

Mend + Transform + Renew
reactivating and (re)imagining pre and post consumer textile waste

By

Katherine Soucie

BAA Fashion Design, Ryerson Polytechnic University; Dip. Textile Arts,
Capilano University; BFA Visual Art, Emily Carr University of Art + Design.

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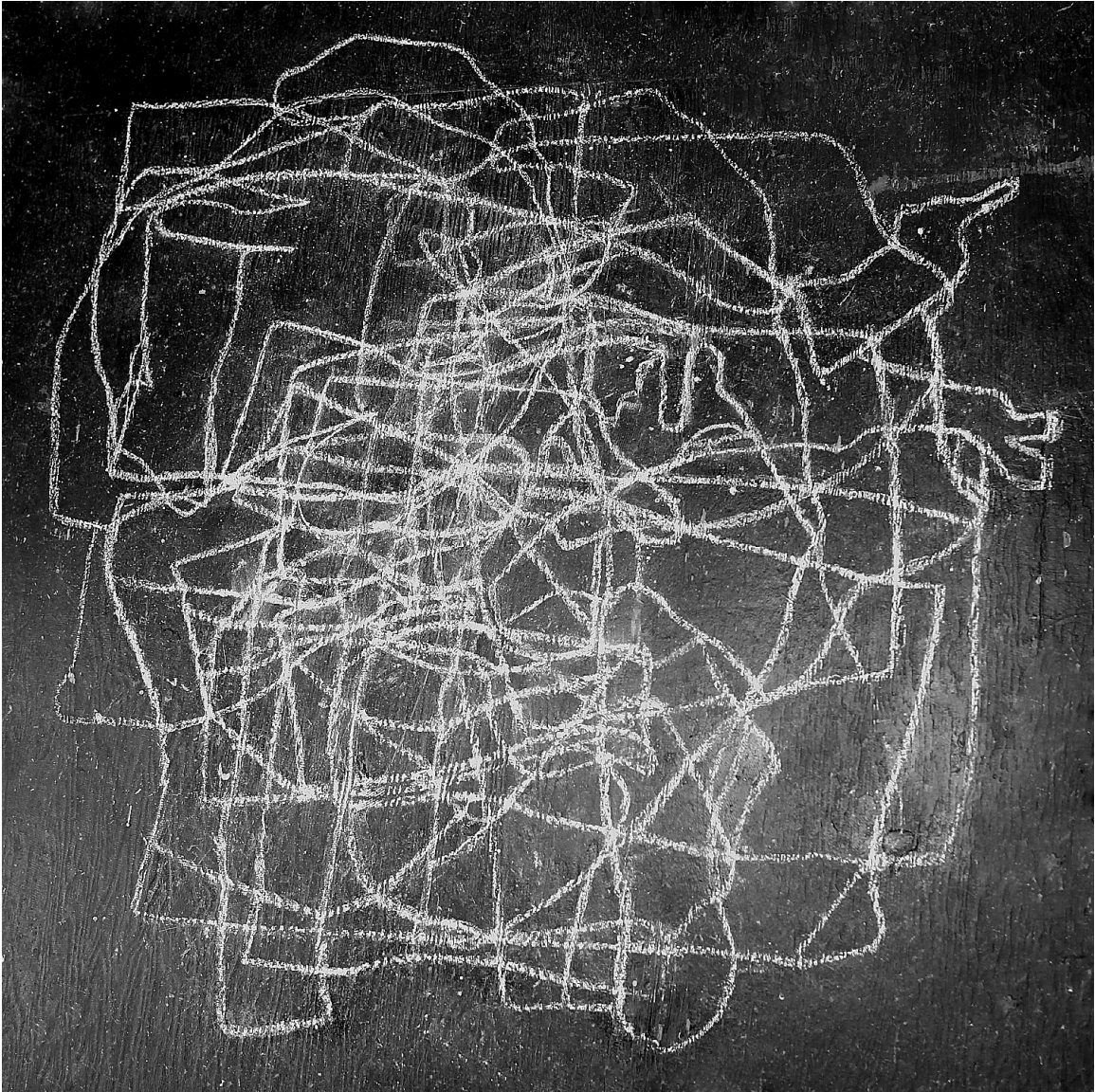


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Abstract

The intention of this paper is to identify mending as an artistic practice able to function as a tool for creation, transformation and (re)imagination. The discussion will contextualize my practice as an artist and designer working with pre and post consumer textile waste in relation to mending as an artistic practice. From the tools I utilize to the artisanal applications I explore, Vancouver has influenced my use of mending as tool for investigating, creating and (re)imagining discarded clothing and textile industry waste.

My research uncovers how mending contributes to the construction of identity through a non-consumption based practice where I focus upon reactivating and transforming the discarded, devalued and obsolete. I position my thesis in alignment with Otto Von Busch's theory on *Fashion Hactivism* alongside artists such as Michael Swaine, Liz Collins, Eleanor Ray, Jonnet Middleton and TomofHolland. As part of the growing discourse surrounding mending, transformation and reactivation, my role as a mending practitioner draws upon the ability to tune in, observe and reverse engineer from a set of limited resources and circumstances where I can (re)imagine and allow the invisible to become visible.

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I would like to extend my gratitude to several others who have been integral to this research, have come to inspire me and have assisted in the 10 years of research and development in my professional practice. Chan Tao, Shannon Lazzarotto, Corey Mah, Dr. Lydia Kwa, William Doig, Ruth Sheuing, Mary Lou Trinkwon, Eleanor Hannan, Leslie Richmond, Yvonne Wakabayashi, Circle Craft, BC Creative Achievement Foundation, Surface Design Association, Victoria Kuzma, Hiroko Oda, Fabienne Good, Elisa Ferrari, Rob Matharu, Julian Roberts, Jorie Johnson, Joanna Staniszkis, Helene Day-Fraser, Delia Cioffi, Jana Lynn-White, Gillian Soucie and Robert Soucie.

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Lastly, I want to acknowledge all the garments who participated in both research projects. (zero.O.lab) and Mending Wall. I have learned a great deal about the stories that garments have and bare witness to their transformation through being mended. This has been a profound learning experience both personally and creatively and am fortunate to have worked with all of you. In homage to your insight and our shared experience, I thank you. It is equally important I pay respect to every individual who contributed to the making of these garments before they came into my possession. Many of you travelled far before we were able to cross paths.

Thank you to photographers Chan Tao, Elisa Ferrari, Rob Matharu, Mel Beunaventura and Paolo Penutti for your ability to make images. Your gift have helped me tell my story.

Dedication

I dedicate this paper to all makers & menders, artists & blenders past, present and future. May your creative thinking inspire, inform and transform all creative disciplines.

(S)ituate

I am an artist who works with textile waste and the discarded.

I am a designer who transforms waste, utilizes obsolete clothing and textile machinery and incorporates traditional artisanal techniques in response to the society we live in.

I remix mending and artisanal handcraft applications with obsolete and digital technologies derived from my formal training in fashion, textiles and printmaking in order to produce by-products that act as a reminder of what is often left behind.

The focus of this thesis will be to look at how I have explored mending as an artistic practice and tool for research. This discussion will look at how mending can be used to transform, reactivate and (re)imagine discarded textile waste in connection to artists who have used mending and repair as a means for (re)imagining and transformation in the applied arts.

Mending is an evolutionary process that cannot be isolated to a fixed format. For the purpose of this thesis, I have intentionally integrated several writing styles that reflects my research and the process of mending. My research projects evolved from a social practice on zero waste applications to an isolated meditative practice on mending. The writing structures adopted are positioned to guide you through my practice and research like a mended stitch. I established a structure that creatively combines narrative storytelling with note taking that transitions within a self interview format. I chose to interview myself similar to how I interview my materials and garments. I created a series of questions that would best illustrate my research where I could reflect upon my role as a mending practitioner.

Experience + Standpoint

My thesis projects were driven by an affinity to and an appreciation of, the art of mending. Being the youngest of five children and born to parents who are old enough to be my grandparents, I was exposed to a culture of the past that most children of my generation had little or no experience of. My mother was the youngest of nine children born at the onset of WWII in the East End of London. Aside from being exposed to endless stories about the war, bomb shelters and German POW camps, my mother was located in a culture where they learned to make and mend. My father several years older than my mother, is Franco-Ontarienne/ German/ Native who grew up in southern Ontario during the Depression. This experience left him with a level of resourcefulness and ability to makeshift, repair and transform anything around him. This experience continues to inform my life and work as an artist.

My mother's reuse and recycling of old garments came from the Make Do and Mend¹ generation. As a child I was exposed to her hand-crafts and spent a lot of time observing her knit, mend and sew various projects. When I was five, with great shame, I asked her to stop making my clothing. This was 1983 and I looked like I was from 1942. My rejection of her clothing resulted in her not passing down her skill set. As I grew older, I began to assert myself and experiment with my identity through clothing and dress. My ideas were often left unmatched by what was available commercially and thus my interest in garment making was born. But how was I to learn?

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¹ Mend Make Do and Mend was a pamphlet issued by the British Ministry of Information in the midst of WWII. It was intended to provide housewives with useful tips on how to be both frugal and stylish in times of harsh rationing. With its thrifty design ideas and advice on reusing old clothing, the pamphlet was an indispensable guide for households. Readers were advised to create pretty 'decorative patches' to cover holes in worn garments; unpick old jumpers to re-knit chic alternatives; turn men's clothes into women's; as well as darn, alter and protect against the 'moth menace'. An updated version of the book was recently released to coincide with the economic recession, offering similar frugal advice for 21st century families.

The town I grew up in is blue collar in origin and situated in the heart of southern Ontario where there were limitations to where I could find fabric and sewing materials. Before I was at the age where home economics and sewing classes were offered, I found myself deconstructing and reconstructing hand me down clothing from my three older sisters. From this, I quickly developed an understanding of the fashion language and how I could transform it. As a teenager, I continued my exploration of remaking garments by shopping in second hand stores in places located outside of my hometown. This was a strategy I adopted to prevent my peers from discovering my knowledge of and interest in sewing. It was considered uncool. I scavenged and collected vintage clothing and textiles and amassed a huge collection that I observed and dissected in order to give way to their transformation. My skill and ability to (re)imagine existing garments led me to pursue my formal training in fashion design.

In my post secondary studies, I abandoned the remaking of fashion to pursue training in the commercial production of clothing. I found myself not creatively challenged and suffered greatly from the lack of freedom that commercial fabrics had to offer. At that time, I was working in the wholesale/retail textile trade as a buyer to supplement my education in the field. Textiles is only a very small component of fashion training and as a clothing designer in training, I felt I needed to cultivate a better understanding of materials. I accumulated some beautiful textiles and built up a library of materials and studied them. These materials would become a future resource in my formal textile training.

Before I transitioned into the field of textiles, a significant experience during my last year of design school changed my relationship towards fashion and textiles. I had the unique opportunity to visit massive landfills and travel to various locations throughout southern Ontario and northern Michigan state. My boyfriend was a professional truck driver who transported various types of waste

and recycling from the greater Toronto region to smaller landfills in Ontario and larger facilities in the state of Michigan. I would travel with him on a regular basis and was astonished by what I saw. The more I saw, the more I wanted to do something about it. Each encounter began to shape and inform my awareness of waste in our society and I wanted to learn more about how to assist in its prevention.

This led me to revisit the act of scavenging, salvaging and the remaking of my own clothing from discarded second hand garments and textiles. This became my creative resource, my inspiration and the beginning of my formal research into transforming and (re)imagining post consumer textile waste. As exciting as this was, there was limited research and support for textile and garment recycling by the garment and textile industry. This was the late 1990's and before terms such as *eco fashion*² or *sustainable fashion practices*³ became popularized. A formal inquiry into sustainable fashion and textile practices has emerged in the last decade and this is partially due to industry professionals such as Kate Fletcher, Sass Brown and Sandy Black.

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² The term eco fashion was coined in 1995 by Marci Zaroff who trademarked the term ECOfashion by fusing the words ecology and fashion. It is a form of clothing production that considers the environment, the health of consumers and the working conditions of those employed by the industry. It is a socially responsible and environmental design practice that doesn't compromise on quality, style, fit and value.

³ Sustainable fashion include terms such as eco fashion, ethical fashion, slow fashion, etc. and is part of a larger design philosophy. It is system built to represent and support socially responsible and environmentally friendly production practices that considers all aspects of design process. This includes raw material production (organic or no pesticide use), recycled materials, low impact dyes/printing/finishes, ethical garment production, product life span, etc.

For the purpose of this essay, I have chosen not to position this research from a sustainable fashion design practice as described above. I acknowledge my use of methods and terminology from the fashion and textile design community but situate this research from a self reflexive and compassionate practice. In order to contextualize this, I re-appropriated the term mending in order to expand upon a relationship between the driving forces of my practice (process, material, application, history and music) in connection to the use, reuse and transformation of pre and post consumer textile waste. The ideas brought forth could be useful to the sustainable design process, however, my self-reflexive and compassionate practice is motivated by a desire to transform traditional forms and skills of the past.

However, I was part of the fashion education system at a time where there was no support in the remaking of clothing and textiles from pre and post-consumer waste. My response to this was to further my education in textiles. This experience was creatively enriching and positioned me to harness a skillset - to responsibly produce textiles and clothing with care.

The artisanal methods of making I learned at Capilano University connected me to a history of making and mending that encouraged ideas and concepts I wanted to explore through the development of a signature style. My interest in repurposing pre and post consumer textile waste for the purpose of one of a kind clothing construction led me to incubate several material concepts from waste materials produced by industry a single use or disposable textiles. One material in particular stood out after a visit to the dollar store. Women's hosiery. A lot of energy and resources go into the production of nylon and women's hosiery. In my eureka moment, I bought everything in the store and was inspired to by what possibilities if what lay before me.

I was already exploring low environmental impact dyeing and printing processes and was experienced in dyeing nylon as a material. I combined processes to transform this material from a non-functional single use textile into a more functional, practical material that could be machine washable and dryable. The beginnings of this material research began in late 2002 and the intention in transforming this material was to rethink how it could be used and reused in the garment making process. In 2003, I launched my company Sans Soucie: Clothing and Textile Design with this material process at its core. I have spent the last 10 years specializing in salvaging waste hosiery from Canadian manufacturers and transforming it into a new material for one of a kind garments. I discovered the material research and development I established is not limited to producing garments. This is just one by-product of my research and practice.

In 2008/ 09, I began to explore the digital embroidery process in the WIPlab located in IDS⁴ at Emily Carr University of Art + Design. I started to rethink how this machine could be used as a tool for constructing material, similar to the knitting and weaving process. I began to construct a new material and develop new forms from the offcuts and ends of my garment cutting process. By slightly altering the machine, embroidery became a tool that transformed, mended and (re)imagined this material. From this experience, I felt compelled to continue at the graduate level where I could expand the (re)imagination of this application and to identify myself as mending practitioner.

Mending + Blending: Textiles and Fashion in an Art Research Practice

Mending has always been part of my vocabulary and way of thinking. It has been the driving force behind my creative process and continues to inform my work. From the clothing I remade as a child to the salvaging of discarded waste hosiery, textiles and garments, I view the act of mending in my practice as a tool of creation that inevitably leads to (re)imagining. For the purpose of this thesis, I will use *mending + blending* as term to defines the territory from which I work and research from.

⁴ IDS is the Intersections Digital Studios at Emily Carr University of Art and Design and occupies 10,000 sq.ft . It is research facility that houses three studios, WIPlab (Wearables and Interactive Products), PMP lab (Prototyping + Media + Programming) and MoCap (Motion Capture and Visualization). These facilities offer access to digital technologies, students and faculty develop technical skills and the opportunity to creatively explore.

I strategically positioned myself to learn artisanal techniques within the field of fashion design and textile art before I completed my formal education in visual art. Each educational experience has led to a new set of circumstances informed by research models and structured ways of making and producing. I have never been someone who adopts a linear structure of thought let alone a methodology.



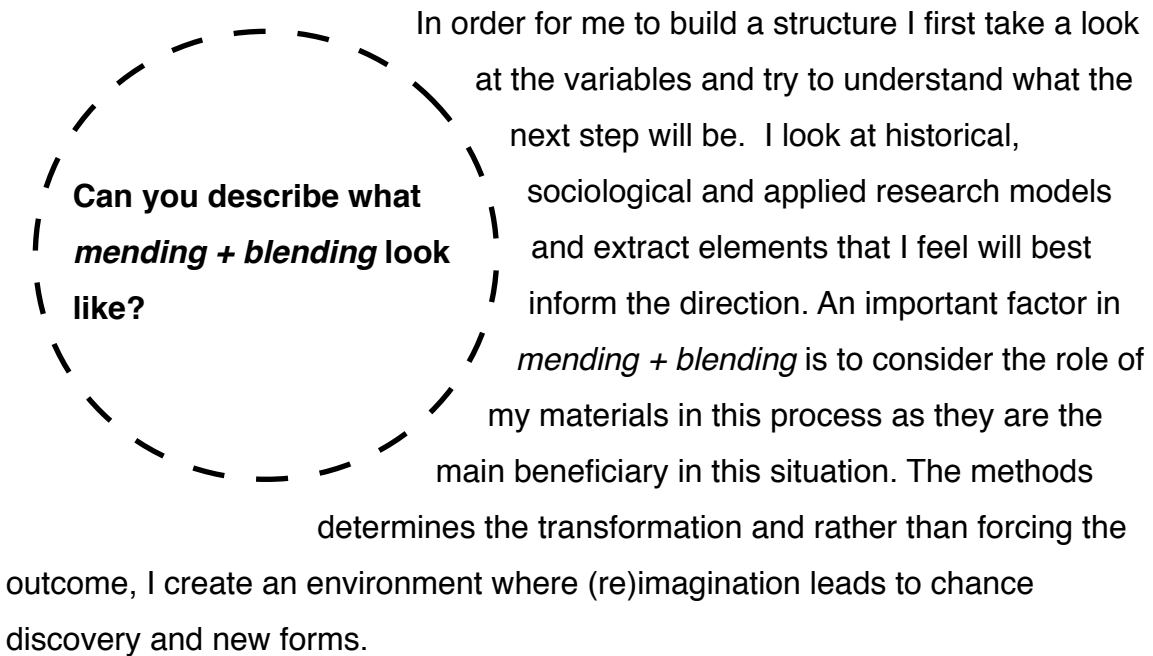
UK based fashion designer and scholar Julian Roberts offers an example of a *mended + blended* practice. His inter-disciplinary approach to and abstraction of materials and processes blurs the boundaries between science, fashion and art. In the 1990's, he pioneered a garment cutting technique known as Subtraction Cutting⁵. From this, he continues to explore and combine research methods with various applications (photography, performance, film, social media, etc.) that give way to possibility and chance discovery.

In his text, *Pattern Landscapes*, Roberts begins with a reflection. *Everything starts with a problem; a problem I must solve, a problem I must overcome or a problem I must create*⁶. He describes how fashion design encourages the ability to experiment, problem solve and take creative risks where you learn by trial and error. When the unexpected occurs, it offers up the opportunity to shift and transform. From these moments of failure, great

⁵ Subtraction cutting or Sub-cutting is an approach to garment pattern making that incorporates chance discovery and is technique that allows you to design with patterns rather than creating patterns with designs. This cutting application is an emergent form of garment making that allows the ability to cut fast and requires little reference to measurements.

⁶ pg. 1, Julian Roberts, *Pattern Landscapes*, 2010.

possibilities exist where new pathways and approaches in making and research can give way to possibility and chance discovery. This is the basis from which I begin to *mend + blend*.



(E)xpand

Getting it together by DOING IT WRONG

Patterns in our life and in an artist's work often develop and repeat in a regular manner, and then something unexpected happens. Something shifts slightly and the pattern and rhythm become radically new. It is in those moments of unexpected change that great possibility exists. We shift. We transform. We go off the grid aesthetically, conceptually, or environmentally.

When I embarked upon my graduate studies, I was specifically looking at zero waste art and design applications in order to understand my role as an artist liminally positioned between art and fashion working with waste. In the fall of 2010, I formed (zero.O.lab)⁷ to create opportunities and workshops for artists, designers, writers and creative thinkers on issues surrounding art, fashion and the commerce of identity through a zero waste art and design methodology. The intention was to intentionally blur the boundaries between art and fashion and explore an art research practice through zero waste art and design applications. The outcome would rethink ways in which we produce, consume and interact with textiles and fashion.

Several collaborations were underway and exciting new works were developed including a community partnership with a non-profit organization that offered access to their surplus second hand clothing. After visiting the storage facilities and retail space that resells donated clothing, I was astonished by the amount of surplus donation materials being discarded. In response, I proposed an artist/designer residence program that would establish a system that other non-profit social enterprises could replicate. This system would take their unsaleable or surplus donations and transform them into their own in house clothing label. I gave this research the title *zerolab(d)*.

zerolab(d) emerged as a clothing label where I could perform social practice research. From January 2011 - January 2012, the (zero.O.lab) would take up residency with My Sister's Closet at their Yaletown location where monthly installations would be made from the clothing collected from their warehouse. In

⁷ The (zero.O.lab) title was created in collaboration with Chan Tao and Shannon Lazzarotto. The name is a fusion between coded languages used in contemporary fashion culture and communication (ie.texting, emotions, etc.) and is a play upon scientific terminology (such as 'lab') popularized throughout the art and design community. The idea was to create a logo that would emphasize these elements in connection to words and symbols that would represent use/reuse, environmental limitations, containment and continued life cycle.

February we were invited to feature a collection at Eco Fashion Week (see figures 3-7) in Vancouver. In addition to this, I created templates, workshops and installations that would engage the community, train and empower women in transition and promote the local production and consumption of clothing. This component of my research was scheduled as part of my internship between May-September 2011. My initial proposal outlined the potential growth this project could offer the organization, financially and within the community. However, due to unforeseen circumstances around authorship and ownership I was forced to dissolve the community partnership and seek legal counsel in April 2011.

Great efforts were made in the first few months of this community-based project. The research and all other developments in the (zero.O.lab) had to be put on hold indefinitely. This led to creative devastation, massive upheaval and an inability to focus. Everything I knew and worked so hard for was stripped away and it was only after I returned from a medical leave of absence that I began to rebuild my focus again. Time passed and the legal dispute surrounding the ownership and authorship of the (zero.O.lab) label along with the projects produced under this label resolved in my favour. Although, I had the opportunity to resume the projects I had initiated, I retreated from a social practice and transitioned to a private and isolated studio practice.



Figure 3. zerolab (d) collaboration with BWSS/My Sister's Closet, Eco Fashion Week.



Figure 4. zerolab (d) collaboration with BWSS/My Sister's Closet, Eco Fashion Week.



Figure 5. zerolab (d) collaboration with BWSS/My Sister's Closet, Eco Fashion Week.



Figure 6. zerolab (d) collaboration with BWSS/My Sister's Closet, Eco Fashion Week.



Figure 7. (zero.O.lab) collaboration with BWSS/My Sister's Closet, Eco Fashion Week.

Failure had given birth to a new direction in my work and something new began to emerge in the studio. I spent time reflecting upon the various aspects and complexities of my practice where failure has occurred. I began to revisit forms of mending from explorations I had produced in earlier works that I abandoned or undervalued. In rediscovering mending, I altered the aim of my thesis research project and uncovered the artistic practice of mending. I began to reflect upon my approach to mending materials, specifically pre-consumer textile waste. What aspects of the mended application performed in the transformation of these materials were not being reflected in the mending applications explored in post-consumer waste. What role did an isolated mending practice offer over a socially engaged mending practice? And how could I explore transitioning lost old forms and techniques through the use of adapted broken machinery.

Artist Michael Swaine explores forms of artistic mending through a socially engaged practice and regularly participates in projects administered through *Futurefarmers*⁸, a multi-disciplinary group dedicated to the open practice of making work. Swaine works combine and explores forms craft, performance and social activism and in 2001, he created *Reap What You Sew*, a week long project offering free mending on the streets of San Francisco. He devised a portable mending cart by repairing a found broken and obsolete sewing machine with an ice cream cart and umbrella. This project created opportunities for chance meetings and collaboration between the artist and clothing he repaired.

⁸ Futurefarmers is a group of multi-disciplinary practitioners engaged with an open practice of making where time and environment is used to frame their projects. It was established in 1995 as a platform to support art projects, an artist in residence program and research on moment of exchanges that encourages learning and not knowing. <http://www.futurefarmers.com/>

For the past twelve years, Swaine has continued to offer his free mending services as part of his Free Mending Library⁹ at theLuggage Store, a non-profit arts organization located in the Tenderloin District. His monthly social mending services have transitioned into a social alchemy within the community, where all walks of life come together to participate, share, learn and mend. Swaine's use of mending and social practice contributes to a history of mending practices that has become lost in our society.

Traditionally mending was a domestic form of repair performed by women privately in isolation or was shared amongst other women in a social engaged environment. Mending as an artistic practice offers the ability to transition between a private isolation and a socially engaged practice. This research has been performed with the intention to operate from a private isolated practice in order to encourage self-reflection and compassion throughout the mending process.

In my opinion, the artistic practice of mending revitalizes old forms and techniques. In contrast to Swaine, I position my mending research from a private isolated practice which was order to encourage self-reflection and administer compassion throughout the mending process.

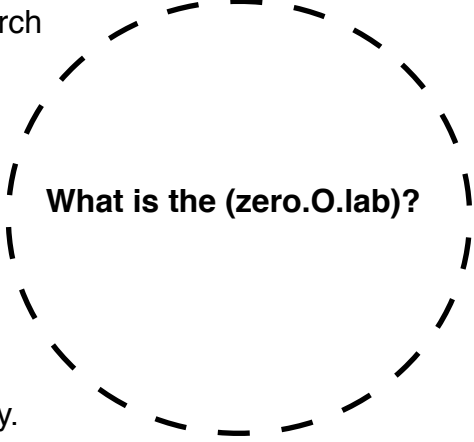
Thesis Research Projects: (zero.O.lab) + Mending Wall

In this section I begin with the works produced under the (zero.O.lab) research project because elements from this research contributed to the development of the Mending Wall project.

⁹ Free Mending Library was established by Micheal Swain to encourage people to mend or bring something to be mended.

The (zero.O.lab) was initiated as a research space and incubator for artists, designers, writers and other creative thinkers seeking to discuss fashion production and consumption. The intention was to connect creative minds with communities outside of their traditional boundaries through the use of discarded and obsolete textiles and technology.

The project was designed to observe the relationship between art, fashion and the commerce of identity with the intent to examine the collaborative efforts between artists and designers currently working within a zero waste art and design methodology.



What is the (zero.O.lab)?

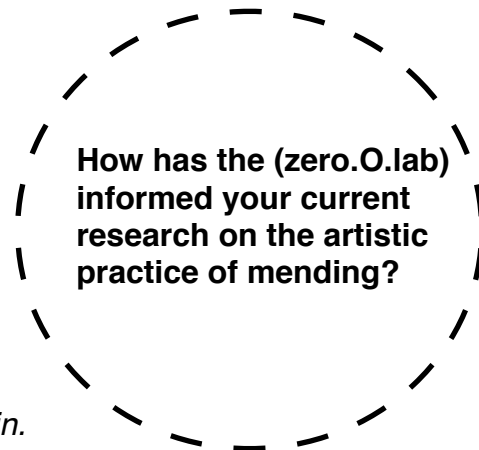


What research methodology was used in this project?

This project integrated action research methods and was designed to bring together various creative disciplines and practices that would offer opportunities to rethink fashion consumption and production through zero waste applications. Two research questions were posed:

1. In what way can a visual art practice assist in a greater awareness of discarded textile industry waste?
2. In what way can a visual art practice bring new meaning to fashion related objects produced from textile industry waste?

Despite the premature death of this project, I did not abandon the works, processes and the research obtained during this time. In fact, the failure of this project enabled me to access aspects of my studio and research practice that had fallen to the wayside. When I think about this project, I am reminded of a quote by Samuel Beckett. *“All of old. Nothing else ever. Ever tried. Ever failed. No matter. Try again. Fail again. Fail better.”*¹⁰



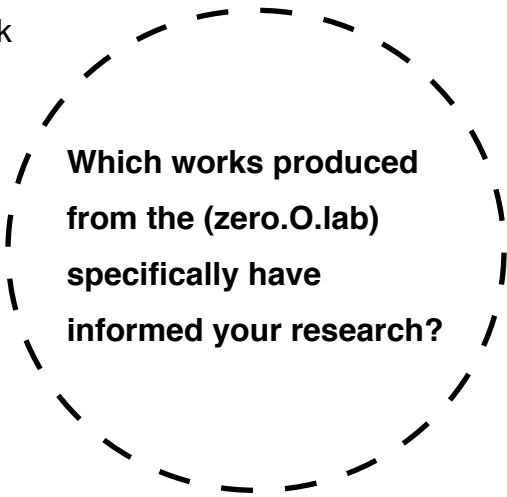
As a mender, I am always looking at ways to reconnect various aspects of my knowledge, experience and skill set with the intention to rediscover from previously abandoned works and failed attempts. I took this opportunity to revisit Otto Von Busch's theories on *Fashion Hactivism*¹¹ to connect the relationship between hactivism and mending where the performance of hacking acts as a form of failure and mending serves to reverse engineer the process. By exploring mending in the context of reverse engineering, the mender engages with the opportunity to transform failure into a represented form of healing. Healing is part of mending and is what helps reconnect and form identity.

¹⁰ Quote, Samuel Beckett, *Worstword Ho*, pg.1. 1983

¹¹ Fashion Hactivism is a term coined by Swedish artist, art historian, fashion theorist Otto Von Busch. Fashion Hactivism is a form of social activism where the owner has the ability to engage with their clothing by hacking into, reverse engineering and sharing the garment making process.

The term Hactivism itself was coined in 1996 and originated from computer culture. It has grown to influence various industries and cultures that are politically motivated to attempt to change forms of policy surrounding human rights and information sharing.

It's important to begin with the first work produced: *Fashion Geography*, 2010 (see figures 8-13). This site specific work, performed on location in my studio, is a photo essay documenting a series of performances where I created drawings on the floor by tracing garbage bags filled with discarded clothing. Each week over an 8 week time period, my collaborators Chan Tao, Shannon Lazzarotto, Corey Mah and I would collect numerous garbage bags filled with surplus and unsaleable clothing discarded by My Sister's Closet¹².



**Which works produced
from the (zero.O.lab)
specifically have
informed your research?**

Before these bags were opened, I would place them randomly on the floor tracing each bag with tailors chalk. For every bag collected, a tracing would be represented on the floor, layering upon one another. The abstract gestural formations that emerged referenced the beginnings of botanical regrowth. The tracing of the garbage bags was an intentional act to mark and honour the lost geographical histories that lay hidden amongst each of these bags. This act grew from a childhood memory where garments were traced in the attempt to recreate them. The garments I chose to be traced were mended into other materials in order my associated value to their origins. By marking their presence on the floor, the discarded are given a space of value and rest before they transformed into their new life and form.

¹² My Sister's Closet is a social enterprise thrift store in operation by the non-profit organization, BWSS. Battered Women's Support Services.



Figure 8. Fashion Geography. site-specific Installation/performance.



Figure 9. Fashion Geography. site-specific Installation/performance.



Figure 10. Fashion Geography. site-specific Installation/performance.



Figure 11. Fashion Geography. site-specific Installation/performance.

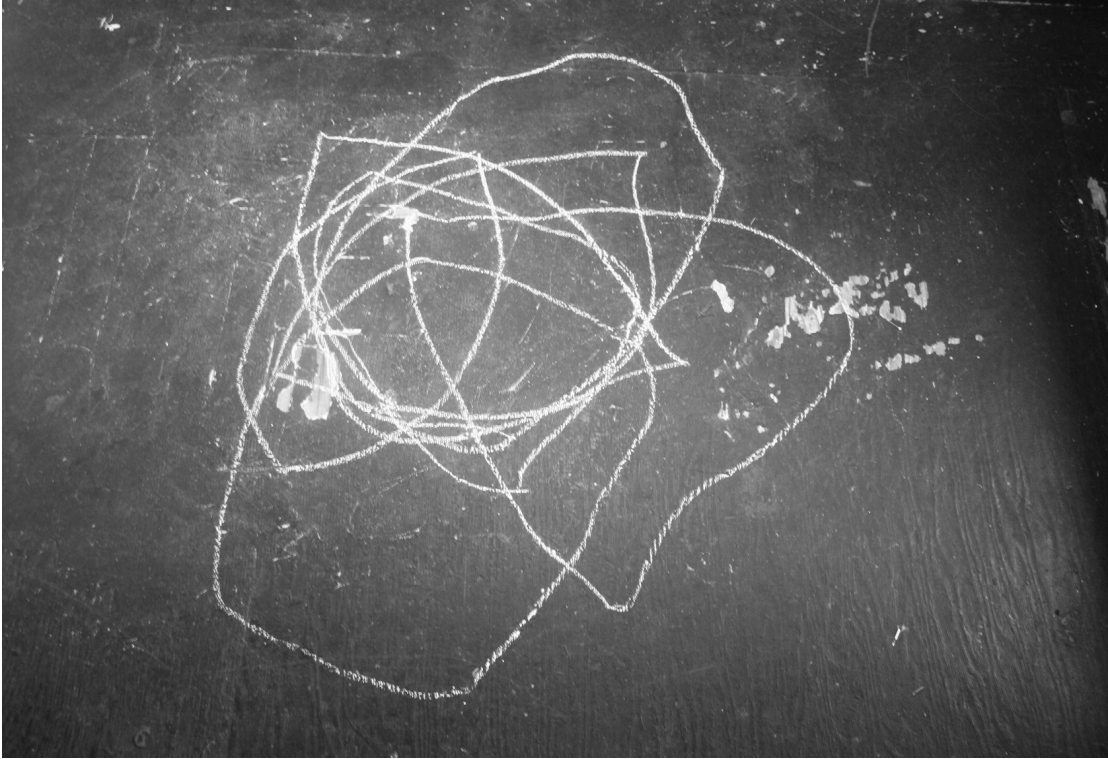


Figure 12. Fashion Geography #1, site-specific installation.

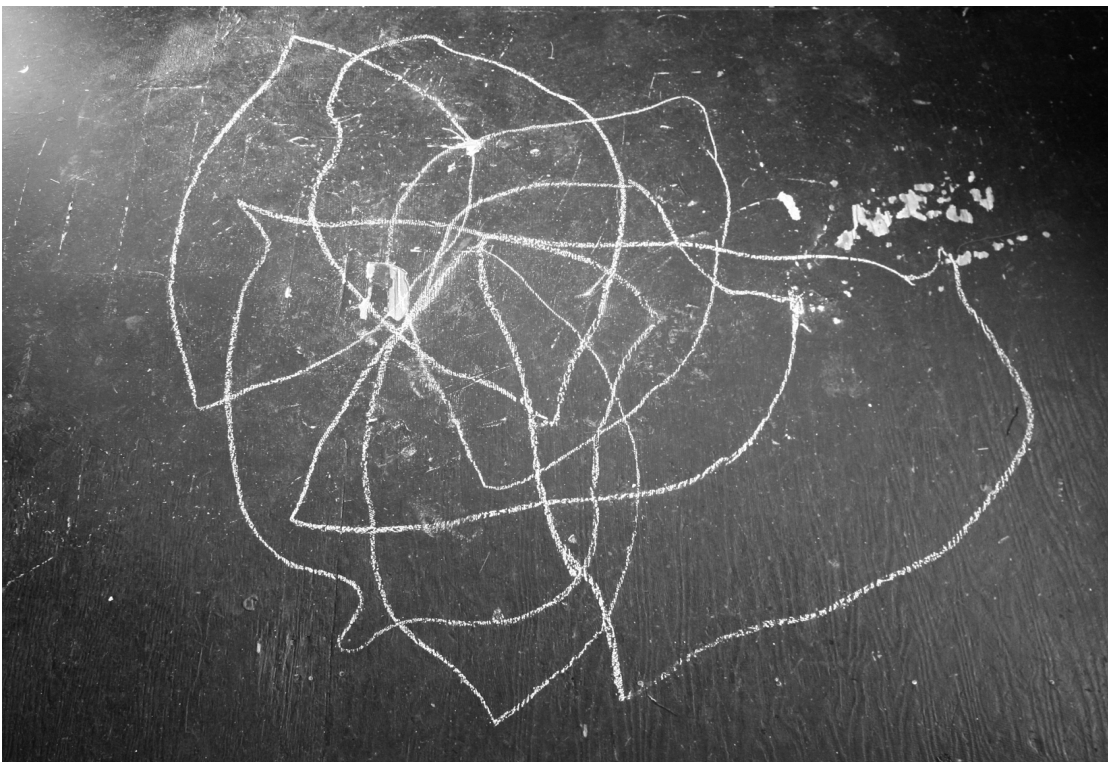


Figure 13. Fashion Geography #2, site-specific installation.

Evolving from this, the next work, *Sum of All Parts*, 2011 (see figures 14-16) is a 25 m yardage created from the collection of patterns that emerged during the *Fashion Geography* series. It was exhibited as an installation in the Concourse Gallery in the BigCleverGorgeous graduate exhibition. Chalk markings are ephemeral and I have an obsession with documentation. During the development of *Fashion Geography*, I captured these images before they disappeared. The act of lifting and transferring is derived from my training in fashion. After every performance, the patterns from the floor were lifted and transferred onto pattern tissue with the intention to revisit and transform them at a later time and date. The timeline of imagery that emerged in this work was (re)imagined through my desire to explore methods of documentation that could transform into a body of work in itself.

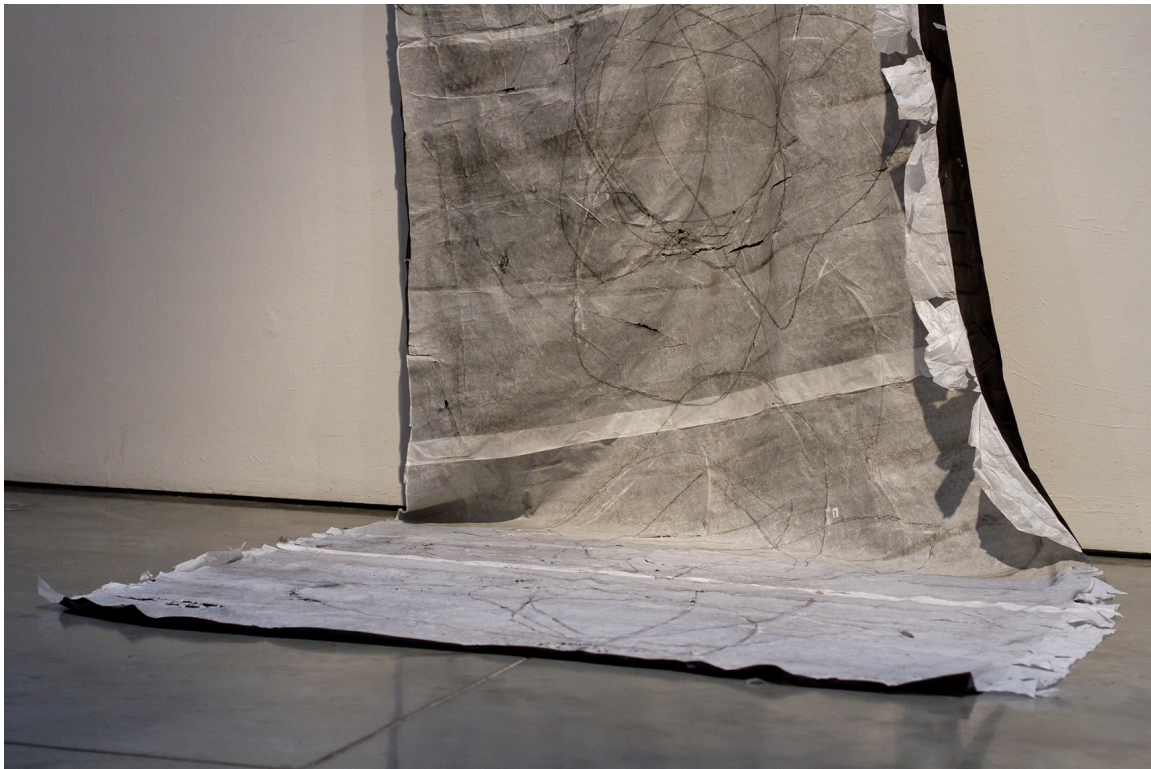


Figure 14. *Sum of All Parts*, sculptural installation, detail.



Figure 15. Sum of All Parts, detail.

I took the 25 m of taped tissue and structurally formed into a new material by laminating it to remnant nylon tricot through the use of simple garment making tools and an industrial iron. The delicate images were transformed from a state of ephemerality into a stabilized cloth structure. The narrative structure embedded into this cloth represents a mending of chance discoveries where new pathways were created after other pathways were revisited. The act of tracing enabled me to connect the origin of the image (the past), the timeline on the paper (the present) and the recycling and transformation of the all the materials into its future.



Figure 16. Sum of All Parts, sculptural installation

The third and final series of work within (zero.O.lab) was *raisons d'être*¹³, 2011 (see figures 17-19). This installation showcased 8 discarded sewing machines donated by the My Sister's Closet; each wrapped and bound ritualistically to honour and value a history associated with the materials and machines. Binding has historically been used as form of mending in the context of healing a wound or wrapping the dead. Historically many cultures have wrapped their dead for funerary purposes. In Scandinavian folk culture, they would bind the dead to their grave to ensure the spirits of the newly dead would not return. In a mummification like manner, I mindfully wrapped each machine as I meditated upon their loss of value and use in society. The waste remains accumulated from my hosiery process were transformed into threads of healing where I (re)imagined their *raisons d'être* from a desire to give new life and meaning to these materials and objects. It should be stated that at this point in my research, I completely retreated from a socially engaged practice into an isolated private practice due to the proceedings of the lawsuit.

This work speaks to a body of work Harmony Hammond (US) developed in the late 1970's and early 80's. *Hunkertime* (see figure 20) was part of a series of wrapped sculptures that Hammond produced from wooden armatures and discarded cloth she collected from friends and dumpsters in Lower Manhattan. An area ridden with sweat shops and immigrants working in extremely poor conditions. The nine ladder-like formations transformed by Hammond mended a dialogue between the community of women that inspired her with the materials she collected from them. The purposeful positioning of these sculptures creates a human-like presence, a similar reference used to describe my work in *raisons d'être*. I believe the care I took in wrapping each of my machines created a transformation in reanimating these forms with different personalities.

¹³ *raisons d'être* translated from French means reason for being.



Figure 17. raison d'être, sculptural installation.



Figure 18. raison d'être, installation, detail.



Figure 19. raison d'être, detail.

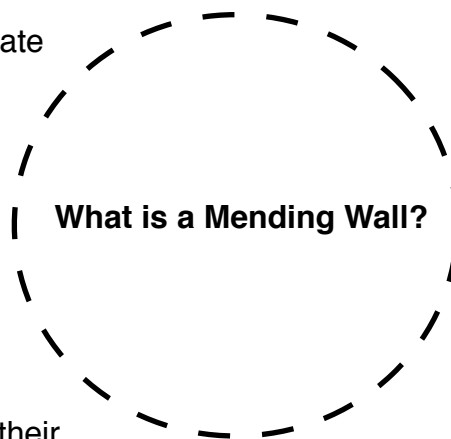


Figure 20. Harmony Hammond, *Hunkertime*.

The *Mending Wall* was initiated in the fall of 2012 as a research project and site-specific work where I posed the question to students and faculty with access to the graduate studios at Mitchell Press. “Do you have a garment that needs physical or emotional repair?” I left instructions regarding how this project was designed to interview, transform and mend the garment.

Participants were asked to carefully pin their garment onto a wall where I could document their collaboration to the project that would aid in building a collaborative work.

This research embraces elements of a social practice but gives preference to a meditative isolated practice.



From this private space, the transformation process became quite a profound experience. I observed and began to interpret the relationship between mending, transformation and (re)imagination and bore witness to an evolution of mending in my practice. Throughout the act of rebuilding these garments' identity, I discovered and explored various methods of a non-consumption mending¹⁴. A method of mending that inspired my use and reuse of remnant fabrics for this research. The role of these materials are reactivated through the use of my Kansai industrial sewing machine (see figure 35).

The Kansai is an obsolete, broken coverstitch¹⁵ machine that I adapted into tool for stitching and drawing onto fabric. This machine implements a form of visible mending I use in the transformation of my materials. It provides a freedom to explore a variety of mending applications that can be layered upon one another over time. The role of machine contributes to part of the mending process. I included hosiery remnants and scraps with the intention to explore this materials potential for healing. Hosiery is a textile and garment designed as a second skin. As I performed the mending applications, I reflected upon this relationship and began to observe how these fragments of cloth began to shift away from their history into their new identity. An identity where they transformed and offered transformation to the garment being repaired.

¹⁴ Non-consumption mending is a survival approach to mending where your only resources come from what already exists in your environment; encouraging the use and reuse of materials already existing in your environment.

¹⁵ A coverstitch is a hemming machine traditionally used to finish t-shirt and knit garments.

The *Mending Wall* process begins with a tracing of the garment on the wall using india ink where the ink is allowed to flow and drip down in the direction of gravity (see figure 21-23). The result is reminiscent of remnants threads posted along the wall. From here, the garment requiring mending is removed and transported to my studio. Before the interview and transformation process is initiated, I place the garment on the floor and trace the outline of the garment. Similar to the method I employed during *Fashion Geography* and *Sum of All Parts* (see figures 24-26).



**How did the Mending Wall
function in your research
process?**

My interview process begins with informal observations. Notes are collected on size, gender, colour, country of origin/manufacture, fiber content and condition. This introduction creates a profile that I could continue to refer to as part of my documentation. I then assign a re-identity number. It is composed of a letter and a number (see Field Notes pg. 47- 52) combining the design identity of the garment with the interview order. I continued to survey each piece intimately and collect notes on their aesthetic appearance and overall condition. Before the mend, I turn on music, review my notes and spontaneously select mending materials and spools of thread. Each garment profile inspires specific mending applications unique to the interview. I believe this process grants access to the garment's past and offers an invitation to mend its past with the present to be transformed for the future.



Figure 21. Mending Wall, site-specific, co-creative installation.

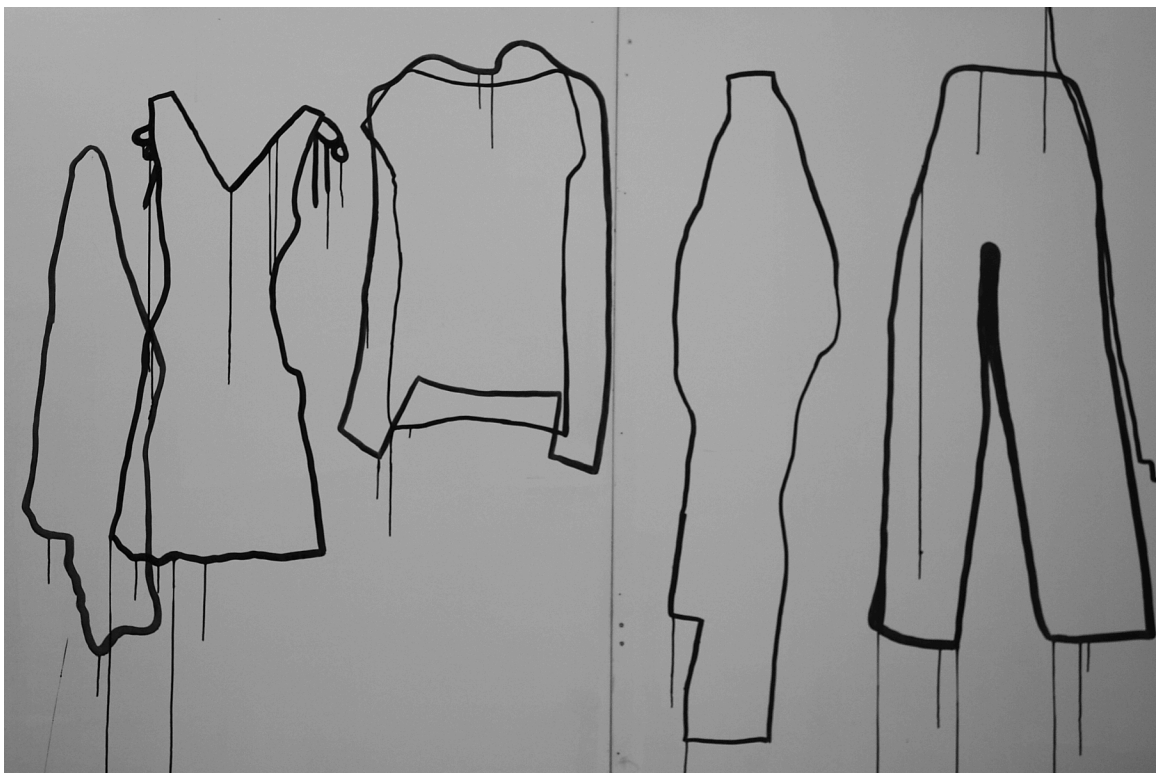


Figure 22. Mending Wall, early stage.




Figure 23. Mending Wall, reinstallation of mended garment, detail.

I looked to Grounded Theory¹⁶ as my research methodology and developed the grand question “What mending is required in this garment?”.

When interviewing the garment I created a book specifically to document my field notes, observations and responses throughout the mending application and process. My decision to use this research methodology was based on a

desire to explore a methodology that would assist and not limit the possibility for the unexpected to emerge; a process I am accustomed to in my visual art practice.



**What research
methodology was
used in this project?**

During this research, I built upon various forms of visual documentation initiated during the (zero.O.lab) where I expanded beyond photography as my only form of documentation. I incorporated social media (Instagram)¹⁷, drawing, painting, tracing, stitching and bookmaking (see figures 24-43). The artifacts I created document my exploration encouraged a creative approach in acquiring data. For example, when the mending process was completed, *The Mending Map: The Master Draft* (see figure 1) served as a final resting site for the mended garment. I used this space to collect additional notes and images but

¹⁶ Grounded Theory is a social science research methodology developed by sociologists Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss. It is a systematic methodology that can be used in both qualitative and quantitative research where the discovery of a theory can emerge through the analysis of the data. Much speculation has arisen from the use of Grounded Theory because it operates from a system that requires the researcher to collect data from the bottom up. Not from a traditional top down format. This outcome of this process creates a reverse engineered hypothesis. Grounded Theory informed the research undertaken in the Mending Wall Project where observation and the creation of concepts were collected and identified through emerging patterns. These patterns are represented in the visual component of my research (see figures 21-35) and in the notes I collected during the garment interviewing process (See Figure 36 -60).

¹⁷ Instagram is an online photo-sharing and social networking service where users take pictures, apply digital filters and share them on a variety of social networking sites. My images were posted under the name sanssoucie.

more importantly, I utilized the *Mending Map* to extract patterns for the purpose of mending the garments. The forms lifted were transferred onto the remnant fabric, cut then mended over the areas that required mending. The purpose of this act was to observe how to generate new imagery and patterns that could be explored throughout the mending process and to reconnect this garment to a history and community of other previously mended garments. (see figures 28-34 and 37-50).



Figure 24. Mending Wall: Field Studies #1, installation/performance.



Figure 25. Mending Wall: Field Studies #2, installation/performance.



Figure 26. Mending Wall: Field Studies #3, site-specific research, installation/performance.

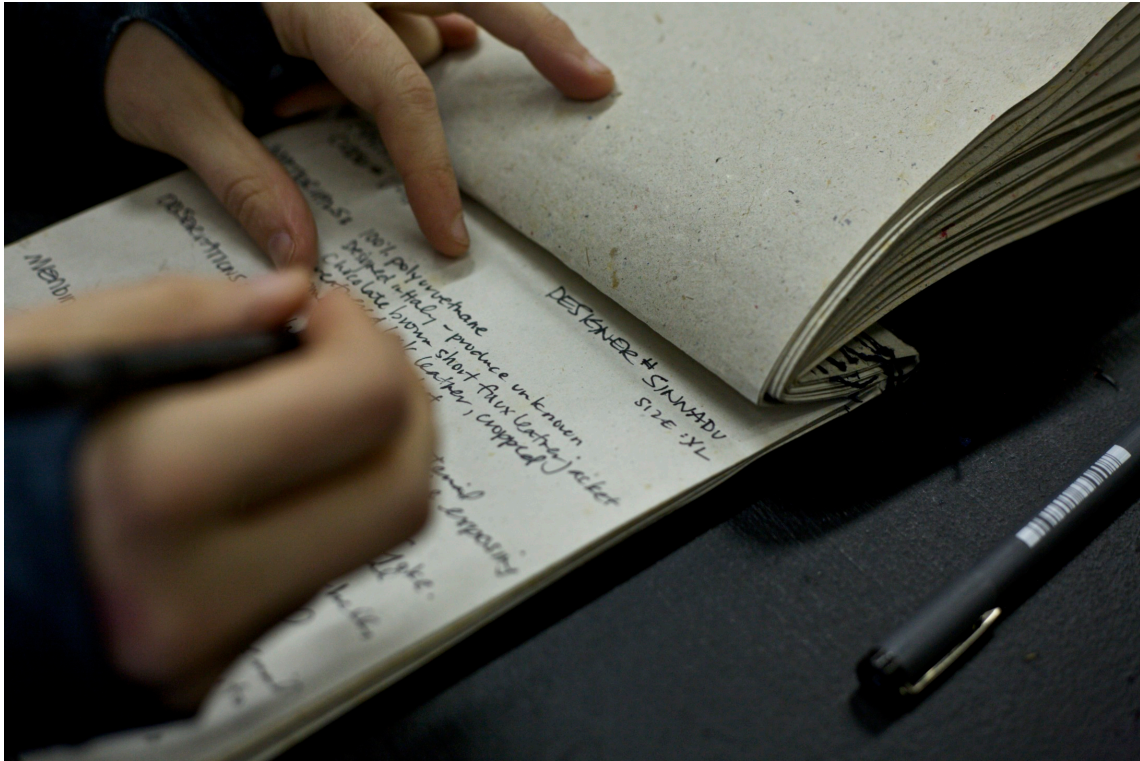


Figure 27. Mending Wall: Field Studies #4.

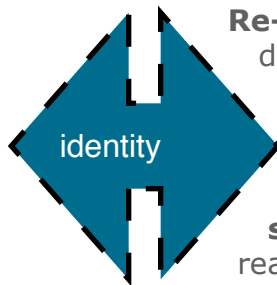


Figure 28. Mending Wall: Field Studies #5. Figure 29. Mending Wall: Field Studies #6.

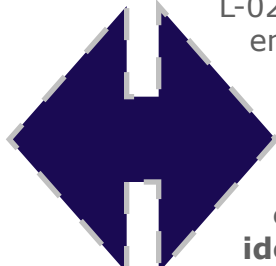
The Mending Machine: Field Notes

The following section is a reinterpretation of the field notes I collected in my Grounded Theory research. This work exists as artifact in the book format but for the purpose of this thesis I have included it to create awareness into how mending can be explored as a tool for research. The concepts and codes highlighted in bold have been mended into the vocabulary throughout this thesis. It is necessary for me to address the development of a coding system I devised to assist me in throughout my garment interviews. I created a re-identity coding system (see figures 37-50) composed of the first initial of the garment's owner (unknown owners are indicated with a U) and placed in numerical sequence reflective of the garment collection and interview process.

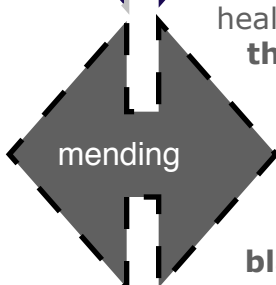
Coding is part of the Grounded Theory structure and it is a necessary component of this research methodology. There is open coding or substantive coding (conceptualization and abstraction of field notes), selective coding (understanding of behaviour) and theoretical coding (theory emerges from patterning observed). It should be noted, I re-appropriated this coding system to operate as tool for research where I could explore mending and the (re)imagination of post consumer textiles and clothing. My adaptation of this research methodology encouraged me to perform research where I could observe, create and mend forms and skills together, resulting in rediscovery and emergent imagery.



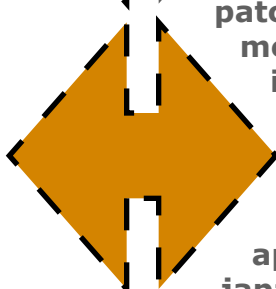
Re-identity # P-01 Danielle Alle Sandri, **Italy, navy**, sleeve detailing, **sweater**, turtleneck, knit, men's, **moth holes**, mid-life use, **well used**, well loved, **item of value**, care, high end, construction, orange, mend, hosiery ends, frame, **connect**, hand mending, machine mending, rescue, **holes**, **hidden retransformation**, **details**, **subversion**, **subversive healing and mending**, repair to reactivate, minor transformation, **The Band**, **Re-identity #**



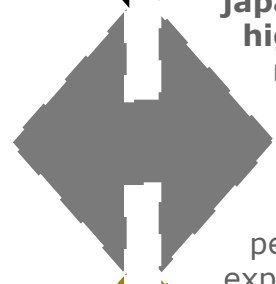
L-02 Jessica, **China, beige, cardigan**, women's, rib knit, emotional repair, preventative mending, **mid-life**, heavy weight, **no identity**, generic/fast fashion construction, **outdated**, worn out, **emotional mending**, heart and shoulder, hand on someone's shoulder, **support**, hosiery scraps, **multi-colour**, wrapping along, left, **line**, **expression**, **release of identity**, **shared**, black, **new identity**, transformed, **covering technique**, **bandage**, healing/mending, **release**, **new life**, new interpretation, **tie that binds**, stitches are like sutures used to reactivate, **Bob Dylan**, **Re-identity #** R-03 People Denim, **Columbia**,



men's, **jeans**, twill weave, **blue**, mid-life, medium weight, **ripped**, **unstitched**, **tears are like tears**, **preventative mending**, update, fast fashion, **preventative mending**, **black**, covering, **reconnection**, **black**, **Kansai**, knee covering, waist stitching, connect, **patchwork mending**, **reactivate**, **preventative measures mending**, healing, holes, reattachment, **Led Zeppelin**, **Re-identity #** L-04 Wrangler, **Bangladesh**, men's, **jeans**,



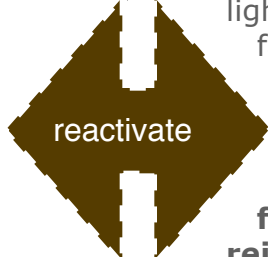
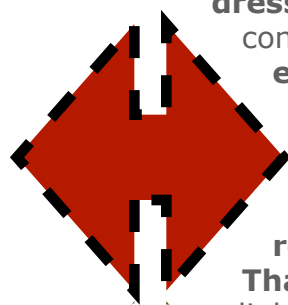
twill weave, **blue**, **well worn**, **holes**, physical repairs, heavy weight, **unravelling**, fraying, holes, TLC, classic, functional, relaxed, **physical mending**, comforting, sweater remnants, **reconnect**, frayed, holes, **reverse applique**, reinforced holes, black, **Kansai**, patchwork, **japanese boro**, **reinforcement mending**, physical revival, **high fashion transformation**, value, detailing, **severe mending**, care, **healing through the touch of a**



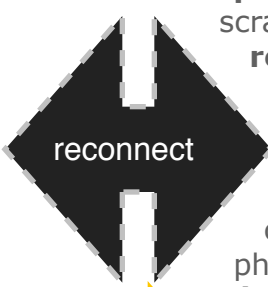
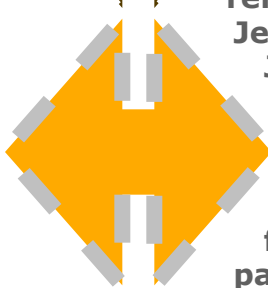
sweater, comfort, healing through comfort, **Patsy Cline**, **Re-identity #** U-05 Comptoir De, **Unknown**, **grey**, women's, jersey knit, **plain weave top**, fast fashion, early life, light wear, no signs of life, **vacant**, no personality, contemporary, **trendy**, **faux pas**, limited expression, tears in appearance, **emotional mending**, **blue**,



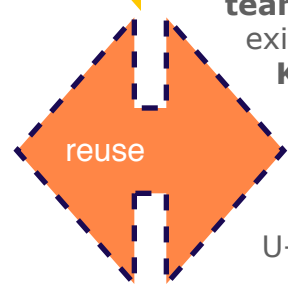
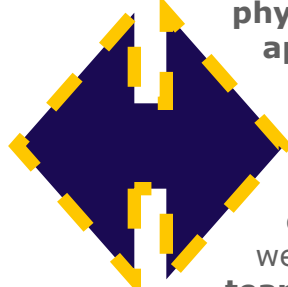
Kansai, no fabric used in mending, structure, foundation, **lacking connection to a history**, **lacking heart and foundation**, **line stitching to establish connection**, like veins to allow the heart to flow, **remove blockage**, energy, **structural stitching**, **Kansai**, **revive**, **reactivate**, **retransform**, appearance, establish emotional presence, **identity through the mended stitch**, **Jeff Buckley**, **Re-identity #** A-06 H&M Divided, **China, grey**,



reactivate

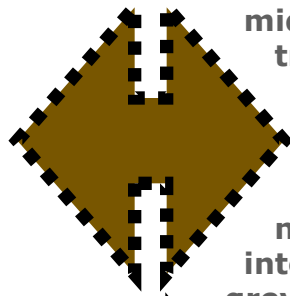


reconnect

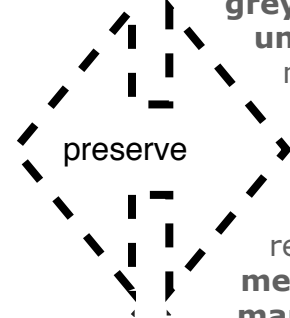


reuse

dress, light wearing, **faded**, lightweight, fast fashion, contemporary, **trendy**, requires grounding, blockage, **emotional healing required**, bring down to bring back up, **navy**, **Kansai**, brown and white hosiery scraps, covering, **breathe new life**, cover, grounded, **create connection to earth and garments past**, **emotional mending**, generate, rhythm of life, **grounding to reactivate**, **Stone Roses**, **Re-identity # U-07 Redo**, **Thailand**, men's, **black**, **pant**, casual, lightweight, **faded**, light use, **half life**, **ripped**, **frayed**, **holes**, **trendy**, fast fashion, **cheap**, contemporary, skinny, **physical repair**, **practical mending**, **physical mending**, **practical mending**, fashionable outcome, **gold**, hosiery scraps, fill, reinforce, **Kansai**, closure, **navy**, renovation, torn, hole, **practical mending**, **continued use**, updated, **functional mending**, **patchwork mending**, **reinforcement**, inner and outer repair to **reactivate**, **Jeff Buckley**, **Re-identity # U-08 Cateral by Hanjira**, **Japan**, **green**, jersey knit, women's, **sweater**, detailing, **hole**, **failure**, **poor construction**, pilling, knit snags, detailing, **faulty**, light wear, lightweight, **structural Kansai stitching**, physically reshaper and repair, **preventative mending**, connect, **prevent the past from bleeding or breeding into the future**, **Kansai**, **patchwork covering**, **green/orange**, **navy**, hosiery scraps, updated, **re-identity**, **preventative and restorative mending**, bandaging, hosiery, cover, **fill wound**, enable healing, **stitches adhere to reconnect**, **preventative mending**, **failed**, **Rocky Horror Picture Show Soundtrack**, **Re-identity # U-09 Mavi**, **Turkey**, **black**, women's, **pant**, blown out, **shredded**, casual, skinny, fast fashion, mid to well used, **faded**, physical repair, **Kansai**, **navy**, contemporary, lightweight, **physical mending**, reassembling, **shredded**, **pink**, **reverse applique**, preventative stitching, holes, **signs of future breakdown**, **practical mending**, fashionable garment functional, **preventative mending**, **reactivated**, **reverse applique**, **White Stripes**, **Re-identity # U-10 H&M**, **Bangladesh**, **navy**, men's, **dress shirt**, cracked, collar, cuff, hem lines, **shredded**, **well used**, well worn, fashion garment, split, peeling, cracked, **severe tears**, **severe remake and re-mend of itself**, reestablish existence, **physical repair**, covering of split edges, **navy**, **Kansai**, reconnect cracked fabric, frayed edges, navy/black knit bamboo offcut to reattach torn areas, **restitch**, beaten down, **forgotten**, **rebirth**, **reactivated**, reinforced, relayering, **material assistance**, material, **Leonard Cohen**, **Re-identity # U-11 Unknown**, **China**, **leopard print**, **umbrella**, **light-**

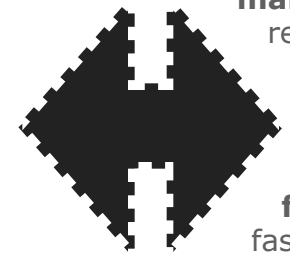


mid use, unintentional tear, between two spokes, trendy, retro, compact, throw away, accidental, physical mending, Kansai, navy, grey hosiery, reinforce hole, heal, reestablish fabric structure, reconnect, continuation of life and use, create memory from an old connection, strengthening, new reinforcement, physical repair, reactivation, re-interpretation of silhouette, Bob Dylan, George, China, grey, women's, sweater jacket, knit, detailing, tear, unravelling, knit, faulty fabric, shoddy construction, mid-life garment, medium weight, contemporary, shapeless, physical mending, structural mending, reshape, stretched, reshape, stains, preventative mending, covering, repair shoddy fabric

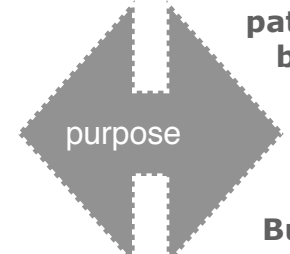


preserve

construction, patchwork mending, reattach fabric to repair hole, red/black hosiery, navy, internal healing/ mending, patchwork mending to repair activity ridden marks left behind, swatch mending, interior mending, reveal, hide, reattach unravelled hole, connected

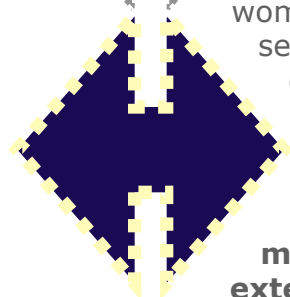


preventative mending, reshape, reshape, Stone Roses, Re-identity # U-13 & Slim, China, indigo, women's, jeans, well used, well worn fashion jean, severe tear, reattachment mending, covering, frayed, continued use, med-lightweight, contemporary, fast fashion, poor fabric construction, exterior revealing, patchwork mending, emotional and physical mending, black/red hosiery scraps, re-identity, self-

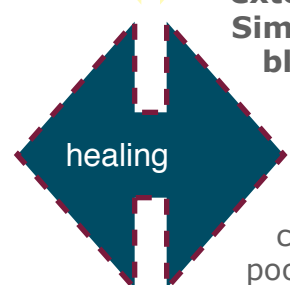


purpose

reactivated mending, navy, Kansai, structural preventative mending, connect all forms of mending, reactivation through re-identity, motivated by self, reactivation of three mending forms, re-soul, Jeff Buckley, Re-identity # U-14 Le Chateau, India, women's, sheer, brown/black floral, blouse, tear, closure, seam, fall apart, poor cutting of garment, poor, construction, fast fashion, trendy, trendy, early-mid life, cheap, physical mending, use, black, blonde, Kansai, fashionable mending, holes, shoddy, snags, structural mending, subversive, colour treatment, mending, navy, Kansai, reconstructive mending, torn, preventative mending, layered, exterior mending, reactivated through subversion, Simple Minds, Re-identity # U-15 List, Italy, women's, black, sportswear jacket, unravelled seam, high fashion, contemporary, casual, sportswear, light use, medium weight, poor stitching, unravelling, physical repair, physical mending, reattach fissure, grand canyon split, grey, Kansai, mending, blend, contemporary, grey hosiery scrap, reverse applique, poor craftsmanship in sewing, reactivated through reverse

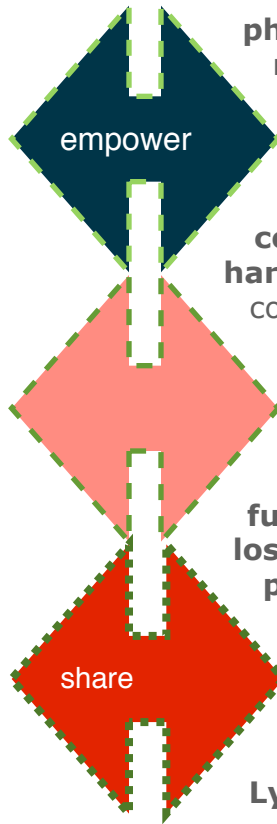


healing





applique, quilting, mend, deep tear, split, preventative stitching, interior/exterior mending, seam, create, stabilize, Tom Waits, Re-identity # U-16 Sinnadu, Italy, brown, women's, faux leather jacket, mid-life use, shoddy material, disintegrating, exposed interlining, peeling away, fraying, interlining, yoke, physical and emotional mending, repair, peeling, exterior revealing the underbelly of what's needs to be repaired, faux at heart, grey, Kansai, preventative and reparative stitching, keep history alive, repair wounds, allow scars to be on view, invisible/visible, transformed, self-initiated mending, using its own material to mend itself, reconnect, cracks, tears, peeling of skin from constructed framework, rebirth, preventative and reparative mending, Stone Temple Pilots, Re-identity # U-17 American Apparel, USA, black, unisex, sweatshirt, bonded knit, emotional mending, fast fashion, trendy, loose fit, no soul, blank canvas, disconnected, frompy, unflattering, lost, mourning, no identity, no character, low status, low value, emotional repair, grey, Kansai, applique, abstracted mandarin rank badge, reconnect, identity formed, status, class, value transfer, self empowerment mending, reclaiming of identity, seam detailing, grey/blue, black/silver/grey, chevron print hosiery scraps, mending from a core desire to be seen, tapping into lost emotions, flagstaff, pathway, to reimagine one's purpose, no culture or status, re-culture of status through mending, low fashion to high fashion guided by the hand, care, patchwork rank badge as high culture, transform low fashion to high fashion, low status/culture to high status/culture, Tribe Called Quest Re-identity # U-18 Jacob Annexe, Taiwan, black, women's, tunic sweater, plain knit, well worn, full use, full history, pilling, felting, fraying, classic, masculine cut, physical mending and emotional update, needs to breathe again, new life, transform masculine to feminine, grey, Kansai, sage green/pink hosiery, detailing, re-centre, re-ground, history, connect, history, reactivation from re-grounding garments identity, practical mending, practical application, exterior mending, reactivated through feminine detailing, Thelonius Monk, Re-identity # M-19 Rachel Mara, Canada, black, women's, dress shirt, detailing, high fashion, quality, mid-life use, pilling, underside, exterior feminine silhouette,



physical mending, emotional life to be restored, mending, tear, moths eating wool, sheer, masculine detailing on a detached, life, reactivate, reverse applique, detailing, grey, Kansai, black and white, hosiery scraps, floral, high contrast, classic, solid, secure, bold, confident, feminine detail blend, collision between masculine and feminine, mending, harmony, balance, past to present, reverse applique, covering, healing, preventative mending, rescue, emotional rescue, mended stitches are like pathways and rivers, reconnect, Norman Greenbaum, Re-identity # M-20 Unknown & Handmade, Canada, black, women's, jacket, damask weave, unknown, heavy material and construction, solid, full life, emotional repair, mourning, loss, identity loss, transform condition, re-ground, shift, reactivate purpose, acknowledge history, nature imposed, green, nature inspired prints, left over hosiery garments, hacked, reactivating the forgotten and never used, exterior mending, blending of histories, emergent, grey, Kansai, layering, mending imposed, second skin, protection, preservation, repurpose, Lynard Skynard.



Figure 31. Mending Wall: Field Studies #8.



Figure 32. Mending Wall: Field Studies #9.



Figure 33. Mending Wall: Field Studies #10.



Figure 34. Mending Wall: Field Studies #11.



Figure 37. Mending Wall: Re-Identity #2 L-02.



Figure 38. Mending Wall: Re-Identity #2 L-02, detail.



Figure 39. Mending Wall: Re-Identity # U-11.



Figure 40. Mending Wall: Re-Identity # U-11, detail.



Figure 41. Mending Wall: Re-Identity # A-06.



Figure 42. Mending Wall: Re-Identity # A-06, hem detail.



Figure 43. Mending Wall: Re-Identity # A-06, back detail.



Figure 44. Mending Wall: Re-Identity # U-12, before.



Figure 45. Mending Wall: Re-Identity # U-12, after.



Figure 46. Mending Wall: Re-Identity # R-03, knee detail.



Figure 47. Mending Wall: Re-Identity # R-03, back detail.



Figure 48. Mending Wall: Re-Identity # L-04.



Figure 49. Mending Wall: Re-Identity # U-13, detail.



Figure 50. Mending Wall: Re-Identity # U-09, detail.

To HACK is to MEND

I hack into textile waste with the intent to mend it. When I cut, I think and the more I think I cut until I reach a point where I shift begin to mend. As a mending practitioner, hacking offers the opportunity to rediscover forgotten routes and claim new territories in your creative practice. Mending breathes new life into old patterns and creates from obsolete forms. Hacking is mending. Mending is hacking. Hacking is the first step into transforming an old patterned way of thinking and approach to your materials and artistic practice. Mending aids in transforming the hack where the mender can choose to reverse engineer the situation through an ability to (re)imagine and form new identities in newly discovered territories.

I was first introduced to the writings and theories of Otto Von Busch when I established the (zero.O.lab). Von Busch is a Swedish fashion artist, theorist, art historian who coined the term *fashion hactivism* in his PhD thesis *Fashion_able Hactivism and Engaged Fashion Design* at the University of Gothenburg, School of Design and Crafts in 2006. His research and practice explores how design and craft can be reverse engineered, hacked and shared among many participants through forms of social engagement where collaboration is explored through craft and social activism.

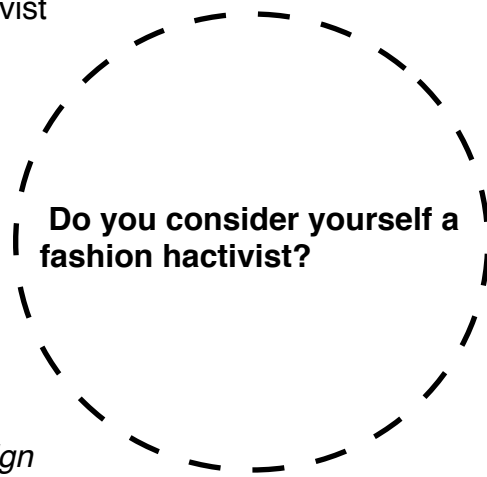


How is hacking a form of mending?

Much of Von Busch's research explores how fashion can be used for empowerment, self-development and personal growth. Allowing the focus to be upon a reverse engineering of the garment instead of through traditional forms of

garment production. His projects, which he groups with his research under the name of >>self_passage<< ¹⁸ look to transition the power of fashion into a positive personal and social condition where everyone can become a fashion hactivist and engage with a fashion practice.

I identify with the role of a fashion hactivist and believe there is a reciprocal relationship between the role of hactivist and that of a mending practitioner. The hactivist's role according to Von Busch arrives "*in the form of orchestrator and facilitator, as an agent of collaborative change. It is not the divine creator of the original and new, but a negotiator, questioning and developing design as a skill and practical production utility. It is a role that purposefully works with experimentation in ascending scales: starting at exploring and developing skills, tools and hacking energetic or material flows, then applying this to larger scale production and projects. It is a combination of designing material artefacts as well as social protocols.*"¹⁹



As a mender/hactivist, I engage with a social practice but have transitioned myself to work in an isolated private space. In doing so, I have reflected upon my role as a mender/hactivist and feel that my practice has the ability to transform between these two spaces. I believe that to successfully manoeuvre between a socially engaged and private practice, they require a mending of their co-existence. I allow one space to adopt a dominate role while the other provides inspiration and support. Eventually the private and meditative space filters itself

¹⁸ <http://www.selfpassage.org/>

¹⁹ p.50, Otto Von Busch Fashion-able: Hacktivism and engaged fashion design. 2008.

into a socially engaged atmosphere but only after a mender/hactivist has tuned into their environment. I tune into both spaces through music. Music inspires my movements, thought process and ability to problem solve while I hack and mend.

The sound of music is not just represented in the mended cloth structures and garments I produce. It is collectively integrated into all areas of my creative practice. Music sets the tone and essentially creates my environment. It allows me to tune in and be present with what I am trying to visually engage with. The interesting thing about the influence of music in my studio practice is that it gives me a chance to privately reflect to a point where I transform this into

whatever I am producing. The remnants left behind by music inform my practice by offering me a chance to rediscover and (re)imagine new ways to explore, revisit, mend and transform whatever surface or structure I am building. This process is known as visual music or colour music²⁰. There are writings in art history around synaesthesia²¹, a term used to describe the transformation between sound and sight in individuals who experience this phenomenon. Abstract painting, Action painting, Lyrical Abstraction, Wassily Kandinsky, Jackson Pollock and Jean Michel Basquiat, etc. are a few examples of artists and art movements where synaesthesia was experienced, discussed and documented.

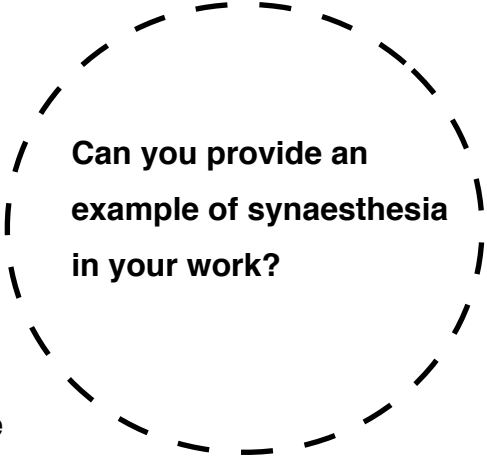


²⁰ Visual music refers to use of musical structures in visual imagery. This idea was first introduced in 1912 by art critic Roger Fry to describe the work of Wassily Kandinsky.

²¹ Synaesthesia is a neurological phenomenon, an involuntary process that occurs when the real information of one sense leads to a perception in another one. For example people with synesthesia (called synesthetes) can “see” the color of the music they are listening to and transfer that into their creative work. For the purpose of this thesis I don’t want to confuse this term with modern day neuroscientific research but rather provide references in association with visual art.

I first experienced synaesthesia as a child studying classical music. Music activates a free form, improvisational method of making where I *mend + blend* material, media and music together. For example, *Vinyl Recordings* is an ongoing series of hand printed yardages where I began to revisit as part of my research in (zero.O.lab). These large scale prints are composed of layers of discarded ink

from my printing process that continue to accumulate until the series of cloth I am working on is complete or I simply just tune out and look to begin with something new. The emergent imagery generated from this process becomes a visual representation built in response to the music. It serves a visual document into a method where the invisible is made to become visible. Similar to the application methods determined in audio signal processing²², this work represents the transmission and compression of sound waves filtered by a performance led by the silkscreen and waste hosiery.



Can you provide an example of synaesthesia in your work?

²² Audio signal processing is the intentional alteration of audio signals or sound waves that has been filtered through an audio effect. The audio effects are techniques described as being unprocessed known as “dry” or processed which is referred to as “wet”. For the purpose of this thesis, I view my work as both wet and dry processed. My performance combined with the use of my silkscreens and waste hosiery serve as filters that synthesize and compress the audio sounds that surround the studio environment. I classify this as wet processing. However, the accumulative layers of ink that build up upon the surface over time creates a level of distortion reminiscent of reverberation. Reverb is an unprocessed or “dry form of audio processing where sound is produced in an enclosed space causing a large number of echoes to occur until it can no longer be heard. Resulting in a unique sound formation.

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Audio_signal_processing



Figure 51. Vinyl Recordings, Key of C. Printmaking/Performance.

(A)ctivate

FEAR of the TEAR

I like to think that a paradigm shifts when old forms die. I believe in transforming the dead, breathing new life into traditional modes of thinking and making. We can let the disciplines of art, fashion, textiles, craft, theory, research and history to inform one another by hacking, borrowing, *mending + blending*. Make your own recipe and remove the best parts. Map out a plan that best suits your needs and feeds your creative soul. To be a mending practitioner, you must push the boundaries between creation, identity, history, imagination to form your own way and connect in this world. Menders don't fear change or a tear for that matter because they chose to engage and transform it.

Mending the Broken: Crafting an Identity Through Non-Consumption

As an artist I must embody an experience before I can share, create, (re)imagine and transform it. I used the *Mending Wall* project as research crafting identity through what I call the *re-identity* of a garment. When textiles and clothing are produced under a fast fashion mindset there is no time to craft its identity.

When I asked the question to participants as to whether they had a garment that needed physical or emotional attention, the goal was to facilitate applications of mending that created opportunities for new relationships. In my research I established a vocabulary that responded to the new discoveries I was experiencing through my mending applications. Reattachment mending²³ and preventative mending²⁴ are two mended applications that became my primary focus of exploration. Subversive mending, reinforcement mending, patchwork mending, restorative mending, repairative mending, abstracted mending and self initiated mending are other forms of mended applications catalogued in my research. Regardless of what mending measures were applied to these garments, I discovered that by repairing them I was able to transform their past and (re)imagine their future through a non-consumptive choice to access what was already there to begin with. If the garment required more assistance, I collected remnants already existing in my environment. The act of mending with the intention to create a *re-identity* is an act of compassion where the garment's past is observed in order to (re)imagine its future.

²³ Reattachment mending is where I utilized waste ends and offcuts to physically reconstruct it to create a layering of protection and to reconnect any severe tears or fraying.

²⁴ Preventative mending was administered when areas indicated that it may require future mending. It was also used to connect various forms of mending together in the same garment as a form of restructuring. It also help repaired pilling, snags and other minor flaws that lay upon the surface of the cloth.

Craft has been a pivotal tool in my practice. It not only informs how I practice but empowers me with a skill set where I can continuously rediscover. In learning a traditional skill set, I have taken part in an act of (re)imagining a history of hand-made cloth production -- creating materials from pre-consumer waste hosiery. The consequences of my actions are transformed into this material and are transitioned into various by-products where the mending process could continue.

In my practice, I explore various tools and forms of technology that encourage the *mending + blending* process. Artisanal training in both textiles and fashion design has led to develop a knowledge of industrial processes and digital textile technologies. Being located in Vancouver has been integral to my research, development and practice. Vancouver is situated on the periphery and has a limited clothing and textile industry. My training in textiles and my childhood experience have facilitated my ability to makeshift my tools and materials based on a survival. If I couldn't afford to fix or acquire equipment, I borrowed, adapted, shifted and transformed what is already in my environment.

When I arrived in Vancouver in 2000, this was a time when a majority of enterprises invested garment trade were moving offshore and discarding most of their equipment. I began to salvage and acquire various pieces of industrial equipment that were either in need of repair or considered obsolete. I was compelled to rethink these machines -- to reconsider their use and role in the studio environment where they could be "*Freed, for the better part, from the limits imposed by their intended purposes, technical devices take the most*

*extraordinary diversions and, with an effect as surprising as it is convincing, assume entirely new raisons d'être."*²⁵

My Kansai machine is an example of a mechanical device that could no longer perform its intended application, a two row topstitch hemming technique. After the machine broke down, it could not be repaired to its original stitching state. It was a five thread machine that could now only operate with two threads. This left me with a device that provides an unusual straight stitch -- aesthetically delivering two qualities of line. I was drawn to exploring this stitch as a mark making tool. I began to (re)imagine what my industrial machine could do.

(M)end

The Mending Economy + The Art of Mending

The ritual of mending in the common household became an afterthought in the last half of the last century. Mending is an undervalued yet very necessary tool for creation, if not survival. For our ancestors, it was a way of life and everything was kept in circulation until it could no longer exist. The narratives built into their mended materials and objects would transform over time so that future generations could be connected to and even contribute to the evolution of that story.

²⁵ Alfred Sohn-Rethel wrote the *Ideal of the Broken Down*, 1921 while living in Naples, Italy. Alfred Sohn Rethel was a philosopher and economist who created the Broken philosophy after observing the Neopolitan's carefree approach to everything technical. When something broke down, whatever material or object that made itself available in that moment was used to fix, adapt and revive what was broken.

Mending practitioners past and present are not linear makers. Their marks are made in response to an intention to reconnect and renew for continued use. Mending was traditionally administered for practical reasons and was meant to be invisible. In Japanese folk history a form of mending known as boro²⁶ exposed the act mending, allowing for the invisible to become visible.



Figure 51. Japanese Boro

²⁶ Boro is the clothing that was worn by peasants, merchants or artisans in Japan from Edo up to early Showa (17th – early 19th century). It was considered a folk textile because it was extensively repaired, patched and mended repeatedly with scraps of remnant fabrics. The layering of these fabrics not only extended the life of the piece, but also added warmth, making the article last as long as possible. A practical solution for having limited resources.



Figure 52. Japanese Boro, detail.

Contemporary mending practitioners Jonnet Middleton (UK), TomofHolland (UK), Liz Collins (US) and Eleanor Ray (US) perform a similar type of visible mending that speaks to a history of radical mending²⁷ born out of human necessity and limited resources. For these artists, mending is explored as a tool of creation and transformation where they reactivate their materials through a socially engaged practice. For example, Liz Collins and TomofHolland (see figure 53) use the form and structure of knitting to mend their materials together through series of knitting interventions and workshops. While Eleanor Ray (see figure 54) explores mending as a tool for research by holding workshops where the history of mending is taught and (re)imagined.

Jonnet Middleton is an activist mender working to bring out the *Age of Mending*²⁸ through two research projects, *Futuremenders* and *Mend*rs*. In 2008, Middleton created the life long project, *Futuremenders* to subvert fashion addiction by sharing her joy of making and mending through a non-consumptive practice²⁹. She describes the *Futuremenders* as “*fun and deadly serious art activism. It sidesteps the traditional art world, cutting to the real business of art in an age of crisis – to futureproof our lives. It prepares us for barely imaginable but plausible futures where forgotten skills are vital for survival.*”³⁰ This research combines a solo exploration of mending through a socially engaged practice. By creating pop up mending shops designed to share mending skills she engages the public with her joy of mending.

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²⁷ Radical mending exists in and beyond the mended garment. I believe it serves to educate on the subject of mending through practitioners who are socially engaged with a political and cultural practice on the production and consumption. It is a practice of mending+ blending where history and craftsmanship informs the imagination and leads to skill sharing, empowerment and community.

²⁸ Middleton's PhD is titled, *The Age of Mending: New Materialist Futures for Digital and Non-Digital Things*. This research aims to bring out the Age of Mending.

²⁹ She declared in 2008 never to consume clothing ever again. A non-consumptive practice in mending focuses on the continual mending and reuse of the clothing.

³⁰ Quote taken from website <http://futuremenders.com/>

In 2011, Middleton founded *Mend*rs* with colleagues Beck Collins and Guiseppe Salvia, PhD candidates in sustainable fashion and consumption. They formed this initiative in response to an emerging community of research surrounding mending and repair. In June 2012, a *Mend*rs* symposium was held in North Cumbria, UK where artists, designers and researchers from various disciplines were invited to take part in a series of events, publications and activist projects on mending. Artist and mender TomofHolland attended this event and developed work that (re)imagined the wornout soles of a pair of shoes (see figure 53).



Figure 53. TomofHolland, Mend*rs Symposium 2012.

TomofHolland is a UK based artist who explores mending through the form and structure of knitting by hosting workshops and interventions. In addition to this, he established a website dedicated to visible mending and garment repair known as the *Visible Mending Programme*³¹. He expands upon a socially engaged practice by offering skill sharing, mending tutorials and inspirational texts.



Figure 54. Eleanor Ray, Home Economics: Radical Mending

Otto Von Busch's held a workshop at the Green Gulch Farm Zen Center in Muir, California in 2011 titled, *Taking Refuge in Restoration*. Participants were asked to sacrifice a section of their garment in order to repair another participant's garment. The act of mending and transformation explored in this lab

³¹ Visible Mending Programme <http://tomofholland.com/>

engaged with the possibility of cross-pollinating ideas, knowledge and skill until something new and unexpected emerges. The exchange between participants became embedded into their transformed garment -- the shared experience left participants with the ability to (re)imagine.

I have detailed the rising economy of mending. The artist and artisan techniques discussed previously offer opportunities in skill building and (re)imagination through the act of social engagement. In Otto Von Busch's theory of fashion hactivism, mending as an artistic practice encourages individuals to engage and become empowered by activating their own ability to transform between consumer, maker and mender.

Making the Invisible Visible: Planned MENDability + Anti-Obsolescence

We all have an emotional attachment and relationship with the clothing we wear. Nonetheless, there nearly always comes a time when we choose to surrender it. Whatever the reason, my goal has been to tune into the garments history and observe why the garment was surrendered. The form of mending I have employed throughout my research is visible mending. Visible mending emphasizes what was mended.

In my practice, visible mending is driven by the idea of self repair. The tools and surface treatments I employ facilitate the markings I leave behind in the form of exposed seams and abstract free form stitches. I am intrigued and inspired by the level of abstraction that emerges from the act of visible mending. When an object is mended with mindfulness and care, regardless of the material or part being repaired, the object is allowed to transcend its original constraints or design parameters. The visible mend offers a disruption that visually alters the

perception of the broken making it hard to read it as a record of violence or damage.

I questioned whether the story of how an object came to be mended matters. To me, mended objects have a presence that is both visually and emotionally resonant. The time and skill required to mend requires a compassionate eye and the passage of time. The affection in which it is now held is evident in its rebirth as a mended object. The intention behind my compassionate practice of mending is not to render the mend invisible. In fact, I want to celebrate it. Mending imbues a sense of value and honour that calls upon what came before and what is here and now. It offers a rebirth in form and identity and that can only continue to inform my practice.

My mending applications are driven by the consideration of and for the materials and processes I choose to explore. Throughout the *Mending Wall* project, I salvaged from my own waste materials and combined them with the intentional markings I was making. This resulted in a more structural form of mending that suggests stability and permanence that didn't previously exist in the garment. Planned mendability and anti-obsolescence is about activating forms of self repair through an exploration of technique and additional materials that is informed by the reverse engineering and of a garment. It invites the invisible to rise to the surface with a noticeable presence that not only empowers the mender creatively but also allows them to look for other possibilities to mend.

Mending a Theory: My Love of the Stitch

*i loved you for a long, long time
i know this love is real
it don't matter....how it all went wrong
that don't change the way i feel
and i can't believe that time gonna heal this wound that i am speaking of
there ain't no cure
there ain't no cure
there ain't no cure for love³²*

The language of mending has always be part of my creative practice as an artist. I feel that the research I have undertaken as part of this Masters has developed encourage the development of terminology that describes the forms of mending I use in my practice. In building on the language of mending, I have unravelled a source of tension in my relationship as a maker of textiles and clothing. This tension, exists in a place where the unmended lie waiting to become represented through my love of the stitch. I look to stitch together the wounded, discarded and obsolete through the act of mending. My survivor tendencies lead to my compulsion to keep things alive. Through it I have begun to integrate stitching as compassionate practice that offers up new relationships and possibilities. Mending as an artistic practice does not exist to create fixed meanings or a permanent cure to the unmended. It allows for transformation and reconnection and an opportunity to rediscover.

³² Leonard Cohen, lyrics to Ain't No Cure for Love, 1988.

(S)pinoff

To MAKE is to MEND

The mending process begins with set limitations, tools and supplies where chance and discovery is able to occur. Menders are not just exploring the physical realm of making but are looking to other areas and skill sets to help aid in transforming the broken. For “it is only when things are broken that they begin to work”³³. Artists, designers and makers of all kind are currently rediscovering many traditional craft applications that allow for a (re)imagination of their application and material resources. The combination of traditional craft applications and present day technology has assisted in the creation of what I like to call the *Age of the Heirloom*³⁴. This is a time where skills are being reborn, revisited, relearned and (re)imagined -- a re-evolution of these techniques are rising to the surface. Menders look to upcycle, re-use, repair, rethink, (re)imagine and remake in order to make way for a renewal. Identity construction, anti-consumerism, craftsmanship, performance, skill enabling/problem solving, self-limitation wardrobes, ethnography, gender and sites of mending all speak to what drives other hactivist cultures. Mending can no longer exist invisibly, it is meant to be seen, shared and experienced.

³³ Alfred Sohn-Rethel, *Ideal of the Broken Down*, 1921.

³⁴ Age of the Heirloom is a term to describe a cultivation of and revisitation of traditional form and skill associated to a history of handcraft. This can range from textiles, garment production, ceramics, wood turning, etc. Practitioners of this generation belief in cultivating new opportunities to revisit old forms. Shared ownership, cross pollination, open source mending and reskilling through socially engaged environments some of the ways this movement is approaching an applied practice.

Mending Beyond the Material Practice

Textiles affect every aspect of our daily lives. Their rich history has influenced many of the technologies we consume. The mechanization of handcrafts led by the Industrial Revolution historically altered how we produce, consume and value our textiles and clothing. In the course of this shift, the knowledge and skills to make and repair slowly disappeared in the last century only to comeback in the 21st century in the form of DIY and craft culture. The *Make Do and Mend* generation rose from a practical need to use and reuse due to a lack of resources. Today many artists and designers are exploring the creative potential of waste.

The outcome of this thesis project brought together a collective experience where mending could be explored by various applications and artistic disciplines. Boundaries and specializations in visual art, textiles and fashion were brought together through the act of mending. The purposeful use of mending in an artistic practice looks at how mending itself can act as a tool for physical reconstruction and at the same time offer a metaphorical bridge that connects traditional territories with contemporary frames of thought. This research was positioned from an isolated practice in order to reflect upon and explore from a compassionate practice of artistic mending. Mending allows me travel -- transition between my different roles as an artist, designer and researcher. It invites the opportunity to *mend + blend* between two environments -- isolated and social. I am able to embody an identity that engages me with the task at hand where I can create opportunities for chance and discovery to emerge.

My thesis projects have taken me on a personal journey; my process (my manner of making) and the outcomes that are derived out of it have enabled mending to emerge as a significant research methodology in my work.

This methodology encourages transformation and chance discovery where old forms and techniques are revisited -- obsolete, broken tools have the opportunity to offer unexpected applications and use. The creative possibilities (re)imagined from this research, led me to uncover a garment cutting technique from the remnant imagery left behind from the floor tracings. The abstract formation reminded me of historical garment patterns produced in the late 19th and early 20th century that are overwhelming complicated to trace from. As I reflected upon this, I imagined new garment forms from the pattern pieces that began to reveal itself. This technique will require further development beyond the institution and it is my intention to continue this research.

Pre and post consumer waste has much to offer an applied art practice. It has the capacity to offer artists to look past limitations in their practice and explore beyond their traditional boundaries and resources. My research has connected with a past infused with the act of mending -- mending that began in my childhood and has carried on into my studies in fashion design, textiles and visual art. I have unpacked the key facets of my creative practice. Mine is one that operates from a self-reflexive and compassionate practice of artistic mending. My acts of mending not only stitch together territories between visual art, fashion and textiles they also embrace the synaesthetic experience that allow me to transform, discover and (re)imagine my materials.

GLOSSARY

Age of the Heirloom

Age of the Heirloom is a term to describe the cultivation and revisitation of traditional form and skill associated with a history of handcraft. This can range from textiles, garment production, ceramics, wood turning, etc. Practitioners in the age of the heirloom believe in cultivating new opportunities to revisit old forms. Shared ownership, cross pollination, open source mending and re-skilling through socially engaged environments are some of the ways this movement is approaching an applied practice.

Boro

Boro is the clothing that was worn by peasants, merchants or artisans in Japan from Edo up to early Showa (17th – early 19th century). It was considered a folk textile because it was extensively and repeatedly repaired, patched and mended with scraps of remnant fabrics. The layering of these fabrics not only extended the life of the piece, but also added warmth, making the article last as long as possible. It was practical solution in the context of limited resources.

Compassionate Practice

A practice where empathy, ritual, readiness to perform random acts of kindness are explored through creative applied art.

Eco Fashion

The term eco fashion was coined in 1995 by Marci Zaroff created the wordmark ECOfashion by fusing the words ecology and fashion. It is a form of clothing production that considers the environment, the health of consumers and the working conditions of those employed by the industry. It is a socially responsible and environmental design practice that doesn't compromise on quality, style, fit and value.

Fashion Hactivism

Fashion Hactivism is a term coined by Swedish artist, art historian, fashion theorist Otto Von Busch. Fashion Hactivism is a form of social activism where the owner has the ability to engage with their clothing by hacking into, reverse engineering and sharing the garment making process.

Grounded Theory

Grounded Theory is a social science research methodology developed by sociologists Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss. It is a systematic methodology that can be used in both qualitative and quantitative research where the discovery of a theory can emerge through the analysis of the data. Much speculation has arisen from the use of Grounded Theory because it operates from a system that requires the researcher to collect data from the bottom up. Not from a

traditional top down format. This outcome of this process creates of a reverse engineered hypothesis. Grounded Theory informed the research undertaken in the Mending Wall Project where observation and the creation of concepts were collected and identified through emerging patterns.

Hacktivism

The term Hacktivism itself was coined in 1996 and originated from computer culture. It has grown to influence various industries and cultures that are politically motivated to attempt to change forms of policy surrounding human rights and information sharing.

Make Do and Mend

Make Do and Mend was a pamphlet issued by the British Ministry of Information in the midst of WWII. It was intended to provide housewives with useful tips on how to be both frugal and stylish in times of harsh rationing. With its thrifty design ideas and advice on reusing old clothing, the pamphlet was an indispensable guide for households. Readers were advised to create pretty 'decorative patches' to cover holes in worn garments; unpick old jumpers to re-knit chic alternatives; turn men's clothes into women's; as well as darn, alter and protect against the 'moth menace'. An updated version of the book was recently released to coincide with the economic recession, offering similar frugal advice for 21st century families.

Mending

Mending has both a physical and metaphorical meaning that refers to the act of making repairs or the fixing of a current condition in need of repair.

Mending is often applied to clothing and/or textiles and in certain cultures represents value and improvement of current condition. Restoration, reconstitution, reconstruction, repair, darning, fix, patching and care are words used in connection to this term.

Preventative Mending

Preventative mending is a form of visible mending that is administered when areas are indicating the site of future repair. It is also used to connect various forms of mending together in the same garment as a form of restructuring. It helps to repair pilling, snags and other minor flaws that lay upon the surface of the cloth.

Pre-Consumer Textile Waste

Pre-consumer waste refers to manufactured materials that do not reach a consumer and are recycled. Pre-consumer recycled materials can be broken down and remade into similar or different materials, or can be sold as is to third party buyers who then use those materials for consumer products or various applications. Pre-consumer waste is commonly used in manufacturing industries, and is often not considered recycling in the traditional sense.

Post-Consumer Textile Waste

Post-consumer waste is distinguished from pre-consumer waste as it refers to the reintroduction of manufacturing scrap back into the manufacturing process.

Radical Mending

Radical mending exists in and beyond the mended garment. I believe it serves to educate on the subject of mending through practitioners who are socially engaged with a political and cultural practice relating to production and consumption. It is a practice of mending+ blending where history and craftsmanship informs the imagination and leads to skill sharing, empowerment and community.

Raisons d’êtres

Raisons d’êtres translated from French means reason for being.

Reattachment Mending

Reattachment mending utilizes waste ends and offcuts to physically reconstruct and visibly mend severe tears of fraying. It creates a layering of protection to prevent any future repairs.

Mending + Blending

Mending + Blending refers an inter-disciplinary approach to combining methodologies and research within the applied arts where disciplines are remixed to create other models and systems for creative applications.

Subtraction Cutting

Subtraction cutting or Sub-cutting is an approach to garment pattern making that incorporates chance discovery and is technique that allows you to design with patterns rather than creating patterns with designs. This cutting application is an emergent form of garment making that allows the ability to cut fast and requires little reference to measurements.

Sustainable Fashion Practices

Sustainable fashion include terms such as eco fashion, ethical fashion, slow fashion, etc. and is part of a larger design philosophy. It is system built to represent and support socially responsible and environmentally friendly production practices that considers all aspects of design process. This includes raw material production (organic or no pesticide use), recycled materials, low impact dyes/printing/finishes, ethical garment production, product life span, etc.

Synaesthesia

Synaesthesia is a neurological phenomenon, an involuntary process that occurs when the real information of one sense leads to a perception in another one. For example, people with synesthesia (called synesthetes) can “see” the color of the music they are listening to and transfer that into their creative work.

(zero.O.lab)

The (zero.O.lab) title was created in collaboration with Chan Tao and Shannon Lazzarotto. The

name is a fusion between coded languages used in contemporary fashion culture and communication (ie. texting, emotions, etc.) and is a play upon scientific terminology (such as 'lab') popularized throughout the art and design community. The idea was to create a logo that would emphasize these elements in connection to words and symbols that would represent use/reuse, environmental limitations, containment and continued life cycle.

Zero Waste Art

Zero Waste is a philosophy that encourages the redesign of resource life cycles so that all products must be reused. Zero Waste Art involves an artistic practice that specializes in working only with discarded materials or produces materials for other artists to use. Zero Waste is a goal that is ethical, economical, efficient and visionary, to guide people in changing their lifestyles and practices to emulate sustainable natural cycles, where all discarded materials are designed to become resources for others to use.

Zero Waste Design

Zero Waste Design is a philosophy and a goal in the field of design. It is a philosophy and design principle that maximizes recycling, minimizes waste, reduces consumption and ensure that everything made is meant to be reused, repaired or recycled back into nature or into the marketplace.

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