

Exploring Change

the object – identity – consumption dynamic

by

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Abstract

In modern society there exists a perception of an ongoing need for self-elaboration, revision of identity, and projection of self. Because objects are part of the way that many proclaim identity, this expectation for change has created a pattern of ongoing consumption. Traditional modes of design and production support this through creation of newer and better objects. Current marketing trends demand a rapid turnover of product, or planned obsolescence. The detrimental effects of this system on the environment are becoming an increasing concern.

In light of the problems created by modern society's inclination to the ephemeral, temporary, and the dynamic, this thesis explores another understanding of change. It looks to the concepts of Alfred North Whitehead and Gilles Deleuze, who both considered the process of becoming, and explored the connection between change and the continuity of things.

Exploring Change examines the possibility of allowing the design lens to shift its focus and regard objects to be in an ongoing state of development. Investigations into the act of making, the multiple events attached to articles of cloth, and the physical evidence of time and wearing, provide insight. The intent is to depart from a linear process. A cyclical understanding of the lifecycle of an object is moved into one that is a designed spiral. Designed obsolescence is replaced by designing for perpetuity. Within this paradigm the work also considers the role of the individual in differentiating and personalizing designed multiples and the relationship between mass production and the personal act of making. The need for change does not have to force us to succumb to a practice of consuming unsustainably. Alternatives resolving the issue are discussed.

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Our need for change does not have to force us to succumb to a practice of consuming unsustainably. There may be other ways of resolving the issue.

Preface

Before embarking on my Masters of Applied Arts I worked in the Garment Trade. As an undergraduate and then as a professional I consistently adapted myself to the established methods used to produce fashion. The result of my effort to conform to the existing system was creative stagnancy and an uneasy awareness of being a facilitator of a system inherently designed to waste. The Fashion industry is renowned for its high turnover of goods. This arena of design and production feeds a disturbing rate of consumption. Individuals like myself, working within the system, are often faced with ethical dilemmas, which invariably lead to choices: to leave the system, to deny or disregard the issues, to justify the status quo, or to work from within as an agent of change. Not being an activist but having a conscience, I chose to remove myself. My intention was to move onto something new. This act of withdrawal, however, did not eliminate my concerns, as they are symptomatic of not only the fashion industry, but also a broad spectrum of consumption-based systems on which the modern economy currently depends.

The interdisciplinary nature of the Masters of Applied Arts program has provided me with the opportunity to explore the relationships and functions of art and design towards sustainable solutions that are attractive, thought provoking and lasting in their impressions.

This paper is divided into four main sections. The first centers on initial investigations into “making” and “change”. From this, the second section explores the interconnectivities of change, difference, identity and consumption. The third deals with the abject and the worn and the challenges they impose on an object’s continuing lifecycle. The final section provides the means to transcend an objects life opening it such that it does not end.

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Dedication

To my husband Rob, my children Manon and Bear and my parents Margaret and Martyn.

I . Exploring Change

Designers within the current system find themselves in a bind when faced with environmental concerns and the consumption-driven nature of their work. The goal of this thesis has been to look for solutions to this dilemma by assessing “change”. Specifically, it is concerned with acquiring insight into the means of changing an aspect of the current design/ mass production systems of objects, which currently encourages waste through enabling consumptive habits in the user. Change is assessed through investigating aspects of lifecycle found in a series of textile-based objects – searching for a means to change, by investigating change itself. Acknowledging the role that consumption plays in satisfying functional needs such as food, housing, transportation, the core of this topic explores the role that identity formation plays in promoting consumptive behavior. Although status and social cohesion are also well recognized as significant factors in consumptive behaviour, the theme of this thesis is the impact of individual identity needs (Jackson v-vi) within the context of North American consumer culture with a Western Philosophical base. It addresses both physical realities and psychological factors connected with individuals’ ability/inabilities to accept change in the objects they surround themselves with and their simultaneous need for change.

The choice to assess change through investigating the lifecycle of a series of objects began by exploring the aspect of design to which I have the greatest affinity, **making**. The act of making provides an insight into the ongoing changes of an object; the study of change directly in real time. From the makers vantage point, I am able to reflect on a quality integral to the man-made artifact: it’s **being**. An object’s being starts with a need, an inception of the idea for the object. The object continues to grow and develop as it flows through the processes of designing and making, and onwards as it is used by the consumer. Events associated

along this thread could be seen as dialogues, both internal and external, which collect to form the narrative of the object. Concurrent with this growth process is one of subtraction. As all materials and objects deteriorate with time, evidence of **the worn** quality of an object was also a focus of my investigations into the life cycle of textile-based articles. Together, the elements of **making, being,** and **the worn** provided me with the basis to assess change.

2. Method

Much of the work described in the following pages has made use of ordinary repetitive actions that have engendered a contemplative state – the spatial, mechanical and kinesthetic – as access to “nonverbal modes of thought” (Dissanayake 45). This idea of thinking with things is one that has been taken up by art historian Esther Pasztory of Columbia University, who has made the point that “things are needed to think with, in order to manage problems of cognitive dissonance” (Pasztory 21). This observation is significant, as the investigations of this thesis derive from recognition of a conflict, a cognitive dissonance found in contemporary society, where the consumption of consumer goods acts as an important means of identity construction while also posing a threat to our own survival. Pasztory has argued that thinking with things allows for a means of dealing with “issues of identity and relation to others and the cosmos” (Pasztory 21). Sociologists whose work center on material studies also make these observations: “one’s understanding of the nature of the universe and one’s place within it, is often formulated through the making, weaving, displaying and destruction of fibres” (Miller 10).

My method, an abstracted act of making, is removed from the traditional societal construct in which making is understood to serve a purpose of providing practical tools and solutions, objects that serve as markers of status, as well as artifacts created for pleasure, or as a means of social commentary and critique. Nonetheless, it has served as a useful tool for sorting out ideas pertaining to a wider social framework, relative to consumption. The investigations I undertake are heavily influenced by random intuitive movement and consciously encompass both rational and tacit knowledge. Not only are the resulting artifacts expressive – intended to communicate, to generate a response from the viewer – they are also comprised of an additional dimension, they serve as a means of generating a response

from myself, the maker. They fit into Marx Wartofsky's description of Tertiary artifacts, those that constitute a "relatively autonomous "world" in which the rules, conventions and outcomes no longer appear directly practical in nature. Such imaginative artifacts can influence the way we see the actual world and act as agents of change for current practice" (Diaz-Kommonen). They are a means of reflecting on the possibilities.

The ongoing *Layers* series, which I will now begin to discuss, has consistently been situated in an exploratory realm. This work has proven to be a significant seed for many unexpected insights and ideas, which will be developed and discussed throughout this paper.

3. Initial Investigations

grounding the questions about change

3.1 Behind The Seams

exposing the process of making

In order to arrive at the point where I was able to define the parameters of my work as an exploration of **making – being – worn**, as stated in the introduction, a shift away from predetermined boundaries and expectations was required. *Behind The Seams* not only helped to formulate a point of view and a vocabulary, it was also an important foray into the method of working and thinking that later became central to my thesis explorations as outlined in the section above.

The initial goal of *Behind the Seams* was to expose the aspects of making that are predominantly unknown to the average modern day consumer. Intent on conveying the internal skill and structure integral to the form and making of a garment, I chose to make a study of the sartorial¹ narrative found within the tailored jacket. Close evaluation and copying of the construction techniques found in such an article of clothing is common in the garment industry. Purchasing a tailored jacket and picking open the seams to expose the interior is



figure 1: Behind The Seams

a useful means of analysis, of acquiring an understanding of how a garment is formed. I transferred this technique for acquiring knowledge and applied it to my current endeavor. Three men's jackets served as my medium. The garments were each opened up along different seams and turned inside out to reveal the internal workings. Each jacket was tacked onto its own large canvas that I used as a forum to expose my concerns – the guts of my argument. The canvases were treated as pages to “write” upon. The jackets and their insides were accompanied by quotes from designers, artisans, art critics and sociologists who have contemplated the nature of craft (fig. 1). The isolated details, such as the carefully constructed shank of a button, were also considered and placed on smaller canvases. Eleven yellow labels, each with a short piece of prose directly related to the actions involved in the act of making the article of clothing were tacked on to the exposed jackets at appropriate points (fig. 2). A yellow stitching line was then used to “write” the connections between the yellow labels and the pages themselves. In this way the viewer was invited to consider the internal aspect of a made object where the distinctions between craft and mass production were blurred.

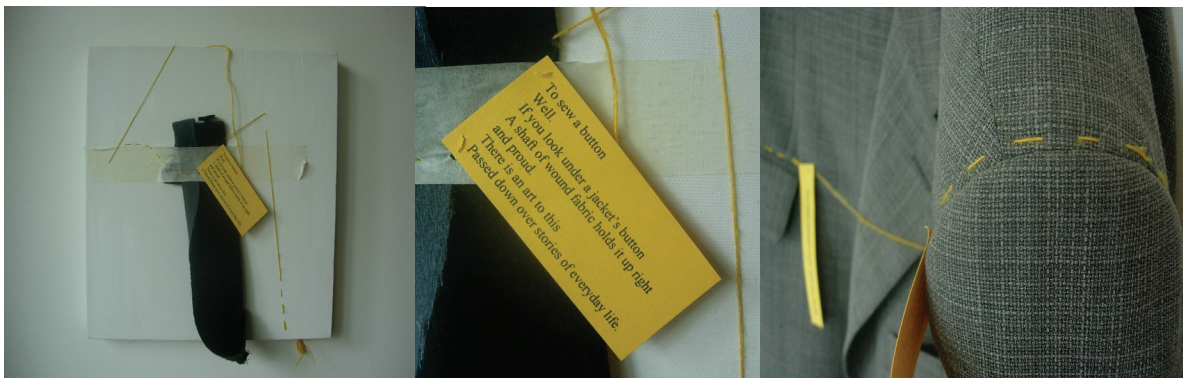


figure 2: Isolated Details

The exhibition of this work was designed to cover a long expanse of white wall. An introduction chalked onto a large, square black board preceded the exposed internal elements of the jackets. Another black board, listing the synonyms linked to the word “innovation”, acted as the conclusion and foreshadowed my growing preoccupation with how to bring about change. As an act of exposure, *Behind the Seams* led me to reconsider craft

and the act of making. It enabled me to begin to conceive of new contexts in which my skills could be used to reinterpret design. The dissective aspect of the work and concern for the gestures of making, apparent in the prose, developed a vocabulary for the investigations to follow.

3.2 Layers I

part one

3.2.1 concept

Layers I began out of a desire to address, expose and explore the problematic relationship between the need for environmentally sustainable solutions and industry's own self-sustaining model of continual consumption². I specifically set out to change the topography and subsequent perception of an object. The object I chose is one which I have worked with for sixteen years and whose form I know intimately: my professional dress mannequin whom I refer to as Judy.

My goal for this project was to explore an understanding and perception of an object in the making. I began with a semiotic approach using a menu of referents. I was conscious from the inception of *Layers I* that the stack of fabric, the dress mannequin and the tools (pins, scissors, thread) used in the piece were a means of referral to the processes of the mass-produced, the craft and the artisanship involved in making. The stack of fabric made up of its many layers, pregnant with possibility, was a means of simultaneously referring to the mass-consumed and the mass-produced. It acted as a visual metaphor for a continual deposit of ideas, understanding and waste. The female mannequin was emblematic of the individual and the creation of identity. She alluded to the past, and an understanding of the human form which I have developed over an extended period of time. It was the tension between all of these elements that I wished to explore; they were the means of initiating a series of dialogues.

The body is a fertile forum from which to initiate dialogue. It is one of the primary means of

perceiving and of being perceived. Cloth placed on the body creates a liminal³ space between these two simultaneous actions, where the boundaries between the internal and the external blur. In the case of *Layers I* was particularly interested in how the external perception of Judy would alter and change through a systematic process. I designed this process, choosing to use and subvert the usual intention of making found in the manufacturing of mass produced garments, specifically the laying, blocking (cutting), draping, pinning, and tacking of fabric.

3.2.2 construction

The medium of exploration for this project was woven fabric. Sixty-seven layers of fabric were chosen from a collection of cloth, which I had gradually built up over the years. By design, these solid blocks of cloth were varied in colour and texture only. No prints were used. In addition, a cream coloured jacquard weave was purchased specifically for the final layers of the intervention. My intention with this final layering of fabric was to return, after having applied many colours, to the same cream tone as the Judy itself. This decided, the fabrics were layered one on top of another forming a pallet for me to work from. These layers of fabric were then taken to a clothing manufacturer in Richmond, BC, where a professional cutter blocked and cut the stack into a rectangular form, in a manner that is regularly used in mass production (fig.3).



figure 3: Blocking the Fabric

dialogue I: how to cut

Windson Lam - the owner, his chief cutter and myself as we decided the best means of blocking the seventy layers of fabric. A dialogue set in the chaos of a cutting room, movements around the stack of fabric layed out on a small portion of the long cutting table. A conversation in Cantonese and English punctuated by hand gestures, smiles and furrowed brows with a local Cantonese radio station in the background, a process of figuring out the best means of cutting the fabric so that it could be moved intact to the gallery setting. I noted the cutter's reaction to the work in my journal:

April 5. 2007

. . .and when he was done the cutter wanted to know what exactly this peculiar bit of work was for.

"Homework" replied Windson . . .

They refused to take payment.

I left them with two invites for the show.

Along with the preparation of the stack of fabric was the task of creating a script to accompany the installation:

dialogue II: times roman

At the sign-maker's, I was confronted by a short, burley man. Pragmatic in, his method, going about his task, he too expressed curiosity over the project and the short three-word statement I had asked him to produce. Consumption and waste and the notion of sustainable practices were accepted with a vague nod. He quickly moved the conversation to creativity, to making, and confessed to having wanted to be an artist. Somewhere along the way his practical side led him to sign making: a means of insuring a steady income.

On April 9, 2007 the stack of fabric was transported to the *Concourse Gallery, Emily Carr Institute* where it was placed alongside the dress mannequin and a large box of pins, against an expanse of white wall marked with the statement: “this is Judy:” (fig. 4).



figure 4: This is Judy

Over a period of four days, I proceeded to systematically place one layer of fabric at a time onto the Judy. I did this using the draping techniques that I had honed while working on high-end garments in the “rag trade”. Draping is a technique used to create the pattern pieces for a garment from scratch. It is artisanal in nature, and based on manipulating fabric around the human form. Implicit in this, for the designer, is an intuitive, tacit involvement with the medium: cloth. Unlike flat pattern drafting techniques, draping does not create form by moving from existing pattern pieces, but rather by removing the manipulated fabric from the mannequin and using the markings made upon it as a template. In the case of *Layers I*, the draped fabric was not removed to create the beginnings of a new pattern; but rather, each layer was tacked and left on the mannequin. In this way, the form began to morph, moving from what was a well-known, familiar shape to an unfamiliar, unruly object. This was perceptible both from a visual and a gestural point of view as I worked the fabric around Judy. Capitalizing on the curves and beauty of the human form gave way to trying to tackle a cocoon-like shape.

dialogue III: public

Observers. The dialogues formed with students passing through the gallery space between classes, faculty on their breaks, outsiders visiting. Individuals, standing at a distance. The brazen squeezed in between Judy and the wall to see – her back-side. There were those that stopped to talk about identity, the process of the making of multiples, of craft and fashion. Leaning against the wall, squatting down, looking up, arms crossed, palms held behind the back. And, on several occasions, after leaving my work overnight, I came back to find objects offered up, placed on the diminishing stack of fabric: the leftovers of a litho print, a spray bottle.

Initially, draping the layers of fabric meant capitalizing, accentuating and playing with the female form. As this form is very familiar to me, I was instinctively able to “know” how to move the fabric, how to pinch, tuck and pull it around Judy. The first five layers spoke of the female and a short history of form in western fashion – in reverse. Initially the cloth on Judy evoked a modern, minimalist aesthetic; this was followed by an allusion to 1950’s couture before being taken over by a silhouette reminiscent of French middle class costume of the mid-eighteenth century (fig.5). The final layer on the first day of the installation, however,



figure 5: Initial Development of Layers I

moved me to confront something new, for “repetition sets things in motion, transforming them” (Vahamaki and Virtanen 2007). Judy, as I “knew” her, was gone. The female had disappeared. I was no longer in the act of creating and accentuating beauty. My hands were not able to instinctively know where and how to pull the fabric around the body whose unfamiliarity had become a challenge. This continued in the three days which followed, as this new form developed and continually evolved. At times, Judy resembled a hunched cloaked figure in motion; at others, a solid figure wrapped in a sari; and finally, most difficult for me, a cocoon hiding the pupa beneath (fig. 6). What I had thought would be an opportunity to manipulate, moved into a process in which I was forced, by previously set constraints, to allow the process to take control. All the while, Judy’s metaphorical content and form became increasingly problematic. This was primarily due to the contradictions within the object/the form itself, which could be perceived as emblematic of both the beautiful and the grotesque – full of potential but weighted down by time and perception.



figure 6: Further Development of Layers I

The act of adding to Judy had a consequence. With each additional layer added, Judy’s form changed. She became something different from what she was before, yet each progressive iteration was dependent upon the layers and form hidden below. The consequence of this process of differentiation meant that she was ever unique. Through the layering process, the

dilemma of contemporary society's consuming tendencies grew more apparent. I had begun to tie a thread between our need to consume and our contemporary understanding of identity. Section four discusses these connections.

3.2.3 documentation

The documentation of the process and progressive change of the form of Judy was significant in the conceptualization of the *Layers* project. A record was kept through progressive photos as well as video footage taken of Judy as each additional layer was added to her form. I was particularly interested in the juxtaposition of the growing form and the statement "this is Judy:" and how, with each layer, a different understanding/perception of the object presented itself.

The photo documentation was an opportunity to evaluate the form once removed. As Individual frames, the images give little indication of what came before and what the future would bring. This is similar to the isolated perspective available to one time visitors of the installation with the exception being the hint provided by the stack of fabric to real time viewers. As an ensemble these digitized images of the ephemeral provide a fragmented awareness of a progressively changing object. This view is similar to the one perceived by repeat visitors to the gallery space who although not present throughout the entire transition were cognizant of a progression. The photographs taken of the *Layers* process, however, do not tell the whole truth even as an ensemble. The perspective acquired via the kinesthetic and haptic act of making, where the continual witnessing of the processes of change is fluid, is not available.

The video footage of *Layers I* is a result of collaboration with filmmaker Bo Myers who took on the project of documenting segments of the five-day process. Beyond acting as a means of conveying to a future audience the multifaceted nature of this piece, the video documentation

played a more immediate role. Review of the footage following the completion of the work revealed an unexpected perspective into the act of making; Specifically the striking contrasts in the relation between the object, myself/the maker and the different stages of the process. The video footage taken from a distance was marked by the stillness of Judy in comparison to my own pivoting movements and varying degrees of intensity as I worked around her; this intensity was apparent through my facial expressions and was heavily dependant upon on the task and part of the process I was performing.

A conversation nine months later with Vytas Narusevicius, whose work hung opposite *Layers* / in the gallery space, offered a different perspective:

dialogue IV: another interpretation

According to Vytas Judy was not still. Static. But ever changing, moving, morphing – an object, a form, difficult to anticipate while I on the other hand, provided the stable unchanging point in the affair.

The still and moving images acquired throughout this project and the dialogues they provoked in others have all added to the understanding of the work, The documentation has also played a role of amplifying, the sensory relationship which I, as the maker, experienced with the materiality of the fabric, the form of Judy and the process I was wrapped up in – the emotional content at play in the textual materiality of cloth and subsequently affected the outcomes (ideas and artifacts) derived from *Layers* in the process.

4. Change

theory and evidence

4.1 Theory I

difference and identity contemplated

Carl Jung noted that as young children, we start to become conscious of the external world. We begin to differentiate ourselves from others (St. Clair 95). Internally we also make distinctions as we define and delineate our sense of *self* as it changes over time. We assume identity is created through differences between: my self today – my self tomorrow, myself from your self. This use of difference as a means of comparison ‘between’ is deeply engrained in western philosophy, from the ideas developed by Plato to those of Heidegger (“Gilles Deleuze”). It is a concept that was developed within a social framework in which identity was not the seminal preoccupation that it is today. Unlike the modern engrossment with change, pre modern peoples’ understanding of themselves and the world around them was based on a static order and the idea of unchangeable essences (Svendsen 138). The understanding of difference, which was developed within this static framework, is still operative in contemporary contexts which privilege change and the dynamic. Difference, a concept applied out of its original boundaries, has turned and fed into the consumptive patterns of behavior that prevail today.

Differentiation, which uses the ‘I’ of the individual as its starting point, helps us to understand the modern motivation of consumption. Our need to proclaim differentiation from others as well as to improve upon our current “self” – to seek to become different from who we were before – leads us to consume the latest materials goods.

The need to differentiate is essential. It allows us to negotiate the social and internal space of our lives. There are a plethora of examples which speak to this. Societal rules that attempt to determine an outer appearance of homogeneity have a tendency to succumb to the

individual's need to differ; both the uniformity of the Maoist garb which has given way to variety and self-expression and the naïve bastardization of school uniforms attests to this. The necessity for the individual to assume new roles as he or she moves into different social and professional settings also demands acts of differentiation⁴. Add to this the maker's perspective: the fashion designer who works with cloth around the body knows how most individuals long to transform themselves. This is evident in the dialogues that fashion designers are privy to in forums as diverse as seasonal trunk shows held in large department stores to private functions where they are introduced to friends as being "in fashion". Creators in the fashion industry witness how even the most reluctant of subjects glows when the clothing fits, suits. Wonderful! For the transformed and the transformer. Transformation and differentiation have the capacity to draw in a broad spectrum of individuals within society.

4.2 Theory II

difference reframed

Sustainable consumption is difficult to contend with when it is situated within the framework which privileges differentiation that I have described above. Designers who strive to convince consumers to buy less or to keep objects longer are working against the powerful and complex needs for differentiation. My assertion is that we need a new way to conceive of objects. We must reconsider what the object can and should do to support differentiation. This is a central investigation of my thesis.

A key insight, useful to this inquiry, is one that reframes our understanding of difference, such a point of view is offered by French Philosopher Gilles Deleuze in his book *Difference and Repetition*. Deleuze moves the emphasis away from the self. Instead of taking the preferred route, assumed by much of western philosophy throughout history, which views the identity of the self as the point of departure Deleuze asserts that the act of difference itself should be used as the starting point. By taking this route the priorities and possibilities change (“Gilles Deleuze”). The layering of Judy, which privileged process and the visualization of differences, became a means of understanding this perspective. Through it I was able to revise my assumptions of what could constitute a manufactured object. The artifact does not need to be viewed as a stable, finished, product but rather, can be understood as one in flux, continually changing and becoming. Such an object could be seen to be continually differing-in-itself (“Gilles Deleuze”) much the same way as each layer of fabric allowed Judy to differ from what she was before. The object could be understood to be full of a potential of change. As a consequence it could support differentiation without depending upon the excessive consumption that currently prevails.

4.3 Layers II

part two

4.3.1 cut: exposing the layers

From the onset of the *Layers* Project, I planned that at the end of the process I would cut back through the layers. I was conscious and hopeful that the action of cutting and the consequence of it would be a means of alluding not only to the layers and complexity of the development of the object itself, but also to that of the ecological, the earth, and the social. We try to understand the history of how we have come to where we are not only through stories, but also by cutting back through the layers of our past. Geologists look to core samples as evidence and a means of understanding geological history and climate variation. Archeologists through their digs dust off; peel back the everyday of civilizations/societies past. I saw the act of cutting as offering an alternate perspective, a means of gaining access to a new understanding of the same thing, a view into the object/ the issue to be addressed, a different perspective.

On the designated morning I arrived at the gallery, my shears in hand. I had considered and negated the possibility of using an X-acto knife to execute the cut for two reasons: the prime one being the possibility that the sharpness of the blade and cut would be too surgical in reference, the second my insistence on keeping to the tools of my trade. As an apprentice, and over time, I have often used the large, long scissors of the garment industry to open up an area on a garment. This investigative action of cutting while fitting garments on static mannequins or live fit models enables the fabric of a garment to fall where it needs to around the human form. Cutting, from this perspective, makes apparent the changes required to progress a design. I decided that the cut on the Judy form in the gallery setting must follow

the flow and form of the final cream coloured figure. I specifically chose not to make a perfectly horizontal or vertical incision. Beginning from a spot close to the bottom of the form, I began to cut up and through the layers. This was not an easy, clean task. I was obliged to work against uncooperative layers of fabrics, which doubled back and forth on themselves. I was able to cut through only several layers at a time. Because of this the folds and colours from within were revealed gradually (fig.7). The cut took a mere thirty minutes – a strong contrast to the hours spent layering and tacking the fabric on to Judy over the previous four days.



figure 7: Exposing the Layers

I had intended the cut as a means of seeing and revealing what had come before. There was evidence of a progressive development and change in the object, of previous interactions. The cut, the crevice, offered up evidence of the past but simultaneously revealed to myself (as a continuous witness of the change) the limitations of how and what we perceive. A complete understanding of what each essential point in time meant in terms of the form, the ideas and the dialogue encompassing the object, was not available.

4.3.2 observations: perspective and possibility

The vantage point we use to evaluate information from has a significant effect upon how we interpret or form a story. It influences our subsequent relationship with objects and our perspective on their potential and future. The cut into Judy exemplifies this. If the object (Judy) is understood in terms of the progressive change of which it is made up of, the cut into it can be abstracted and point to the possibility it opens up. The cut becomes symbolic of what Deleuze referred to as a “line of flight”⁵ and facilitates the opportunity to review and revise assumptions about the possibilities. On the other hand, if the starting point is the form of Judy, and not the change and process of which it is made up of, the perspective changes. In this case Judy is seen as a stable whole and is consequently wounded by the gash, which cuts into her. The signifier (Judy and her cut), petrifies us and offers few options, beyond an innate desire to close up the slash and attempt to ignore what is exposed.

Frames of reference play a significant role on the subsequent metaphors (both positive and negative) which are attached to objects. They affect how objects are perceived and may either limit or open up the possibility of objects to carry on as contributing to everyday life. This foreshadows the muddy territory I now delve into as I begin to consider the next generation when something is worn “out” and/or cast off.

5. Transition

recognition of the challenges

5.1 Layers III

the abject

The corpse, seen without God and outside of science, is the utmost of abjection. It is death infecting life. Abject. It is something rejected from which one does not part, from which one does not protect oneself as from an object. Imaginary uncanniness and real threat, it beckons to us and ends up engulfing us (Kristeva).

Layers II marks a juncture, where I was pulled to consider the abject: the desecrated, destroyed, rejected object, which came to dominate my final investigations. The remains of *Layers I* was the point of departure. I began *Layers II* by removing the fabric that enveloped Judy. Using a horizontal cut across the mid section of the form I gradually pulled the top and bottom sections apart and off of the mannequin. The visual records of this process ricochet strangely between alluding to the photographs of evidence taken at a death /murder scene and the playful form of Russian nesting dolls⁶. The series of images enable metaphors that contradict and fight one another; maternal lineage and growth end up being overridden by the abject – death (fig.8). This brings us to a stalemate, similar to what Kristeva describes above, where any ability to conceive where and what to do next seems impossible.



figure 8: Layers II

5.2 The Use of Metaphor

questioning the design perspective

The associations connected to the abject are difficult for both the user and the designer to contend with. The abject is potent when applied to objects. This is because of the role that artifacts play in our own identity construction. We recognize in the abject object something that was once part of ourselves or of someone else. There are numerous examples of these objects. We come across them frequently. They are the chairs, the mattresses, the socks, and the toques that are left behind: sitting on curbsides, languishing at the dump, waiting for someone to pick them up. These artifacts are seen to be in traumatic limbo. As objects that we consider as abject they are most often denied the possibility to renew themselves, to continue to function, to be.

Situated at the front end of the product life cycle the designer rarely confronts the abject in professional practice. As a consequence, designers tend to see metaphor as an enabler⁷.

Peter-Paul Verbeek notes the importance of metaphor from a design perspective:

Designers tap into the capacity of metaphor to both communicate and sort ideas out.

Industrial designers appear to approach not only the meaning of products but also their functionality in terms of signs⁸ and, conversely, to regard a products ability to bear signs as a form of functionality (Verbeek 2006).

For an object to function sustainably, to have an extended period of use, however, the designer must be prepared to contend with the metaphors that threaten to overwhelm its capability to continue **being**. The insight here I would suggest is that awareness of the negative power of some metaphors may allow us to put in place processes that enable us to dodge the emotions which lead us to reject and subsequently view objects as abject and inaccessible. The following investigations shed light on some potential solutions.

6. Further Investigations

exploring the challenges of residue

The clothes we wear are redolent of our presence, impregnated by the bodily experience of the wearer and the maker. The empty garment is an icon of absence and death. Trace elements, stains, history of use: these elements mean that clothing serves as a powerful metaphor for experience. “To deal with the absences – in art or life – entails most of all the recollection of formerly existing and now absent presences: the matrix of memory inescapably commences to pulse” (Millar).

6.1 Five Shirts

6.1.1 introduction

Layers II allows for insight into the negative metaphors attached to an object at the point of being cast off. It does not, however, address aspects of the worn that develop over time on an article of clothing worn close, against the skin. The following investigations use five men’s dress shirts, which after having been worn consistently over an extended period (months, years) had been relegated to the *Goodwill*. The evidence of wear found on these artifacts was contemplated through methodical repetitive movements associated with the act of making and repair: The nature of my reactions to the different residues which I chose to tackle, and the role that the ritual-like actions of making played in enabling affect to be overcome is noteworthy. My actions, and the insights derived from them, are described in the following sections.

6.1.2 necks: Collar edges of shirts and the consequences of friction with exterior elements – tears.

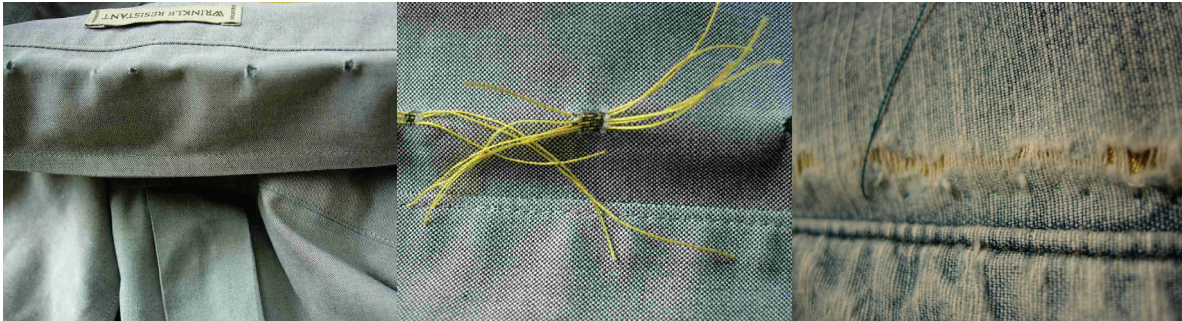


figure 9: Worn Edges

First.

A men's grey shirt, its collar slit at regular intervals running the length of the roll line, was my first opportunity to contemplate the worn (fig. 9). With the intention that the marks of wearing should not be hidden but celebrated, I chose to weave a series of bright yellow threads back into the spaces where the fibres had worn away. The ends of the yellow thread were not slipped back into the weave of the fabric, out of sight, but rather left to dangle on the outside, remaining exposed.

Second.

A shirt made of denim, also worn along the collar roll line. This time, a different method was used to interrupt and interpret the worn. A layer of chartreuse coloured raw silk served as a contrast to the faded blue indigo of the shirt. The silk fabric was inserted into the inside of the collar stand and carefully stitched into place. The new inner layer of green was consequently exposed where the fibres of the old shirt had worn away along the length of the collar.

In both cases the methodical process was one of ease. Conflict did not come into play. In search of a greater challenge, looking for disturbance, I left the collar line behind and took to peering under the arms of the shirts, at the stains, which remained.

6.1.3 armpits: residue found under the arm

Third

Forth

Fifth

"I have been told that the most beautiful sound in the world is a taut piece of cloth stretched on an embroidery frame with a linen thread being pulled through and you get that kind of 'chch'. The sound is just beautiful" (Millar).

Does the quality and story of the cloth affect the quality of this sound? What happens if the cloth stretched on that embroidery frame comes with a tangible history of heat, the accumulated stresses of another person? Can we get past the residue of discomfort and find beauty again, allow what has been cast aside, as no longer acceptable, to carry on; perform another function, have another story added to the continuum, evolve into another form?



figure 10: Traced Stains

The method I chose for *Armpits* concentrated on tracing the outlines of residue left behind on the interior side of shirts. This residue was a combined result of the body's innate tendency to sweat and the North American need to cover up the smell. Using an embroidery hoop to hold the fabric in the armhole area taut I methodically pushed a darning needle through the fabric, marking the edges of the caked on sweat stains. The poke marks left in the armhole area created a decorative element, unwittingly conforming to the nature of markings traditionally created within the circular framing of embroidery hoops (fig. 10). Beyond the decorative, these markings hint at a functional aspect: the renewed capacity of the woven fabric to breathe. The investigative holes also redefine the form of the armhole area, issuing it a new sculptural perspective (fig. 11). This investigation is an example of boundaries between creative domains being blurred. Initiated using a craft based method, the work turned into design relevant as observations were made concerning ritual-beauty-function while simultaneously creating artifacts that can be read as a form of artistic output.



figure 11: Sculptural Perspective

6.1.4 observations

The investigations of *Five Shirts* caused different responses, contingent upon the residue investigated. They uncovered affect: the sensation of emotions, which significantly influence our behavior. As filters of experience, affects can be understood to cause “an increase or decrease in the power of action for the body and mind alike” (Spinoza 49). They are capable of causing or disabling our ability to act.

As noted above, *Armpits* centered on the accumulated evidence found on the interior side of garments. The act of making was not an entirely agreeable one. Affect, the sensation of distress that threatened my ability to allow the shirt to carry on in a new form, became a significant hurdle. Evidence of sweat, the odor and the crusty layer I pushed my needle through created a degree of discomfort for myself, as maker. Incongruous to this response was the product of my labours: a disturbingly satisfying, almost appealing, artifact. The *Necks* series, in contrast, were investigations based upon evidence of residue, which resulted from exterior friction. Worn fibres as a point of departure, unlike sweat, did not perturb. It might be inferred from this response, that for the object, made of cloth, the place from which the evidence of the worn is issued effects our ability to interact with it. Evidence of exertion and discomfort, from the internal perspective of the liminal divide, is a significant hindrance to our allowing the cloth an ongoing narrative. While evidence that presents to the exterior and somehow implies interaction with the other, the social, is somehow more acceptable.

6.1.5 conclusion: ritual and making

Actions associated with ritual, with making, as illustrate in the *Armpit* exercises are significant. They enable us to allow an artifact to continue, to move to another form. Through ritual we are able to overcome the qualities of affect, which can potentially disturb us. The methodic actions of making and repair are capable of enabling us to get past the revulsion of the

residue left behind by a previous wearer and move on to produce something new. Our histories are full of examples of this: from the darned sock to the scrap pieces of garments cut and placed alongside others, replete with narrative; to form a patchwork quilt, a rag rug. The **being** of these articles is allowed to continue. Necessity has been the impetus for this kind of continuity in the past. A different sense of necessity prevails now in the western world – one that is a response to ecological, rather than financial limits – the quantity of designed objects found in new morphed forms may be seen as attesting to this.

There are a substantial quantity of objects in contemporary society that are being repaired, reused and reinterpreted. The work of the Andrea Crews art collective (“Andrea Crews”) provides an excellent example of reinterpretation. The events organized by this group gather people, materials (piles of second hand garments) and the tools, to cut, reassemble and create individualized, morphed, pieces of clothing. This genre of installation, DIY in a public space, allows insight into what came before. Viewing and reconsidering, recycled design allows us the space to re-evaluate the meaning of the material and the marks left behind within a new functioning object/entity. Andrea Crews events serve to promote an active making – thinking relationship with the object. They highlight an element that has progressively been lost in contemporary mass made society – the direct connection to the act of making.

The designer’s approach to re-using materials and artifacts, in contrast to the art based approach noted above, does not fully address the need for re-establishing making-thinking relationships with objects . The types of re-used artifacts most commonly offered up by design do not demand the active participation of the consumer beyond consuming. They position the user as an observer and rely on our propensity to adhere to narrative (Verbeek 205). Presenting objects as whole – finished entities has its drawbacks. It allows the user the possibility of divorcing themselves from these items once the story grows tired; to throw them out and find a new replacement.

If the goal is to shift society into a mode of consuming less then the motions of individualized making need to be designed back into the lifespan of objects we create, to reoccur throughout the story. For they not only allow for new functions, but also, as acts of ritual, enable us to get past the trap of letting objects be dropped to the wayside as abject and unwanted. The user, I would contend, needs to be involved in the act of making and re-making.

Five shirts used the physical evidence of residue, as the starting point for investigating the worn. With the following *Gestures* Project the emphasis shifted. I began to explore the worn using motion; the action of choosing and wearing were to be my point of departure.

6.2 Gestures

6.2.1 introduction

The *Gestures* project was conceived as a means of exposing and considering one of the ways in which the sartorial object becomes worn: through its ongoing and constant handling by the user. The investigation was a performance piece calling upon a group of peers to carry out a brief series of actions. It could also be considered a probe⁹. A study of my own gestures, as well as those of my fellow students who participated in the project, shed a light on the significant distinctions between the Designer and the User. The gestures I observed allowed me to re-evaluate the interaction between these two parties as they maneuvered around a shared entity, a piece of clothing.

In preparation for the *Gestures* project, ten black/dark grey garments were sourced from *Value Village*. These articles were ironed, hung on hangers and placed on a rolling rack. The intention was to create a small collection to be presented to the public for evaluation. Evaluation implies the need for a control – a constant – from which to examine change. The dark black/ grey colour pallet of the garments was intended to serve as this constant. It quickly became apparent, however, that a larger degree of unity was required. The past was a significant obstacle to the possibility of creating a blank toile from which to evaluate objectively, for the smell of mothballs, sweat – miasma, indications of residue left on garments, evidence of **being** – get in the way; affect.

6.2.2 cover up

Reaction to odor could be read as idiosyncratic. It can, however, also be institutionalized socially and professionally. Within the high end segment of the garment industry, sales are considered to be influenced “favorably” when garments are presented to the consumer perfectly pressed, devoid of fluff, stains or any odor – devoid of any trace of a past. Care taken in the preparation of sample collections and of garments coming off production runs reflects this. Garments are preened: inspected systematically for loose threads, oil stains and poor pressing, before being bagged individually and sent out. Exceptions to this rule do exist within the avant-guard sector in terms of concept. The postmodern propensity for loose threads and unfinished hems, as well as designers who have buried their collections in the earth before resurrecting them to show, attests to this. My professional design background and training has predominantly been located in the high-end segment of the fashion industry. When presented with the task of putting together a unified collection for the *Gestures* project made up of secondhand clothing, replete with the past, a gut reflex took over. I proceeded to delete all traces of odor that referenced previous narratives by using lavender essence and strategically placing droplets under the collar and the underarm areas of the garments.



figure 12: New Brand

A more evident sign of a past is found in visual clues: in signs used as markers. Labels can serve this purpose. The collection of garments gathered for the *Gestures* project was

comprised of ten different articles of clothing, each bearing a different label. Conscious that I had already participated in an act of erasure, I continued with my cover up. I decided the collection would bear the label: *Blank Canvas*. The new label was placed over the pre-existing ones and attached using two large red stitches, which formed a large X across the new brand (fig. 12). The re-labeling, achieved through a visual mark, bonded them. The garments now had a semblance of cohesion and formed a “collection”, in the fashion sense of the term.

This act of unification of the product is representative of the traditional construct of design that uses collections and objects as means of creating one-way statements. Although the intent of *Gestures* was to allow participants to take up the product and leave their mark; my preparations for the exercise perpetuated this. It hindered a flow of dialogue between the new user, the designer, and the previous wearer.



figure 13: Gestures

6.2.3 unify - individualize

It is ironic that an exercise intended to be about adding and attaching stories of the worn began by having the past extensively negated. The collection of second hand clothes labeled and presented as a *Blank Canvas* were to be marked yet again with a new layer of residue. Participants were asked to rub their hands in climber's chalk, select a garment, remove it

from the hanger, and place it on themselves (fig. 13). In this way, the resulting markings left evidence of individual's gestures and the acts of choosing and placing the garments on their bodies.

At the planning stage of this project, I had surmised that there would be particular regions on the garments where the markings would be concentrated. What I had not anticipated was the variety of the resulting shapes and densities of dust left behind (fig. 14). The markings vary from: a large definitive thumb print on the left lapel of a mans' suit jacket, a spattering of small specks left from the tips of fingers and the action of pulling on the end of a cuff, a dusting of chalk on a jacket front, from brushing hands back and forth over the plush texture. Each garment was handled and approached differently by each individual. The pallet of black and dark grey moved to one now spattered with white. As a whole, the collection in its revised state still has a semblance of cohesion. Close investigation of the marks, however, reveals that the individual user's acts of wearing challeanged the designer's attempt at creating unity. Each garment has been pulled away from the group ever so slightly by unconscious acts of personalization (fig. 15).



figure 14: Marks Left Behind



figure 15: Unconscious Acts of Personalization

The action of personalization is rarely addressed and often considered inconsequential by the designer who is trained to control a 'vision' of the product. Acknowledging the impact of the user demands much more of the designer because it introduces the element of surprise – one never knows exactly what the user will produce – and threatens a commonly held assumption of what design is, or can be. The innate action of the user, if considered in tandem with the designer's ability to unify, may provide the means of achieving a new dynamic in our relationship and understanding of the objects around us.

dialogue V: thinking

This motion . . . my hand flies out . . . “It is like a ball of yarn.”

The designer winds the ball up. Makes it tidy, whole. And then the user pulls at the end of the yarn. Unwinds, unravels the package. The designer winds it up again. And . . .

6.2.4 re-grouping: a repeat process

Is it possible to revise the existing relations between the designer, the object, and the user, based on tendencies that already exist?

The designer's role need not be linked solely to the beginning of an idea, or story, with the user relegated to the second half – the dead-end. They could exist throughout – a new process of producing – consuming. Imagine the designer and the user in a continual iterative movement of sending the object back and forth – a movement entailing a conscious and gradual link of information, function, form, and narrative.

The scenario might play out as follows:

The designer creates an entity and puts out a series of multiples. In the users' hands the units become individualized and personalized. Once this is done, the changed entities return to the designer, who moves to unify the now 'unique' artifacts to form a new set of multiples. The new iteration is put forward for the users to individualize and change again. This allows an iterative, open-ended process where the designer unifies and the user individualizes.

The designer-user relationship is no longer validated using objects as statements to be consumed, but rather as the instigators of a progressive flow of dialogue – of conversation.

The idea of enduring within this construct is also altered. It moves from something conceived

and intended to be held on to indefinitely toward a notion more closely in line with what the philosopher Alfred North Whitehead conceived as a “route of inheritance” (Shaviro 3). Each object would contain an ongoing legacy of input contributed to by both the designer and the users. In this way the enduring object becomes an entity that is understood as always in a state of being “actively produced” (Shaviro 4). Inertia, as a consequence, is denied because the object is understood to endure “only in so far as it renews itself, or creates itself afresh, over and over again” (Shaviro 4).

7. Limitations and Possibilities:

dealing with affect, metaphor and the abject

Although effective at provoking a flow of ideas, the method I have chosen and applied to all of my investigations has not been smooth or devoid of conflict. By leaving the familiar territory of design, and applying the act of making to new situations and artifacts replete with their own histories, I have been repeatedly faced and confounded by the dynamic of: affect, and metaphor, and the abject. This trio has the capacity to threaten the continuity of an object's being. It puts the brakes on the very process that I am bent on enabling: the creation of an object with the continuing ability to change and become. Acknowledgement of this hurdle is essential in order for design to act responsibly when faced with the societal need to reduce the quantity of goods which we consume.

Observations and insight procured through both the *Five Shirts* and *Gestures* projects have made it apparent that changing the role of the user, and the user's interaction with the object is a significant means of dealing with the trio of affect, metaphor, and the abject.

There are different ways of assembling this dynamic. If we take the point of view of the passive observer when faced with a worn lone holey sock, we see the standard reaction: the sock is cast aside, as it has no apparent function. In other words the user/observer is confounded by the abject that has stopped them in their tracks and has become a metaphor for why they cannot see the continuing viability of the object in terms of its materiality. This perspective leaves society at an impasse in a closed cyclical loop where it becomes impossible to allow

objects to continue functioning. Relegated to a position of observer, the user does not actively participate. The sock is thrown away and quickly replaced.

For the individual caught up in the act of making, however, the vantage point is changed. The starting point is affect. The sock is picked up and considered. The issue is no longer what the object symbolizes, but how the materiality of the object affects us. The sense of discomfort with having to deal with the lone holey sock can be overcome. Metaphor and the route to the abject become disrupted by the ritual motions in the manual act of making. Metaphor can be modified and the ecologically unsatisfactory conclusion, leading to the automatic rejection of objects, can be mitigated.

Making is an essential tool in allowing objects to continue to be. It needs to be considered not only at the front end of the object's life but at regular periods through its lifecycle. This assertion is one of the main premises behind the design object *Compose it_* that is detailed in the section below.

8. Continuity and Change Applied

final projects and new models



figure 16: Collected Experience

8.1 Collected Experience

Every object is composed of a multitude of events and dialogues that collectively creates its narrative. The installation at *Primed* (the Masters of Applied Arts Graduation Exhibition held at the *Emily Carr University of Art and Design*, April 30 to May 11, 2008) entitled *Collective Experience* was an application of an extended narrative – a principle of perpetual design. Select individuals that have influenced the last two years of my Master's studies were asked to provide two to three used cloth articles. The eleven fellow students, four professors, one collaborator, and three family members, each contributed a selection of cloth articles that were a part of their life experience or home environment (fig. 16). The articles donated ranged from a computer sachet that once ported and protected, well-loved bunny slippers, alma mater T-shirts, worn dress pants, a quilted vinyl jacket with a fake-fur trim that “would not breathe”, a lacy pink scarf, a mended skirt, a bedside rug, pieces of tulle from a movie

set, a hand embroidered tea towel, a great grandmother's petticoat and a frayed hand knit sweater acquired by the owner while knap-sacking in search of their roots. Each article was segmented into identical square dimensions and layered on top of one another forming a strata, representing a collective experience. Like a flower press, four stacks of layered cloth were arranged between larger square units of plywood. Set into six idiosyncratic stools the collective experiences were catalogued, preserved and transformed into objects unrelated to their previous function (fig. 17). The following section outlines the criteria behind these composite stools – for the design of *Compose it_*.



figure 17: Six Stools

8.2 Compose it_

8.2.1 concept

The design model employed in this work is one based on the premise that an object is not complete when it is passed on to the user. The process of making is ongoing and shared. Both the designer and the user are integral to the object's development. As an open system this design model accepts material input from a variety of lifecycle stages and sources. It makes use of the repetitive action of making, and the formation of multiple units out of previously formed objects, as a means of addressing the issue of the object and mitigating the negative metaphors attached to the worn. An artifact resulting from this model is linked to both continuity and change. It has the capacity to act as a record of past events and dialogues, while simultaneously providing the user/maker with an object capable of fulfilling their need for change and differentiation.

Design Model

1. As an evolving entity the design system takes on previously designed and used artifacts. Worn objects are broken up into a series of multiple units at both the designer and user/maker stage.
2. The units provided by the designer form the structure for the new object.
4. The designer supplies the user/maker with the template to create a series of personalized multiples and the system to connect these units to the designed structure.
5. The user provides the core material for the new object from his/her own living environment. The template provided by the designer is used to create a series of multiple units out of this material.

6. The user then takes the system provided by the designer to assemble the multiple units into the design structure.
7. The resulting artifact is conceived by the designer and made unique and personal by the user.

8.2.2 actualization

For the *Compose it_* design, as outlined in the model above, the user is supplied with a number of components. Legs recuperated from worn stackable chairs are attached to rectangular units of plywood that form the base structure (fig. 18). Added to this are smaller square pieces of pre-drilled plywood, draw strings, synch mechanisms and a cutting template.

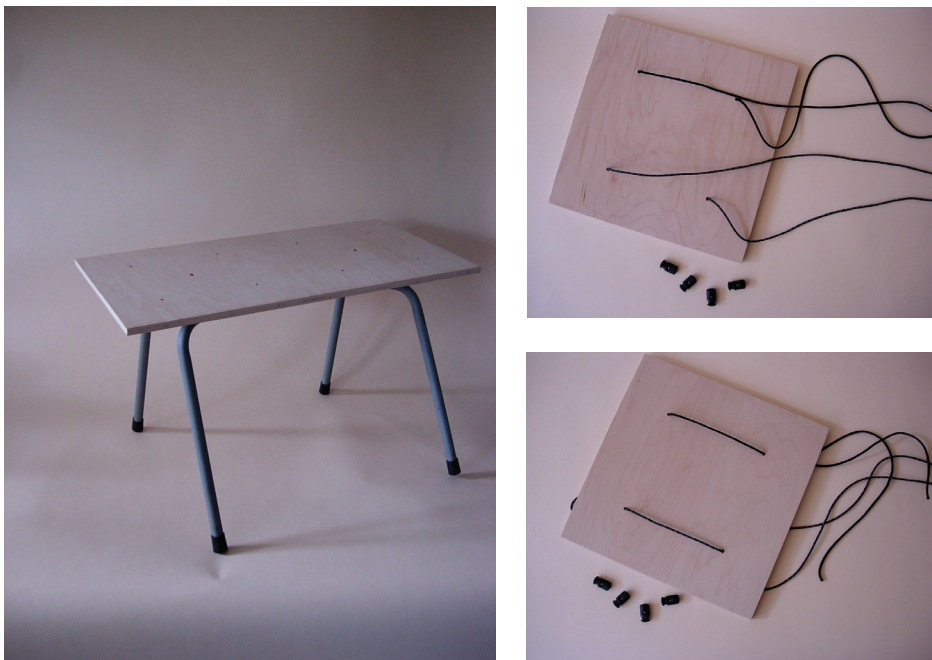


figure 18: Base Structure

It is at this juncture that the role of making is transferred to the user/maker and the individualization of the object begins (fig.19). The core of the stool is designed to be made up

of cloth articles collected by the user. Using the cutting template the worn cloth-based articles are methodically cut into stacks of uniform squares by the user. A hole is then punched out of the center of the square units with a die cut tool. Threading cord through the stacks of cloth layers forms a series of building blocks (fig. 20). These units of approximately three to four inches in thickness are then sandwiched between the square plywood units and finally synched to the base using drawstring mechanisms (fig. 21).

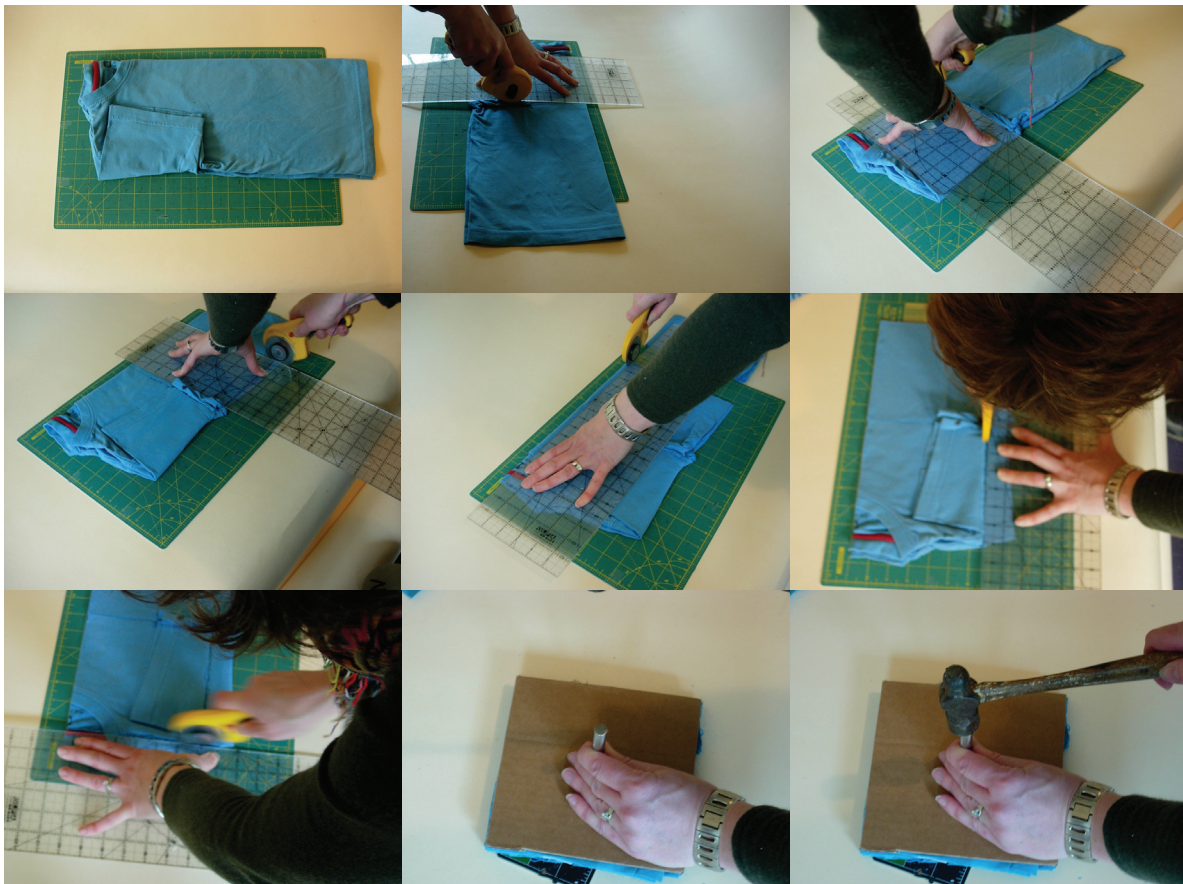


figure 19: Cutting Squares and Punching Holes

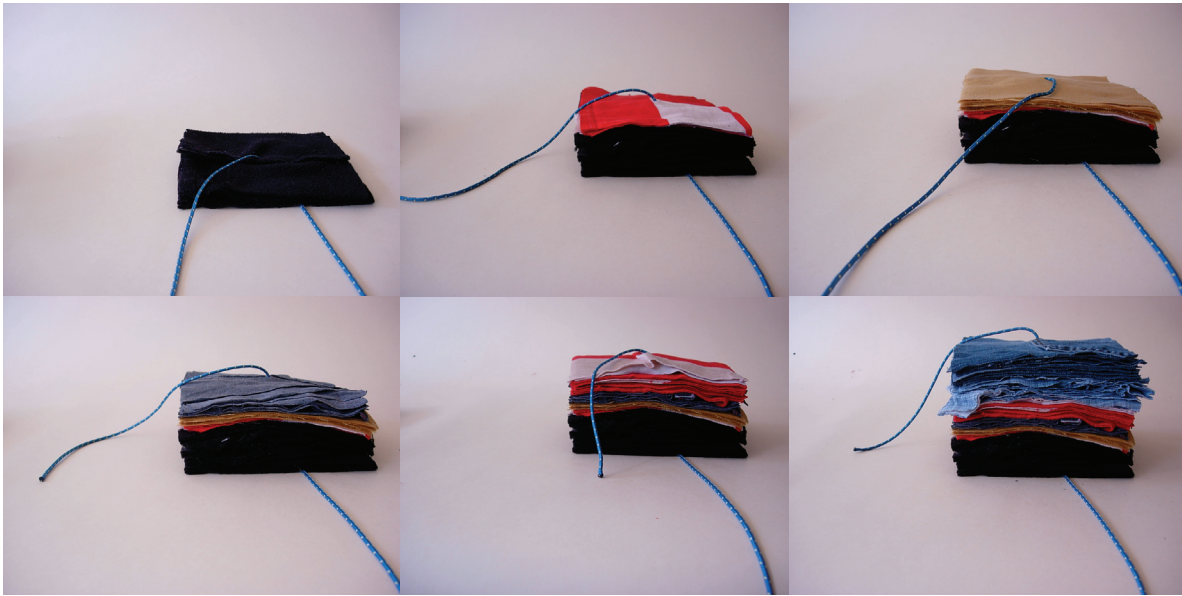


figure 20: Threading the Stacks



figure 21: Sandwiching the Layers

Not only is *Compose it_* a composite of re-configured materials; it is also an object that enables a revision of the roles and responsibilities of the designer and user (fig. 22). Through the act of making, and the use of multiple units, cloth-based artifacts previously perceived

as worn and potentially abject, are validated and moved into a new function – a continued capacity within the individual's own living environment. The articles that form the visual makeup of the stool encourage a critical dialogue addressing the issue of unnecessary waste resulting from current consumptive habits. It serves to allow the individuals who come in contact with it to recognize the potential to extend an object's lifecycle.



figure 22: Compos^e it_

9. Conclusion

This thesis addresses, in part, the issue of over-consumption in contemporary North America. The work focuses on the connections between identity formation and change, specifically how identity needs drive the impulse to discard objects prematurely.

The act of making was a central method throughout the series of investigations, and as such, it offered a means of active reflection. It enabled the recognition of an interdependence that exists: linking objects, consumption, and associated narratives. As a method that emphasizes process, making served as a catalyst. It showed the capacity of objects to extend beyond functioning as stable fixed entities, or markers. This was key to imagining a new framework that revises the roles of the designer and the user through the shared act of making. Making in this model is not, however, intended as a promotion of engagement through craft-based activity. Rather, the model emphasizes making as a composite: a combination of mass (design) production and user-centric making. This hybrid of making is conceived to occur throughout an object's lifecycle. In this manner, making acts as a bridge between the parties involved, and serves to promote and shape an active relationship between the user, the object, and the designer.

Revising the role of making such that it is a continuous, interactive, and dynamic process, with contributions from the designer and the user, would extend an object's life, and support identity formation and change in Western culture. As an alternative to over-consumption, this organic approach would move the role of designer beyond preparing the delivery of an object for consumption, to the seeding of an entity that could continue to grow and change with the user. The consequence is an artifact whose lifecycle would defy obsolescence, as it transforms into new shapes, uses, or functions.

Endnotes

1 The Sartorial pertains to tailors and their trade as well as clothing, style or manner of dress. The word sartorial is a term, which came into use in the early 19th century. The word derives from the Latin word *sartor* 'tailor' (from *sarcire* 'to patch') ("Sartorial").

2 Encouragement of consumption is apparent in many sectors of production, which increasingly uses a fashion agenda to sell a wide range of goods; this paradigm is being questioned by some designers who argue that products are considered too disposable. Writer Lakshami Bashrakan has termed this movement as 'Design Essentialism'. (Bashrakan 99)

3 Psychologists call "liminal space" a place where boundaries dissolve, a space where we get ourselves ready to move across the limits of what we were, into what we are to be. As such it is often understood as a space of transformation. Sand on the beach is a good metaphor for the liminal space. Sitting between the earth and the water the sand is a transitory space, at once of both the earth and the sea which it borders.

4 A good illustration of this can found in a recent study by Sociologist Carrie Yang Costello which documents the significant changes in the garb and attire of law and social work students as they took on their respective professional identities, and notes that students tend to shop "for new clothing in an attempt to change themselves from the outside in". (Costello 151)

5 An evaluation of *Layers I* was offered by a fellow student: Vytas Narusevicius, nine months after the piece was presented in the *Concourse Gallery* at *Emily Car*. Narusevicius's interpretation notes the role and importance of the idea of a 'line of flight':

The layers represent the ordered principles of society that consist of bits of codification, the sayables and thinkables, like your issues of how fashion is perceived, rules of consumption, etc. It operates according to the existing social reality. What the cut through the layers of fabric does is to deterritorialize the strata through what Deleuze calls a "line of flight." The cut beautifully detaches the code from the layers, thus the stratification is sidetracked from its normal mode of operation and opens up new possibilities. It allows for a process of abstraction where thought can move beyond the realm of preconceived thinkables into something new and unexpected.

6 These dolls are also called Matryoshka. The name Matryoshka came from the female names of Matryona or Matriosha, which were common to Russian peasants in the early 1900's. The name is derived from the Latin root of "matter" or "mother" ("Matryoshka").

7 The philosophers George Lakoff and Mark Johnson have noted that metaphor is central to a concept of causation (Johnson and Lakoff). This link of metaphor to both: cause and effect leads it to be a candidate to be appropriated for many uses.

8 Verbeek clarifies that products seen as bearers of signs derive from a semiotic perspective. This outlook sees products and their functions from a denotative and a connotative standpoint. The denotative signs, which products emit, tell us how they are intended to be used. The connotative turns products into the symbolic; a social-cultural context is placed on the object, which allows users to identify with specific lifestyles (Verbeek 205-206).

9 The probe, as conceived by designer Bill Gaver, is a tool that uncovers information (Gaver). It is an enabler of comparison. It is useful to the design researcher, and is also used by the curator, who gives out an assignment and then reassembles the whole to be seen as a group. The probe offers an opportunity to reassess what is important and brings forth unexpected insights. Different models of probe like initiatives exist. Dunne and Raby's *Evidence Dolls* (Raby) and Elizabeth Sanders *generative tool kits* (Sanders and Stappers) might at first glance seem to have little in common. But there is a link. Such assemblages ask us to rethink and allow assumptions to be questioned. The potential of opening the door to new ideas is made available. *Gestures* fits into this general definition.

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