you don't know how much work it is to just make just one piece of garment... This is difficult to explain to the people outside, why you need to work so much to make one t-shirt, to produce a collection. It takes a lot, you have to really think about everything, and organize everything. Fashion world is really cool for the people from the outside, because they see the magazine, they see the dress that is finished and looks good on the catwalk and looks good on the celebrities. They see all of that, but they can't imagine how much work is behind only one piece of this.' (Interview with the design assistant, 12.9.2014)

By shedding light on the multifaceted process of creation, design and making, I seek to offer fresh insight into processual 'becoming' and the ever-changing relations between humans and artefacts. 'Crafting is a continuous becoming', von Busch (2009, 39) suggests, and this certainly applies to Yat's and Pierre's everyday work. To me, material dress represents a designer's expression or interpretation of the past, present and the future, and exposes the tensions between 'being' and 'becoming', as well as change and stability (e.g. Tsoukas and Chia, 2002). To me, material dress is not a final, complete artefact but an emerging part of a never-ending process of transformation and movement (Ingold and Hallam, 2014). As my empirical material suggests, dress is rarely finished in the context of high fashion. It is continuously under construction. Those who only see the surface of fashion, as explained by Pierre above, have no idea how much work goes into only one piece of garment. Clothes are produced through bricolage-like interactions between non-humans and humans, transformed from ideas, visions and concepts, cloth and thread to structure, from 'ordinary', anonymous or unfinished material objects into deliberate and affective 'high' fashion



objects through detailed manipulations and a form of necessarily covert *ad hoc* improvisation. Specifically, Pierre indicates that we know little about fashion's everyday work, including its mechanical, repetitive and manual aspects, and 'why you need to work so much to make' one piece of clothing. This section discusses the creation of clothes as a work-intense yet *uncertain* bricolage process of continuous 'becoming' that involves surprises, the assembling of bodies and materials as well as happenstances and mistakes, all tied to space and time. However, I can only partially capture and convey glimpses of this multifaceted, fascinating and experimental process of 'becoming' in this text.

Research on organizational bricolage suggests that bricolage cannot be contained by organizational rules, standards or formal procedures (e.g. Freeman, 2007; Van De Walle, 2014). Rather, bricolage requires flexibility, openness and non-routinized processes. In fashion literature, bricolage is surprisingly often portrayed as a straightforward and seemingly linear recombination of existing raw material elements into something new, intended, and in a sense, 'final' (e.g. Barnard, 2002). Design is frequently treated as an evident form of bricolage (e.g. Barnard, 2002; Thornquist, 2005) with an obvious end product. This approach to design as a concentrated project with a clearly defined start and finish appears confusing to me, given that design is rarely rigid and deterministic. When does processual design even begin or end, and what do creation and design mean for the designer himself?

Once garments are sewn, 'they will clothe a human life' (Ingold and Hallam, 2014, 2) suggest. In the realm of this thesis, I approach creation as visioning, philosophizing, acting, expressing *and* communicating, which links to the notion of design. To me, creation holds more than 'the creation of useful artefacts' (Louridas, 1999, 5). Rather, creation is about process, transformation and never-ending movement. 'Is the table a complete artefact or just a phase in the life-history of a piece of wood?' Ingold and Hallam (2014, 2) critically ask us. In a similar manner, Yat explains how the story of fashion does not begin with the deliberate acts of the designer. Rather, the designer is part of a larger and more complicated process, where materials circulate and 'pass from one form of life to another' (Ingold and Hallam, 2014, 2). In this sense, Yat does not stand 'over nature' (Ingold and Hallam, 2014) as he removes materials from their former 'life' and prepares them for a new life through transition. Therefore, design as an intuitive, embodied-material bricolage process is radically different to any rational 'process of

logical deduction' (Marion and Nairn, 2011, 31) or what Thornquist (2005) calls *deterministic* design. Specifically, I would encourage us to think more deeply about design in terms of a fleeting process of transformations, or as a rite of passage.

Following Thornquist (2005), *designing* could also be approached as the 'gestalting of spontaneous acts' or a kind of collective 'trial and error' bricolage activity that intertwines liberation, precision, decision, spontaneous actions and uncertainty, as well as coordinating form, fabric, feelings, shape and structure (Baugh, 2011). In fashion design, bricolage thus emerges through actions and interactions between human producers, non-human fabrics, materials, and tools at hand. Coloured with uncertainty, a will to impress and *perform*, more than just economically, in a reality lacking in finances, creating a collection is thus a kind of uncertain bricolage puzzle. Yat and Pierre do not actually know where they are heading before they reach their deadline and manage to finish a first-draft version of a sample or collection. This 'not-knowing' is part of the process and vital to art in general (e.g. Bartheleme, 1987; Fine, 2004; Thornquist, 2005). When a first-draft version of the collection is created, it still not finished. Is it 'finished' when it appears on the catwalk, in the shop window or on a body? Is it ever finished, I critically ask.

Different to the dominant literature, I approach bricolage as *collective*, tricky and inherently affective. 2OR+BYAT operates in an interesting 'low budget' yet 'high' fashion reality where a bricolage-like inventory use of at-hand resources drives the organization of the design process, including actions of experimenting, careful editing and correcting, over and over. As has already been emphasized, fashion is inherently about crafting *affection*, where the realms of the optic, kinetic, olfactory and utility intertwine. As pointed out by Halme et al. (2012, 770), 'bricolage entails intimate knowledge of the elements belonging to a bricoleur's repertoire and the knowledge of context' (see also Duymedjian and Ruling, 2010). This was apparent to me throughout my study. For instance, tacit fashion knowledge and excellent material knowledge are inherently part of Yat's and Pierre's skill repertoire. To Barnard (2002), however, a designer might not want to be labeled as a bricoleur, especially as bricolage might raise certain non-professional, amateur associations. Rather, a designer prefers to be perceived as an artistic *créateur* and skilled *craftsman*. Indeed, staying close to craft matters to Yat, who knows how different materials, cloth and surfaces 'breathe', move and perform on human bodies. He stays true to the *materiality* of clothes and

cares about fibers, finishing, details, trimmings and cuttings. The materials Yat works with have crossed many hands before he processes them, and before he gives them over to the following *petites mains*.

In the lengthy extract below, Yat sheds light on the craft-intense creation process that goes all the way back to farming and harvesting. He emphasizes the importance of material *accumulation*, and explains how materials evolve from one form to another in his work. For instance, the leather Yat uses is skin from animals that requires long ‘preparation before the seamstress can even commence her sewing’ (Ingold and Hallam, 2014, 2). More specifically, I relate Yat’s comments regarding this to the writings of Ingold and Hallam. The authors (2014, 2) write that ‘makers of every profession appear to stand at the threshold, in amongst the stuff and tackle of their trade, easing the way for their ever-varying, protean material to pass from one form of life to another’. In other words, a lengthy process of handiwork combined with substances of earth initiates design as a rite of passage. In addition to referencing the whole process of materials, Yat’s explanation illustrates a messy and non-linear bricolage reality, one that is always coloured by accidental and unplanned acts. Despite striving for perfection and the ideals of craftsmanship throughout, ‘a lot of things can go wrong’, and this is totally normal in Yat’s context. As we see throughout this thesis, mistakes and flaws are essentially part of fashion’s ‘becoming’.

‘I think the closest, the closest DNA with fashion is, of course, in the creative side. It’s not about, it’s not... product... It’s not advertising or graphic design, something like that because fashion is very much related to product. It’s a very, very complicated process to create one single item. It’s a lot of work. It’s a lot more complicated than product design. Because in product design you might have one PP or plastic chair with one material only. You do the injection, you design the shape, and you mould. You have one material for the chairs, probably, and then the chair might last for decades and you know, 200 years. But with fashion and textile, because it’s worn, outside, on a daily base, it’s, all the way... maybe a lot of people they don’t really think about that but, nowadays people do...

‘It’s a very complicated process that... it goes all the way to the farming, first. And then you have to harvest, either with fibre, bamboo, cotton, yarn or... wool, with the hair. It’s all about farming [laughs], to begin with. And then you have,

you need to plant that. Of course, nowadays, people do plant forest to get wood and things like that. But for example plastic, you buy the, crude oil. You buy, there's a product, to do that. So, of course we do that too but fashion and textile is very complicated and you have the fibre, you dye the... [ponders]... you change the colouring, and then you comb it, you... twist it and then you weave it, you dye it, or you dye before you weave it. We call it young dye. Or then you do piece dye that you weave it first and then you dye. Then it's... and a lot of process, just up to a year, a lot of things can go wrong. Wrong colour, wrong base, colour fastening control. And then you, this is only the textile side, and then you have the, knitting is the same thing and then you... have to rely on the factory, the people who will cut the pattern. And then you cut the garments, you sew the garments, you, trim and finish the garment and, it's really long process. It's a really complicated process.' (Interview with the designer, 2.10.2014)

Design is part of a larger ontological transformation. In this sense, putting together a collection serves as an illustrative example of bricolage editing and proceeding in an uncertain manner, where the shape of an item 'arises from countless micro-gestures of threading and looping that turn a continuous strand of yarn into surface' (Ingold and Hallam, 2014, 5). Both Yat and Pierre possess a great deal of practical experience, and as they bricolate, they might fall back on their tacit knowledge and a series of learned routines. Although each collection is a unique combination of items every season, an aesthetic consistency is recognizable throughout collections from season to season. Aesthetic consistency is hugely relevant yet subject to continuous negotiation. Importantly, bricolage is not always novel (Pina e Cunha, Vieira da Cunha and Kamoche, 1999) in this setting. Rather, 'a recomposition of older elements' (Van de Walle, 2014, 11) is central here. In practice, design is often about making only minor adjustments to 'safe' pieces that nicely fit different bodily forms. 'There are some pieces that stay the same, or there are few modifications', Pierre explains to me. Pierre and Yat might replicate what has been proven commercially 'safe' in-shop to produce again. They make use of existing patterns and blueprints that are modified into new combinations in a collection. In that sense, a collection is a joint result of what the team has been able to negotiate and express by a certain time and space. It is never truly novel in the sense that every single garment part of it performs a radically new stylistic innovation. Also, it is never finished.

FABRICS AS PERFORMATIVE BRICOLAGE RESOURCES

'There's a certain routine that I need to do, nowadays which is like, well not nowadays but since I started to do this, is to evolve, to, to start with the textile, start with the yarn, start with the material. And then, go into, because design doesn't take much time to be honest, but it's the process that's taking a lot of time, to get the fabric *right*. And when you have the fabric, then you know what kind of things you will do. Or then when you have a whole list of fabric, then you know, you will see the merchandise, what we are lacking and what we still need, or what we have too many of them. So therefore, it all started with material. And when you have the material, it's clear that this material is only for coat, and this material is good for pants, good for, skirt, good for dress.' (Interview with the designer, 4.10.2014)

'When I said about form and shape, because, that is very important, because I always put that in front of details because detail is... how would you get around to finish it. Finish, the, refine, touch, in the garment. So it is all depending on the form, when it's complicated, the structure is complicated, a lot of shape, within one garment, there's a lot of seaming. Then you don't need to over-design things and, you don't need to overdo things just for the sake of adding details there. But when there's something simple, for example... When you do something simple, that means the fabric has to be something special. Has to be something special then you would have, some details. But of course, at the end of the day, details, it can also, it doesn't... it's not only meaning the decorative part. It could also be pocket and, fastening... It could be a lot of... it could be a lot of meaning. And it can also, it's all about, balance, how to balance the items. And... As with the form and shape, different shape of the people, you know if you are 1.80, nice and slim you can easily get around with a lot of things but in the reality, that's not. There's a lot of people that they are, they are not that kind of shape... there is, they are not this kind of a, figure, so therefore, it's tricky for some of the people to, look good or, they would be happy and smiling. So that is quite interesting, how to create those... make these people look, still look, attractive, that they are confident so...' (Interview with the designer, 2.10.2014)

Textiles, fabrics and materials tell us multiple stories, help us make sense of our lived experiences, and bring us together (Prain, 2014). Textiles play an important role in telling narratives, evoking affects, protecting our skin and armoring us (Rippin, 2015). They play significant roles in our lives (Rippin, 2012a; Prain, 2014) and historically, different fabrics have carried different statuses in situated contexts (Baugh, 2011; Rippin, 2012a). To designers, fabrics perform vital work components and *limited* bricolage resources. Through fabrics, designers create movements, contrast and expand textures and play with fluidity, structure and shape (Baugh, 2011). Unsurprisingly, the inventive workers must know their 'materials to create the structure of the envisaged artefact' (Louridas, 1999, 9). Various processed *fabrics* perform and move differently, and fibres, the smallest components of cloth, determine the behaviour of cloth. As fabrics perform and feel differently, a designer's choice of fabric, combined with techniques of cutting, shaping and draping, drive the complicated process of bricolage 'becoming', and determine how a garment will fall and *feel* on a moving human body. In this messy and time-consuming process of getting 'the fabric right' as Yat describes above, fabrics *perform* vivid non-human agents that do not always obey human will or perform in the ways a designer desires. The fabrics have agency. To Yat, matters of colour, aesthetics, details, structure, form and shape are always interrelated, and form also intimately relates to the structure of the wearer. Above, the auteur talks about *balancing* a garment through fabrics by creating or negotiating forms that look good and make wearers feel good, too. As a process, design is often said to begin with fabrics, but it seldom 'ends' with fabrics. 'Rarely are textile works simply end products – they are saturated with narrative, from the chain of events that led to their creation and the choice of materials used to the stories told by the pieces themselves, and finally to the accounts shared by those who have experienced an emotional reaction to these artworks', Prain (2014, 10) articulates. Whereas Ingold and Hallam (2014) problematize the popular image of making as a concentrated activity that 'implies a certainty about ends and means' (ibid, 2014, 1) and occurs between a well-defined start and a finish, I ask if we could problematize bricolage further for resting upon similar assumptions?

Woven, knitted or massed fibres vary in density and weight (Baugh, 2011), and Pierre and Yat create using both natural and manmade fibers. They rely upon tacit knowledge and intuition (Thornquist, 2005) in choosing fabrics.



LA NUOVA LINEA  
A 100%  
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ZORBYAT

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Specifically, Yat and Pierre engage in a reflexive dialogue to choose amongst fabrics to form combinations they firmly believe in. To them, choosing suitable fabrics is an intuitive and haptic process far more important than following specific trends. Meanwhile, the rhetoric of opposing ever-changing, frivolous forms of fashion through the choice of 'sustainable' fabrics is evident here, and picking the right fabric might even represent an act of 'anti-fashion'. Yat cares greatly about these components. He prefers natural fibres with tradition and heritage to artificial ones. As Pierre points out, picking the fabric, a significant non-human agent, is part of a larger system of relating to or opposing what is considered 'fashionable'. As fabrics always perform *limited* bricolage resources, the selection of fabric is largely dependent on the price and the feel of the garment, something Pierre emphasized during our interview:

'Because you like the fabric, you like the price, you like the price and the touch, and you know that it's good quality, the colour... This is how it works. But of course, you can like a fabric, at first you don't really have the eye when you start it's really difficult, because you can like a fabric..., but when it comes to a finished garment, it will look really bad. This is the most tricky part, to find a fabric you like and that will be good. In this company, we start with the fabric, picking and organizing the fabric and after we decide the style per fabric, to see the merchandise at the same time. And after that we start the collection. So this is how it works with Yat and this company. With some fabric you can't make a coat, so we have different type of fabric, but we always start with the fabric. Of course, we have a mood board, we have a theme, and we follow the theme, but with the fabric, it's always the most important part.'

'This is the thing that in school, you start with the trends of the year. Here we start with the fabric. We go to the fabric, we start with the fabric, we don't care about the trend. Because we try to do timeless pieces and the fabric supplier, they follow the trend. So when there is some agency that created the trend of the year, we don't really use that information, we just start with the fabric and it will make our trend.'



## ‘SO MANY HANDS ARE INVOLVED!’

By continuing the discussion on creation, samples production and uncertain bricolage ‘becoming’, this section intends to illustrate the mundane, embodied-material sides of bricolage actions and performance. Specifically, I shed light on the organizing of the samples production as an illustrative example of uncertain, *embodied-material* bricolage. I meet Yat in the daytime in his flagship store in Kluuvi shopping centre on New Year’s Eve in 2013. When I arrive, the entire floor is worryingly dormant and calm. Of course, it is New Year’s Eve and people are busy, but I notice that there are no customers or even browsers in sight. I know the shop is struggling, and this burdens the designer, who is surprisingly open to me about the troubling, less successful sides of his business. Great expectations were placed upon the Kluuvi shopping mall as it opened a couple of years ago. Today, it is more or less dead. The hip organic food market, Eat & Joy, had to close, and the same goes for many of the other promising design shops. The entire block seems to be a tricky corner in Helsinki. Located on *the* shopping street of the city, it is – paradoxically – perceived as ‘far away’ from everything. Yat’s rental contract expires in October, and he is currently not likely to renew it. ‘In October I will have a life again’ an exhausted designer straightforwardly puts it, which says plenty about his current state-of-mind and attitude towards the shop. If Yat’s working body is feeling pressed, he must indeed *act* to feel lighter again (Stewart, 2007).

We hug as we meet. ‘I had two days off for Christmas’, Yat tells me, perhaps to – once more – indicate that he must remain disciplined and entrepreneurial, regardless of holidays, and that he is always busy working. To me, Yat is another contemporary ‘extreme worker’ as described by Cederström and Spicer (2015), one who is obliged – and also in a sense lucky – to be busy (Stewart, 2007). First, we chitchat about (the lack of) holidays and internships. Two days was apparently all Yat could afford to keep up the usual pace. Again, I am reminded that there is always too much work to do. Yat’s working body is practically never allowed to rest entirely. As we meet, Yat reflects upon producing another international fashion show in Copenhagen, and relates this to his previous Fashion Week experience. He is currently dealing with the exhausting last-minute challenges of coordinating the clothing samples production, a bricolage process ‘with so many hands involved’. This messy process involves many phases, working

bodies, interpretations, corrections, surprises, materials, and tools. In fashion, the ongoing dialogue between the designer and his supplier is communication is it unfolds: the process is unpredictable and not easy in terms of reaching mutual understandings. Human mistakes and misinterpretations of vision are bound to occur along the way, and a finished clothing sample, as a 'perfect' or 'correct' interpretation of one of the designer's earlier subjective versions and visions, is actually never achieved. In this sense, I view the putting together of a sample as an illustrative example of *embodied-material* bricolage. Moreover, Yat's talk illustrates organization as meaningful human and non-human encounters, and samples production as a relational, non-linear endeavour in the spirit of ANT.

We move onto discussing the upcoming fashion show. Yat and his assistant already coordinate and manage everything production-wise themselves, and preparing an international staging adds the consuming task of organizing things and communicating to different agents based in another country. I think of my first trip to Copenhagen and Yat's memorable words onsite: 'You need to be crazy to do this!' In January 2014, 2OR+BYYAT will not be the only designer-led Finnish fashion label on the Copenhagen runway, as another Finnish label known for gowns and feminine drapings is also showcasing. This time, Marimekko is not on the schedule despite showing in City Hall back in August 2013. 'I wonder what is going on with them', Yat comments. We usually discuss the latest fashion news and gossip as we meet. It is no secret that Marimekko had a difficult year with copying scandals and shop closings abroad. However, I sense that the times are still difficult for *everyone*, both the biggest multinational brands and smaller designer-driven labels.

If the first international 2OR+BYYAT runway show felt like a creative bricolage experiment, giving rather 'chaotic' impressions, this year's show is being prepared by a more experienced design team. Nevertheless, Yat deliberately portrays his premiere show as exceptionally organized and 'well-prepared'. Perhaps he prefers to present himself as a person of rational resource planning (Rhodes and Westwood, 2008) rather than one of not knowing things, or running around whimsically. Perhaps refusing to appear messy is also about appearing *professional* in this setting. On site, however, the previous show had been coloured by amounts of confusion, endless editing actions and true *ad hoc* improvisation. What I believe Yat wants to emphasize is, however, that he did what he could – well in advance – to prepare for his premier staging. All of the

changes and adjustments that had to be made had been beyond his control, because changes are essentially part of how things in fashion are done.

Unlike this year, Yat had agreed on the hair- and make-up ‘looks’ with his designated team up to three weeks prior to the show, which is considered a long time in fashion. Despite doing so, everything changed at the last-minute, and a totally unknown hair- and make-up team showed up backstage for the actual show. In this sense, fashion is full of surprises and randomness, I have learned, and nothing is ever fixed or static. You cannot trust in what has been agreed upon beforehand; anything random can always happen. Perhaps Yat’s previous experiences explain a seemingly relaxed attitude regarding his upcoming show. The designer still expects many things to change along the way. Like the bricoleur that he is, he ‘muddles through’ and adapts to the situations he faces by solving problems on the go. ‘Unlike a rational planner, bricoleurs go ahead using available material, rather than waiting for optimal conditions’, Van de Walle (2014, 10) reminds us. In fashion, the conditions are – much like the clothing objects themselves – never optimal, I ponder.

With less than a month to Copenhagen, things are still unfinished, in progress, or entirely freely floating. This goes for producing the Autumn/Winter 2014 collection samples, preparing for the trade fair and organizing and coordinating the entire, strategically important runway show. Perhaps working late is also just very typical for fashion I ponder further, as I relate my experiences to the many chaotic Fashion Week representations present in the media (such as fashion documentaries, seasons of Project Runway, and so on). Rhodes and Westwood (2008) explain sampling as a form of social interaction and surprising bricolage. In the fashion context, bricolage is about *feeling*, touching and *transforming* ‘raw’ materials, cloth and fabric, with vision, skill and intelligence. ‘Knowing-in-practice’ (Gherardi, 2009a, 2009b; Gherardi and Strati, 2012) is absolutely crucial here, and this ‘knowing’ is embodied in the designer’s skill and touch. Such knowledge requires trying to stitch together ideas, vision and material cloth into something that holds together and feels good. At the same time, this mixture of a material, embodied and economical ‘trial-and-error’ process is rarely entirely in the hands of the designer. The process involves human mistakes and misinterpretations, which are later corrected by the designer.

The ‘mess’ of samples production accurately involves an uncertain *embodied* bricolage process, mixing together bodies and materials. Zippers are ordered

from one supplier, buttons from another, and fabrics from a third. In this case, *embodiment* is inseparable from the technological production (Rhodes and Westwood, 2008). A single piece of clothing assembles different agents and materials into an entity with the help of skilled bodies using the right tools. This practical bricolage assemblage requires active, *physical* and bodily engagement: 'One pair of hands puts together the front of a shirt, another pair works on the sleeves, a third pair the back, and so on', Yat verbalizes the hands-on production to me. As a specific pattern is always interpreted by many human agents involved, his original creative vision and image is rarely 'correctly' understood. This ambiguity and imperfection is something a designer must tolerate and cope with. Of course, this may at times become problematic and stressful. However, I sense that the fashion bricoleurs learn to deal with these crises, as they regularly need to overcome unexpected events.

As we meet, the crucial AW 14 samples do not yet physically exist. I learn that the drawings are currently in the hands of the designer's three major suppliers: a small dressmaker's shop in the city of Lahti, Finland, and two small-scale factories in Tallinn, Estonia. The material samples, produced by manufacturers according to detailed instructions provided by Yat and his team, still need to be shipped to Finland or picked up in Tallinn, then eventually adjusted, trimmed and finished in the design studio before departing for Copenhagen. The samples continuously move in-between fairly distant geographical locations and spaces of production before they are coordinated and presented in motion to an influential crowd in a specific exhibition space. Also, this bricolage process of transforming design concepts into high-quality material objects is carried out through an intersection of human agents (the designer, the supply 'manager', and the factory workers) and a variety of non-human agents involved (the appropriate machines, cloth, threads, zippers, buttons etc.).

As we discuss, I am reminded that production often equals problems. This time, Yat has – purposefully – delegated a significant amount of the responsibility for the samples production to his younger assistant, still inexperienced when it comes to managing production and dealing with the various suppliers involved. Coordinating the samples production is challenging, particularly 'as so many hands are involved', Yat had explained. Research suggests that tacit knowledge, informal networks and practical experience is essential to bricolage (Van de Walle, 2014). 'Bricoleurs use their memory, and have considerable

local knowledge, much of which is not recognised in the organisation's formal knowledge repositories', Van de Walle (2014, 10) points out. While Yat allows and *wants* Pierre to learn production properly in practice by doing it, it is ultimately more time-consuming and risky. Pierre is not experienced enough to 'use his local knowledge' as suggested above to govern the process or press the suppliers to deliver correctly and *on time*. 'I think Pierre will not be able to foresee as much I', Yat honestly ponders in the shop. The chief designer could, of course, have coordinated the process himself, given that 'bricolage is more likely to be practiced by experienced rather than by inexperienced people' (Pina e Cunha, 2005, 16). As Pierre's boss and a responsible fashion mentor, Yat wants him to learn all the things that require significant tacit fashion knowledge and problem-solving on the go, as this is crucial for his assistant's future career in fashion. Much rehearsal and practical experience is necessary to enable fashion's complex decision-making and situated action. 'That's why I'm being so harsh on Pierre. One day he will hopefully appreciate it', Yat summarizes. In addition, Yat indicates that the schedules are always extremely tight. In fact, samples produced at the last-minute will not necessarily make it to their intended exhibition. To make coordination even more challenging, some suppliers close for holidays, whereas others never deliver on time. If one crucial supplier is closed over holidays it might delay the production of an entire sample, Yat explains. Therefore, both Yat and Pierre must organize schedules carefully and deal with the many interdependent suppliers involved. However, I get the impression that especially the chief designer is trying to 'see the signals', fix things and solve eventual problems on the go. In this sense, Yat works as a skilled bricoleur who does whatever he can in a rather stressful last-minute situation.

## SAMPLING ARRANGEMENTS

### FASHION WEEK PLANNING AND PRACTICAL RESOURCE SEEKING

The following episode describes the bricolage-intense preparations of presenting two fashion shows in Copenhagen in August 2014, one presented by the design school, Lahti Institute of Design and Fine Arts (LIDF), with Yat acting as the show head producer, and the other staged by the 2OR+BYAT label. This summary of events illustrates and explains how actors navigate social complexity, the importance and centrality of bricolage practices, sampling arrangements and resource-seeking throughout the show preparations in a 'high fashion' yet 'low budget' reality obsessed with giving spectators the 'right' impressions and images. In this setting, bricolage comprises various *collective* efforts and spontaneous doings, where the established contact network is an important usable resource. Specifically, the occasion is an attempt to attract the crucial resources that are not yet 'at hand' (Baker, 2007, 695). Also, it is about creatively *producing* novel resources and valuable opportunities rather than just making use of existing resources. Also in this section, I will illustrate bricolage as a valuable form of 'rule-breaking'. Taken together, I illustrate bricolage as an emergent, relational and 'network'-oriented (Baker et al., 2003) way of organizing and arranging fashion shows, one that dynamically relies upon dependency, resource- and gift exchange, improvisation, as well as the presence of luck and serendipity. Also, I intend to analyze *how* bricolage is reproduced *in action* intertwining human and non-human agents as I analyze what the present fashion agents, entrepreneur-bricoleurs, actually do when they 'do' bricolage in the moment. Here, I discuss not only how the behaviours, speech and embodied-material actions taking place during the planning meeting either are or are not bricolage, a surprisingly common assumption in bricolage literature (Baker, 2007). Rather, I show how bricolage-as-bodily-performances occur in this setting, and what we can learn from these performances and practices more broadly.

Bricolage often emerges in situations of luck and chance (Rehn and Lennerfors, 2014). 'Social complexity inculcates people within a highly deliberative process; how they engage in action in part depends on how they weigh-up complexity and make strategic choices', write Edwards and Meliou



(2015, 1278). This becomes evident in my empirical setting, too. From what I have observed, organizing in the setting of ‘high’ fashion is all about proceeding in an apparently *ad hoc*, bricolage-intense and non-rational fashion, but nonetheless aiming at producing valuable, elaborated, affective and effective results. In early June, Yat invites me to join a small BBQ garden party and an informal meeting at his house in Helsinki, a short ride by metro and bus from the city centre. Prior to the meeting I learn that Yat will produce another fashion show in Copenhagen in August, a show staged by the graduate students from

Lahti Institute of Design and Fine Arts (LIDF from now on), one of the two most prestigious design schools in Finland. Minna, the head of the fashion department at LIFD and Yat's former wife will be the show tutor. Traditionally, she has invited the school's graduate students for a relaxed dinner at her and Yat's house, which also says something about the lack of strict hierarchies between students and staff. As I arrive, I notice signs of the 2OR+BYYAT business throughout the designer's home. For instance, an empty swimming pool in the basement of the house built in the 1970s currently serves as the storage space for the stock of the label – again, a 'take whatever you have at hand' bricolage mentality or, in this case, a 'store-whenever-you-can' reality keeps costs to a minimum.

We gather outside Yat's house in a formation around Yat, the fashion authority and most frequent speaker of the meeting. Present at the occasion of planning and resource-seeking are Minna, Pierre, Pierre's girlfriend Rebecca, four graduate students and me. Orr's (1996) detailed study of the work of photocopier technicians reveals the importance of tacit knowledge in actual practice, and how *performing* as skilled bricoleurs becomes significant to the construction of professional identity in this setting. As previously stated, this self-enhancing performance appears highly relevant for fashion, too. It becomes evident throughout the meeting that Yat performs skilled and exceptionally experienced bricoleur. Specifically, the chief designer *performs* the role of critical professional and authority, hinting that the present students still have plenty of work ahead to improve their collections before the international show, and eventually become professionals in their field. Meanwhile, the organizers present here, *all* bricoleurs in a 'close-knit community', must use every connection at hand to collectively organize things as creatively, inexpensively and smoothly as possible. The fashion agents are expected to share their experiences and knowledge with each other and support one another.

Throughout the meeting, I sense that the fashion insiders continually change their arrangements and proceed with the show preparations in an open, mobile and flexible manner. Yet, they try to reach ideals of perfection. In this setting, the bricolage-intense and low budget logic of 'taking whatever is at hand' mixes together with determined, self-disciplined, concentrated and precise working towards the 'higher' forms and ideals of avant-garde, artistic and conceptual fashion. "I am going to be frank with you, I'll talk straight", Yat dramatically begins. 'I wasn't too impressed about the show'. He is referring to the recent LIFD



spring fashion show called 'KOE 14', a student show staged in mid-May that I attended with Yat and Pierre. Furthermore, Yat indicates that student shows are usually not included in international Fashion Week schedules, and I sense that Yat's connections are crucial for the upcoming staging in Copenhagen to happen. As no Finnish design school has ever shown during Copenhagen Fashion Week before, this is a valuable learning opportunity for the young designers. Also, I perceive that Yat wants the fashion novices to take the opportunity he has arranged for them very seriously. Their show is scheduled to begin an hour prior to 2OR+BYAT in the Royal Danish Music Hall, a venue conveniently located next to Forum Copenhagen, which hosts fashion fair Gallery. Hard work, focus and devotion are necessities to develop, learn and eventually survive in fashion. 'The individual pieces looked good in a different context, but rather weak on the show', Yat critiques to the students. In this moment, I am aware of the presence of power. In addition to pointing out the obvious need to meticulously focus on creating stronger and more interesting one-of-a-kind showpieces *by hand* for Copenhagen, I sense an attempt to keep up a distinct fashion hierarchy between the professional designer and his students, still inexperienced novices in the process of 'becoming' designers. This is manifested in the designer's speech, bodily gestures and distinct habitus.

Specifically, Yat points out that the students should work on their collections extensively during summer. Also, he expects up to 40 interesting outfits for Copenhagen. Again, hard work and long working hours are considered a norm and necessity, the only route to becoming an 'authentic', skilled and possibly appreciated designer. As the hard-working designer and busy show producer in charge, Yat attempts to transfer the same disciplined and work-oriented mentality to the younger fashion generation. Converting unfinished, bricolage-like or aesthetically 'weak' garments in process into strong, perfect, and high-status fashion objects comprises acts of manipulating surface and materiality, making corrections, solving problems, and essentially includes the editing out of 'discordant details' (Thrift 2008, 15). Moreover, the show is an opportunity to experiment and play with materiality, and try out something novel and eye-catching. For instance, Carita plans to add volume and interest to her collection by trying out a new knitting technique. She is meanwhile slightly worried about the lack of time to engage with manual labour, particularly 'cause knitting will be so bad for my hands', as she says. Here, materiality and the dimension of time

offer a fruitful path towards further analyzing the role of things, embodiment and emotions involved in the processual, bricolage-intense ‘doing’ of fashion.

Next, the students discuss matters of materials and time, crucial as always in order to make affective pieces with expressive capacities. Currently, no one is employed in the fashion industry. ‘We are freelancers, that sounds better...’, someone says. It sounds better to be a creative ‘freelancer’ rather than an unemployed, newly graduated designer. Apparently, everyone has enough cloth left to create novel pieces for the upcoming show. Also, everyone seems to possess rather developed ideas on what to make for their show, e.g. by focusing on the things they had not been able to finish for their previous graduate show. The principle of bricolage is relevant in this setting: again, the students may respond to resource constraints by using materials and work spaces at hand. Luckily, they can still use the premises and tools of their school free of charge. ‘The shoes were bad, you need to rethink the shoes for Copenhagen’, Yat then straightforwardly expresses. A shoe sponsor would be much appreciated, although there is practically limited time to negotiate one. ‘Should we ask Vagabond?’ someone suddenly suggests. ‘The second-year students got shoes from them’. Again, the suggestion precisely illustrates bricolage as a spontaneous form of cheap resource seeking. If Vagabond sponsored someone else, it is a logical option to ask them for similar consideration. ‘Bricolage capabilities may help firms explore and exploit new opportunities that might appear too expensive to pursue through other means’, Baker and Nelson (2005, 357) write, and this is evident throughout the meeting. Organizing things on a ‘good enough, low budget’ principle while still aspiring to give professional, ‘high’ fashion impressions continues to dictate how things are planned and organized throughout. As such, fashion’s organizing is not only about creating ‘something’ from ‘nothing’ as discussed by Baker and Nelson (2005). Rather, it is always about creating ‘more’ (value) from ‘less’. Bricolage actions may fulfill important functions in organizational survival, Van de Walle (2014) suggests. This appears relevant to the fashion setting, too.

In what follows, Yat advises the students to organize their accommodation as cheaply and soon as possible in Copenhagen by asking, ‘Do you have any friends there?’ The first option is always to use one’s existing personal connections to stay somewhere for free. It turns out the students know an apartment in Nørrebro that they could possibly stay in. Again, we see how the organizing principle of bricolage is potentially useful in this setting. Apart from a minor donation from

LIFD that covers the compulsory Fashion Week attendance fee, I learn that the students must finance their show themselves. Lacking funding and sponsors, the show is organized on the lowest possible budget, and despite the monetary constraints, the end result must impress. Evidently, the creative workers face plenty of resource constraints and cannot always get what they want. Especially transportation, accommodation and logistics will require additional money.

Yat is kind enough to lend his runway models to students free of charge, but this cheap resource exchange still requires some effort from them. Specifically, Yat asks the students to ‘think of some gifts for the models’. ‘Maybe you can make something for them, a top or something so you don’t have to give away your entire collection’, he suggests. Quite interestingly, the somewhat irrational logic of fashion assumes that students should – just like that – be prepared to give away their unique, one-of-a-kind custom-made collections to the models. To me, this exchange of value seems crazy. With unique showpieces made by hand, the collections have engaged the students for countless working hours. A fashion show is over in minutes. To avoid this nonsensical arrangement and still increase their own designer visibility, the students make jokes about printing selfies on t-shirts as gifts for the models. This suggestion resonates well with a reality of severe resource constraints, contemporary selfie cultures, and what is often referred to as the individualistic fetishism of fashion. ‘Yea, that’s promotion!’ Minna laughs. It is, however, important to treat give-aways as serious promotional tools (Mears, 2011). Here, I interpret the selfie suggestion as communicative and meaningful rather than simply an effect of narcissism in consumer cultures (Ehlin, 2015).

Yat then explains that he has already been in touch with his agency about the models. He re-uses the same agency, always relying upon his pre-existing contact network as a means at hand (e.g. Duymedjian and Rüling, 2010). His agency of choice is not one of the expensive ‘star’ agencies, although it has co-operated with established high fashion labels such as Stine Ladefoged, Ready to Fish, Henrik Vibskov and Asger Juel Larsen. ‘He’s got twelve girls, 175 cm in average they said’, Yat shortly puts it, referring to what his booker Michael, the CEO of Étoile Models, has previously told him about the girls. ‘So they are quite short!’ someone spontaneously comments. This implies the designer’s need to creatively adjust the clothes to the bodies carrying them regardless of their shape. Following Thrift (2008, 19), the stylized bodies of the fashion models are

not only living human performers on display but moving ‘totalities’ consisting of all non-human things and materials such as clothes, accessories, make-up and decorations attached to them. More importantly, the meticulous effort of transforming models is in an ANT-inspired sense, dependent on the hard work of a large range of persons and materials involved in the show production. This ‘dragging up’ links to Butler’s (1990) work on performativity. Also, the production of captivation is concerned with aesthetics and *performance* more broadly rather than just appearance and ‘looks’ (e.g. Hancock and Tyler 2007). I associate this ambiguous and uncertain value production with an organizational process of ‘bricolage becoming’ where distinct socio-material elements and openness are vital.

Whereas twelve models have been booked for the upcoming shows I am surprised to hear that this has been handled well-in-advance this time. In fact, Yat appears to be ahead of his own schedule, at least with some of the preparations. He has already negotiated the show schedule with the organizers, and also secured models to do the two shows. A model’s size, appearance and height are always issues in fashion, and this is discussed at the meeting, too. If desired models are ideally (extremely) tall, someone producing a low budget show cannot afford the tallest models. ‘Some bigger brand will pay them more’, Yat realistically reflects. In his limited resource reality, he cannot afford the ‘best’ and most expensive models: ‘We still pay them but not much’. In this sense, the designer always has to create ‘more’ from ‘less’ or something impressive almost from ‘nothing’ (Baker and Nelson, 2005). So far, Yat has managed to negotiate decent terms with his agency. As a ‘foreign’ label in Copenhagen he also plays by slightly different rules than the local Danish actors for whom hiring models is often an extremely expensive affair. Yat is very lucky to pay his agency significantly less than the domestic labels. If he gets away with a symbolic fee, each model must receive a complementary gift from him. To save where he can, Yat usually gives away his older, ‘less worthy’ collection items on hand. This time, the models will receive bags in styles he happens to have plenty of in stock and thus have not sold well in shop.

Although Yat will have to be satisfied with shorter and less renowned models, this might actually benefit the designer, the agency and the models involved, I learn. Yat saves plenty of money, the models get much-needed exposure and practical walking experience, and the agency, then, might get a

decent commission if one of the models is discovered and booked after Yat's show. This has happened, Yat explains to me. The organization of the models provides another example of fashion's complex network of dependency, gifts and value exchange. In addition, mobility and space matter and influence the organizing of the models. 'The models are coming to Copenhagen from all across Denmark and regions like Jylland, meaning that there will be no time for fittings', Yat remarks. Without the possibility of arranging separate fittings where models actually try out the outfits on their bodies in advance before the staging, the designers are dependent on the body measurements of the models provided by the agency. Again, matching measurements with the individual clothing pieces is a kind of uncertain bricolage puzzle, based on ad hoc improvisation. Also, the measurements provided by the agency are usually subject to skepticism. The designer cannot really trust the numbers, and is, in a sense, prepared to face surprises as he encounters his own clothing samples and the flesh-and-blood models in Copenhagen.

Throughout the meeting, Yat is trying to give a realistic and perhaps even pessimistic image of the fashion business to the students. 'Don't have too high hopes about the buyers', he straightforwardly puts it. Getting their very own fashion show does *not* automatically guarantee massive interest or press exposure. In fact, Yat indicates that it is quite unlikely that the students will actually manage to sell any of their pieces afterwards regardless of the show. 'I am trying to get press there for you', he still optimistically points out. The designer acknowledges the importance of the gaze of others. Both the students and Yat get press exposure and the 'right' visibility only if they are lucky. The politics of Copenhagen Fashion Week with its on-schedules, off-schedules and different trade shows running simultaneously make it a highly competitive and uncertain setting where everybody wants to be seen. At the same time, no fashion journalist, magazine editor or blogger has time to actually experience everything. The critical spectators and fashion curators must choose what to attend. Also, the full show schedule is not published online until late July. As it is early June, the students do not even know who they will be competing against in August.

To Yat, bricolage is a common, cheap and valuable organizational activity (Baker, 2007), and throughout the meeting, Yat teaches the students how to eventually *become* skilled fashion bricoleurs themselves. Specifically, Yat delivers his 'hands-on' instructions on *how* to attract and make use of inexpensive

resources, a skill that any designer might find useful in the future. Bricolage reveals a negotiated process (Edwards and Meloiu, 2015), and a bricoleur makes ongoing decisions about how to proceed. 'You need to get someone to take pictures and video of the show', Yat points out. In the spirit of bricolage, also the photographers or filmmakers are recruited among established connections, and Yat encourages his novices to find 'cheap' professionals to collaborate with. If the bricolage resource at hand is an inexpensive one, there are always risks involved. For instance, an inexperienced filmmaker could be unprofessional, and eventually ruin the video material for the designer. The students should always brief the filmmaker properly to construct a straightforward, simple and professional video for them to easily edit or cut, Yat carefully explains. The video material is crucial for designers for promotion purposes. A good video exposes the outfits from a straight and flattering angle. 'It must be professional!' Yat emphasizes. 'The worst thing is if the filmmaker is trying to do something creative!' Yat dramatically shouts out. Interestingly, only the designer is allowed to be truly creative in this context.

As argued throughout, bricolage is always dependent on a *collective* (Baker, 2007). Moreover, space influences the staging of a fashion show, as well as the performance of bricolage. Someone asks if the students should prepare individual tracks for each staging or not. In fashion show performances, sound and space intimately intertwine. Again, Yat delivers his opinion without hesitating: individual tracks for each staging will best depict the differing moods of each staged collection. I sense that sound is a powerful organizing principle in this setting, choreographing and organizing the onstage performance further. Sound is rarely 'just an incidental characteristic of the organization of space' (Munro and Jordan, 2013, 1515). Instead, sound performs 'a key element in determining how space is distributed' (ibid, 2013, 1515). After the meeting, I ask Yat about the music for his own staging. Interestingly, his choice of music serves as another creative example of bricolage and applying creative resources on hand. It turns out that Yat's skilled 18-year-old son is currently recording the runway music for 2OR+BYAT, for free, of course. 'Now he's got six minutes in total and we need 16 more minutes', Yat puts it. 'He plays all the instruments himself and has recorded upstairs [at home] by the dining table', a seemingly proud father continues. Here, bricolage materializes as a physical, bodily activity that involves an active human body playing around with lots of instruments at home. To add

worth to the chosen show music, Yat also tells me how a customer visiting his store was particularly impressed by the show music he was ‘testing’.

Another practical question discussed in the moment is that of logistics: should the students preferably fly over to Copenhagen with their collections or drive there themselves? Which option is cheaper, easier and more practical? The students ponder if they could manage to borrow the school’s van for the trip to save money. Yat laughs at the creative bricolage suggestion and says: ‘Yeah, you should ask for the fuel card, too!’ Perhaps he is a bit jealous of the privileges of a student, as he covers all of his expenses himself. Apparently Carita’s bulky and heavy knitwear collection with thick layers, lots of fringes and heavy rug carpet material will be challenging to transport to Copenhagen and back by plane. ‘You should wear all the pieces yourself!’ someone laughs – another creative suggestion. Again, the bricolage professional delivers his hands-on advice to the less experienced students: ‘You all need to check in simultaneously, so that you can negotiate the weight at the desk. Usually it is 20 kg but 26 kg is still all right... That’s part of this industry, too!’ In this case, bricolage as ‘rule-breaking’ equals creative and innovative problem-solving (see also Lipsky, 1980; Riccucci, 2005; O’Leary, 2005), and reflects ‘a negotiated process through which circumstances are weighed-up by individuals’ (Edwards and Meliou, 2015, 1273). How to negotiate with others or practically move collections in the cheapest and easiest way from one location to another is another illustrative example of the unglamorous, practical ‘real life’ work premises and the bricolage-intense reality of overcoming ambiguities emerging in everyday situations in fashion.

I notice how bricolage is used throughout the meeting, in the planning and organizing of the upcoming fashion shows. I have illustrated and analyzed how unplanned and unexpected events are present throughout the preparations of the fashion show. Also, it appears as if connections and networks are vital for eventually gaining fashion recognition. Despite the presence of bricolage, continuous resource seeking and improvisation as way of ‘doing’ and organizing fashion throughout, those in this industry are expected to be fully focused on work, to care about their work and to put much effort into even its minor details and finishings. Considering this, I identify an ongoing interplay between spontaneous bricolage and orderly perfection.

The following is another straightforward and quite funny example of emergent bricolage in the fashion setting. On the important show day, in

Copenhagen. Yat gets up already at 6 a.m. after a very short night's sleep. As I sleep on the living room couch between the bedroom and kitchen, I can hear him walk over to the kitchen, prepare some hot water and open his computer to work. Later, Yat tells me that he actually managed to finish the sales book early in the morning, and still e-mailed some important connections about the show, again illustrating how things in the fashion world are done at last-minute. Also, bricoleur Yat literally grabbed whatever was available at hand for breakfast. In fact, he had the fridge-cold slices of leftover pizza from the previous night for breakfast, as no one in his team had the time to find a local grocery store or supermarket. Not only did the entrepreneur save leftovers for the following morning, he actually ate them for breakfast then, too. Next, I shed light on the organizing of the outfits as an illustrative example of emerging bricolage in my empirical setting.

## ORGANIZING OUTFITS

The following episode illustrates the bricolage of organizing the runway show outfits at the stand in Copenhagen, an important task in the preparations for an international staging. As previously indicated, surprisingly few studies of bricolage have put ongoing or emerging *embodied* action, movement and socio-material interaction at the fore of inquiry. This is something I do. The following episode illustrates how the designer performs as an artistic and rather careless 'capitalist *bricoleur*' (Thrift 2005, 135) in his setting, producing captivation in situ by rapidly selecting and mixing together the different styles at hand. He picks whatever he happens to find strong and attractive in that particular moment, all in order to further create something interesting to his larger audiences. This selection illustrates the designer organizing affective material expressions by 'having a go at it'. Again, the outcomes are rarely fixed or finished, but part of the process of working 'towards' fashion. As such, this episode illustrates *act* of organization as meaningful human and non-human encounters as a relational endeavour in the spirit of ANT.

The fashion show usually involves a storyline built as a narrative from the 'ordinary' towards the more spectacular and outstanding – the *order* in which outfits are presented matters hugely, and is part of fashion's crucial storytelling,





(re)creation and 'becoming'. A designer also needs to be able to experiment *outside* of the garment (Duggan, 2001, 2006) by adding interest through the many other affective interacting elements, such as hair, make-up and accessories. Duggan (2001, 246) suggests that 'the type of model, the location, the theme, and the finale' all perform central components in this uncertain 'becoming' that the designer could always try to manipulate. Although Yat's show strives for orderly perfection, I experienced the preparations and proceedings as bricolage-intense, disorganized and 'non-rational'. Again, I will reflect upon embodied-

material bricolage as present and meaningful throughout these vital show preparations, as I turn to the last-minute styling practices taking place at the designer's stand. Here, bricolage is practiced when constructing the totalities of the outfits in shows.

In practice, styling requires the *activation* of the designer's and his assistant's working bodies, as well as a constant negotiation with materiality. On Thursday at the stand, I observe Yat and Pierre decide the order that the looks will appear on the runway, a critical decision in the overall organizing of the show. It is a form of aesthetic and affective storytelling that requires and relies upon bricolage. 'One [dress] rehearsal is enough', Yat decides to begin with, as 'nothing is too tricky' in his more commercial collection this time. 'Do we need to wait for press to arrive? Last time we lost half an hour when we couldn't get in', he ponders further. There is uncertainty in the air regarding the timing of the preparations. Meanwhile, the combinations of outfits and models are crucial bricolage resources that need to be organized into a structured, memorable and impressive story on the catwalk. I see this process as being based on a 'bricolage aesthetic that relies on creation out of contingency and loss' (Evans, 2003, 299). First, the order of the outfits *excluding* models is decided. Then, the flesh-and-blood human model 'suitable' for each material outfit is chosen. This selection reveals just how these bodies are treated as *instrumental*, objectified resources, hardly any more alive than coat hangers.

'I think the first outfit needs to be strong', Yat says at the stand before noon. 'The girl has to be hot too' he adds. This combination of living and moving human being and dead non-human needs to be something extraordinary, especially for the sake of the images circulated: 'Copenhagen Fashion Week is always using the first runway picture [for press exposure]', Yat indicates. Hence, the representation needs to embody and communicate the entire label. The first image is possibly *the* fashion image widely circulated, vital for constructing his designer identity across space and time. As the designer cannot control the spread of images in virtual spaces and elsewhere, he must make wise decisions concerning the looks on the catwalk. Pierre explains the intended runway order to me, and quite unsurprisingly, it is about triggering imagination, as well as playing around with the different fabrics, shapes and styles of the collection. 'You need to find a way to coordinate the colours. If it is too mishmash, it won't look good as a collection', Pierre says. 'Too obvious' references on the catwalk must be avoided: 'If you have ethnic plus ethnic, it will look too ethnic. With

pattern, you need to be clever', Pierre continues. In practice, the order is decided by physically moving around the clothes on the racks, putting them together and pulling them apart. Pierre then needs to prepare a document on the order on his computer before models arrive for fittings in the afternoon. Ideally, he should also already know which outfit each body could wear for the show. Soon the designer joins in. 'This one we put together with this one' Yat suggests. 'Mesh and coat...', he then suggests as he moves around the stand.

Deciding on the models, then, can be a tricky, creative bricolage process. It involves a non-random inventory of the totality of body-and-dress that is an intertwined 'at-hand' resource. Here, the material clothes drive the selection process. How to dress each model is all about adjusting the model's body, an idealized and 'de-humanized' human, to the material dress, a non-human, to create a whole look out of several individual garments, interesting accessories and a bag. It is noteworthy that this process is not at all about adjusting the garments to fit the model, but the other way around: the right girl must 'fill up' each outfit in an impressive way. Pierre prints the sheet of the bodily measurements, the one with the faces, and the document on the recently decided order of the looks. Then, the procedure goes as follow: Pierre and Yat focus on looking at the pictures of the outfits on screen, and compare these to the pictures of the models to make decisions. During the last weekend before departure, Pierre's girlfriend Rebecca already tried on all the AW 14 samples in the studio for a quick photo shooting. These pictures were featured in the document of the runway outfit order. 'We squeezed everything on Rebecca, so it won't be a problem!' Yat says about fitting the clothes on the runway models, thin and narrow in comparison to more 'ordinary' consumer bodies. 'We need a nice body with this', Yat says as the selection is initiated. Yat and Pierre pick up the picture of the simple, short dress. 'Now this girl needs to be really tiny'. If a dress is short and therefore shows a lot of leg, then 'straight legs would be good', as Yat expresses. The bodies and the bodily parts such as hips, legs, waist, arms and shoulders are critically evaluated and discussed.

Dressing models is not only about bringing out the garment and a model's best bodily features on the catwalk, but also about skillfully *covering* what you do not want the audience to notice. Adjustive dressing is about showing what is attractive and hiding 'unattractive' body parts, as clothes can hide and mask. Although Yat has hired professional models, the most 'standardized' and idealized

bodies in the world (Mears 2008, 2011), they are by no means considered perfect or flawless. For instance, the models of the show all wear tights to cover the knees, 'ugly' body parts that are not supposed to show. The twins, for instance, are both too big and too tall for some of Yat's outfits such as short and narrow dresses. Their curves must be hidden, not emphasized. 'This we can't put on the twins', Yat critically ponders as he closely examines his narrow, slim-fit dresses. To Yat, the twins have 'bigger' hips than standard models. These types of bodies are preferably covered with straight pants and a long, hip-covering coat. If the twins are socially constructed as 'big', then the smallest, inherently skinny model might also have 'unflattering' hips. Mille, for instance, is problematic: 'Her bottom is really low. Her hip is a bit dodgy' Yat says. Certain shapes and materials such as voluminous mesh is used to cover undesirable body parts: '... And also they'll look good on this kind of volume stuff', Yat refers again to the twins as he physically grabs his black and red pattern dress with a symmetrical hem. Although the dress is short it is not considered dangerous, as it is worn with an interesting wide, hip-covering mesh.

Yat and Pierre start with the most 'dangerous', difficult outfits and move towards the easier ones. The dangerous outfits require specific physical features to hang well and look good on the catwalk. As emphasized throughout, it is about finding the model with the right proportions for the garment. 'So, who is the smallest?' Yat uninhibitedly asks while going through the printed sheets. 'Emma is an XS. 81-62-88.' He looks around. 'No, Ida is the smallest actually', he continues and reveals her measurements: '76-60-88'. Yat first picks out the red-orange dress, but then suddenly notices the check dress in his printed outfit overview. 'This one is more dangerous', referring to the fabric. The polyester check dress (94 % polyester, 6 % EA) does not stretch at all, so the body of the model has to be small. 'We need a small bust for these two dresses'. According to the critical designer, the dresses also need 'a tiny waist and tiny arms' to look good. It all sounds quite ruthless and straightforward, but that is how it is expressed. 'Emma...', Yat ponders while looking at her picture, 'How does she walk?' He moves his gaze from the picture to the computer screen and clicks open the video clip of Emma cat-walking. 'Her hip swings a lot. She's swinging quite a lot. It looks like her upper thigh is quite heavy and also her ankle', a slightly worried designer puts it. His critical eye notices all the flaws and the imperfections. Again, a model is rarely 'flawless' and the designer's comment exposes the unrealistic

demands placed upon the model's body and bodily movement. Apparently, Emma's body and style of movement is not the best choice for any of his dresses. He must pick models with walking experience and strong bodies to wear up to three outfits during the show. 'Mette... Mette we know', Yat says. 'She probably has more experience than most girls'. Nevertheless, also her body is not perfect. 'Mette has a flat hip, she shouldn't wear something like this...', Yat continues and points at an outfit picture. Again, a body is adjusted to dress, and not the other way around. Yat and Pierre turn to the more spectacular and difficult outfits of the show, the 'dressy' dress combined with the blue mesh to add volume and shape. 'This one should be first because we have a mesh', Yat reasons, but then the workers suddenly decide the dress should act as the final piece of the show. 'The colour looks good. Now we just have to choose the model', Yat says. 'Caroline, the hot one!' he quickly suggests. She has it all, apparently: her added value is an extraordinarily beautiful, symmetrical face, a nice body and a very strong walk. Caroline is a stronger resource than the other models. 'We should make Caroline wear something more', Yat continues.

After some further discussion at the computer, Yat gets up and walks over to the closest clothing rack. He grabs the bright red pants with a simple, straight cut. Yat stretches the polyester-spandex fabric between his fingers to evaluate if the pants would fit one of the twins or not. 'Come on, it'll fit two me inside!' he jokes and laughs. Spandex does the required trick, and the pants should certainly stretch to fit a 94 cm waist, a rarity among models. 'Let's not swop [the order]. The colour story goes very nicely now...' Yat expresses, and seems happy with the order at least for the moment. In the next moment, he has already changed his mind. 'The fabric [of the blazer] does not give back', Yat suddenly says. 'Let's do the difficult first. This girl has to show more, she walked really nicely', Yat continues while looking at Catherine's image, unaware at this point that Catherine would later pull out of the show. 'The twins are difficult... Let's sort out the twins!' Yat suggests again, and asks me to try on the silver wing coat, an option for one of the twins to wear. I try it on and walk a bit. 'I think it looks good, the jacket', Yat says. 'It will look good on the show'. He then asks my opinion about the coat. I honestly say I like the cut but not the fabric. 'Yeah, but it's *bling bling!*' Yat emphasizes. It is supposed to be showy. 'And also, it will cover the hip', he adds, which makes it a versatile piece that looks good on any body.



The episode above has illustrated the ever-changing ‘you take what you find at hand’ process of picking and trying out the right outfits for the show. Nothing is certain until the very last minutes before the staging. One situation at the stand illustrates the serendipity of the runway show when satisfaction quickly turns to doubt. Yat suddenly notices the brown denim zip dress hanging on the rack, an item that Camilla will wear in the show. He gives the outfit another closer look. Suddenly, he is not at all happy with this particular outfit. ‘This looks weak! Her breast is too small for that dress!’ Yat cries out of the blue. Perhaps he realizes he is suddenly being overly critical. ‘We are seeing all the bad things...’,

he complains. The designer walks around his stand examining his racks, and is clearly looking for something. Suddenly, he grabs the beige fake fur vest and puts it with the dress. 'Maybe turn it inside out. No, not inside out but the other way around', he adds as he touches the vest. The fur vest covering Camilla's bust is added to the outfit, now a more 'interesting' totality, as fashion's emphasis is always on the edgy (Twigg, 2013).

'This kind of outfit would be better close to the finale', Yat comments on another totality. He then moves the clothes around and messes up the entire order that Pierre just created. 'If you're going to change everything we won't have dinner tonight', a seemingly irritated Pierre says to him. To this, his creative boss shouts out, 'I was judging by the photos!' Yat had been too obsessed with the images on his computer screen to look at the physical garments in his stand. Now that he is actually taking the time to examine them, he is no longer happy. 'It's very complicated. Maybe we don't need to change anything...', Pierre suggests, and continues: 'If we change everything all the models need to change'. He prefers not to start organizing the outfits all over again. 'Now I was misled by the photos!' Yat explains again. 'Okay, let's do a compromise and not move too much', Yat says but cannot really leave it. 'This is really dodgy!' he says about Ida's outfit, and moves it away from the rack. Again, he spontaneously swops some outfits on the go. 'This looks more comfortable...'. In the moment, the designer creates a new runway order by randomly grabbing and moving the pieces along. 'Bang! Kick ass!' a happy and satisfied Yat finally declares. There are only hours until the show begins. His assistant looks less satisfied, grabs his papers and looks confused, asking, 'What did you change...?' Bricolage and organizing occur in the moment where plenty of things happen *in situ* and *ad hoc*.

#### CREATING LAST-MINUTE, 'HIGH-END' VALUE – THE BRICOLAGE OF PRICING THE COLLECTION

In this section, I give another empirical illustration of embodied-material bricolage through describing acts of preparing for the upcoming fashion fair, as well as pricing taking place at the last minute before Copenhagen Fashion Week. Also this illustration intends to open up the busy preparations and bricolage-intense last-minute reality of fashion. Here, pricing as an improvisational bricolage act

is to some extent based upon Yat's experience and tacit fashion knowledge, as he must have an idea of what each item cost to produce. Meanwhile, bricolage occurs in the moment where things happen *in situ* and *ad hoc*. What looks expensive is priced accordingly, but again, this not predetermined, planned or meticulously calculated. Moreover, the space and location affect the pricing of the garments.

As soon as the stand is in order at the Gallery fair in August 2013, team 2OR+BYAT heads over to the apartment to continue working and to get some rest before the intense trade show experience kicks off. Again, Yat's team has arrived relatively late at the trade show, and we are also among the last ones to leave the trade show in the evening. Instead of staying at a hotel which is expensive, Yat usually rents an apartment for Fashion Week. I stay at the apartment together with the team. On the first night, I share the only bedroom available with Italian design trainee Clizia. Yat sleeps on the living room sofa and Pierre in the joint living/dining room. On the first busy night in Copenhagen, we all gather around the kitchen table. The window is open, the street is noisy and the air is still hot. It is almost ten o'clock and there is still plenty to do before night. 'We haven't uploaded any stuff on Facebook', Yat says to begin with. Ideally, they should post something for their followers if only just a quick 'hi', as it looks professional to be at an international fair. 'We can do that now', Pierre replies, but the social media posting never happens. On top of this minor thing, the entire Spring/Summer 14 collection still needs to be priced. To me, this seems like a time-consuming task to start so late evening, and I wonder why this critical matter has been left until now. The sales book needs to be in perfect order for potential customers arriving in the morning. This time, Pierre and Yat take care of the pricing. Clizia, who is only a trainee and an extra pair of helping hands, is not involved in this vital practice.

Fashion encompasses 'both material and cultural elements' (Twigg, 2013, 119), and the designer is only one of many agents involved in constructing the worth of his collection and label. Plenty of powerful 'gatekeepers' need to recognize Yat's makings for them to be legitimized as exclusive 'high end' fashion. Prior to this study, I had never reflected too much on how designers actually price their apparel. As consumers tend to buy into perceived 'lifestyles' and often pay for carefully branded images (Alvesson and Spicer, 2016; Gabriel and Lang, 2006), I thought the pricing of designer fashion was a carefully planned and



perhaps fairly programmatic practice. How fashion worth was constructed in reality, however, was a different matter. Again, this fairly important construction was carried out at the latest possible moment, just in time for the opening of the fashion fair the following morning. It took place after a long and exhausting day of driving, and was completed by two already rather exhausted working bodies, a stressed designer and his tired assistant drinking local beer. To me it seemed this subjective, spontaneous practice was to a great extent based upon intuition and *ad hoc* improvisation, and appeared like another embodied-material bricolage practice involving a computer, a calculator, an assistant and his boss.

In the context of art, 'high prices convey respectability' and justify talent, Fine (2004, 219) points out. This appears to go for high fashion, too. Fine (2004, 274) writes that 'it is impossible to think of pricing strategies through a formal neoclassical supply and demand model of rational, isolated actors'. In my empirical setting, this becomes evident as Yat and Pierre gather in front of Pierre's computer at the kitchen table. Yat suggests that Pierre begins with the calculations while Yat gives his input later. This sufficiently illustrates the power relationship between the novice and his master. There is a pocket calculator involved, and Pierre starts using it. Although Yat indicates giving Pierre the space to work independently, he cannot avoid regularly checking up on him over his shoulder. This must annoy Pierre. Perhaps Yat does not quite trust the skill of his assistant. 'Are you joking?!' a rather dramatic designer shouts out when he totally disagrees on the price that Pierre has just calculated for him. If this acting and performing annoys Pierre, he looks as if he quite used to the manners of his boss. To me, it is almost amusing to observe the ongoing interaction. Here, aesthetic and affective matters influence the negotiation of value, often determining how individual samples are priced in the end. The clothes are priced for the occasion on the spot, in the spirit of *ad hoc* bricolage occurring.

A suggested price depends on the quality and price of the fabric used, and all 'extra' features such as unconventional cuttings, drapings, costly zippers added for aesthetic rather than practical reasons, decorative buttons and so on. In addition, what *looks* expensive is priced accordingly in the moment. In the pricing moment, Yat often totally ignores Pierre's 'rational' calculations that rely upon actual production costs, and suggests a price rather intuitively or on a 'gut feeling'. His suggestion evidently builds upon his tacit fashion knowledge and experience, but is meanwhile – interestingly enough – constructed in the

moment. As such, I view pricing as an illustrative example of improvisational bricolage. It also becomes clear that Yat and Pierre are unable to sense what consumers would be willing to pay for their makings. They desire deals but what happens to *sound* good in the pricing moment matters. Yat often makes use of the ‘psychology’ of numbers, playing around with numbers as he constructs an item price. ‘How much was the fabric again...?’ ‘59 or 60? 59 sounds better than 60.’ ‘...And this one then, let’s say that we can do 200’, he says as he examines a jacket onscreen. ‘And this one, the short one 200, so the long one can be 260... Two-sixty... Even French Connection, their jacket is two hundred something! 260 is a small price for a designer jacket... 260, 245, 160, 240 ... Now this is natural-fibre...!’ he ponders further. To Yat, French Connection serves as a useful point of reference. If a garment by a mass-marketed ready-to-wear label has a suggested retail price of more than two hundred euro, then his *designer* jacket with more high-fashion value attached to it can be more expensive still. As such, bricolage might also form the basis of brand- and designer identity construction.

Interestingly, some samples are produced in materials far *too* expensive for actual production. In other words, the collection always includes pieces that Yat already knows he cannot afford to proceed with into actual production. Of course, this is common in high fashion: expensive design one-offs called *showpieces* are often featured in collections (e.g. Mears, 2008). Louridas (1999, 17) writes that ‘design is a tinkering using materials which the designer cannot freely select’. For some styles, Yat has selected expensive materials that he is not free to use in his future production. Again, this is common in fashion. As Mears (2011) puts it, many catwalk designs are not even intended to be practical creations, and not all fashion intends to sell. Yat must produce a large and impressive collection, and this aesthetic exposure is intended to impress and create important symbolic fashion value. He has paid significantly for each unique sample brought to Copenhagen for exposure. The classy sequins party dress with see through sleeves is an expensive sample in a fabric that cannot be used in actual production. The dress certainly looks impressive, but it is not actually for sale: ‘If someone orders it, we’re in trouble!’ Yat cheerfully puts it. Again, we see how fashion does not represent a rational or logical business (rather, quite far from it). I have previously discussed irrationality as central to our understanding of fashion. Again, Yat’s saying contrasts any logical, rational or pre-figured approaches to organizing his sales and business.

## SAMPLES AND SEASON SALES

This episode discusses the '2OR+BYAT SAMPLES + SEASON SALES' event in January 2014 that intends to move experimental, one-of-a-kind items from the shop floor to the customer. Specifically, bricolage actions are present throughout the process of organizing this event, and the event is an *outcome* of bricolage. The sale is supposed to bring in income and help with the Fashion Week expenses. However, a designer usually needs to be careful about selling stock, as it risks diminishing the value of the brand (Meadows, 2012), but Yat has talked about organizing a sales event the entire autumn. With other more urgent things to accomplish he has been too busy to do so until now. As such, the event is 'just a quick decision from last night', as Yat puts it in his e-mail to me on January 14th. Apparently, the bricoleur has again acted rather intuitively. I view the event as a way of raising money to cover some of the Fashion Week expenses, although Yat never articulates it in such way. In addition, January is a hugely expensive month for the designer. Somehow, he needs to cover the production costs for the new laser-cut leather goods, the Autumn/Winter 14 samples production, and the entire Spring/Summer 14 collection. Furthermore, January is a potentially calm and risky month due to consumers expecting seasonal sales and spending less while recovering from Christmas or simply waiting for the spring goods to arrive.

Yat has created a Facebook event called 'Samples + Season Sales' to which he invites loyal customers to purchase unique, experimental high fashion items for reduced prices. Interestingly, the designer asks his regulars to bring their own shopping bags with them. To him, even the smallest savings count. If Yat has asked his customers to bring their own bags also during the hugely popular 'jumbo sales' that will take place in March, Yat carefully points out that a samples sale by no means equals a 'jumbo sale'. The 'jumbo' bargain sale in the basement of his studio is about getting rid of old stock for little to no profit, even sometimes at a loss. A samples sale is quite different. Organized in the shop, it has a more exclusive image and environment to it. Also, the relatively newly created one-offs are worth more than older, ordinary collection items. By no means fashion 'bulk' piled in dusty corners of the studio, these personal and creative makings have appeared on the pages of magazines or at bloggers' gala events or worn by artists performing music. On Facebook, Yat describes his samples as garments 'photo-shooted, unfinished, experimental, used in shows & performances, special offers...' With words such as

'unfinished' and 'experimental', the designer's description of the collection clearly entails bricolage. Yat is also prepared to post 'triggering' images of his individual pieces on Facebook to attract customers to the shop. Although some samples lack in finished detail, the event is no occasion for easy profit. On the contrary, Yat has invested significantly in his samples production. Each sample is made with good quality and requires specific machine adjustments, certain fabric cuttings and sewing in addition to the 'usual' add-ons such as zippers, buttons and linings. As each sample is unique and not part of the designer's ordinary small-scale 'volume production', suppliers charge designers significantly for them. 'Samples are extremely costly to produce. This is our way to get something back', Yat explains to me.

'Welcome, you are my first client' Yat cheerfully says on Monday and gives me another big hug as I show up outside his store in the morning. He is already there arranging the samples on two metallic racks in the middle of the shop floor, hyper-visible to anyone entering. In addition, a few '30 percent off' sales racks are placed along the wall on the left-hand side of the shop. Yat has repeatedly told me that he does not do regular seasonal sales, as these represent a symbolic fashion 'failure'. However, he clearly does them like everybody else; he just does not like to admit it. Upon my arrival, Yat is about to begin pricing the samples. Many of them represent AW 13 collection showpieces that he never proceeded with into actual production. 'Reasonable fashion is hardly attractive', Esposito (2011, 604) critically points out. Esposito (2011, 604) argues that 'fashion is rational in its way of producing and using irrationality', and this makes sense in my empirical context, too. I spot the expensive, black 3D-embroidered sequins dress with see-through sleeves, the two lovely, bulky merino wool cable knit scarves, and the interesting, irregularly woven woolen herring bone coats. The hand-knitted, grey silk and cotton sweater, and the jacquard and print bolero dress set weaved in France matched with the golden leather 'party clutch' are also AW 13 items. 'This is couture', Yat proudly points out as he prepares and gently touches the items on the rack. Technically, it is not, but it is interesting to see how he attaches worth to his bricolage pieces by cultivating an aura of exclusiveness and craftsmanship around them. Also, the act of touching his makings demonstrates how Yat creates affective relationships to his makings (Vachhani, 2013), that construct self-identity and meaning.

'I am going to prepare some bad instant coffee', Yat says and disappears in the backroom. He comes back with two big porcelain mugs. I ask how things are

proceeding with the AW 14 collection, due to arrive any day now. ‘Let’s see if we have a collection at all’, Yat says and does not look too happy. He has experienced the usual hustle and stress with production, but still expects the samples to arrive on time. Meanwhile, Yat begins pricing by reusing old price tags for his samples. Again, he makes use out of everything he has paid for, creating something from ‘nothing’ in the spirit of bricolage. The idea(1)s of bricolage are always crucially present: every tag costs him something, and an entrepreneur must be creative, economical and even greedy. ‘This is completely irrelevant’, Yat says as he marks each tag with a new price. Again, he seems to improvise while pricing goods. He only needs to give each item a quick glance to decide upon the price. The more exclusive pieces, including silk dresses and woolen coats, are being priced on average at 150 euro. The hand-washable fringe tops are priced at 100 euro each, simple skirts at 50–60 euro, jersey tops at 20–30 euro and the scarves and hats in the ‘bargain box’ at 20 euro. To cover the production costs and the expenses for the exclusive materials, some samples need a higher price.

The dramatic orange silk dress that was the ‘star’ outfit on the catwalk in Copenhagen in January 2013 has moved from the studio to the sales rack in the shop. Four months ago it was still being presented on the runway in Helsinki. Yat refers to this unique silk dress as difficult to sell as ‘it requires a specific body’. The suggested retail price for the dress in question was 1100 euro in the A/W 13 sales book, the wholesale price 440. Now the dress lacks a price, and Yat leaves the tag blank. Perhaps he does not want to mark it. The knitted merino wool sweaters and bulk scarves were expensive to produce and have apparently not sold well in-shop. ‘How much should this knit be? Is 180 too much for this?’ Yat ponders. ‘Oh... 180 and there is still 24 percent VAT’ he remarks, slightly annoyed about the taxes ‘eating up’ a significant share of his cake. ‘This is merino wool.... this was expensive to produce. It hurts me if I need to sell it for 50 euro’. I can almost feel his pain. ‘It is proven that knitwear does not sell’, Yat reflects on the irrationalities of consumer behaviour. In what follows, I continue to discuss the work-intense practices and presentations of fashion, and discuss these practices in reference to bricolage and organizing more broadly. Specifically, I analyze crucial bricolage manipulations and transformations in my empirical setting. First, I shed further light on the transformation of runway shoes from cheap objects into ‘high’ fashion commodities, second I discuss styling as a form of affective bricolage, and finally, I analyze the arranging of a stand to look impressive.

## MANIPULATIONS AND TRANSFORMATIONS

Fashion is obsessed with presenting the alluring, magical and fantastic (or sometimes, the disturbing, horrible and ugly) through conception, surface, shapes and forms. In other words, fashion's never-ending process of 'becoming' involves the moulding of aesthetics, physicality and surface, meticulous editing and the use of montage, which projects with the will to shine in relationship to others (Alvesson, 2013). In what follows, I illustrate the intersection of aesthetics, affects and bricolage in my empirical context. Specifically, I will provide accounts of *how* bricoleurs physically act upon aesthetic and affective matters as they go about manipulating, transforming and organizing things and materiality *in situ* and 'on the move'. These accounts are illustrative examples of 'thinking and visioning through acting' (Thornquist, 2005, 291), whereby central elements of a practice are brought together in action (Shove, Pantzar and Watson, 2012). As emphasized previously, we still know little about *how* mixed influences and manipulations play out in the emergence of bricolage in action on a micro level, and thus shape situated, processual, organizing and possible, intended value creation more broadly.

What people notice is a vital aspect of self-presentation and designers are continuously focused on the gaze of others. Perhaps fashion's continuous creation of enchantment through manipulations could be seen as a 'form of social reproduction, where meanings and values are embedded in, and produced by, work practices' (Endrissat et al., 2015, 1557). Endrissat et al. (2015, 1559) suggest that enchantment involves using different means to create a sense of authenticity, 'while avoiding the 'brute reality' of low-paid service work'. I find similar window-dressing tendencies in fashion, where the dirty work and unglamorous 'brute reality' is also preferably erased and rendered invisible (Huopalaainen, 2015). Meanwhile, I interpret the attachment to 'higher' forms of fashion through bricolage as a form of resistance towards the mainstream. Attention to detail is crucial in this setting, and perhaps, a kind of 'fear of finalizing' (Thornquist, 2005, 99) is present, too. In this empirical context, the perspective of aesthetics does not only concern the look of a garment. Rather, aesthetics capture the many sensual and expressive ways of 'knowing' and doing things in fashion, which closely connects with the presence and manipulation of



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affects. What is of particular interest here is the interplay between the creation of affective aura in relation to the ‘messy’, last-minute do-it-yourself reality of bricolage, and ‘the ways in which that intersection is conducted in unplanned, unintended or accidental ways’ (Rhodes and Westwood, 2008, 172).

‘I THINK HE HAS A PICTURE IN HIS MIND OF WHAT HE WANTS’  
– BRICOLAGE AS DIY ARRANGEMENTS

The following episode from my fieldwork illustrates the bricolage of *transforming* and customizing twelve pairs of cheap runway shoes in the design studio for a strategically important runway show in Copenhagen in January 2014. Specifically, this passage exemplifies the embodied-material or ‘hands-on’ transformation of an inexpensive, unknown, mundane and perhaps embarrassing material resource into something cool, interesting, ‘edgy’ and strong. In this sense, the production of affection could be approached in terms of an uncertain and spontaneous organizational process allowing and demanding multiple humans and non-humans to become part of the work in progress (Huopalainen, 2016). If captivation in the literature is often portrayed as effortful self-improvement (e.g. Coy and Garner 2010; Gundle 2008), it is interesting to notice how bricolage, improvisation, anxiety and uncertainty play out in the actual social organization of captivation around the collection, as well as the preparations of a fashion show. With this example of transforming shoes, I show how improvisation and bricolage are continuously present in the creation of allure and the generation of ‘fake feeling’ (Thrift 2008, 15).

Bricolage is here portrayed as a meaningful yet fortuitous affective editing technique. As fashion is about producing ‘intensities of difference’ (von Busch, 2009, 38), someone must intensely *want* to buy the collection that Yat presents, adjusts and then proceeds with into production. In producing affective intensity and enhancing the clothing collection, the runway shoes perform a surprisingly crucial matter and a vital part of the totality of human and dress appearing on the catwalk. Scratching the recycled shoe surface is an almost trivial example of how Yat tries to earn future enthusiasm in a cheap and surprising manner. As previously indicated, the designer always tries to save money where possible, and also tries to avoid buying new things to bring into the already packed studio.



Again, this practice sufficiently illustrates the very material aspects of bricolage and the emergence of the human and non-human interface through surface manipulations. Yat wants to re-use the golden-sprayed polyurethane boots originally bought on sale from H&M for his first runway show, now customized to look entirely different. This time, I am again involved in this transformation – another last-minute act of resource combination by using whatever one finds at hand – taking place in the studio on a Saturday afternoon, only two days prior to Fashion Week departure. Yat has bought a couple of cheap spray cans from K-Rauta, a local hardware store. This time, sticky metallic spray, a ‘discarded object’ (Fine, 2004, 119) at hand is needed to create fierce-looking runway boots. Like the self-taught artist, an ‘impoverished’ designer does not use the expensive, highest quality metallic spray but the cheapest possible, potentially ‘improper’ material (Fine, 2004). However, the transformation itself requires effort and vision while taking place in the studio setting cluttered with things: fabric samples, boxes of essentials, empty soda cans and bottles, racks, files, a rusty old bike, mannequin dolls, patterns, ribbons and thread – a creative space never ‘tidy’ or sanitized. A constant lack of finances forces the designer to rely on what is cheaply available to him instead of playing with endless choices. Despite the tricks involved, the end result must appear ‘status-enhancing’ and convincing.

Pierre has received quick verbal instructions on the phone from the busy designer, who is driving back and forth to the city of Lahti to pick up samples, on how to transform the shoes. ‘I think he has a picture in his mind of what he wants’, Pierre vaguely expresses to me as I arrive in the studio. This sounds fairly interesting. Pierre first transfers his interpretation of Yat’s vision to me who must then interpret this vaguely articulated vision ‘correctly’ in practice. It goes without saying that designer Yat is an aesthetically sensitive and artistic person by nature, picky about how things look, thus I am slightly anxious about creating something for him in an uncertain situation. Johanna, a 34-year-old stylist student arrives in the studio to help me out. She serves as yet another random, voluntary human resource at hand in a bricolage-intense reality, available and around both in Helsinki and Copenhagen. She has offered her help to Yat so that she can be part of the ‘insider’ Fashion Week experience. As a future stylist, she needs practical work experience and insight. Again, connections, networks, resource exchange and voluntary workers matter hugely. ‘This is how fashion works’, I ponder. Johanna is a valuable human resource, a working body entirely



free of charge to Yat. As Johanna will stay at a friend's place in Malmö throughout Fashion Week, Yat does not have to worry about her accommodation.

Yat wants all the shoes to be sprayed blue and red to match his collection. He prefers an uneven surface. Unlike with the clothes, flaws and stains are allowed on the surface of the shoes, and these imperfections are even valorized. Meanwhile, it takes quite some time and effort to transform the shoes. Oddly, Pierre wants the spraying to happen inside, in the tiny studio kitchen. Due to the smell and the mess I suggest spraying outside, but according to Pierre that is not allowed. Said and done, Johanna and I cover the sensitive floor and parts of the wall with the plastic bags on hand to bravely spray shoe surfaces. The spraying

smells terrible. ‘Look at these dots’, Johanna complains. We transform ten out of twelve pairs. If Yat decides to include the twins in his show, he must ask them to bring their own shoes. To find out if Yat is happy or not, I photograph the first blue shoe and the first red shoe, and send him the images. Yat calls me back immediately. ‘You can add some more colour’, he advises. ‘Tell Pierre we will have two more models and three outfit changes’. Apparently, the situation with the models has changed again, and would keep changing until the very last moment of staging. There is spray and dirt all over, and I wonder if the end-result is worth the effort, smell and mess. At this point when the shoe surface is still wet, it is difficult to judge how the shoes will ultimately look. Pierre is not too bothered about this transformational bricolage act. ‘Let them dry and then we’ll see what we do about them’, he calmly puts it as I ask his opinion. Again, I sense that things are never fully finished, but remain in a process of construction, transformation and ‘becoming’. Since this transformation, too, has taken place at the very last minute, the ‘quirky’ boots are still sticky at the fair.

‘WHO NEEDS A STYLIST?’

–THE BRICOLAGE OF STYLING A RUNWAY SHOW

This episode describes styling as another example of artistic transformation and creative bricolage in my empirical setting. During a late dinner at the tapas restaurant on a ferry from Helsinki towards Stockholm in January 2014, runway show styling is discussed around the table. Present are Yat, Pierre and me. To me, styling represents an affective-aesthetic form of bricolage, a creative practice of blending garments from the brand new collection with suitable accessories, edgy jewelry and hair- and make up styles that altogether *enhance* the collection and *move* audiences. We happen to discuss a Finnish fashion blogger and self-taught stylist who will, for the first time, style at an international runway show in Copenhagen for another Finnish label’s premiere staging. Pierre appears both curious and slightly skeptical about this arrangement. ‘Who needs a stylist?’ he critically asks his mentor. ‘I don’t know’, Yat honestly answers and continues: ‘If it’s designer fashion, you should already have a vision’. To him, the catwalk is where a *designer’s* profession, concepts, visions and identity ‘become’ and come to expression. It is where *his* visions are carefully presented, and not a

stylist's interpretations. How could an outside stylist ever understand his artistic aspirations and the stories his collection intends to tell? Yat's answer reveals the importance he places on protecting vision and an unwillingness to compromise in this regard; it also shows that the creative and fun part of presenting a runway show, aesthetic and affective bricolage, is part of *his* work.

Styling is apparently a fun practice, and Pierre and Yat are more than happy to style *themselves* after finally completing an exhausting, rather technical process of producing first-draft clothing samples. As such, styling also momentarily marks the end of governing the stressful production process. Moreover, Yat explains how only the 'ordinary', commercial, simple or even weak pieces usually need to be *styled*, enhanced or spiced up to look good on the runway. 'Top, bottom, top, bottom... all the simple stuff'. Detailed makings with interesting cuttings and shapes, in other words, what he creates, are considered strong enough as they are. He constructs his makings as strong *high-end* pieces that speak for themselves. The practice of styling is part of the fashion business, often 'outsourced' to freelance stylists, self-employed bricoleurs doing different styling projects here and there. Styling services are frequently offered to designers organizing fashion shows during Fashion Weeks. 'They [the organizers] want us to pay a lot of money for a stylist and choreographer that is totally useless', the critical designer explains. Yat is not willing to pay for this 'service' himself, although some designers do work closely with stylists, creating another type of co-operation in fashion. 'There is plenty of that 'I'll rub your back, you rub my back'-kind of thing going on', Yat verbalizes. To the 2OR+BYAT workers, styling serves as an example of artistic and creative bricolage, an exchange of immaterial value that holds aesthetically-informed practical judgments (such as 'we need more layers for it to look interesting', 'let's put something on top of that', 'that doesn't look right') regarding who they 'want to be' on the runway. To Yat, styling also means adding specific hair- and make-up choices to support the clothes presented on the runway. The hair and make-up for the show are crucial and things he always 'outsources', although the final look is created mainly according to *his* vision. Interestingly, Yat does not usually pay anything for this service. The hair- and make-up team, creative professionals, work on a voluntary basis to gain visibility and experience through the show. Meanwhile, Yat might give away some clothing items or accessories in return for this crucial input – another 'take whatever you have at hand' exchange of immaterial value.

## TRANSFORMING THE STAND

Unsurprisingly, how people and things *look* and behave in fashion matter hugely. I now move on to discuss the bricolage-like practice of organizing the stand and creating 'illusionary arrangements' through manipulations and transformations of sociomateriality. This episode is based upon my observations at the stand in August 2013. Stands at trade shows are provisional pop-up stores, put up for the sake of attracting attention. A stand must communicate a fashion label 'correctly', stand out and provide a memorable experience, as it is where buyers physically encounter exhibitors and make notes on what they experience. Exhibitors usually pay significantly for their stands, which have probably required a lot of planning, effort and investment. Evidently, the stand is also where aesthetic and emotional labour takes place. With all surface polishings frequently going on in fashion, it is perhaps quite hard to know what activities are just 'illusionary', or created for the sake of affecting audiences, and what are crucial, efficient and *productive* for organizing purposes. To me, all of the 'illusionary arrangements' and manipulations of surface and materiality discussed here appear crucial for the sake of producing elusive fashion value.

The standard of how polished the look must be and how vital impression management is here sharply contrasts with how quickly everything is set up in practice. The August edition of Fashion Week has begun dramatically for Yat and Pierre. The two creatives arrive late in Copenhagen due to a minor car accident in Sweden. Yat is a fast driver always in a hurry, and sometimes, accidents happen. Yat and Pierre still manage to reach Gallery by 18.15 on Tuesday evening to set up before the trade fair opens at nine o'clock on Wednesday morning. As soon as the car is parked close to the main entrance, the usual 'unloading' of it begins. This includes moving the garment bags and all the essentials to the stand, arranging and setting up everything, as well as preparing everything else for the trade show. The collection travels to Copenhagen in three zipped-up black garment bags. The leather goods have been stuffed into two large and zipped-up suitcases, which are quickly emptied at the stand. Instead of moving the suitcases back to the car, a safe place to store them, Yat always drags them to a dusty, 'hidden' corner of the trade show, usually somewhere close to the toilets. By so doing, Yat avoids moving things around more than necessary, and can easily drag the bags back to the stand in order to stuff them again as soon as the trade show is over.



Arranging the stand at Forum Copenhagen is crucial as always. In the spirit of bricolage, the 2OR+BYYAT team creatively makes do with what is already available such as racks, a table, two chairs and a mirror, and what is brought there: posters, the goods to exhibit, and the logo. Luckily, Yat has received the same stand as he has previously. It happens to be strategically well-placed on the corner, on the ground floor of the large hall. 'Since exhibition space is not cheap, vendors will pay a hefty price tag for a booth that is close to entry/exit points and on corners or aisles', Shaw and Koumbis (2013, 60) exemplify.

Negotiating his exhibition space has apparently been the source of constant struggle. The organizers have tried to move Yat upstairs, perhaps to give away his space to a bigger and more famous label. ‘I always fight back to the same corner’, Yat proudly puts it, indicating that labels fight for the best spaces. His saying illustrates the need to be stubborn and even manipulative to stand out in fashion. Among exhibitors, the ground floor is perceived as ‘better’ than the second floor. Buyers can never experience everything and if a buyer is busy, she or he will most likely only quickly walk through the ground floor. ‘I met the R/H girls, they got kicked upstairs’ Yat then adds. The local organizers might harshly ‘kick you’ upstairs if you are not ‘important’ enough.

Stands are manipulated and customized in different ways. The principle of ‘the bigger the brand, the bigger the stand’ seems to apply in Copenhagen.<sup>46</sup> Enhancing the collection is of course vital in this setting. To judge what looks best from the buyer’s perspective while efficiently setting up, Yat and Pierre move around the three clothing racks, experimenting with the space available. They finally place them along one of the provisional walls, then step out to get some perspective. ‘The stand looks much more impressive with the entire collection on one side’, Yat points out and looks fairly satisfied. As a result, all three racks are moved together in this impressive manner. The most eye-catching pieces are then strategically placed on the end of the racks to trigger. In addition, the spotlights are carefully adjusted to point at the commodities on offer. This is done with the help of the local set-up crew, who are moving around in the airy halls and assisting exhibitors. Yat runs after the busy, local ‘lighting guy’ and actually grabs him by the sleeve altogether *three* times for him to come readjust the lights, as he is not happy with the previous adjustments. Yat is very picky with the lights, and wants them to point at his collection in the best possible manner. As this is something he pays for, it needs to be ‘correct’. The lighting guy looks slightly irritated but does his work without complaints and seems used to the demands of the many creative workers present.

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46 For instance, French Connection has organized a cool lounge including sofas, live music and a cocktail bar to entertain their clients, whereas an unknown label can often only afford a modest stand presenting the collection. Business- and shop cards are often exposed next to small ‘gifts’ like chocolate, candy or marshmallows. Also, fresh flowers are frequently on display.

## PRESENTATIONS AND BRICOLAGE 'BECOMINGS' (OR NOT)

### IN SEARCH OF EXCELLENCE

'When they see it is like 'oh wow!' yeah, they see that this is real and it's, probably it looks a bit more, I wouldn't say realistic but it looks more, you know *done* and, professional, so-called professional, because we are exposed to the outside world.' (Interview with the designer, 2.10.2014)

'Yeah, the fashion show, I think it's worth doing it, especially the one we're, I am, doing in Copenhagen. In terms of the cost... it's affordable, still, and you get quite a lot of good... the publicity, yes, it's quite limited to, to the press going to Copenhagen at the moment. But, then nowadays, because of the digital, because of the Internet a lot of overseas press they can see, they can just go to Copenhagen Fashion Week dot com to see, to see the items and things, to see the look and the brands so in that sense I think it's definitely worth doing it and, I will do, I will continue doing it whenever I can, and in terms of the cost it's still a lot cheaper than going to Paris and, and going to, New York for example. And as I said, I don't have the luxury... I don't have those funds from, from... the ministry so it's not, some people they got it but, this is what it is so, so... I think the show is important for us and then we also have the images and, the videos so it helps. It helps with the next things. Mostly it helps with the next season, what is coming up, not the current collection because it's too late, when you have that images, so...' (Interview with the designer, 2.10.2014)

This section discusses the *presentation* of fashion as a process and performance dependent on bricolage in motion. By organizing fashion shows designers learn to *perform* and present themselves for different audiences. Unsurprisingly, Yat's purpose is to create media hype and attention (Khan, 2000), to capture interest, and to gradually *transform* presented items into objects of affection and *desire*, later articulated as 'Fashion' (Skov et al., 2009, 27). As such, affective, cultural and symbolic value creation, image-creating activities seem to outweigh any



‘direct’ economic gain (e.g. Aspers, 2001; Entwistle, 2002, 2009; Skov, 2011). Although the fashion show does not help Yat sell his current collection, he must still create ‘oh wow!’ elements as a designer, as this is when fashion ‘comes to life’. Yat commonly organizes shows on a creative low-budget and the premises of bricolage. To him, doing fashion shows is about getting exposure, identifying with the fashionable world, and becoming part of it (Volanté, 2012). To Yat, a fashion show is no superficial add-on but a *defining* moment that ultimately strengthens his label. Moreover, those who do shows create and dictate fashions, and shows distinguish professionals from amateurs. ‘It looks more done and professional, so-called professional’, Yat explains to me.

Here, the framing ‘so-called professional’ is interesting to reflect upon. Specifically, this saying illustrates a bricolage-intense reality where things certainly need to *look* and appear professional but are – in fact – organized professionally in *so-called* professional or real-life improvisational and low-budget manners. ‘We drive ourselves and drink bad coffee’, Yat verbalizes his bricolage-intense fashion reality, one that includes restricted resources, bad gas station coffee, a night in a cheap ferry cabin, quick take-away food, and far from glamorous driving against the clock. The road trip from Helsinki to Copenhagen Fashion Week and back may be exhausting and intense, but it is also a break from the designer’s daily routines, an escape from the studio setting and the flagship store. Although driving requires full attention, it is still compulsory time off from e-mails and other ‘disciplined’ office work. I sense that Yat looks forward to his road trips and seems to enjoy them. Perhaps the otherwise constrained fashion entrepreneur experiences illusory freedom on the road. He always looks forward to the social gatherings and meeting up with his friends abroad.

‘For the roughly 20 minutes of a catwalk show, producers broadcast their sartorial style, status position and market identity’, Godart and Mears (2009, 671) write. By physically showing and exhibiting his makings in Copenhagen, Yat will – potentially – gain wider visibility across the globe. Specifically, his runway show images being circulated across virtual spaces can potentially be affective triggers. A show creates hugely important wide-spread imagery and video material for promotion. This is something Mears (2008, 2011) and Godart and Mears (2009, 872) pick up: costly fashion shows rarely generate direct sales but act as important ‘brand-building strategies’ that strive to secure status for fashion houses. Meanwhile, this elusive ‘costly public relations stunt’ (Mears,

2011, 54) might only give illusions of being about direct *selling*. Successful runway shows, then, boost the sales in-shop, and Yat happily tells me this happened after his Copenhagen staging in January 2013. His show activated his regulars in Helsinki to act and buy, which then required much effort from the designer. By showing his customers both artsy 'high status' runway images and 'dressed-down' studio-shot images of the garments on his computer screen in the shop setting, Yat eventually managed to impress and *move* his regulars. Clients must *experience* the garments to relate to them, Yat explains. What looks great on a spectacular runway model does not make a client buy: 'Of course we did our homework and also showed the customers a dressed-down version'. This kind of mixed presentation actually worked: 'Some items had a 95 per cent sales through. Already 70 per cent is a very good result (sales before bargains)', Yat concludes.

#### THE 'BEST OF SCANDINAVIA'

##### – INTERNATIONAL PRESS AND BUYERS PREVIEW

'A perfect kick off to mark the start of Copenhagen Fashion Week, Gallery's Int. Press and Buyers Preview offers a chance to get a closer look at the best of Scandinavian fashion. Selected pieces of selected designers will be presented at the event reserved for press and buyers in the heart of Copenhagen.' ([http://www.fibre2fashion.com/news/fashion-news/newsdetails.aspx?news\\_id=156464](http://www.fibre2fashion.com/news/fashion-news/newsdetails.aspx?news_id=156464), accessed 4.2.2014)

Bricolage exhibits the interaction of space, materiality, human and non-human agency. My empirical material suggests bricolage emerges as an improvisational *embodied-material* activity. In this section, I illustrate this emergence more thoroughly through another episode that relates to the presentation and staging of fashion. Here, the exhibition space is approached a site for staging experiences, a networking site and a site of negotiating fashion's boundaries (inclusion/exclusion, quality and recognition). Also, intersubjective affective processes, specifically excitement and concern, are part of this multidimensional and spatial bricolage emergence. In January 2014, the AW 2015 edition of Copenhagen Fashion Week begins with an international preview event on a

Tuesday evening. As indicated above, a preview is a closed presentational space, an insider opportunity for selected exhibitors and buyers invited to meet without the pressure of ordering, experience the exposed collections before others, and eventually make appointments. A preview is another occasion to perform, stand out and network, crucial as always in fashion. Moreover, it is where activities of socializing, checking out others, making appointments, eating, drinking and mingling take place.

The ‘Best of Scandinavia’ preview is a closed event for 50 selected Scandinavian designers, invited international ‘top-buyers’ and press. It is perhaps one of the more glamorous events in the busy, less spectacular everyday life of fashion. It is an honor to get invited and is a chance to expose the ‘best’, *selected* pieces for an influential fashion crowd. The event takes place at Hotel d’Angleterre, a prestigious venue in central Copenhagen. It is another setting where those present *perform* and reproduce high fashion. Space matters in the construction of worth. Established in 1755, the d’Angleterre is portrayed on its website as ‘an icon and a historic landmark in Copenhagen, celebrated for its elegance, luxury and style’. With its ‘rich materials such as soft carpets, stone, wood, varnish and velour’,<sup>47</sup> it is intended to serve as a sophisticated and stylish interior to host an influential crowd of high-end buyers, press and the ‘best’ labels in Scandinavia. It is the second time 2OR+BYAT has been invited to the preview, and the first time Yat actually decides to attend. Tuesday will be busy. While Pierre and I set up the stand at Gallery, Yat will head over to d’Angleterre where he needs to be at 4 p.m. to set up. The material objects brought to the preview must resonate with the crowd, appear beautiful and strong on this symbolic, critical preview stage. They must *perform* and manifest Yat’s presence as a high-end designer.

The ten outfits picked for the posh preview with a protected reputation are, to my surprise, not at all subject to careful consideration or elaboration. Instead, they are quite randomly decided on-the-go in the messy, dirty design studio in Helsinki just in time before dividing the samples into black garment bags zipped-up for transportation. This important physical selection is carried out by busy and concerned bricoleurs, and occurs only hours prior to departure with plenty of other things happening simultaneously. A stressed, multi-tasking Yat suddenly

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47 <http://www.danglerre.com/restaurant-bars/>, accessed 4.2.2014.

enters the studio. He has worked on his computer from the shop while waiting for his urgent DHL delivery to arrive. 'Ugh, it smells microwave food!' Yat notices and makes an ugly face, followed by a quick comment directed to his assistant: 'Can you pick out ten ass-kicking outfits for the preview? I need ten good-looking outfits!' Ten 'ass-kicking' outfits must be handpicked for an important preview, which Yat acts surprisingly nonchalant about and I have barely even heard of.

As three garment bags out of the four go directly to the trade fair, the important selection has to be carried out in the studio and not later. Yat will bring the selected pieces directly to d'Angleterre himself, and there is no time or space to switch outfits in Copenhagen. Pierre immediately starts to pick out preview outfits by rearranging the samples on the rack. I follow the procedure in order to better understand how the selection is made in practice. Meanwhile, Yat is running and rushing around his studio fixing last-minute things. He wears the loose, black hemp trousers from his A/W 13 collection, the black-and-grey hemp sweater and a beanie. 'First things first', Yat says. 'I need to e-mail DHL. Our things are still stuck in the customs. Then, I need to print out the Viking Line documents. And I need to e-mail you the list of the girls', he continues on-the-go. Yat is still casting four models for his show and sits down to work by his desk. Pierre moves around in the other corner of the studio. He moves pieces that signalize 'strong', colourful and detailed from one rack to another. My favourite item from the collection, a woolen check-patterned coat with a big collar is selected, as is the 'wing coat'.

Yat phones DHL. While on hold with someone trying to sort out his delivery, he walks over to see what Pierre has picked out for him. 'I think we need to see some more original stuff', he straightforwardly comments as he gazes at the outfits. Yat suddenly grabs the short, turquoise 'Mexican stitch' flower print jacket, and quickly moves it to the rack with the other chosen preview pieces. He then grabs the red dress that Pierre has already selected for him, closely examines it and says: 'I'm not sure about the dress... It's too simple'. 'But the fabric is nice', Pierre answers. Yat makes the decisions in the end. Apparently, 'nice' fabric is not strong enough. All selected items need to be *special* in form, shape, cuttings and details, particularly as Yat's trademark is unconventional cutting. 'What about the denim dress?' Yat suggests and grabs another piece. His denim dress, a brownish indigo garment with an asymmetrical cut and multiple zipper details running in the hem is apparently strong and unconventional enough to

show. 'Why not this dress?' he then says and grabs another 'dressier' dress in a shiny, yellow and blue fabric decorated with a long zipper detail running in the back. He also moves this dress to the rack but instantly realizes that he might be stepping too much on Pierre's territory, the space that he has just given to his assistant. 'You know better than me', Yat adds, steps back and returns to his call: 'So what is the best thing you can do now?' After considerable time spent on the phone sorting things out, it looks like the two deliveries will not reach his studio before departure. The samples need to be in Copenhagen before the fair opens on Wednesday morning. 'Wednesday is the busiest day at the trade show', Yat explains to DHL, and he really needs the samples for the exhibition.

At the late dinner on the ferry towards Stockholm, I ask Yat about the preview. 'How did they select the labels?' I ask. 'I don't know, the usual, I guess... around the dinner table', he replies and laughs. 'Hey, let's pick Yat!' he continues and makes a funny face. The fashion circles are small and the designer quite clearly indicates that decisions tend to be made upon a 'friend' basis. In other words, you need to be somebody the organizers know in order to get an invitation. 'Do you think some serious buyers will be there?' I continue. 'No, I don't think so', Yat replies without hesitation. 'People are usually just coming for the free drinks. But of course, you never know', he then adds. Having seen enough shallow 'people-come-solely-for-the-food-and-drinks' events and having organized press previews that lazy journalists nowadays barely come to, Yat does not expect much from the occasion. Perhaps it will be another empty, pointless fashion party. With low expectations he protects himself, however, from being too disappointed. Next, Yat jokes about Pierre and me setting up his stand all night while he 'lets go' by getting tipsy on free champagne. 'We'll see if you are still at Gallery' Yat puts it, and explains that he expects the event to end around nine in the evening. 'I hope not', he laughs. It always takes time to set up. Interestingly, Yat proudly mentions having remembered to bring his business cards on the trip: 'This time I brought my cards, I just need to remember to bring them there, too...!' Yat acts surprisingly laid-back or careless about business cards and other formalities. Suddenly, something else is on his mind: 'Oh shit, did we bring the extension?' he suddenly asks. 'Oh yes, it is here', Pierre assures. It becomes evident the two workers could have prepared for the important preview better. Specifically, they lack selling images of the collection, flyers and a proper 'look book', which is an attractive catalogue of the garments dressed



on human bodies in a studio-setting. 'It's a shame we don't have a look book', Yat straightforwardly says on the road. Exhibiting the garments on the spot is, of course, crucial; buyers must see the patterns, colours and cuts in detail, and touch and *feel* the materials (Rippin, 2012a). However, offering affective and sensual stimuli is not necessarily enough to make the buyers *act*. Hanging garments risk looking like dead fabric on a hanger, even poor and abject. Thus, a look book can prove beneficial; representations of bodies 'filling up' the garments complement those hanging flat on racks. With the samples arriving late as usual, however, there was no time to create a proper look book before departure.

## DRESSING UP AND PERFORMING FASHIONABLE

‘The appearance, abilities and dimensions of the working body are produced and rendered meaningful through costume’, writes Monks (2010, 21). On the road, I ask Yat about the dress code of the fancy preview. The front-stage event is significant, as it reflects the ways Yat’s critical audiences might look at him and the other designers present, all socially exposed and dressed up to ‘perform’ onstage. ‘Well, it’s a designer event!’ Yat proudly and promptly says. For such a fancier event he must dress up, *perform* and decorate himself accordingly. However, Yat plans to quickly ‘suit up’ somewhere on the road as he prefers to drive in slouchy, comfortable clothes that no one notices anyway. There is a symbolic power dimension to dressing up or suiting up, shaping professional identity and preparing the designer for an important occasion. ‘I am going to change on the last gas station’, Yat says somewhere on the road, again, illustrating the stark contrasts of fashion reality. Performing fashion’s more glamorous ‘keeping up appearances’ in a dark suit in a posh environment is a crucial part of the tedious fashion theatre. However, it can only happen after an exhaustive and fast drive through Sweden without making any stops on the road, and getting dressed in a public restroom on the ferry between Helsingborg and Helsingør. ‘I’m wearing suit pants and a jacket but not a shirt or a tie’, Yat explains to me. He wants to be perceived as sober and stylish but certainly not boring: ‘Of course I’m wearing something funky, a funky top underneath’. A white t-shirt covered with his black mesh top intends to communicate such ‘funkiness’. The expressive ‘suiting up’ for a gala event is an embodied action that communicates, creates and functions as a vital part of the preview spectacle with a distinct high fashion atmosphere.

If the designer’s presentation of his own body actively constructs brand value, the clothing collection, empty and ‘dead’ material pieces, might actually carry the ghostly traces of a lost body (Monks, 2010). Garments must resonate and attract consumer bodies. ‘Did you take photos?’ Yat suddenly asks Pierre in the car, and refers to the twelve pieces going to the preview. ‘Because [the organizers] might not deliver them before tomorrow’. Again, we can see that images are crucial and that plenty of things remain uncertain in the studied setting. If the physical garments are missing from his stand on the following day due to the preview, Yat could always show *representations* of his creations to

potential buyers. It turns out the clothes are returned to the stands on behalf of the organizers. 'It's DHL!' the designer laughs. At this point, DHL has already become an internal joke. 'I'll try to grab them back', the designer says before leaving for the preview. He does not trust the organizers in this respect, and prefers to bring back his own pieces.

We arrive in Copenhagen before rush hour. Yat who is not afraid to occupy space tries to park the car right in front of the main entrance to make it easy for us to unload the car. It is where parking is not allowed. Someone in the set-up crew gestures to Yat to move his car, and he finds another parking lot. 'Someone already got a ticket', he calmly notices as he looks at the car next to his. He is not too bothered and says: 'I don't think anyone is coming anymore'. After parking the car and risking a ticket himself, Yat grabs one of the black garment bags under his arm and goes looking for a taxi. The dressed-up, suited-up designer is now performing the 'traveling salesman', physically carrying along his own collection to face a crowd of critics. In that moment outside an exhibition hall in Copenhagen, glamour still appears quite far from his reality. As Yat does not know the local taxi number he must walk around a bit to find one, and he looks a bit lost. 'Text me if something funny happens' Yat says before we split. 'Have fun!' I say. 'I'll try!' he cries, and does not look too enthusiastic. While the designer is off to d'Angleterre to *perform* and hopefully make new business connections, Pierre and I head over to the venue to quickly set up the stand.

Yat is back at the apartment at 20.45 o'clock in the evening. Pierre and I have already grabbed something to eat from the nearby grocery store. Pierre is cooking pasta in the kitchen and I am on the sofa, writing my field notes. 'How was it?' I ask Yat as he enters. 'I am surprised actually!' Yat responds. He is in a good mood and looks happy. Clearly, the event went better than he expected it to. 'I talked to a lot of Chinese people, and they are coming to see our show'. Apparently, Yat did not know about this year's Chinese New Year celebrations and the organizers' heavy investments in attracting Chinese press and buyers to Copenhagen. 'Apparently I have dressers coming [for the show]', he then adds. Again, fashion is full of surprises. 'This Lina is terrible with communications! I talked to a girl from Hong Kong and she said she's coming to help us, and I was like *really?*' Yat continues. Quite interestingly, this episode illustrates the typical 'no one knows' in fashion, where surprises are always present.



‘Was [another Finnish designer] there?’ I ask. ‘No she was not’, Yat declares with certain pride. ‘I was the only Finnish fashion label there, so I think we need to make a fuzz about it!’ the designer laughs. The ‘fuzz’ he refers to is a Facebook status update that will inform his followers, including chief editors in Finland, about Copenhagen. Without delay, Yat posts a picture from d’Angleterre on the 2OR+BYAT Facebook page saying ‘Very proud to be the only fashion brand from Finland. YAT has been invited to present 2OR+BYAT collection in THE BEST OF SCANDINAVIA at Hotel D’Angleterre Copenhagen Denmark!!!! – [check in] at Hotel d’Angleterre’. ‘It works!’ he then enthusiastically shouts, as he is getting likes from fashion editors in Finland. By attaching to the exclusive spaces of high fashion and an event no other Finnish label could attend, this act is another example of constructing fashion value and recognition. Because Yat tries to construct a distinctive, namely attractive and seductive, image of his label, I am curious about the organizer’s effort to establish Chinese business relations. ‘Why China?’ I ask him. ‘China is important’, the designer promptly answers. China has become a hugely significant player in the global fashion economy, and many local firms already cooperate with Chinese producers.

The preview is discussed at the traditional exhibitor’s dinner in Forum Copenhagen on the following evening, a fun occasion with plenty of food and drinks free of charge. Before dinner, the local crew is setting up tables in the aisles in-between the stands. Someone leaves a pile of chairs too close to the Yat’s stand. ‘Hey, it’s not six o’ clock – we are still doing business here!’ Yat sharply reacts. He does not like his business to be affected or interrupted, and it does not matter that the fair has been predominantly quiet. At first, it also looks like it is going to be a quiet dinner, too. ‘It has never been this empty’, Yat notices as he glances over the halls. Nevertheless, the tables slowly fill up – it just takes time for people to move from their stands to the dinner. Yat’s Danish architect friend, Lars, joins us at the table, and asks about the preview. Yat enthusiastically describes a posh environment, red carpets, Michelin chefs meeting in the lobby upon arrival, fancy finger food and an interesting mix of people present. As Yat was starving after a long trip (we made no stops on the way to save valuable time and money), he laughs at immediately grabbing four fancy little spinach soups with poached eggs to still his hunger when he first arrived at the venue. Again, he performs the art of bricolage in the setting. Moreover, Yat is excited and vividly describes the atmosphere and the other A/W pieces present. He is clearly proud

of being one of the invitees. 'Black, black and black!' and he vividly gesticulates waving his arms, dramatically indicating that everything presented looked more or less the same. Perhaps Yat also wants to demonstrate how *his* colourful pieces stood out from this fashionably discrete, almost boring crowd. 'Perhaps we are doing something totally wrong here', Yat laughs. To me, he craves to making a statement and *wants* to stand out (sartorially and otherwise). This is, of course, what performative fashion is about. Also, Yat's saying reveals an entrepreneur challenging professional norms of practice. 'I talked to the designer next to me, he was from Shanghai. His collection was not very strong, it looked quite unfinished...', Yat eagerly explains. He narrates a colleague closely examining his pieces, feeling the materials, clearly impressed by what he encountered. 'You should not be talking to the other designers', an amused Lars points, out and he is quite right. As a designer, Yat should primarily connect to important buyers and journalists at a preview event, not the other designers and potential competitors present.

## SELLING DREAMS

Attending 'old-fashioned' trade shows may be less about direct sales these days, but taking part in them is still important for other reasons. 'Places, events and people are remembered with and through the lived body', Cutcher et al. (2016, 4) remind us. Space and visibility matters in fashion; you really need to *occupy* and change performance space. The exhibition is another powerful performance space, organized so as to become a meaningful *place* (Shortt, 2015) that constructs strong audio-visual narratives and invites recognition, reflection and future agency (consumption). The organizing of the exhibition includes ambivalent feelings of uncertainty, fear, desire, confidence and worry. In this sense, attending a trade show is a powerful attempt to manage organizational memory (Cutcher et al., 2016) and invite consumption through affective means. It goes without saying that all exhibitors must dress to represent their labels. I had never before seen so many unrealistically beautiful, fashion-conscious bodies assembled in one space, (more or less) consciously *performing* fashion for one another. 'There has long existed a kind of conscious fashion performative self-staging among the professionals who participate in fashion fairs and



fashion weeks, a kind of imitation or reference to the fashion aestheticisation', Engholm and Hansen-Hansen (2014, 3) point out. I strongly felt this 'self-staging' materialized in my empirical context. By walking around the fair, I also observed appointments taking place at exhibitions stands. Yat has not agreed to meet any buyers beforehand, and the people showing interest his stand are, for the most part, random. This is interesting, given that I expected actual buying to take place at the exhibition.

Being physically present (or not) is about (un)certain image creation and symbolic fashion value, which builds over time. If Yat treats his samples as first draft

versions that need to be modified and adjusted before only a selected few go into actual production, the exhibition provides a valuable, affective opportunity for the designer, a chance to learn from critical observation and feedback. Interestingly, the buyers must evaluate the exposed samples as ready-to-*sell* commodities. What they see is not, however, what they necessarily will get later. As previously indicated, samples are rarely ready-to-sell garments from a designer's point of view. Rather, they are unfinished experiments in the process of 'becoming' or 'first draft' garments-in-process that still need to be modified, adjusted, developed or even dropped after a trade show. As such, the presented collection is a form of aesthetic illusionary arrangement that builds upon the editings of bricolage. The collection is still very much 'undone', under construction and in progress, but needs to look strong, detailed and finished to impress.

There is an element of politics involved as buyers view the display. By observing people's reactions at his stand, Yat tries to sense what people think and *feel* about his collection. Specifically, Yat carefully follows the buyers' body language: which pieces are the buyers frequently and physically drawn to, what pieces do they choose to physically *touch* or which items do people ask him further questions about? 'There's a politics to ways of watching and waiting for something to happen and to forms of agency', writes Stewart (2007, 16). This becomes quite evident at an exhibition stand, too. Subjective meanings attached to garments are bound differ from individual to individual, as they are based on elusive taste preferences. In reality, it is not easy for a designer to form an opinion about how his design or collection is received.

While at the stand, the designer is eagerly waiting for *something* to happen (Stewart, 2007). If nothing remarkable happens, which unfortunately is often the case, the designer is eventually in trouble. If affective makings do not resonate, their presence is mute, and the products are essentially worthless. Rhodes and Westwood (2008, 176) suggest that bricoleurs invent their resources depending on situated tasks. Elaborating further on the collection as it is exposed at the stand exemplifies such *in situ* invention. This elaboration includes 'inventing' which pieces are possible future resources, or what to proceed with into actual production. These are difficult decisions that are based on affect and gut feelings: what is risky and could be dropped at this point? What should definitely go into production? At one trade show, Minna asks the entire team present about our favourite items, to see if we manage to agree on the 'safe' pieces that Yat

could proceed with, with little or no modifications. The feminine, rose sequin embroidered jacket turns out to be such a garment. The sequin dress is also popular. Although these are feminine, light and perhaps summery, Minna suggests that the glittery, sparkling pieces could be produced in time for the upcoming Christmas and party season.

I am still left puzzled: why are so many expensive samples produced for each season when there is no intention whatsoever to sell many of them? It feels unsustainable and unreasonable. Of course, *impressing* buyers by selling dreams, creating optical illusions and keeping up appearances is always vital in fashion, and it is generally important to offer lots of styles to choose from. A large collection might also symbolically signal that a label is doing well, even if it is actually struggling. Knowing the low budget reality of Yat's small label, this expensive illusionary arrangement feels awkward. Fashion 'has always been considered the kingdom of the irrational – not to say of the unreasonable', Esposito (2011, 604) writes. Esposito continues: 'Fashion is a kind of free zone where irrationality is more exposed than refused' (2011, 605). Again, this 'irrationality', in my view, helps make sense of the otherwise disjointed sample production. Pierre tries to explain this production to me further. The description below confirms fashion's 'rationality of the irrational' (Esposito, 2011, 604), when irrational ways of working that even seem to outweigh careful calculations and planning ahead become incorporated and widely accepted as 'normal' and 'rational' in this setting:

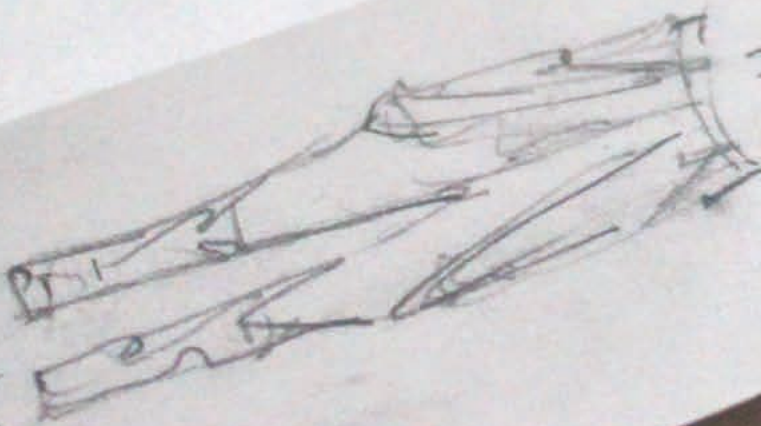
**Astrid:** 'Why do you have to produce so much samples? Why is there so much producing stuff that doesn't go into production...?'

**Pierre:** 'You have to ask Yat. I think it's because he has a lot of ideas, when it comes to creating the collection. I don't know how he works. I'm concerned about this, because I'm mostly doing the production, so when we have so many samples, I know that not all of them will go to the production. So this is a question mark for me, also, but I think it's also like, to have the merchandise as much as possible that the buyer can choose from. Of course, you can always keep one, because you produce only one piece. So there is not so much risk. So if they [the buyers] like one style, you go for this type for production, you don't go for the others. So it's also a way of thinking, and a lot of many wasted.' (Interview with the design assistant, 12.9.2014)

Exposing a brand new collection is both exciting and anxiety-causing. 'We need to put all cards out there', Yat explains to me. 'Buyers are busy and might have a next appointment. They have to get all the information directly or they might not bother to come back'. What becomes rather paradoxical in August 2013 is how Yat constructs his relationship to buyers. During uncertain economical times, the designer needs actual orders more than anything to secure his living. He is physically present to sell, and his entire stand must be in 'perfect' order to impress. Yat's team has quickly prepared a sales book, steamed the clothes to remove wrinkles, and strategically placed them on the racks to stand out. Everything, I sense, is adjusted to look perfect before the fair opens. Paradoxically, perhaps, his entire collection is usually not physically present or ready for a fair. 'I'm actually telling our customers not to place orders at the fair', Yat says at the stand, much to my surprise. As a way to trigger further interest, Yat decides to show potential clients 'onscreen creations', seductive images on his computer of becoming-things or creations-in-process not even physically present or ready. In this sense, the designer is literally selling affective dreams. In August, the novel collection of colourful laser cut leather goods, are an example of such virtual presentation in a 'real life' context. 'Instead of them spending their money elsewhere, I try to show them what we're getting in'. Oddly, Yat encourages his customers to patiently wait for some goodies to come in later. This sounds interesting. Despite exhibiting an impressive collection on the spot, Yat's own focus is already on the next things. Perhaps this is typical for the restless, moving, 'becoming' of fashion. Yat does *not* conduct selling as an instrumental matter of carefully considering what would be most profitable for him from a business point of view. 'If I would only do what sells I could as well be a consultant for Nike or Mulberry or something else, and I've done that'. He talks of doing things wholeheartedly and passionately as long as it feels right to him. To Yat, being in the fashion business is something larger than trying to make money or making a living. It is about attunement, surge and surviving by doing the things one loves (Stewart, 2007). It is about feeling connected – to something.



60 N - Mhh



60 N - Mhh





PART VI  
PIECING TOGETHER  
BITS AND PIECES





## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

In this study, I seek to add a reflexive, richer and more critical understanding of the versatile, emerging and non-linear work of fashion by closely exploring people's everyday doings, dynamic interactions and work experiences in a specific creative context. My interest lies in one particular affective and 'idiosyncratic' (Khaire, 2014) work environment: high-end fashion, a context that 'incorporates significant elements of exclusive handwork and craftsmanship' (ibid, 246). The purposefully open, broad and seemingly simple question 'what do people do when they *do* fashion?' was inherently central to my work. Interestingly, this question turned out to be dynamic, multilayered and complex – even philosophical – and perhaps more complicated than I first thought. By exploring – in-depth and in detail – how a fashion designer and his team creatively organize and re-organize themselves and their work or apply varied, often low-budget and bricolage-inspired entrepreneurial practices on the steps towards offering worthy high-end fashion, this thesis creates deep and situated knowledge on the uncertain, ambiguous and ever-changing 'trial-and-error' process of working *towards* fashion, an idealized phenomenon that is always expected to be on the move or in a state of becoming and passing by.

This thesis has explored several aspects of organizing in the context of fashion's everyday activities, addressing some of the constitutive elements that have dominantly been overlooked to this emerging practice. As I use it here, the notion of bricolage is inherently multidimensional, 'messy' and complex, and I have also brought in elements that were successfully overlooked by the mainstream bricolage literature. Specifically, I suggest that the study of both bricolage and organizing *demands* a profound immersion in complexity (see also Montuori, 2003); socio-materiality, spacing, embodiment, and affective relationships, none of which have traditionally been the focus of existing bricolage studies in the realms of organization studies or fashion studies. To me, existing bricolage research has not reflexively managed to explain *how* bricolage actually emerges in its social context, how bricoleurs actually engage in dynamic *action*, how they co-create actions themselves in and through their bodies in specific situations across time and space (Satama and Huopalainen, 2016), or how they weigh-up or cope with complexity in a constant play of order, disorder, and organization.

Whereas existing bricolage studies have often tried to ‘outline the context within which bricolage occurs’ (Edwards and Meliou, 2015, 1278), the focus has arguably often been on more abstract structures or the lack of resources constraining bricolage in organizations in a strikingly a-mobile manner, saying less about potentially more disruptive, temporal, emerging and dynamic bricolage ‘in the making’, rooted in the everyday. In this thesis, I have worked against ‘anachronistic theorizations and outdated images of work’ (Barley and Kunda, 2001, 90; Sergi, 2012). Thus, the novelty in my analysis is in showing how fashion is produced *in situ*. My work says something valuable about everyday fashion, organizing and bricolage, phenomena always processual, moving, hybrid and intertwined. My thesis allows a deep and critical examination of the various ways in which the subjectivities of fashion go about organizing plenty of things in an uncertain socio-material process of trying to articulate affection, distinction and worth. In this research I have shown how fashion *in the making* is a fascinating, uncertain and ongoing process of ‘becoming’, and I have shed light on the emerging, self-fulfilling, disciplined, surprising, mimicking and manipulative dimensions of this continuous evolvment. Specifically, I have managed to illustrate how this complex ‘doing’ of fashion is an ongoing and essentially non-linear process of navigating multiple logics, conflicting meanings, resources, materiality, expectations, multiplicity and mess *in action*. In this sense, this thesis develops fashion as an emerging *organizational* phenomenon, as well as bricolage as a multidimensional phenomenon with agentic possibilities. This thesis argues that fashion is essentially unfinished; an ongoing bricolage process of endless becoming, which evidently links to emerging organizing.

Moreover, my thesis opens up novel ways of engaging with emerging, dynamic, multidimensional and affect-intense practices that – broadly speaking – organize human activities, spaces, material objects, collective meanings and social value. Organizational studies have traditionally focused solely on what *humans* do within organizations in a seemingly utilitarian or ‘rational’ way (Gabriel, 2001), neglecting and marginalizing other resources, non-human agents, material things, objects, and tools essentially present and active in organization. This neglect of non-human agency is evident in the bricolage literature, too. By showing the significance of various elements such as non-humans resources, materiality, and performance space in organizing for fashion, my thesis tries to work against such humanist hegemony. I viewed work practices



as both material and fleshy in the sense that they involve surfaces, various non-humans, materials, tools as well as active, sensing and feeling human bodies moving across spaces and *creating* spaces, interacting with artefacts, relating to others and doing what they themselves believe are meaningful things. As emphasized throughout, creating fashionable things ascribed with affective value requires significant effort working with multiple non-human materials available (Thrift, 2008, 2010). In the fashionable world, matter *matters*: materiality as an *active presence* with agency is hugely relevant here. Taken together, and

intimately tied with socio-materiality – organizing is – from this allowing and ‘hybrid’ position – all about navigating complexity, finding meaning and trying to articulate worth. Equally, it is about developing, reproducing and *maintaining* a particular affective economy by focusing on details, concrete manipulations and subtle acts.

Meanwhile, professional norms, discourses of image, beautification and display, self-actualization and self-expression, (an illusion of) freedom, creativity and high aspirations (see e.g. Gabriel, 2005, 2008) were hugely important in the studied setting. These discourses and dynamics continuously formed the organizing activities, practices and ‘becomings’ studied here, and are, of course, present and relevant in plenty of other empirical contexts, too. A contemporary society of spectacle (Gabriel, 2008) is regularly said to build upon the ambiguous dynamics identified here. In this respect, this thesis links to broader debates about contemporary ‘extreme work’ (e.g. Cederström and Spicer, 2015; Costas and Kärreman, 2016; Costas, Blagoey and Kärreman, 2016), the importance of enhancement technologies (Bloomfield and Dale, 2016), surface polishings (Alvesson, 2013), as well as the centrality of display in a creative economy part of the society of the spectacle more broadly (Gabriel 2005, 2008, 2012; Evans, 2003). Altogether, this study says something novel and valuable about the truly complex and ‘messy’ organization of fashion, and the versatile and meticulous work performed in fashion in order to produce value.

#### TURNING THE SPOTLIGHT ON A FASHION DESIGNER, HIS PROXIMATE TEAM AND ONGOING ORGANIZING

In the previous chapters, I have empirically illustrated and analyzed the many things I have observed people and things do when they – together – organize, act, create, make and ‘do’ fashion. As previously explained, my aim with this study has been to portray a socially constructed reality in rich detail. I have strived for deeper understandings of fashion’s everyday organizing activities ‘from the inside’ and beyond the shallow surface. The empirical organizational reality is always in motion and in flux (e.g. Hernes, 2004, 2014; Heroes and Maitlis, 2010; Tsoukas and Chia, 2002), spanning human and non-human bodies capable of affecting and being affected, corporal forms and various non-

human objects and physical artefacts on the move. I have studied human (and non-human) encounters in working life as well as versatile *acts* of organizing – people doing and trying to achieve meaningful things together – in a rich setting of manipulating surfaces, as well as performing affective and aesthetic forms of bodily labour. I have also illustrated how an increasing emphasis in the studied context is placed on the demand for extreme work and entrepreneurial spirit (Bloomfield and Dale, 2015), performance, manipulation of surface and materiality, self-improvement and affective/aesthetic forms of labour.

How does a fashion designer do what he does and what are he and his team actually doing? What is happening? I have found many, sometimes contradictory, aspects of organizing in my empirical setting. For instance, the paradox between the designer's desire for freedom and flexibility contrasts with the continuous demand of self-discipline and productivity. Unlike most existing bricolage studies and fashion studies, I stress that I have focused on actions, micro-level practices and everyday *embodied-material* activities to illustrate the dynamics of emerging and fleeting moments of organization. Surprisingly few studies on fashion and bricolage have put ongoing action (e.g. Chia 1997), movement and socio-material interaction at the fore of inquiry. This thesis shows that the 'doing' of fashion does not follow an orderly, linear process. Rather, this complex doing enables hybrid ways of thinking about processual organization, what it could mean to organize and 're-organize-in process' (Ashley, 2016) (in) a fashionable world, and what it means to *live* and experience (in) such an organized world. Stewart (2007, 129) describes everyday life in the following words: 'Some things have to be sidestepped. Or solutions have to be invented. There are deadening frustrations but there's also a central, palpable pleasure in the state of trying. An impulse toward potentiality.' To me, this affective description fits excellently with the rich and sensate fashionable world I studied, a fascinating work setting in such a continuous 'state of trying' and uncertain 'becoming'.

Despite dreaming of certain things, Yat never did exactly articulate or perhaps even know what he was trying to accomplish as a designer-entrepreneur or what he wanted to focus on. Indeed, he set off in motion – all the time and in various directions – to act, organize, bricolate and do plenty of things. In a sense, I believe this description could apply to many of us. Fashion's vital organizing practices and accomplishments build upon collective Do-It-Yourself actions, ideas of 'having a go at it', an ongoing development, experiences of uncertainty

and serendipity, stimulating desires, editing techniques, *pretending exclusivity* and always aspiring to keep up appearances. Although Blumer (1969, 289) once wrote that ‘fashion introduces order in a potentially anarchic and moving present’, order alone does not explain fashion. Rather, change, surprise, transformation, rejection, ‘chaos’, confusion, doubt, anxiety, ambivalence, inefficiency and disorder appear crucial for the production of ‘orderly’ fashion. These dimensions deserve our further critical scholarly exploration. In the doing of fashion, order and disorder intensely intertwine, which I have illustrated empirically. Also, I have shown the importance of errors, failures and mistakes to the organizing of fashion. Esposito (2011, 606) articulates this ongoing negotiation well when she notes that ‘fractures or clefts, such as the irrationality of fashion, are not mistakes to be corrected and deleted where possible, but become conditions for the very functioning of the organization’. I have, through the notion of serendipitous bricolage, demonstrated the significance of fractures and clefts in my empirical section as such important conditions. Again, organizational studies have traditionally tended to neglect these ‘irrational’ yet important conditions in favour of more polished, intentional, linear and straightforward accounts of organization (O’Doherty et al., 2013; Burrell, 2013; Phillips et al., 2014).

#### MAKING SOME SENSE OF AN AFFECTIVE ECONOMY

This thesis offers deep insight into a specific fashionable world, and how it is constructed, organized and signified *in action*. Of course, this does not mean that I seek to reveal any objective truths in my writing. A fleeting affective economy is an ever-changing hybrid form in motion that many agents and agencies, surfaces and materials taken together ‘do’ relationally. Here, I do not *advocate* this economy. Rather, I wish to demystify, deepen, problematize and scrutinize it further. This study has illustrated the inherently ‘messy’ organization of such an economy, and presents a serious engagement with such a complex world. Specifically, this thesis sheds light on how the specific affective economy of fashion is situated at the intersection of the global and local, the economic, affective and cultural, the ‘high status’ and ‘low budget’, the ‘cheap’ and expensive, the polished and dirty, the planned and improvisational, the social and material, as well as the political and passionate. Encounters, affects, objects,

persons, spaces and their complex relationships with each other structure the construction of worth and experiences of captivation in this setting.

Every fashion designer works differently, but my study suggests that it takes a great deal of effort to construct material clothes inscribed with a fashionable ‘aura’, affection and image. It is not at all easy to try to affect and *move* critical audiences. As discussed, I focused on the hard work, the ongoing activities of bricolage and improvisation, the creation of favourable impressions and the aesthetic and affective illusionary arrangements behind-the-scenes of fashion that not only significantly constitute a fashionable ‘surface’, but are inevitably part of continuously *constructing* and validating this exciting world. This study indicates that designers and fashion insiders are continuously focused on the gaze of others, hence, what other people see or notice is a vital aspect of self-presentation and performance in this setting.

Fashion’s workers, knowing bodies-in-action (Bassetti, 2014), seek to experiment, improvise, accumulate and make use of resources as cheaply as possible by working together with others under various project-oriented arrangements. Some of the bricolage activities I observed explicitly worked ‘to hide away the degree of chance involved’ (Rehn and Lennerfors, 2014, 12) in these collective processes. This was especially true for the various technologies of enchantment I could observe. In practice, a variety of manipulations and editings of surface were ‘hidden’ from sight and carried out with polishing intentions and for the sake of creating affection. Interesting was the assumption that disruptive, unruly and ‘non-professional’ bricolage must go ‘unnoticed’ by certain agents or professionals. Affective ‘tricking’ and manipulation, for instance, was usually carried out behind closed doors. As emphasized, this polishing was often experienced as an improvised and uncertain means to gain success, yet self-evident to do in this setting. It was, I would say, part of fashion’s doing while inventing ‘the way of doing’ (Gherardi and Perrotta, 2013), and crucially part of its rites, culture and rituals more broadly.

By curiously exposing and shedding light on practices that would probably otherwise go unseen (unfortunately, this sounds fairly objectivist, see also Linstead, 2015), I have shown *how* diverse hands-on doings set up, shape and organize a very particular kind of moving, restless and exhausting affective economy. This economy is marked by continuous movements, insecurity, fabrications of desire, struggles, tensions and paradoxes. There are moments



of pure joy and satisfaction, but there is also plenty of anxiety, uncertainty, tears, disappointments, struggle and failures (Stewart, 2007). Meanwhile, there are doings often problematic, stressful, sometimes contradictory and utterly difficult for those involved to handle. As a shifting economy of circulated fantasies, suffering, affective dreams, ‘magical’ (Moeran, 2015) things and escape routes from boredom, dullness and routines in everyday life, fashion performs another ‘scene of both liveness and exhaustion’ (Stewart, 2007, 1). In the case of 2OR+BYAT, striving for orderly perfection was continuously present, whereas plenty of the activities I observed were carried out in a seemingly whimsical, ever-changing, *ad hoc*, improvisational and last-minute manner. This ongoing balancing act between idealized ‘high’ fashion and the couture concept of ‘made to measure’ juxtaposed with a reality of spontaneous Do-It-Yourself, inventing ways of doing while carrying out actions, manipulation, dirty work and ‘low budget’. Meanwhile, expressing artistic freedom and skills was observed throughout as central to a highly competitive reality of constrained resources and the social norms, rules and expectations of the fashionable world.

As an unreachable ideal of perfection appears evident in fashion more broadly, one might also suggest that the effort needed to produce something that is effortlessly beautiful, is not only significant for fashion. Fashion is of interest in the sociology of organizations more generally because so much of contemporary capitalism relies on the production of affective value, glamour and captivation. The creation of affection not only drives, shapes and defines the behaviours of human and non-human agents involved in organizing ‘for fashion’. The hard work and the uncertainty has the power to later determine economic and cultural success in this economy where elements of pretend play out in value production and where significant effort and suffering are often rendered invisible for the sake of a moment’s consumer amusement, attachment or (long-)lived experience.

## DEVELOPING OUR UNDERSTANDINGS OF BRICOLAGE

Denzin and Lincoln (1994, 2) once suggested that bricolage is ‘a pieced-together, close-knit set of practices that provide solutions to a problem in a concrete situation’. Rather than finding solutions, using bricolage to enhance performance or approaching any situation as ‘concrete’, I am concerned with

problematizing bricolage and questioning its underlying assumptions further. My study sheds light on bricolage as a mundane, emerging and 'incomplete' attempt of organizing *in action*, doing and dealing with complexity in the fashionable world. In fashion, non-linear bricolage seems to have direction and intends to create worth, although plenty of the work carried out to produce social worth appeared whimsical, improvisational and 'invented'. Organizational practice is always affected by uncertainty, struggle, mistakes, accidents, improvisation and serendipity. I have touched on the complex 'making of' organizational bricoleurs, and how bricolage practices are formed in spatial relations and everyday moments over time. My study has shed light on bricolage as it is carried out *in situ* or performed and produced 'on the move' across rich socio-cultural and embodied-material contexts and lived spaces. Rather than explaining and analyzing *how* bricolage actually comes about in complex *embodied-material* relations and spatial, everyday actions, the study of bricolage within the field of organization studies persistently continues to focus on the more 'rational' and linear capabilities of the human bricoleur. This approach neglects emerging action, the significance of socio-materiality, lived experiential bodies, as well as the body and senses of the bricoleurs who are always acting emotionally, relationally and 'irrationally', too.

My stance advocates an understanding of organizing as emergent, relational, processual and 'becoming'. This goes for bricolage, too. Specifically, my study develops our understandings of bricolage as an emerging socio-material process in which workers and materiality are *active* constituents. For working bodies, bricolage is about making situational sense and pinning down particularities within a specific moment in order to *act* according to what, at that time, space and moment, simply seems like a good thing to do. At the same time, 'bricolage is not everything' in my empirical context, and I will discuss these implications within real-life complexity and multiplicity as follows. The *varied* activities of bricolage I have observed and interpreted each have their own purposes and objectives, such as impressing and affecting audiences, creating long-term fashion value, and standing out in a fierce global competition. Throughout, I have found bricolage suitable to analyze mundane yet meaningful embodied-material actions and doings *in situ*.

My focus has been on the versatile makings of bricoleurs, bricolage as a local (dis)order, and the construction of fashionable objects through mundane



embodied-material micro-level practices. Specifically, I have analyzed bricolage practices of preparations, manipulations and transformations, illustrating how working bodies and relevant materials are caught up and brought together in these surging and spontaneous activities (Stewart, 2007) on a day-to-day basis. By turning to bricolage, I have been able to exemplify how various valuable meanings, outcomes and objects in the fashion world are creatively made up 'on the spot'. At the risk of sounding disturbingly positivist, I suppose this study has identified 'new' bricolage activities, especially as the kinds of bricolage illustrated, analyzed and developed in this thesis are not at all common in management literature. Meanwhile, our understandings of bricolage remain subjective, varied, partial and limited.

Practices, such as that of bricolage, are frequently viewed as sites of working, knowing and organizing (Schatzki, 2005; Nicolini, 2011, Carlile, Nicolini, Langley and Tsoukas, 2013). Therefore, a key question in the realm of practice-based studies is consequently *how* all these interrelated elements – symbolic, semiotic, affective and material – actually come together in practice. This thesis offers deeper insight into this complex question. Tracing *how* embodiment and materiality were mobilized and *how* things were done, assembled, pieced or stitched together offers an important and valuable contribution to the field of practice-based studies as well as to the fields of fashion studies and organization studies, especially as the existing literature on both fashion and bricolage still suffers from a lack of deep and situated empiricism. In a socio-material framework, 'the social and the material are *constitutively entangled* in everyday life', Orlikowski (2007, 1437) reminds us. Throughout, I have empirically illustrated *how* bricolage is created *ad hoc* in uncertain conditions and entanglements between the social and the material in an ever-changing fashion reality. These entangled actions include bricolage as manipulations of surface and materiality, affective 'tricking' practices, and bricolage as the interface between embodied humans and non-humans. In this thesis, I not only identify *what* constitutes bricolage across different times and spaces, I also show *how* bricolage is co-constituted *relationally* and in motion across time and space. More importantly, these insights move our attention from *what* is connected in bricolage (for instance, affects, humans and non-humans) to the complex processes of *how* human and non-humans 'become' connected in bricolage. In this sense, I have added a dimension to the deeper understanding of the

processual, *emerging* activity of bricolage, as well as the ‘becoming’ of practices more broadly (see also Gherardi and Perrotta, 2013).

I argue that we need to seek to challenge the dominance of anthropocentrism in research on organization and bricolage. Apart from a growing collection of critical research (e.g. Rhodes and Westwood, 2008; Perkmann and Spicer, 2014; Rehn and Lennerfors, 2014), literature on organizational bricolage remains widely informed by fairly traditional, linear mainstream management thinking. Bricolage still appears to be too often attributed to the human agent and the individual whose cognitive skills are, in my opinion, over-emphasized. Precisely as previously discussed, this literature overlooks the *agencement* of bodies (Gherardi and Perrotta, 2013; Satama and Huopalaainen, 2016), and renders materiality as merely passive, without agency. This is problematic for several reasons. I have shown how the acting capacities of non-human agents and their different forms of agency provide the mandate for their inclusion in bricolage research. I am aware that interest in this area is growing within organization studies (e.g. Cooren et al., 2006; Simpson et al., 2015; Whittle and Spicer, 2008). However, significantly more attention needs to be paid to this important subject in the realm of bricolage research.

Moreover, there are plenty of bricolage studies on handymen and less on handywomen. The existing literature has also ideologically tended to privilege maleness over femaleness, masculinity over femininity, and ‘serious’ businesses over the ‘frivolous’. Plenty of empirical studies exist on bricolage in relationship to IT and other technology *innovations* (see for example Ferneley and Bell, 2006; Garud and Karnøe, 2003), whereas far fewer bricolage studies have been carried out in the context of fashion and other feminized, ‘frivolous’ industries. This thesis has contributed rare empirical insight about bricolage to a dialogue that adds substance to what is still considered superficial, feminine and frivolous in the field of organization studies. Bricolage needs to be explored in other empirical settings than traditional serious ‘macho’ businesses, and we need to problematize the (male) human as key to understanding bricolage action. In this thesis, I show how inquiring into the organization of a ‘feminized’ field does not generate merely shallow or superficial understandings of bricolage. On the contrary, this thesis suggests we need to reconsider, develop and deepen the multidimensional notion of bricolage. I will return to this discussion. Could bricolage be an important part of the broader postindustrial, spatial

and dynamic experience-based conditions of organization, then? Building upon insights from the context of fashion where the notion of bricolage has facilitated increased understanding of the complexities of organization, this could quite possibly be the case.

#### EMBODIED-MATERIAL BRICOLAGE

In the context of fashion, bricolage is arguably an organizational *inevitability* (Rhodes and Westwood, 2008). Bricolage represents a promising concept, one that intertwines ‘knowing’ and ‘doing’ (Gherardi, 2015) in a way that neither privileges knowing nor doing. Rather, the practical emergence of bricolage suggests that bricolage takes the form of *reasoning* and *acting* in an association of non-human and human elements (Gherardi and Perrotta, 2013). This is something that my thesis has illustrated throughout. My analysis focuses on the embodied-material aspects of bricolage. In particular, I shed light on human and non-human movements across spaces, manipulations of human bodies, dress and material surfaces by creatively using bodies, cheap things and various resources available ‘at hand’. My study suggests that versatile *in situ* activities of ‘doing’ fashion by practicing bricolage are always contingent on multiple actors, relations, spaces, agencies and interactions, as well as the presence of uncertainty, ambiguity, serendipity and luck. Throughout, I shed much-needed empirical light on the various ways in which a fashion collective *performed* the art of ‘brico-lage’ by pulling together materials, using tools, manipulating elements, objects and issues in manners often ‘diverse, improvised, experimental and borrowed from a range of sources and places’ (Stokes, 2011, 15). Meanwhile, bricolage actions are also to a great extent influenced by the conventions, rituals, norms and regimes of their particular cultural ‘world’ (e.g. Becker, 1982).

Previous research on bricolage in organization studies has traditionally *not* included embodiment, materiality, aesthetics and affects in its wider scope and definition. My study is in contrast with much of these existing studies, which largely neglect the materiality of embodied experiences of bricolage, as well as the agency of materiality as constitutive of bricolage. By emphasizing the practicality, sociomateriality and affectivity of bricolage, my thesis contrasts with

traditionally abstract and metaphorical conceptualizations of bricolage (Ciborra, 2002; Garud and Karnøe, 2003; Duymedijan and Rüling, 2010). Therefore, I suggest our understanding of bricolage deserves to be rethought and developed. Bricolage is an embodied-material practice as it happens: bodies *and* materials organize, and bricolage is a dynamic form of organizing. Furthermore, to my surprise, the literature on bricolage has arguably largely ignored how bricoleurs *perform* and present themselves physically, aesthetically and emotionally on different stages and social arenas. Regardless, emotional, affective and aesthetic forms of labour seemingly play a crucial part in the emergence and performance of bricolage in any social setting.

In my study, I found the emergence of bricolage intensely relational, social and material, requiring continuous interactions with others. Essentially, we know fairly little about *how* the entwinements between embodiment, materiality (Dale and Lantham, 2015), affects and bricolage play out in the everyday context of organization. I propose a generous framework that develops the current conceptualization of bricolage to include and emphasize an *embodied-material dimension*, that is, the ‘capturing’ of how bricolage dynamically emerges through the entanglement of humans and non-humans in action. Bricolage, a hybrid practice, does not form and develop as a separate entity but *in relation* to and under the influence of various human and non-human agents involved. Non-human and human entwinements (Dale and Lantham, 2015) significantly shape and socially construct the relational, spatial and embodied-material phenomenon of bricolage. Bricolage always involves the skillful and meticulous assembling and performance of the human and non-human interface, manifested in e.g. the dynamics of organizing material objects and bodies.

The dominantly disembodied approach to bricolage and the lack of both situated empiricism and critical edge (Rehn and Lennerfors, 2014) has inspired me to develop bricolage writing in a more empirically rooted and embodied-material direction that does not overlook the role of materiality, expressions, bodies, bodily postures, gestures and non-verbal communication. However, an embodied-material understanding of bricolage takes into account the entangled embodiments of bodies-materialities-organization (Dale and Lantham, 2015) to an even greater extent than what I have managed to accomplish here. Problematizing the embodied, material and ‘physical’ facets of bricolage further opens up novel possibilities for theoretical and philosophical approaches to

bricolage. I hope my work encourages others to develop bricolage writing in more emphatic, aesthetically sensitive and *expressive* directions deeply rooted in emerging practices. This resonates with the importance of bringing the active body back in to management research (which has been done to a great extent already) and acknowledging the significance of sociomateriality (Ashcraft et al., 2009; Orlikowski and Scott, 2008) within organization studies. If the body, the senses and the material world are oddly absent from much of bricolage literature, we must indeed address these critical neglects. This is crucial in order to do justice to bricolage and organizational practice.

Moreover, if bricolage could be approached as the ‘entanglement’ between humans, non-humans and spaces, as suggested above, the notion of bricolage as ‘entangled’ would also deserve to be developed scholarly. We might want to reconsider the more complex, ‘messy’ and mediating roles that objects, bodies across spaces play in practices of bricolage. This appears helpful in better understanding any forms of organized actions in the world. Inspired by Actor Network Theory-oriented analytic techniques (Chugh and Hancock, 2009; Griswold et al., 2013), I here merely suggest that many insights from Actor Network Theory (ANT)<sup>48</sup> have the potential to enrich and broaden existing theorizations of bricolage. Although, as I am fully aware, Actor Network Theory is not properly spelled out in this thesis, developing our understanding of bricolage in this direction would require a better clarification of what ANT is about, how the human and the non-human are conceptualized, and *which* insights from it would be brought in. Also, it would require more philosophical work on how we approach the human and the non-human in the world. Actor Network Theory approaches might shed further light on the *interactional* achievements of bricolage across spaces, objects and bodies involved (see also Satama and Huopainen, 2016). I also notice that posthumanist theory provides another generous framework for understanding the complex entanglements between humans and other agents in social settings (e.g. Taylor and Twine, 2014; Pedersen, 2011).

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48 I view the strength of an ANT approach in exploring organizing through a symmetric network of human and non-human agents, well aware of ANT’s somewhat ‘naturalizing ontology’ and unreflexive epistemology (Whittle and Spicer, 2008).



## BRICOLAGE AS A SPATIAL PRACTICE

It is certain that space influences bricolage action. Space is not neutral, and bricolage takes surprising forms of action *across* spaces. In contrast with previous bricolage research, this thesis illustrates how bricolage practices are formed in dynamic spatial relations. According to Taylor and Spicer (2007, 325) organizational spaces are usually understood as ‘neutral settings . . . fixed, dead and immobile containers’, a view that appears typical for mainstream bricolage research. I have closely observed a designer and his team creating, manipulating, marking, organizing and *conquering* various organizational spaces (for instance, there was intense fighting for exhibition space and performance space in the Fashion Week schedule). I have also empirically shown how activities of bricolage are always context-dependent on organizational space *in flux*, and how emergent bricolage is actually often about creating performance space (Munro and Jordan, 2013) and actively negotiating space usage with other users, performers and stakeholders. For instance, organizing a fashion show is all about ‘using spatial tactics’ (Munro and Jordan, 2013, 1515), and creating *affective* virtual and memorable spaces ascribed with crucial intensities (such as sound, vision and a specific feelings). In this sense, I have illustrated how bricolage actions, always context-dependent and emerging, have *active* relationships with space.

Also, this thesis illustrates how the practice of bricolage might *constitute* performance space in the fashion context. Here, I argue that the mainstream bricolage literature has failed to understand, approach and relate to space as well as the sociality, materiality and *intensity* of space (e.g. Dale, 2005; Dale and Burrell, 2008), which seems problematic for several reasons. To understand bricolage in more dynamic, deep and processual ways requires an understanding of the dynamics of spatial relations in different ways than what the existing bricolage literature suggests. Similar to Munro’s and Jordan’s (2013) study, this thesis directs attention to how bricolage practices are negotiated and formed in *spatial relations*. As such, this study can enrich and develop our understanding of bricolage *as* spacing, because bricolage is a spatial practice. ‘The creation of space is an intensely social experience, requiring continuous interaction with the other users of the space’ Munro and Jordan (2013, 1515) remind us. As a skilled entrepreneur and bricoleur, Yat often used bricolage for the negotiation and creation of *performance* space, and for various other purposes, too.



'Creative work is not confined to the office', Munro and Jordan (2013, 1516) are right to point out, and this was evident in my empirical setting, too. In fact, Munro and Jordan (2013) remind us that much of the work in the creative industries takes place in semi-public urban spaces and various 'third places' (e.g. Florida, 2002; Lange, 2011) that I have, unlike the existing literature on bricolage in organizational studies, included and discussed in my thesis. By exploring fashion's organized actions carried out across and in-between design studios, polished flagship stores, showrooms, backstage, dusty corners, sales events, moving cars, show rehearsals and so on, I have extensively moved in

the interstitial spaces in-between fashion's front and backstage myself. In this sense, I have also included *liminal* spaces (Shortt, 2015) such as moving cars, ferries, rented apartments and public toilets in my study. Inspired by Shortt's (2015) study of how liminal spaces becomes meaningful places in the context of hairdressing, I have rendered visible how taken-for-granted spaces shape and matter to the organization of fashion, too. In this sense, space has been a central yet always doubtful issue under constant negotiation in my empirical setting. Despite connecting bricolage to space – or more active and dynamic spacing – I could have done with for this relationship to better materialize in my text. Here, the insight about space as dynamic, not static, neutral and forgotten, as the existing bricolage literature still largely assumes, offers useful, novel and more critical insight for the future study of bricolage and organizing.

#### FASHION'S MESS AND MULTIPLICITY AS A THEORETICAL AND METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH

The field of fashion studies is a fairly young academic discipline, and the quality of fashion scholarly literature is arguably still uneven (McNeil and Miller, 2014). To this emerging field, my thesis offers a deep and detailed exploration of fashion 'in the margins', one uncovering situated meaning-makings and aspirations towards value creation in a peripheral fashion context. When it comes to the development of this field, we must strive to go *beyond* the image boosting surfaces of the experience economy, and develop more critical, multilayered and including approaches to the study of fashion. In particular, further light needs to be shed on fashion's less spectacular, mundane, mechanical and everyday aspects, not limiting our understandings of a culturally and socially significant phenomenon to staged spectacles in certain 'fashionable' locations. Of course, we also need to critically address and actually do something about the darker sides of global fashion, including exploitation, dirty work, child labour and other unethical behaviour, even if these important dimensions have remained beyond the scope of this thesis.

'Fashion, with its affinity for transformation, can act out instability and loss but it can also, equally, stake out the terrain of 'becoming', writes Evans (2003, 6). Moreover, 'every practice is a mode of thought, already in the act', Manning

and Massumi (2014, vii) write. Fashion performs an intriguing arena already in the act, rendering visible the dynamics and ‘complexities of modern life’ as Evans (2003, 7) suggests. This thesis broadly connects to fashion’s hybrid ‘becoming’, and highlights the uncertain, embodied and affective elements of such complex becoming. To better understand fashion in action, we need to embrace, feel and *experience* fashion both empirically and theoretically. In this thesis, I have tried to do justice to fashion, a boundless practice in motion that we might attach to anything from performativity to embodiment, surface manipulations, entertainment or glamour. In this thesis, I have tried to articulate and understand fashion’s multifaceted ‘becoming’ by making use of a multi-theoretical and multi-methodological bricolage. In order to facilitate nuanced understandings of the complexities and dynamics of fashion, fashion organizations and the people working within them, this thesis indicates that we *need* to embrace and make use of a plurality of different theoretical and methodological perspectives. If fashion is still lacking in academic gravity, fashion’s complexity, multiplicity, change and richness has valuable implications on how we actually choose to approach other moving phenomena in the world – both theoretically and empirically.

I have illustrated fashion’s ongoing processes towards becoming and value creation empirically. Such becoming involves a myriad of actions, encounters, sets of issues, performances, manipulative makings and everyday orderings on the move that are always inherently intertwined. We must consider the importance of dimensions such as materiality, time, motion and space in ‘doing’ fashion. Fashion’s craft-intense material objects, such as the clothes, were always prioritized in my empirical setting. Quite interestingly, they were never ‘finished’. These are what Stewart (2007, 4) calls ‘literally moving things – things that are in motion and that are defined by their capacity to affect and to be affected’. One of my key points is that of multiplicity and hybridity in the study of fashion, and how we need to take ambiguity, uncertainty and mess seriously. Fashion is neither highbrow Art nor lowbrow capitalist rubbish. Fashion is always *both*: a creative mix of impressions, always subjectively and differently understood at different times and in different spaces. Fashion, a complex ‘set of forces’ mixes fluidity and density, centre and periphery, shallowness and depth (von Busch, 2009, 34).

This thesis emphasizes fashion as something that can be actively *done*, practiced and pulled off. As such, I believe a processual, multitheoretical approach to the study of fashion does justice to fashion’s movements, multiplicity and

actions. Fashion incorporates a complex array of movements, where clothing samples literally move between the hands of the designer and his assistants, design studios and factories overseas, then move onto bodies during fittings and fashion shows of a surprising variety and finally, move on the skin of the affected consumers, fans and followers before moving on elsewhere (see also Huopalaainen, 2015). If the clothes always intend to move, both physically and mentally by stimulating fantasy, I have illustrated fashion's intimate relationship between affective organization and motion. In the fashion context, social relationships are important, and these are not passive. Instead, they are continuously worked upon. Furthermore, obsessed with novelty and change, fashion is a form of continuous, often extreme and fetishized movement, as fashion continuously needs to travel and pass by (e.g. Huopalaainen, 2015). Esposito (2011, 607) refers to fashion's paradox, a search for continuity within change, as fashion's stability of transition, and this was evident in my setting, too.

To the studied designer-entrepreneur Yat, fashion represents something that one must at times 'oppose', yet always relate to. As a designer, he must continually negotiate in the field. How can he 'operate with an inclusive fashion yet still allow it to remain exclusive?' (von Busch, 2006, 34). In what I observed, Yat tried hard to position his artful makings as 'anti-fashion' and strived to work against the shallow image of fashion. The main question for him as an entrepreneur remained *how* to make his makings move, 'while still "respecting" them, combining hype and hope?' (Fine, 2004, 225). In this sense, the versatile doings were always laced with ambiguity, emotions and anxiety.

Fashion sufficiently reflects the values of our fitful contemporary society and might – as such – offer both critical and interesting novel insight into society itself. To slightly elaborate, actual substance is today often replaced by *image* and surface (e.g. Alvesson, 2013; Alvesson and Spicer, 2016), aspects often linked to fashion. Other dimensions<sup>49</sup> found at the core of fashion have arguably become key dimensions of our contemporary society: 'We are sold the sizzle rather than the steak, the image rather than the object', as Mirzoeff (2008, 27)

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49 Such as aesthetization practices (Hancock, 2003), affective dreams and fantasies, idealized, commodified and unrealistic expectations, grandiosity, illusion tricks and arrangements (Alvesson, 2013), status, desires that eventually produce anxiety, the creation of the edgy, high maintenance, elitism and success.

puts it. If fashion quite brilliantly captures ever-changing paces, movements, shifting values and trends of our modern society with its emphasis on speed, *performance*, status and surface, its more critical theoretical and philosophical potential has still gone surprisingly unnoticed. Could fashion, in fact, serve as a contemporary interdisciplinary theoretical lens to understand the developments of our contemporary society and ever-changing age in more nuanced and ‘moving’ ways? In popular parlance and the academic realm, fashion is still often considered too ‘frivolous’ to be taken seriously, or too shallow to be serious and philosophical. My thesis shows how fashion is both serious and frivolous, and the multiplicity of fashion offers critical insight into the understanding of our contemporary society and age.

#### THE FABRICATED MAGIC OF FASHION

‘Fashion promises a life of being extraordinary’ Mears (2011, 261) suggests, and the fairly common and simplistic assumption about glamour, fame and fortune in fashion is worth problematizing further. As a specific creative and affective economy, fashion enjoys an exciting, even seductive image. Many of us have a perception of fashion as a glamourized, oh-so creative work domain. Quite unsurprisingly, these assumptions do not necessarily meet reality. In this thesis, I have shed light on the mundane conditions under which affection and fashionable surface is produced. This ideologically underpinned glamorous image is, to a significant extent, created by the fashion workers and fashion insiders themselves. It is created by everyone who participates in fashion’s affective economy. However, I argue that we cannot ‘accept’ the allure of fashion without critically discussing it. In their study of boredom in highly acclaimed knowledge work, Costas and Kärreman (2016, 65) notice that those work ideals reproduced and fostered by ‘discourses on knowledge work’ may – in fact – be far from people’s everyday work experiences. My study suggests something similar in the context of high fashion. Interestingly, I also regularly noticed that fashion was often quite absent in the high-end fashion context I studied. As mentioned before, Yat tried to oppose fashion in different ways.

Perhaps it was not that surprising to find the fashion ‘reality’ conforming to certain naturalized and *expected* cultural assumptions and the norms of beautiful,



chaotic and stressful fashion, where aspiring to a dazzling, seductive and shiny ‘champagne-fuelled’ aesthetics of seduction (Hancock and Tyler, 2007) were constantly present. Fashion is about continuous performance and *performing*, and this was evident in my empirical context, too. Interestingly, making a point of hard work, effort and suffering actually seems to *construct* the fascination with fashion, and gives extreme labour ‘a certain sex appeal’ (Costas and Kärreman 2016). However, fashion’s norms and assumptions deserve to be problematized further. The shows I studied did not, for instance, in any way attempt to shock, confuse or perform critique, irony or parody. They did not attempt to break dominant fashion norms, revolt against narrow ideals or critique commodity fetishism in order to stand out. They often reproduced fashion discourse.

This thesis is my ‘attempt to deconstruct the mystification of creative work’ (Rehn, 2014). There’s a common misconception that many people have regarding work most people would consider ‘glamorous’, enjoyable, or desirable’ writes Rehn<sup>50</sup> (2014), and I completely agree. In their study of consultants and the boredom of (high status) knowledge work, Costas and Kärreman (2016, 75) notice that consultants make ‘a point of describing the dread as well as the glamour in their recruitment process, admittedly in a way that gives working 80 hours a week a certain sex appeal’. This *construction* of worth and glamour through bodily suffering (see also Ekman, 2013; Huopainen, forthcoming) seems to go for fashion, too. ‘By identifying with the glamour, power and other fantastic qualities of organizations that the subject associates with, as employee, as customer or merely as admirer, he or she derives a narcissistic satisfaction. Part of the organization’s allure becomes internalized by those associated with it’, Gabriel (2016, 218) concludes.

For long, the creative industries have been equipped with an ideologically underpinned coolness and buzz to them, and we need to scratch and problematize this polished surface. Fashion is – at times – cool and edgy, but it is also repetitive, dull, dirty, exhausting and shameful. Fashion is ‘ephemeral, dangerous and unfair’, Lagerfeld once said. Having said that, we still tend to focus on the seductive, special and glamorous moments and forget the ‘tedious and taxing toil’ (Costas and Kärreman, 2016, 75) of fashion’s mundane life. This arguably

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50 See: [http://therouse.com/in-praise-of-frivolous-knickers-what-agent-provocateur-can-teach-us-about-innovation/?utm\\_content=buffer07f29&utm](http://therouse.com/in-praise-of-frivolous-knickers-what-agent-provocateur-can-teach-us-about-innovation/?utm_content=buffer07f29&utm), accessed 3.6.2016.



goes for all work that we commonly label as ‘creative’. If fashion as we know it as consumers is repeatedly associated with spectacle, illusion, glamour, exclusivity and luxury (McNeil and Miller, 2014), I counter-act the image of the heroic star fashion designer by bringing into play an empirical account which emphasizes the mundane aspects of organizing, doing and enterprising fashion. Contrary to common representations, my study has exposed the more profane, paradoxical and perhaps prosaic sides of the fashion practice, usually left out of more celebratory and pompous portrayals. I have illustrated a designer trying hard to maximize the prestige that eventually comes with fashion, and hoping for it to take him far away from the ‘uncomfortable reality’ (Rehn, 2014) he experiences on a daily basis.

Many critical entrepreneurship researchers (e.g. Hjorth and Steyaert, 2010; Johannisson, 2011; Olaison and Sørensen, 2014) describe entrepreneuring as struggle and exhaustion, no salaries, and sporadic, precarious project-oriented contract labour. All of this appears to go for fashion, as well. My thesis illustrates the design profession as a seemingly difficult career path, one characterized by extremely hard work (Ekman, 2015), self-employment, constant insecurity, long working hours, and an expectation of full devotion. If fashion often blurs the division between exhausting labour and ‘leisure’ because of its exciting image and uncertain promise of fame and fortune, movement, lack of finances, high pace and constant change is, it appears, a consuming normality for those working in this cyclic industry. Plenty has been written on creative work in a postindustrial experience economy, and one could tie my findings to the more critical entrepreneurship literature (see e.g. Hjorth and Steyaert, 2010; Johannisson, 2011; Jones and Spicer, 2005; Olaison and Sørensen, 2014) as well as literature on experience-based creative labour (McKinlay and Smith, 2009; Lorentzen et al., 2015) more broadly.

#### METHODOLOGICAL IMPLICATIONS, CONTRIBUTIONS AND LIMITATIONS

What does it mean to claim that something I have personally experienced and researched is, in fact, the ‘doing’ or making of fashion? This thesis challenges rational, disembodied and neat understandings of organizing. In this study, I have strived to embrace complexity, proximity, emerging action and relationality.

The study of organizing, fashion and bricolage is, I argue, to curiously, openly and reflexively go about exploring the nuanced actions, doings, interplays and intra-relations (e.g. Gherardi, 2015) between fashion agents and material surfaces, workspaces, tools, objects and other human and non-human agents on the move. To do so, I argue that we need multidimensional approaches to research. In this thesis, I have linked together insights from different theoretical and methodological approaches in order to make sense of a rich empirical material and generate novel ideas. This has been my way of doing justice to a surging and saturated world. Therefore, I hope this research reads as an example of in-depth, 'hybrid', processual and critical qualitative bricolage that takes multiplicity, movement and multidimensionality very seriously.

Throughout this study, I have used a plurality of *different* theoretical perspectives, and I have also built my methodological approach on the principle of bricolage. Indeed, I have embraced complexity, and my work deliberately takes a broad approach. A broad approach is, of course, rarely desired in research. As researchers, we need to be precise and focused, not broad. At a first glance, then, it may be tempting to argue that my study suffers from its explicit will to be broad, open and including. Someone could argue that I could have been more focused, or framed a more precise critique of a particular theoretical discussion in the realm of the thesis. In this sense, I am fully aware of the dangers and pitfalls of my broad approach. However, my point exactly is that a fine-grained study of emerging organizing as well as the practices of bricolage must – in fact – take a broad approach, and in this sense, do justice to the principle of bricolage. Providing detailed descriptions and analysis of the doings and speech of my researched subjects (Duberley and Johnson, 2009, 351) has been a central goal of my research, as has been making further sense of the many, sometimes contradictory and paradoxical organizing activities that occurred in this context. For me to gain understandings about these varied activities, I was, much like Thornquist (2005), forced to enter into the ambiguous organizing process itself.

Stewart (2007) reminds us that the world is overwhelming and alive. This insight of awareness has implications on how we actually choose to approach diverse phenomena in the moving world. In advancing critical organizational scholarship, we need to foster knowledge from multiple angles and frames of reference. We need to enter into the ambiguous organizing process. We need to be open and, in a sense, broad. By doing so, we might reflect upon the

multiplicity of organizational reality as well as facilitate deeper and increased understandings of the complexities of organizations and the people within them (Kincheloe, 2001, 2005). By embracing and borrowing insights from many theories, this thesis demonstrates my explicit will and ambition to actually deal with complex organization. The task of being a social scientist is ‘also a task of self-development, of finding one’s own identity in dialogue with and through the world one is studying’, Montuori (2003, 253) reminds us. Only by trying to find a voice that incorporates both theory and lived experience, rational and emotional, subjective and objective, order and disorder, constraints and possibilities, can our work value and reflect the complexity of *both* self and world (Montuori, 2003).

Through my way of approaching the versatile doings of fashion with clear ontological ambitions, I argue that my thesis succeeds in presenting its result as a puncture that arise not only in the conclusions, but in the details of intimate relationship with the people presented and the nuanced levels of abstraction crafted through the text. In other words, although my work deliberately takes on many different aspects, I have, in fact, demonstrated an ability to reflexively navigate many layers of the complex fashion economy. This is a major contribution in itself. Hence, one of my key methodological arguments is that we *need* multifaceted understandings and multidimensional approaches for the study of complex organization. Also, this multiplicity has to show in the kind of bricolage research that I have crafted here. Kincheloe (2001, 2005) grounds his thinking in an epistemology of *complexity*, an epistemology that enables a researcher to uncover relations and deconstruct the complexities of social theory. In this thesis, I have tried to do something similar. I have moved in an open, hybrid manner that articulates various modes of attunement in research encounters.

‘Experience unfolds through the matrix of qualitative fields of overlap and emphasis already immediately moving toward expression in a dynamic field of becoming alive with co-composition’, Manning and Massumi (2014, 7) write. Affective, multidimensional approaches create potentially novel ways for us to perceive, imagine and do research – or connect and ‘co-exist’ with each other in a world inscribed with impulses and moving forces (see Jokinen and Venäläinen, 2015; Stewart, 2007). The embodied encounters and events I have experienced have also *affected* me in a number of ways. During this study, I have felt excited, curious, exhausted, confused and perhaps, at times, also a little seduced by my

spectacular empirical context. Meanwhile, I was deeply touched by the care the people I met and gradually got to know showed me.

My background as a researcher in the field of organization studies and not in fashion design has affected my approach and the outcomes of my study. Naturally, my subjectivity affected the quality of the empirical material, and how it was gathered and analyzed throughout. My proceedings all shaped and determined the particular knowledge that I created. Prior to the study, I was not very familiar with the many practices of fashion. Although I regard myself as an 'aesthetically sensitive' fashionista, this fascinating world of craft, material fabrics and surface, hard work, exhaustion, cuttings and patterns, self-presentation, performance and adornment was – in fact – quite foreign to me. Designer Yat was initially confused to have a researcher from a business school following his work. Given my background, he wondered how I could actually *understand* his aspirations and creative work. Certainly, I understood things subjectively. Looking back, I thought that much of what I observed in my setting and the catwalk 'theatre' confirmed my expectations, although I was continually surprised, as well. How am I able to maintain the uniqueness of my situated empirical context on one hand and generate meaningful insight that goes beyond my specific context on the other?

A critically informed research project must reflect on the limitations of the study. Seeking generalizability in qualitative research is difficult, but I have done my best to carefully 'generalize beyond' such a moving world (Fine, 2004). Obviously, I cannot and do not wish to draw any all-encompassing conclusions based on a culturally specific, limited and subjective ethnographic study. However, I believe other small and independent fashion firms or creative organizations might work from premises fairly similar to those of the studied designer, Yat. I have indeed studied rather privileged entrepreneurs representing the creative class in a Western high-cost country. Meanwhile, I have had to be careful when it came to representing my subjects throughout. My intention has never been to produce a heroic account of a designer, but by emphasizing the hard work, intense effort, struggle and 'suffering', I have risked creating one. Moreover, every methodological approach is always limited, and this evidently goes for the ethnographic approach, too.

Ethnography, participant observations and semi-structured interviews have been at the core of my methodological approach. All interpretations continue

to be my own. My subjective interpretations, like any other interpretations, can never be conclusive or ‘true’ (Gabriel, 2015). In fact, my position could – for good reason – be critiqued for its neglect of power, politics and gender performance issues. However, this piece of writing has addressed subjectivity seriously, and reflected upon the difficulties involved in writing ‘differently’. Whereas I felt utterly privileged to enter a small fashion community on a daily basis, I quickly realized that I should preferably be a skilled ethnographer to make deeper sense of my ‘messy’ setting. Ethnographies are often problematic in some sense (e.g., Taylor and Land, 2014), and I could have done things differently methodologically. I enjoyed doing my fieldwork and could – of course – have spent even more time with those I studied to understand their organizing and precarious lives even more deeply. However, a research project is limited and time-bound, and one must accept that it needs to come to an end (Taylor and Land, 2014). Also, one must respect the research subjects who have already kindly let in a researcher (Taylor and Land, 2014). They must get the space to continue with their life (ibid). For the sake of the arguments raised in this thesis, the empirical material is rich and ‘appropriate’.

Interestingly, Rehn and Lennerfors (2014) suggest that bricolage research could make use of ‘a methodological agnosticism where one can just as well follow bricolage as unfolding resource combinations, where an individual bricoleur might just play a minor part’. Retrospectively, my own ‘pick-and-mix’ approach could have moved in this ANT-inspired or bodies-materialities-organization (Dale and Lantham, 2015) direction more explicitly. Despite my will to demonstrate and do justice to human-non-human intertwinements, relationships and entanglements, I now realize that my analysis of bricolage might have remained more ‘linear’ and anthropocentric than I had perhaps intended. In this sense, humans were sometimes prioritized over material things in my setting. Also, I could have conducted more formal semi-structured interviews and chosen only to interview Yat and Pierre once at the very end of the study. Furthermore, I could have interviewed not only the 2OR+BYAT workers but other stakeholders and agents. Of course, I was involved in numerous informal conversations with other agents, and always wrote plenty of field notes regarding speech and doings. In this respect, I have done my best to voice as many subjects in my setting as possible to better understand fashion’s relational dynamics. However, much of the presentation of my empirical case and analysis still relied

on the activities and speech of the *chief* designer. As Yat has received plenty of space in this thesis, his central and dominant role has eventually silenced other voices, but this was never intentional.

'It is actors' mode of engagement with unfolding practices, rather than unfolding practices themselves, that constitutes the locus of social reproduction and/or transformation' (Thompson and Willmott, 2015, 17)

How are practice(s) socially structured? How can we address the significance of affect in the (re)production of practice? How do affective forces shape human intentions and organizing actions (Chia and McKay, 2007)? Taking cue from Stewart (2007), I have tried to keep alive the experienced, sensorial and 'fleeting' in all that I have researched. Whereas I have broadly intended to approach what happens and what is experienced by giving the researched subjects plenty of space to 'speak out' and by providing the reader with detailed information about them and the particularities of the empirical context, I have not deliberately written this thesis from an emic perspective. Nevertheless, I have said plenty about what it is like to work as a fashion designer in a fluctuating and precarious affective economy. Keeping in mind that my findings based on a specific study are not directly generalizable to other working contexts, or even other fashion locations, I cannot claim that my empirical material would sufficiently reflect the life of a 'typical' fashion designer or the design profession. I must indeed 'take care in generalizing about this diverse group of workers' (Fine, 2004, 6), but this does not mean that I cannot say anything that goes beyond my specific empirical context. If I have focused more on the versatile 'doings' rather than the fluctuating and context-dependent 'feelings' of my embodied research subjects, it is because studying subjects' mode of engagement is difficult in practice. Still, lived experiences are, of course, of utmost importance, both in my setting and the human condition more broadly.

The ethnographic method is currently under interesting scholarly debate. The critique that a recent study, conducted by a white female researcher on black neighbourhoods in the US, received has triggered me to further reflect upon the importance of reflexivity. Ethnographic studies can be hugely problematic, and I have faced challenges along the way. At times, the intensity of my empirical site felt overwhelming, and I experienced fashion's diverse pressure points, too.

I felt the stress in my body during the many intense stagings and the relief of ‘letting go’ among the other sweaty bodies gathered backstage. I performed aesthetic labour myself, and I participated in the social theatre I was part of. I was part of a cool world inhabited by almost unrealistically beautiful people. I was – at times – a little seduced by my empirical setting. These affective processes have been crucial to the various practices of organizing that I was part of. It has been important to me to be aware of the ethical dilemmas I have encountered, discuss them openly, and continue doing my work (aware of the limitations throughout). If I have been privileged to gain exclusive levels of access, this does not mean I have always succeeded in doing justice to those I studied. I also remain doubtful about whether or not I managed to express these varied intensities and complexities in my written account. My methodological approach has hopefully involved moving in a direction of self-reflexivity and research affectivity, as I have included topics rarely discussed by organizational ethnographers. These include the range of emotions involved and the researcher’s own performance of bricolage in the field. Here, I suggest that future studies could reflect upon the researcher’s own performance of aesthetic labour in the field, and what implications it has on research.

#### ‘SUPERFICIALITY’ AND MULTIPLICITY AS KEYS TO UNDERSTANDING FASHION AND BRICOLAGE

It is in the ambiguous here-and-now, which is difficult to articulate, or in the moment-to-moment organization, equally difficult to capture empirically, that fashion and bricolage actually ‘become’. Both fashion and bricolage are already multidimensional actions in motion, embedded in a specific context that intertwines ideas, doings, metaphysics and knowledge (Gherardi, 2015; Duymedjian and Rüling, 2010). Simultaneously, fashion and bricolage are theoretical phenomena present in many *different* scholarly debates, and this theoretical richness, multiplicity, complexity and hybridity might feel somewhat overwhelming and challenging to handle for a single writer or researcher. Given the many ongoing and relevant debates, how should one approach these moving phenomena? Which academic debates were central, and retrospectively, what are the discussions I wish to participate in with this piece of writing? Where did

I end up situating myself and my work, and how did I avoid doing fragmented, superficial work myself?

Of course, theoretical frameworks are always inherently partial and limited, and certain issues arise from using vague, broad and mobile concepts as major analytic principles. Fashion scholars have tended to emphasize that fashion by definition is a tremendously rich subject. Given the allowing and open starting points, it seems slightly ironic and even odd that many fashion theorists have rarely spelled out the hybridity and multiplicity of fashion convincingly in either theory or practice.<sup>51</sup> To me, it appears that truly multidisciplinary approaches to fashion are still rare. Breward (2003) once wrote that fashion theorists have tended to divorce the materiality of fashion from the economy of fashion, as well as the theory of fashion from the practice of fashion, thus keeping up certain dualisms, divisions and distinctions. This is something I have tried to avoid and work against in my own writing. Czarniawska (2011, 601) notices a similar dualism: ‘cultural theory has devoted a great deal of attention to fashion as a cultural phenomenon, but little attention to fashion as a production system’. Within the field of organization studies, then, the production-side of fashion has, according to Czarniawska (2011), been well researched, but this does not include fashion’s cultural, aesthetic and affective sides. Instead of treating the crucial dimensions of fashion separately, my study has moved in a direction of intertwinement and acceptance in an attempt to ‘fuse’ embodied-material, affective and organizational approaches to the study of fashion and bricolage – altogether and simultaneously.

In order to position fashion and bricolage and make sense of these fitful practices, I delved into the diverse field of fashion studies, the assorted bricolage literature, work on organizational space, affects and embodiment, glamour and enchantment, Actor Network Theory, practice-based studies and so on. In practice, I ‘zoomed in’ and ‘zoomed out’ (Nicolini, 2009) on ontologically different theoretical discussions to seek inspiration and to find enriching, surprising and thought-provoking angles and discussions to relate to. In this sense, my work has been inductive, curious and open. This thesis suggests new

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51 Elizabeth Wilson’s *Adorned in Dreams* (1985) is a classic, must-read and an important opening for this inter-disciplinary direction. Furthermore, Caroline Evans, an absolutely brilliant fashion author, draws upon a variety of *different* theoretical perspectives to explore fashion in her beautiful writing.





ways to conceptualize and approach the phenomena of fashion, organizing and bricolage. Specifically, these broad notions deserve to be approached with an allowing, fragmented and bricolage-like theoretical framework. Throughout, I have aspired to adopt what Czarniawska (2011) calls a *balanced* approach to both fashion and bricolage. I interpret this balance as the careful blending of *different* relevant theoretical discussions, which – when taken together – do justice to the hybridity of fashion and bricolage, enrich these practices as well as shed light on a complex empirical reality.

One of the main contributions of this thesis is the deliberately ‘messy’ approach that seriously deals with the multidisciplinarity, movement and dynamics of fashion and bricolage. Moreover, I have included affects in the study of fashion and bricolage. Affects *do* things to us (Ahmed, 2004b) and construct our subjectivity. In the ‘realm’ of affect, the material, social and cultural are by definition already intertwined (e.g. Ahmed, 2004a, 2004b). ‘Bodies affect one another and generate intensities in everyday encounters and relations’, Stewart (2007, 128) writes. This insight is, perhaps, quite unsurprising in my performative and bodily intense context. However, this insight matters in an academic realm that for a long time has been preoccupied with discursive practices and has forgotten about bodies, emotions and affects. Specifically, I argue that an affective perspective opens up much-needed possibilities to sense and experience research, or think about, understand and do research differently with ‘relationality at the heart of perception’ (Manning and Massumi, 2014, 6–7). This approach enables us to explore the world differently than mainstream research has – so far – done.

When it comes to both using and developing fashion and bricolage, I have turned to many discussions to overcome certain established binaries as explained above. By doing so, I have risked getting lost in complexity. I have found inspiration in ontologically and epistemologically inherently different discussions and debates, and I argue that this multidisciplinarity has been vital and has provided a fresh and attentive perspective to the study of fashion and bricolage more broadly. As I have moved through a diverse collection of literature that I (to some extent randomly) have encountered and experienced myself, picking and borrowing ideas, going back and forth, getting lost, and eventually finding a focus, and getting lost again, I have been a research bricoleur myself, feeling how the thinking and doing research is always intimately intertwined. Specifically, I believe that the concept and the practice of bricolage pose a clear challenge to more ‘traditional’ ways of thinking about emerging action, organization, and perhaps also social sciences more broadly.

Methodologically, the hybrid and including approach poses many challenges. If my messy approach to fashion and bricolage in this thesis eventually illustrates a researcher’s lack of focus, revealing a somewhat lost researcher unable to ‘pick’ her main arguments, this open and allowing (or superficial, if you like) approach not only suits me, but, in fact, has turned out to be of utmost importance for the deeper understanding of fashion and bricolage. As emphasized throughout, both fashion

and bricolage are slippery, vague, amorphous and even contradictory concepts that allow for different levels of analysis and various directions of theoretical elaboration. A ‘superficial’ or broad approach does justice to such hybridity and multidisciplinary, and opens up possible alternative ways of thinking. Law (2004) discusses ‘messy’ premises for qualitative research, and Tsing (2004) argues that the messy should inform us as researchers. A thesis that takes as its starting point the complexity of phenomena still risks ending up illustrating fashion practice and bricolage merely as vague activities. There is even a risk of stating that ‘everything’ observed represents ambiguous bricolage in one way or another. Despite the inherent problems involved (which one can never entirely escape, I am afraid), I suggest that understanding fashion and bricolage in deeper and alternative ways *requires* that we construct a bricolage as researchers. Finally, I suggest that both the field of fashion studies and the field of organization studies need more deep and situated empirical studies on the dynamics of bricolage in organizational realities, studies on *how* various resources ‘are actually combined as bricolage’ (Rehn and Lennerfors, 2014, 5), as well as processual studies on how organizing is carried out on the move. Overall, we simply need more empirically rooted studies on both bricolage and fashion practice in different empirical contexts, and this study makes a serious effort in this direction.

#### THE MAKING-VALUABLE EFFECTS OF BRICOLAGE

This study demonstrates how a designer and his workers aspire to and sometimes struggle to go about ‘adding’ worth, affect, identity and exclusivity to the consumer objects they meticulously create, over and over. According to Khaire (2014, 42), ‘empirical knowledge of the *process* of worth construction is rather limited’, and I completely agree. I have tried to illustrate specific moments in this ambiguous process in a context involving busy embodied subjects on the move, always becoming part of the organizing activities they participated in. While my study involves a dynamic fashion world, ‘a bricolage of floating ideas and static<sup>52</sup> things’ (Thornquist, 2005, 199), what could be said about the making-valuable *effects* of bricolage and other more improvisational actions produced

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52 I do not actually see things as static.

in my specific empirical context? How did these *ad hoc* actions produce and construct meaning (Ashley, 2016) over and over, *affect* people (Thrift, 2007) and aspire to create worth, social meaning, affection, distinction and importance in the fashionable world?

I wish to discuss these matters, aware of the difficulties involved in approaching the actions and subjective experiences of creating fashion value in a complex and joint affair. What is value to begin with, and what are, then, the ways in which ‘value’ was created in my setting? How is economic, symbolic and cultural value created in fashion’s everyday working practices? (Value according to who? The producer, the consumer or someone else? *How* do I actually know what is considered ‘value’ here?) To put it differently, how were Yat and his proximate team able to create value, importance and meaning despite severe resource constraints (Senyard et al., 2009)? The many questions I have posed might be impossible to answer. I am aware of the impossibility to empirically assess whether or not fashion value was actually being produced throughout. As emphasized, I am able to say something novel about the *effort* and joint relations involved or the aspiration to create forms of value in fashion. Importantly, this thesis is not about the forms of value per se.

The affective economy is one complicated network of communities with its own values, conventions of work practices, norms, ideologies, interests and actions. In this context, ‘value is created through collective interest and action’, as Fine (2004, 2) suggests, referring to the context of an art world and the context of self-taught art in specific, where certain ‘communities determine what is beautiful and what is powerful’ (Fine, 2004, 2). Although this statement greatly simplifies messy reality, this seems relevant for fashion, too. This thesis situates the problem of ‘doing’ fashion within the larger context of value production in organizations in advanced, affective capitalism. As such, this thesis also says something interesting about value creation and the underlying assumptions of a very particular economy. However, questions about value remain broad and complex. As discussed previously, the *ideals* of hard work and never-achieved perfection have been present throughout, but this does not tell us if ‘value’ was created or not. What this thesis indicates, however, has something in common with von Busch’s (2009, 39) study on engaging design: to become fashion-able means ‘to be a skillful shaper of the flows of fashion, not rejecting these energies but learning to bend and manipulate them together with others’.

Here, I suggest that fashion's endless aspirations towards creating value (whatever form one might think of) are accomplished through all-encompassing devotion, motivation and drive, and by putting much effort into work in practice. In fashion, it takes considerable effort to look effortless – this contrasts with the conspicuous image of fashion present in both academic writings and popular parlance. However, what does the insight of fashion as hard work add to discussions of value creation in a wider sense? Shedding further light on the real-world dynamics of fashion production and the improvisational, less spectacular sides of producing captivation therefore enhances both our theoretical and empirical understanding of the overlooked sides of fashion and bricolage. In my site, bricolage was not only about creatively using and mobilizing 'given' human, material, and symbolic resources, but also about actively *creating* novel resources on the move. As such, bricolage always requires never-ending reconsideration and adjustment to local circumstances.

Here, it is important to point out that the organizing of the resources that bricolage relies upon also deserve to be further problematized. How can the human, for instance, be used as a resource for affective, economic and commercial gains? What about the materiality or corporeality of embodied experiences? I suggest we also seek to more deeply reflect upon how various resources are seen as bricolage 'resources' in the first place, and how various ways of 'organizing the human' influence (or not) the ways in which bricolage is both theorized and practiced. Whereas accidental bricolage is difficult to plan for and foresee, the 'value' involved might only last for a short moment. The fashion show represents an almost archetypal example of a spectacle that builds upon light-hearted and short-lived amusement in a consumer society, seducing and triggering audiences over and over again. Perhaps the value of the fashion show can only ever be short-lived and elusive, lasting as long as the creations pass by on the catwalk; otherwise it loses its ability to enchant. Meanwhile, today's consumers are rarely either passive or easy to seduce. In order to seduce, fashion requires routines, resources, repetition, rational planning, budgeting and elements typical for an 'orthodox' economy. Meanwhile, issues such as affection, desire, aesthetics, image, style and taste are of utmost importance in creating and re-producing this specific economy. Such socio-material settings where desires and needs are channelled and commercialized, particularly through fashionable bodies on display and the creation of powerful narratives and different 'auras'

of success, might offer us critical insight into the underlying assumptions, underpinnings and 'cultural/commercial pillars' of how hybrid, affective and aesthetic economies are in fact meticulously built.

Fashion is rational 'in its way of producing and using irrationality' (Esposito, 2011, 604), and this is something I have illustrated empirically throughout. Detailed fashion practice reveals interesting interplays and paradoxes, making coordination and *in situ* improvisation necessary amid this uncertainty an interesting problem for the study of bricolage and social organization in a wider sense. Creating affective fashion value is always an uncertain project that requires plenty from the individual designer. Putting on low budget fashion shows that still aim to look both effortless and exclusive demands a great deal of creativity and bricolage in 'tricking' audiences by crafting illusionary lures from cheap resources and inexpensive materials. A fashion label needs to stand out to survive but only in the 'right', to some extent manipulated and carefully coded, ways. A fashion entrepreneur must always play and dress according to the rules, norms and conventions of the context to be part of the spectacle. As such, bricolage as a form of organizing renders visible the complex interplay between manipulative and improvisational acts in aspiring towards value creation. Keeping up appearances, circulating allure and ensuring economic, cultural and social power, all build upon an uncertain, fading, 'you never know'-kind of highly risky aura of success. This thesis indicates that producing value and differentiation in fashion is an endless, uncertain 'becoming' and balancing between standing out and fitting in.

## FINAL WORDS

This thesis offers interesting thoughts on emerging organizing, constant 'becoming', as well as the dynamic and never-ending co-creation of bricolage. Specifically, I argue that existing theorizations of bricolage restrict explanations of bricolage action. However, as eventually evidenced by the slippage in my writing as to what the diverse notions of fashion and bricolage actually comprise in my empirical context (sometimes hard work and effort to construct something 'effortless', achievement, a process, etc...), how do we actually – to be critical and reflexive here – know that bricolage was the key thing 'happening' in the

empirical context? Why did I not, for instance, deliberately use the notion of 'organizing' or of making to explain the doings I observed throughout? Thinking about it retrospectively, I was studying organizing as it occurred. However, I chose to approach bricolage and organizing as interrelated yet different constructs, which is something Rhodes and Westwood (2008) also have done. If I did not do much in order to ease the burden of contradictions that come with continuously having to explain what fashion and bricolage are about all the time in my setting, I believe these contradictory notions still manage to do justice to ambiguous organizational practice as well as complicated and ever-changing reality. By definition, these notions must remain open-ended, contradictory, fuzzy, messy and performative.

The study of fashion and bricolage is never only about describing 'what is already there'. It is about challenging ordered, formal and overly optimistic and naïve understandings of organizational practice, and directing us towards more critical understandings, raising greater awareness of the moving, felt, embodied and 'darker sides' of organizational practice. To raise such awareness is about doing justice to the complexity of ambiguous practice. There are many forces shaping processes of fashion production, bricolage and organizational bricoleurs. Future research on organizational bricolage could certainly more frequently use various methods such as participant observation, photography or film to capture these aspects. To understand both fashion and bricolage means to embrace and experience it.

Fashion should be afforded a place as a more productive concept within the field of organization studies. Moreover, fashion deserves to be further problematized in a wider sociological context, where any kind of 'backstage' work is rendered invisible, production looks like consumption and consumption is rarely about fulfilling 'rational' needs. 'We consume to show off, to feel better about ourselves, to enjoy the sensation of silk on skin', Rehn (2014) writes. Indeed, purchases are 'emotionally enriching' and make us feel alive, as Fine (2004, 224) suggests. The paradox between fashion's constructed aura of 'effortlessness' requiring considerable effort and impression management is particularly timely and relevant for the sociology of organizations more broadly, since much of contemporary capitalism relies on its affective production (e.g. Thrift, 2008, 2010).

'We are now deeply in the era of spectacle', writes Gabriel (2012) on his research blog. What does this actually mean, to be honest? It appears as if criteria

and attributes close to fashion – such as individualism, loudness, hedonism, luxury, exoticism, and eroticism – have become key values for success in today’s cultures of performance and ‘grandiosity’ (Alvesson, 2013). This is evident in the ways most of us perform and pretend on the various stages of our lives, dress to impress and embrace image management and surface manipulation in communicating who we *want* to be. In line with these developments, we simply cannot ignore the power and influence of fashion. Despite its perceived scholarly awkwardness, we need to address fashion seriously. The same goes, of course, for bricolage. Both fashion and bricolage capture and do justice to ambiguous organizational practice and ever-changing reality. If anything, these concepts offer ways to understand our contemporary culture, organization and age in deeper and more nuanced ways.

Finally, Dolly Parton famously quipped ‘it takes a lot of money to look this cheap’. This thesis has illustrated the accomplishment of a specific kind of affective economy. The practical *in situ* doings, actions and hard work intersecting with uncertainty, surprises, accidents as well as trials and errors have the power to later determine economic, social and cultural success in this affective economy. A developed understanding of work in affective economies needs to consider and acknowledge the presence, influence and power of these intertwined practices. Fashion and bricolage are complex, expansive real-life phenomena already in motion. Studies attempting to grasp different dimensions of complex phenomena and take ‘becoming’ seriously will lead to nuanced, more mobile, critical and engaging forms of research. Meanwhile, both fashion and bricolage deserve to be pushed into more radical, potentially disturbing, utterly uncomfortable and more empathic realms of critical research.





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## **APPENDIX: INTERVIEW OUTLINE**

### BACKGROUND

Tell me freely about yourself. Who are you and what do you do for living? When and from where did you graduate? What was the best thing you learned in school? What did you do after graduating? How did you become interested in fashion? Tell me briefly about your previous work experience, and how you established/started working for 2OR+BYYAT.

### THE COMPANY AND THE FASHION BUSINESS

Tell me about your company. How and when was 2OR+BYYAT established? How would you describe 2OR+BYYAT? What business are you in? Who are your customers? Do you have different 'target groups'? How does fashion differ from other businesses? How do you become successful in fashion? What is the best and most challenging thing about doing fashion? What are the main difficulties? How do you deal with them? How do you survive in fashion? How do you think the company should develop over the years? What is the importance of doing fashion shows and going to international trade fairs? How do you gain visibility and stand out?

### DAILY WORK PRACTICES

What do you do for 2OR+BYYAT? Describe your job and what it consists of. (What does it mean in practice?) Could you describe a 'typical' workday? What does it look like? What daily tasks are included in your job? At what time do you usually come to work? How is your work divided into designing and other work? Are the working hours regular/irregular? Is the work seasonal? What are your personal goals? What is the importance of networking in your work? What is the funniest/most boring/most difficult thing in your job? Do you like your job?

### THE DESIGN PROCESS

From idea to a finished piece – could you describe the design process and its different phases (design, manufacture, sales) in the overall fashion cycle? Who is designing in your company? Where are the clothes and goods made? Where do you get your ideas? What inspires you? What is creativity and what does



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it mean in your work? Creativity in relation to the design process: are certain 'steps' in the design process creative, while others are not? What is creative and non-creative in your job? What connects the different collections? How do you price your items? What makes something 'valuable' in your business? How is 'worth' in fashion constructed? Where are the 2OR+BYAT products sold and how do you sell them?

## BRANDING AND COMPETITION

What does 'branding' mean to you and 2OR+BYAT? How have you developed the 2OR+BYAT label? How do you create a strong fashion brand? How do you grow as a company? How do you stand out from your competitors? What is the importance of growing internationally? How do you protect your products and your label e.g. from copying?

## ENVIRONMENT AND THE FINNISH FASHION SCENE

What is the importance of Helsinki as a 'base' for the company? Are you part of a design community in Helsinki? Describe the Finnish fashion scene. Does such a concept as 'Finnish fashion' exist? How is Finnish fashion doing today? What would you like to change about working in Finland? What is the reputation of Finnish fashion in Finland and abroad? How could the conditions for fashion companies be improved? How could growth and export be improved? How do you see the future of 2OR+BYAT? What are your own dreams for the future? Where do you see yourself in a few years? Anything else you would like to add?