

# InfoWear

Clothing as Visual Communication Medium

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## Clothing as Visual Communication Medium

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Moving onward!

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# Abstract & Keywords

This research projects seeks to explore the potential for clothing to act as a socio-political medium that interrogates the emerging nature of personalized media environments. Social media platforms, governed by online algorithms, have altered the context in which we currently receive information (Steeg & Galstyan, 2012; Romero et al., 2010). This new and private media environment is often personalized to a degree that it can have an impact on our decision-making (Erkan & Evans, 2016; Liu et al., 2015). Using a “research through design” (Frayling, 1993) approach, the project proposes a system that allows participants to act as ‘publishers’ by bringing the content of their private media streams into public view, by incorporating them onto clothing. The resulting garments exist not only in a fashion context, but also act as a platform for civic engagement.

## Keywords

Participatory design  
Co-design as social conversations  
Strategic Foresight  
Attention economy  
Civic engagement  
Embodied criticality

# Introduction

The year was 2000, at the height of the dot-com bubble. Google, a powerful internet search engine that upended the way we would be able to receive information, was about four years old. Initially launched in 1996 and was formally registered as a company in 1998, it took shape as a way for individuals on the world wide web to look upon specific information on their online repository. The search engine's primary function at the time was to display text results to search queries. However, this main functionality quickly changed after a particular event that unfolded on the Grammy's red carpet in February, 2000: Jennifer Lopez's green Versace jungle print dress (Tashjian, 2019). By the words of Eric Schmidt, the former Google CEO and executive chairman, by a testimony he wrote on Project Syndicate in 2015:

***"People wanted more than just text. This first became apparent after the 2000 Grammy Awards, where Jennifer Lopez wore a green dress that, well, caught the world's attention. At the time, it was the most popular search query we had ever seen. But we had no surefire way of getting users exactly what they wanted: J-Lo wearing that dress. Google Image Search was born."***

This event has long been a fascination of insider fashion circle, a rare moment that displayed the power of a 'viral' fashion moment has in influencing and shifting an apparatus that exist outside of its own world. This moment however, also provides an example where a direct link from digital imaging and fashion is drawn. Moreso, fashion provides a compelling reason for digital imaging platforms to exist and flourish. It is rather one of the main interwoven 'currency' in the web of the digital image. And this platform has become highly influential towards the main platform in which contemporary information exchange is done: social media.

Modern social media platforms very often would sell a particular vision of how users can manipulate user-generated visual content to gain social capital online. Whether it is through manipulation of humor, scandalized messaging, satire, one common denominator that often gives resonance is the visual aspect that allows for the proliferation of the platform itself. This visual aspect influenced the form of information online and the behavior of information consumption. For one, the attention economy forces information themselves to be more than a factual statement and veer into the realm of promotional content. Another

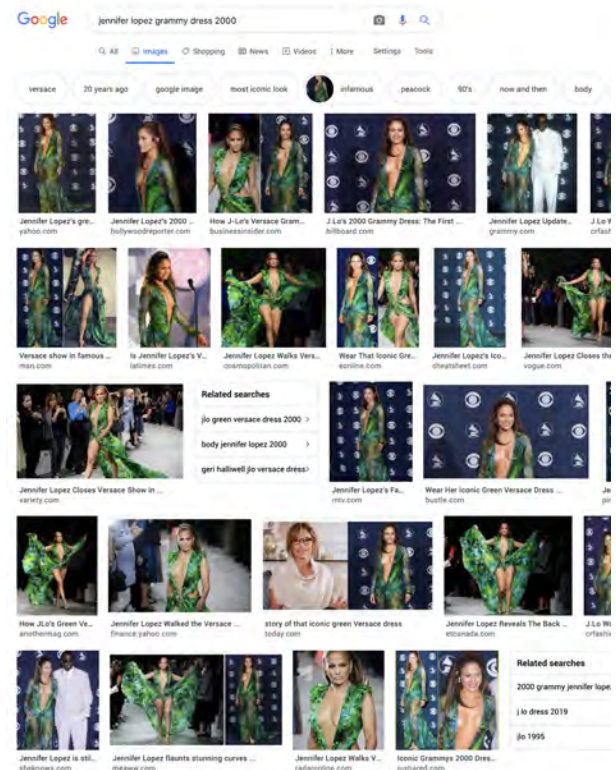
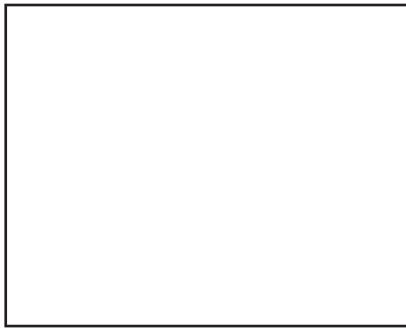
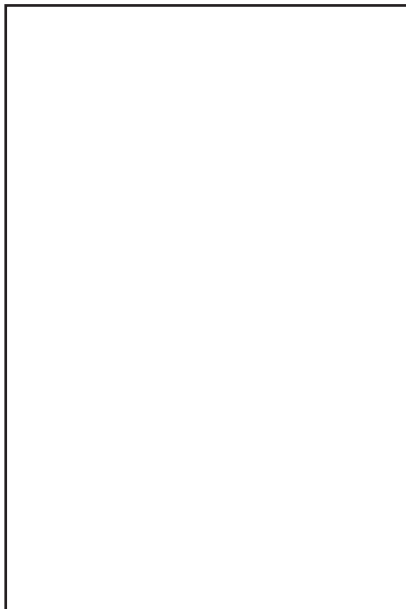


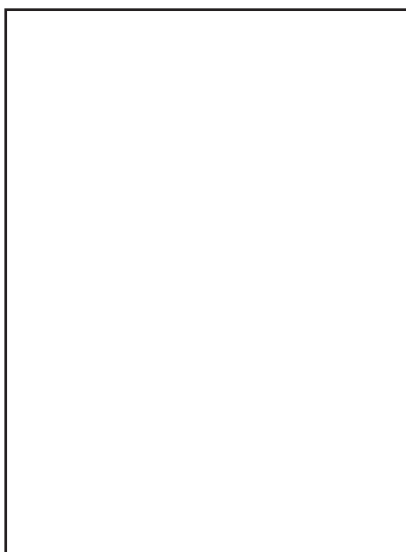
Fig 1. Google Image Search Page of "jennifer lopez grammy dress 2000". Search query that kickstarted the creation of the digital imaging platform.



**Fig 2. "Make America Great Again" Hat popularized by the Trump Campaign in 2015**



**Fig 3. "Stop Calling 911 On The Culture" T-Shirt from Pyer Moss Spring 2019 Collection**



**Fig 4. "Knockup" Louis Vuitton print sweater from Dapper Dan Atelier**

aspect that has upended this system is the importance that these online platforms give to user-generated content. In this realm, we are all "influencers" and publishers. There is not much hierarchical difference on how a user-generated social content would be displayed online compared to a content by a 'traditional' media publishers such as newspapers and magazines. As more cameras are put in the hands of social media users, user-generated visual content will continue to influence other forms of information.

This research is interested in this current evolution of media and information exchange. Particularly, on the prioritization of visual content over textual information and the shift towards making textual information relevant in the framework of a visual content. This will be done by implementing a research project that uses the medium that kickstarted the digital imaging revolution in 2000: clothing. Questions that will become the basis of the projects are: What are the strategies that we can take to foster a more critical dissemination process into the way general public communicate with each other, and what are some of the possibilities of developing an alternative communication medium in this space in bringing insights regarding the future of media and information.

Design objects and interventions in this project are rooted in the existing references in which clothing is used as a carrier of an explicit socio-political messaging. The 'Make America Great Again' hat, popularized by the Donald Trump presidential campaign in 2015 is a great example on this use case (Budds, 2016). For its 2019 Spring/Summer collection, a New York fashion house Pyer Moss deployed a white T-shirt with a slogan that referred to a racially provocative incident (Givhan, 2018). Another relevant instance was the body of work of Dapper Dan during the 1980's-90's which influences high fashion style in the hip hop community (Plessis, 2019). All three of these examples are important for a couple of things: these clothing items incorporated explicit messaging from existing socio-political point of view/socio-economic standing that are bigger than their counterparts that are communicated through the clothing themselves (anti-establishment movement symbolized by the 'MAGA' hat, reclaiming of Black narrative by the Pyer Moss shirt and manipulation of socio-economic standing through Dapper Dan Atelier)

Thus, through the knowledge of aforementioned references, the project introduced a term that is used to refer to this particular usage of clothing : InfoWear, which stands for 'Wearable Information'. This term is derived from fashion terminology used to describe a particular way of dressing by combining two descriptors into one (e.g Athleisure, Normcore, Streetwear). In the context of the research project, InfoWear also refers to the clothing experimentations done throughout the project. True to form, these garments largely were developed as a wearable piece of information more so than they are clothing items.

# Research Framework

## Research Questions

- How can wearables act as a socio-political carrier to address the private nature of a person's personalized media environment?
- How would embodied messaging through the lens of Research Through Design foster critical information dissemination?

## Research Objectives

- Gaining insight on a non-digital information technology through the “algorithm of the street”
- Explore the possibilities of civic engagement through non-conventional touchpoints
- Observe the usage of worded information as visual image

## Scope and Limitations

This research is deeply focused on the possible civic engagement that could come out of self-made clothing interventions in the street. The participants that the project is mostly interested in are individuals who are well versed in the language of social media and skew towards the younger millennial generation. It seeks to compare the behavior of engagement with information online and on the ‘street’. While it incorporates DIY clothing skills and fashion hacktivism knowledge, the focus of the research is on the news message of the clothing that the participants wear. Throughout the implementation of the research, a white t-shirt is often used for the workshops and trials. T-shirts have historically been used as a medium of political protest and individual expression through DIY art. In this instance, a singular color white merely emphasised the focus on the message on clothing and takes away possible additional pressure on the participants to gain new fashion knowledge to merely participate in the research. This method allows the garments created and worn to function as wearables more than they are items of clothing.

Since one of the main components of the research actions done is the garment embodiment and implementation on the street, travelling becomes a complementary aspect within the embodiment process. However, the majority of the knowledge and context that will be used to analyze the findings are rooted in a personal North American context and media culture. By no means they will be universally relevant nor accurate to each location the garments were embodied in. However, the framework and methodology of the research project would provide points of comparison to the local news context and media culture that would potentially be beneficial in developing a critical analysis of the methods enacted.

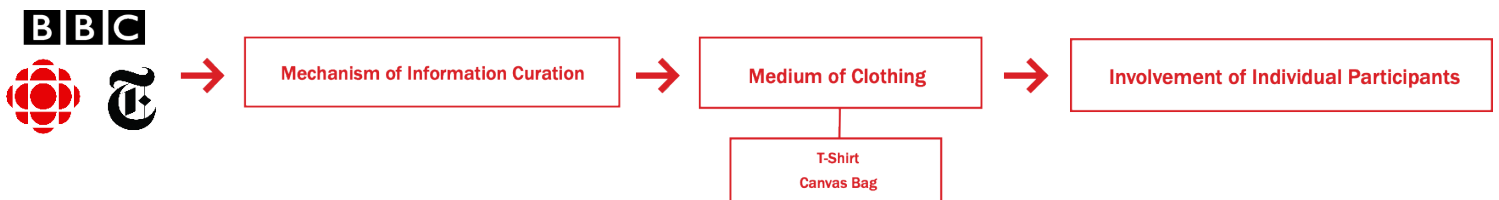
# Methodology

Throughout this thesis, the term InfoWear which stands for wearable information is used to describe this particular clothing phenomenon and the project that comes out of the research inquiry. The term InfoWear is derived from the existence of such fashion nomenclature that has been historically used to describe trends and influential styles or ‘waves’ that were popularized by many, including ‘streetwear’, ‘normcore’ and ‘athleisure’.



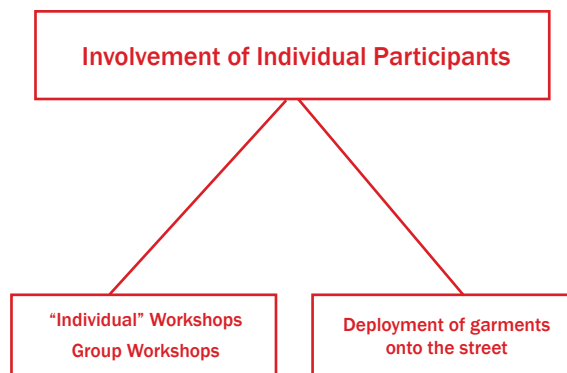
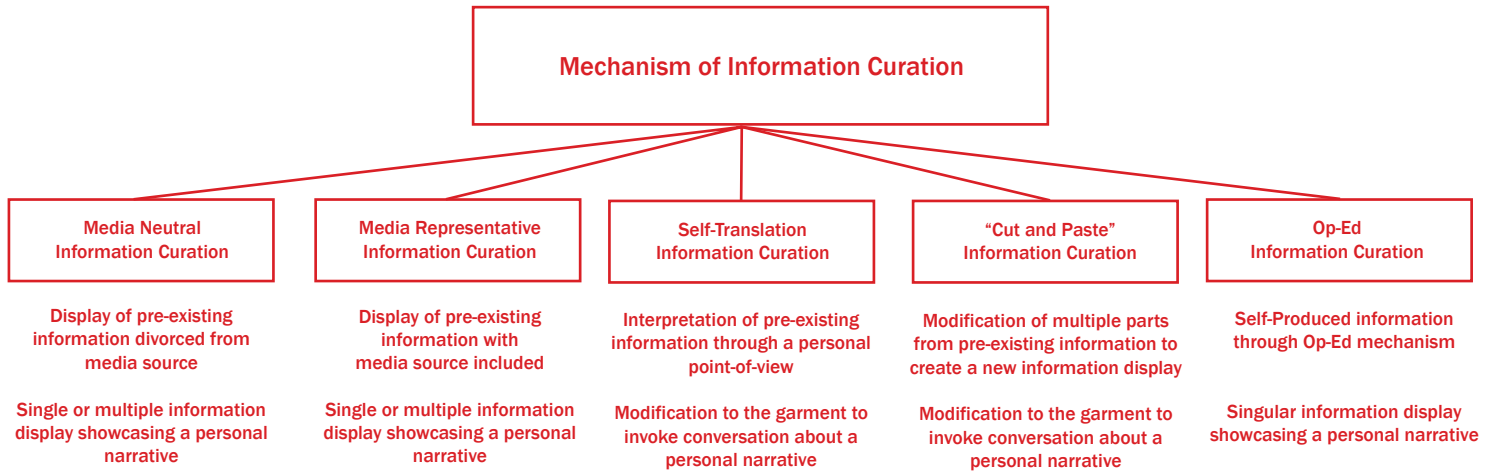
The conception of InfoWear as a research project comes from the focus of using wearables as an information medium. In this instance, pre-existing news content and fabricated individual textual content exist as the sole visual signifiers on the mediums that are T-shirts and canvas bags. There are three main counterparts that support the mechanism of the project: Medium of clothing, Involvement of individual participants and the Mechanism of Information Curation; all three viewed through a lens of criticality. A subsequent methodology then is created to visualize this system.

## Information Flow





## Mechanism Breakdown



# Theoretical Framework

## Smuggling – an embodied criticality

Irit Rogoff, an initiator of the transdisciplinary field of Visual Culture and founder of the department at Goldsmiths, University of London, elaborated on “Smuggling” which she defined as a practice of embodied criticality (2006). This practice refers to the relation between two elements that are distinguishable from one another and cannot be separated into independent components. She argued that as there is a prevalent shift from critique towards criticality in the transdisciplinary design practice, an evolution of our theoretical framework towards criticality would be integral to the ‘actualization of contemporary cultural practices’. This also forms a critical analysis that attempts to expose hidden and unacknowledged ‘desires and power relations into a cultural manifest’.

She further explained:

*“The fact that participants, be they audiences, students or researchers, produce meaning not simply through the subjectivities they project on works whose circuits of meanings they complete, but that they produce meaning through relations with one another and through the temporality of the event of the exhibition, or the class, or the demonstration or the display.”*

This knowledge becomes foundational to the framework of this research project, it is particularly relevant as we would seek to analyze the physical results of the project and the impact the project has on participants. In this project, the InfoWear pieces produced is not merely a clothing item or a tactile piece of news headline. It is both and it requires a lens of analysis that incorporates knowledge from both fields throughout the actions done.

## Co-design as social conversations

In his book “Design, When Everybody Designs” Ezio Manzini (2015), a leading expert in design for social innovation and sustainability, elaborated on a framework of co-design as social conversations. This practice is deeply rooted in participatory design actions, in this case called Co-Design, and refers to a design scheme in which design experts facilitate and mediate design actions involving participants to trigger social conversation and influence it with cultural knowledge and new ideas based on their design expertise. In this realm, a design proposal becomes a multifaceted network where each participant has something to contribute and has the potential of evolving and influencing the framework of the design project through their action and interaction.

In each iteration of InfoWear, each participants input is integral to the garment creation process and the information curation process. Though raw garment materials are consistent throughout and some pre-existing news content selected before the actions are done, a participant’s personal narrative and point-of-view has the most potential of shaping the result of each garment and action of garment embodiment. Coupling this with the different locations each participant are situated in, this wide reaching project network is benefited from the involvement of diverse group of audiences.

## **“The personal is political”**

This popular notion first popularized by the essay by a second-wave feminist Carol Hanisch in the anthology *Notes From the Second Year: Women's Liberation* (Firestone & Koedt, 1970). The main understanding is that to a woman, a realization of the issues that a woman would face is just as important as an explicit political action. American sociologist Paula Rust wrote that ‘one should make personal choices that are consistent with one's personal politics; personal life and personal politics are indistinguishable.’ In the context of the research, this notion is further made explicit and increasingly influential by social media platforms. As a user's online behavior becomes the basis of their online interaction, these individual preferences will create individualized media bubbles that amplify singular voices and create social division.

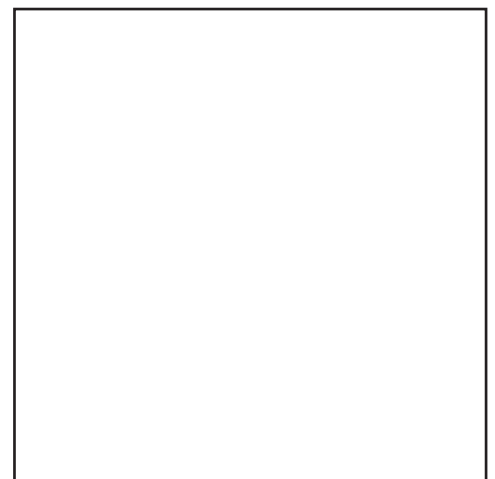
## **“Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man”**

The knowledge of media discourse by Marshall McLuhan in his seminal work “Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man” becomes the basis of the deep exploration of the medium of information throughout this project (1964). In particular, his discourse on technologies being an extension of ourselves which includes information technologies which we used to consume information being an extension of our central nervous system. Therefore, they are influenced by our inner thoughts, ideas and personal values. This “extension of consciousness” can be found in the current digital information conundrum, by the help of online algorithms which tap into our individual preferences and display informations which we would be preferable to. This shift empowered yet also burdened the users and create an information conundrum where the influence of an informational content has shifted towards the end user.

In iterations of InfoWear, the research combines both aspect of traditional news content and the multi-layered channel that is the participants and allow for these informations to exist physically on a participant's body. By doing this the research project allows us to situate the news headlines outside of the digital realm, going away with online algorithms, and letting participants to wear their news environment ‘on their sleeves’ by becoming a physical and tactile self-publisher through the ‘algorithm’ of the street.

## **Historical Precedence of Transgressive Fashion**

This project is cognisant of the many instances of transgressive usage of fashion throughout history, particularly in cases which fashion is tied into a socio-political movement in the past. One reference of this is “The Future is Female” T-shirt which was produced in the 70s for a New York City feminist bookstore, Labyris Books. Taken by photographer Liza Cowan as a part of a photo essay entitled “What the Hell Dressed Dyke Will Wear,” the T-shirt exist as an extension of the lesbian-centered feminism messaging which utilizes garments as a form of activism on the street.



**Fig 5. The original “The Future is Female” T-shirt produced for Labyris Books, NYC in 1975.**

## Secondary Research

To ground the project interventions in the everyday and gather professional input a secondary research was done in the midst of the individual workshops. The focus of the activities is to answer two particular questions:

- What are the possibilities of clothing interventions as visual communication medium
- What are the most salient components to create a platform that could effectively become a data gathering project and medium for conversation

Through this secondary research some insights about the nature of news and the influence of news readership particularly stood out from a digital disinformation conference. Attending this talk was a way to provide current and critical analysis of the digital information exchange, which is central to the research project. This thorough hour-long conversation shed a light on the issues that are central to conversations around news in the current era. Some points include deeper insights on the nature of disinformation and the influence it has in the newsroom. For one, a discussion on how disinformation, particularly within online digital platforms, is correlated with a demand issue, rather than solely a supply problem. It was suggested that the popularity of fake news phenomenon is a reflection of the news readers moreso than the subjects within it or the perpetrators. One important reason in the era of digital paywalls is the worth of a piece of information. An information is paid by someone whether or not we pay for consuming a piece of information, it is paid for by someone and it is a mechanism that news readers should be cognizant of.

These pointers stood out due to the points they raise on the relationship between news publishers and its readers, particularly how much power news readers have towards shaping the news that they consume, even from traditional print news publishers. A news reader's behaviour, particularly in the digital 'paywall' era, has a direct impact in influencing information that would be produced in the newsroom. This conversation surrounding online disinformation was had during a public talk held by Simon Fraser University in Vancouver involving three news industry insider: David Frum (Senior Editor of The Atlantic), Sue Gardner (Former Executive Director of the Wikimedia Foundation) and Christopher Wylie (Former Director of Research for Cambridge Analytica) whose role was essential as a whistleblower to the data-backed operatives that helped elected Donald Trump in 2016. The key revelation of his finding was how central fashion data was in creating an online algorithm which was used in their political advertising campaign (Friedman, 2018).

To gain relevant outsider perspectives on the mechanism of the research project, four industry insiders were invited to view the work in progress throughout the development of the project. These individuals have practices that touch upon the different nature of design that the project incorporates : Graphic Design, Advertising, Fashion and Data Visualization. Yavuz and Rissanen in particular have worked on projects during their practice that become references for this project. Thus, it was crucial to be able to get their personal assessment regarding actions taken in the project.



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## White T-shirt Usage

There was a unanimous opinion from both Henry and Kim that the most effective form of the project was in form of a blank, unadulterated white T-shirt with a clearly printed textual messaging on top. In this scenario, the textual messaging acts as the sole visual signifier on the garment without any potential diversion if the participant is to alter the garment in any way. This approach also would position the messaging on the garment to be slightly detached from opinions of the users by displaying the media source of the information. The garment becomes purely a physical representation of news consumption on the body.

## Multiple Engagement Touchpoints

Another aspect that could prove to be important is utilizing different touchpoints in the project, and this applies to both participants and audiences. This includes availability of the garments through multiple means and the nature of visual documentation of the garments. Different format of engagement with the user could give additional data points which would be useful (Individual approach, Group approach, and possible Point-of-Sale approach). Additionally, physical context complementing textual messaging on the garments would provide further relevance to any visual documentation.

# Iterations of InfoWear

## Early Experimentation

Early stages of the research projects are focused on experimentation around the main components of the activities in the projects. Integral to the research is the exploration of how clothing and news headlines are incorporated together into a single entity. Therefore there is a need to experiment with effective forms where two components would visually complement each other. Two activities, alongside the aforementioned secondary research, were deployed to answer this: a personal garment experiment and an early experiment in a group workshop setting.

## Personal Garment Experiment

Self-Translation  
Information Curation

Self-as-maker as a point of view is central to the garment interventions done during the time of personal garment experimentation. In this early stage activity, a white T-shirt becomes the canvas to display a curated set of news headlines, each interpreted through my personal response to the content, with a focus on telling narratives through physical interventions on the garment.

The 'self-translation' information curation approach resulted in five headlines from various North American news sources. I have selected news headlines that allow me to visualize possible alterations into the T-shirts. Some articles deal directly with issues of sexuality and the body, while others deal with the issues of materiality and popular culture. These news headlines have largely been crafted to fit the sound and feel of each news source which adds another level of bias that the reader experiences. I found that one of the aspects that I wanted to experiment with was the role of signification in terms of news headlines as (supported) by the semiotic structure of a headline that is different from conversational language structure.



Fig 6. Garment modification process and results of the Personal Garment Experiment. Headlines taken from CBC.ca, NYTimes.com, DailyMail.co.uk and Washington-Post.com

To conduct the garment modification exploration, I took on the role of a 'hacktivist', a term used by Otto von Busch (2008) in his PhD Thesis *FASHION-able*. In the document von Busch elaborated on the practice of 'fashion hacktivism' which uses fashion as a form of social activism by inviting participants to 'hack' clothing items as a mean of empowerment. It deals with the fusing of the role of clothing and personal identity of its wearer.

Staying true to the role of a fashion hacktivist, it was a conscious decision from my end to tweak the T-shirts in a way that would be representative of the headlines. Most of the physical garment modification both visually represent selected news headlines and my personal relationship to the articles. In the case of a Washington Post article: "White House's plans to counter climate science reports 'will erode our national security,' 58 former officials warn", the burning of the T-shirt symbolizes the erosion of national security that was mentioned in the article. It also references forest fires that has escalated in the recent years due to global warming. With a CBC news headline: "Teacher shown door after Christian school discovers she had sex 'outside of a heterosexual marriage'" the intervention brought forward a personal narrative experienced by myself. Drawing from my own personal experience in the past I was looking for ways to get a female wearer, alluding to the female subject in the article, to potentially be expelled from the school that was mentioned. This is done by exposing the arms, the cleavage area and the belly button. There's also the 'lace print' that was mostly done to expose the body in the New York Times news headline: "'You Have to Pay With Your Body': The Hidden Nightmare of Sexual Violence on the Border", alluding to barbed wire in the border. All of the devised interventions to the garment was designed and implemented with the body politics in mind.

The garment modification process provoked many personal insights which is largely the result of a 'research through design' approach. By doing alterations on the clothing, taking into account the body politics of the created garments, I realize just how individualized and personal these garment modifications are. While at the same time, I also challenged myself to create interventions that are purely ideal without much consideration for 'politeness' factor or social conformity of the wearer. Therefore, this experimentation becomes a personal fashion semiotic exercise which prior to this action I have little knowledge of. Drawing on sociologist Sharon Zukin's (2018) words on understanding the world through skill and craftsmanship, she explain this method as:

*"a sensory appreciation of a product's qualities, a modest understanding of different production techniques, and the imagination to construct a product's 'back story' – a social narrative of the cultural tradition from which the product comes."*

Having this method in mind, it becomes clear that a group workshop setting could provide a powerful platform to gather various individual narrative through making.



## Early Implementation of Group Workshop

### "Cut and Paste" Information Curation

One of the main learning outcomes during the personal garment experimentation was the necessity of receiving feedback regarding the research framework. In many ways the past comments about improving the quality of the garments have been useful, but feedback regarding my methodology or the conceptual arguments would be crucial in shaping a workshop format for subsequent actions that will resonate. To answer these challenges I created a couple of actions that would allow for a higher level interaction with audiences.

Complementary to the hacktivist role which von Busch (2008) elaborated, he posited that the potential a designer has by being an *intensifier*. He further elaborated that:

*"A key ability in an intensifying role lies in the capability to spot and reveal existing potentialities and initiatives. These could be found by coincidence or by careful mapping and systematic curiosity. These local initiatives are then supported and amplified through situated practices and workshops with the aim of energizing existing and emergent processes and intensities, promoting local potentialities. Here the role of the designer becomes manifold. Both on a social level, facilitating processes through practical organizing, and also on a craft level, a hands-on tool provider, re-skilling teacher and blacksmith."*

It is through this principle that a group workshop format was created. A workshop with a gathered audience would provide physical references as a point of comparison to my own clothing interventions in the past. This workshop was held involving 16 Master of Design students and educators. Using school materials and additional tools that are available at hand, they would create clothing interventions using white T-shirts and thirty randomly selected headlines from news sites that were previously used for the personal garment experiment. The groups were given fifteen minutes to create these new garments and present after the time is up. In this workshop, thirty randomized news headlines were diverse in regards to its content: ranging from politics, pop culture, economics, all are relevant to a North American context. A 'cut-and-paste' information curation method is encouraged for participants to use, hence creating messaging results on garment that are highly personal with unpredictable results.



Fig 7. Participants action during Early Implementation of Group Workshop



Out of the seven T-shirts that were created, practically none resemble one another. Most of the interventions that were created showed the level of creativity that a group of Master of Design students and teachers would have. Considering how many of the materials at hand are potential health hazard, most of the garment experimentation take form in ways that are quite wearable were they done in a more professional manner. Some of them such as the post-its covered shirt, body slasher T-shirt and the coffee stained T-shirt showed a more outlandish interventions that is s literal interpretation of the messages brought upon by the headlines chosen. However, the most crucial part of the workshop were the last portion where I received direct feedbacks regarding the news headline curation process and the appropriative manner of some of these interventions. These feedbacks contribute a lot into shaping a workshop form that reaches a wider scope of potential audiences. The feedbacks also influenced some intervention methods practiced into creating garments for the exhibition.



Fig 8. Exhibit displayed in Emily Carr University consisting of all garments done during the early experimentation process.

# InfoWear through Individual Workshops

Media Neutral  
Information Curation

Media Representative  
Information Curation

Self-Translation  
Information Curation

This ‘individual workshop’ is designed to accommodate some willing participants travel plans during the summer period. It started from the need to answer a critical research inquiry, on how will the garments perform in a real life context. To accomplish the task of answering this question, a set of provocations were created for the participants. One aspect that determines the questions was the emphasis in giving full participatory agency in the exercise. This is done in the hopes to create garment interventions that are individually unique according to each wearer’s preference and taste (within the constraint of the exercise).

In total, 10 individuals participated over the course of the summer in various locations. The same set of provocations were given to each and resulted in numerous different ways. Two individuals selected the headlines themselves, while the rest gave some suggestions on what topic I could select the headlines from. Across the board, there were few physical garment interventions. Some headlines were placed on the garment in a D-I-Y manner using fabric pens.

The participants were chosen from a pool of individuals whom I have personal relationship with in various capacities. This is partly done due to the personal nature of these garments, alongside the need to analyze their personal background. Being familiar with their history and personal preferences, I was able to easily analyze how connected their chosen headlines are with their socio-political background.

The headlines chosen contrast deeply to each other in the end. By communicating with the participants during the headline selection process, I was able to gather some insights regarding the motives behind the choices. Largely, the headlines that were chosen would mirror a participant’s professional life/career choices. This, perhaps, was the easiest to predict. The experience that the wearers had wearing it however were much more varied. There are two distinct groups of experiences which differs in terms of the number and the quality of the conversations had while wearing the garment. The individuals that I reached out to, and my own experience during a period of travel.



Fig 9. Some of the T-shirts produced by participants during the Individual Workshop. Headlines above taken from FastCompany.com and NationalPost.com



Across the board, all the participants argued that casual conversations were few in-between. If they do exist, it is highly likely it would happen in a familiar setting with individuals that know them personally. This includes co-workers, colleagues, service workers. However, there happen to be a consistent amount of in-depth conversation that happened with individuals who they share common interests with or close friends and family members. In the case of Adine Halim, this instance happen during an exhibit visitation with three artists-in-residence. Though they were not well-acquainted with each other before, the shared personal experience around the issue raised in the headline seem to be a catalyst for an analytical conversation between the garment wearer and the audience. With Rhian Tate, this happened with some family members (sister and mother) during a routine family gathering. With Benjamin Espinosa, the conversation had with a distant family member also became an informational piece due to a lack of contextual knowledge.

This contrasts quite a bit with my personal experimentation. Both of the T-shirts that I wore during my time in Vancouver, NYC and Los Angeles elicit many casual responses from subjects that include onlookers on the street, service and retail workers, and restaurant patrons. They ranged from questions on the nature of the T-shirt, compliments, and questions regarding the source of the garment. Some of these questions also include inquiries into the commercial availability of the garments. However, in-depth conversations that I had with colleagues and friends mimic the experiences the other participants had. However, an aspect that we need to keep in mind is my level of familiarity with the project compared to the rest of the participants.

Another aspect that some participants verbally expressed to be influential of the responses they received is the cultural norms of the location they situate the garments in. This might be linked to two factors: level of contextual knowledge of the surroundings with the headline and local cultural norms that might have affected the number of encounters the wearers had with audiences. In the case of Wuchen, it was mentioned that though the headline is taken from a local context, it is considered culturally 'taboo' for individuals to talk to strangers on a public setting. This might have resulted in a fewer number of encounters. When we contrast the experience that Benjamin and I had in New York City, the contextual knowledge of headlines worn could have been a factor that is evident. The garment that I wore was taken from a local media source (The New York Times) and contained information that would be easily understood by casual onlookers. The headline that Benjamin wore was taken from a Canadian news source (National Post) containing information regarding a local issue.

**Fig 10.** Images of participants performing the produced T-shirts in Jakarta, New York City and Los Angeles.



Another aspect that some participants verbally expressed to be influential of the responses they received is the cultural norms of the location they situate the garments in. This might be linked to two factors: level of contextual knowledge of the surroundings with the headline and local cultural norms that might have affected the number of encounters the wearers had with audiences. In the case of Wuchen, it was mentioned that though the headline is taken from a local context, it is considered culturally 'taboo' for individuals to talk to strangers on a public setting. This might have resulted in a fewer number of encounters. When we contrast the experience that Benjamin and I had in New York City, the contextual knowledge of headlines worn could have been a factor that is evident. The garment that I wore was taken from a local media source (The New York Times) and contained information that would be easily understood by casual onlookers. The headline that Benjamin wore was taken from a Canadian news source (National Post) containing information regarding a local issue.

This experimentation, with all the limitations that it had, garnered potentially influential inputs and some directions to move forward. One undeniable aspect which could prove to be a challenge would be the amount of in-depth conversations that have happened in the past. Two aspects come to mind: the design of the garment as it stands and the amount of free agency in the participatory experimentation. While giving a complete control allows for an unadulterated view of each participants' point of view, it might not be the most effective method going forward. While a further experimentation into the design of the messaging on the garments will be conducted, there would need to be additional steps in the inquiry process. A system that could be implemented in the future could take shape in a "direct-with" instead of "direct-from" the participants. The question that comes to mind would be how would a different garment/messaging design, in a different workshop format perform.

# InfoWear through Group Workshop

Op-Ed  
Information Curation

The main objective for a new form of workshop implementation is to answer inputs derived from previous action on variations of the information display. More so, different forms shaped mainly through participatory agency. Another aspect to this feedback is to increase potential audience engagements with the information displayed. How would the wearer be able to manipulate the information on garment to provoke a more critical reaction? This is done in the order to start a conversation that will begin to unpack the news displayed in a critical manner.

A reading that shaped the workshop is in the form of a research paper, conducted by Alexander Coppock, Emily Ekins and David Kirby of Yale University. The study seeks to discover the long-lasting effect of opinion editorial section on newspapers. It particularly focused on the difference of its power of persuasion among elites and the general public. The op-ed column debuted by The New York Times in September of 1970 to “create a forum to host a variety of outside experts to articulate their arguments and engage in the ‘exchange and clash of ideas’ for the benefit of the general public, their intended audience” (Coppock et al., 2018).

The result of the study proved that the Op-Ed column largely is effective in persuading the minds of readers across the political spectrum and socio-economic barrier. Through the experiment, the three found out that Op-Eds are persuasive to both mass public and elites, but marginally more persuasive among the mass public. This finding becomes the grounding for the moving parts of the subsequent workshop that was held. By using the framework of opinion editorial, the workshop would allow participants to create own headlines according to their personal beliefs. Yet, the result would still be in the form of news publication content.

Using a tactic that was implemented in the individual workshops, a group workshop is done in a Master of Design class setting. A week before the workshop was held participants were given a questionnaire with prompts regarding their personal experience with a piece of information. The questionnaire asked the participants to record a recent experience when a piece of information they received altered a preconceived idea or belief they previously held, and which medium did they received the information through. Relevant readings were also given in advance as guidance. They include a short form version of the Yale research paper finding, Chomsky’s Media Control (2011), a commentary from Tank magazine on challenging establishment media and an article on The Guardian on Neil Postman’s view of information culture in the future (Bastani, 2019) (Postman, 2018).

## Form of Questionnaire

**When was the last time you received a piece of information that challenges your preconceived idea/opinion?**

**Who delivered the information? What was the medium?**

**How did this new piece of information influence your actions/life decisions?**

In the workshop participants were given 50 minutes in total. 30 minutes were spent in the beginning to make their own Op-Ed headlines based on previously filled questionnaire to be worn on a garment. They were given two options: a paper canvas in the form of a T-shirt and a tote bag. Op-Ed writing principles written by McGill University were displayed on the room to guide the participants in making an effective and concise Op-Ed content. The last 20 minutes then was used as a time for critical group discussion regarding the readings given and how it shaped the forms of the exercise.

The results of the Op-Ed workshop varied greatly from each other. In total, there were three main forms of content that the participants created: A series of word provocations, a series of graphical provocations and a series that uses both word and graphical provocations.

Since the garments have not been deployed outside of the workshop setting it would be hard to make hypotheses on their subsequent impact on reactions that they will gather. However, the series of word provocations proved to be the closest in form to an Op-Ed article headline and might prove to be more successful in delivering the participants point-of-view/personal statement. While the series of graphical provocations work well in the context of a custom-made garment, it is difficult to know how effective they would work in its effort to incite conversations about a particular topic it carries.



**Fig 11. Images of group workshop in Emily Carr University through Op-Ed information curation.**

Throughout the second half portion of the workshop, several differing comments about the efficacy of the workshop were discussed. There were several comments on the overall time allotted for each sections and the way they were arranged. The way discussion time was arranged to happen post-making session did not allow the participants to properly engage and dissect aforementioned readings in a critical way. This would have allowed the participants to alter the mechanism in which they would create the fabricated Op-Ed content in a more effective way.

One particular participant felt particularly empowered by the framework of the workshop. They attest to the benefit of the workshop as a facilitator to deliver a personal testimony. It provides a platform where they felt secure enough to voice an opinion that they had long held into words. In contrast, another participant made a comparison to a workshop that was held in the spring. In that instance, the participants were allowed to create information display on garment based on previously curated news headlines instead of having to write one on their own. They felt that the mechanisms of the current workshop is challenging in contrast to a previous one.

OPINION



**ARE MIGRANT  
WORKERS A  
DISPOSABLE  
RESOURCE?**

OPINION



**DO WE REALLY  
NEED WHAT  
WE THINK WE  
NEED?!**

Opinion



Everybody smokes  
in Delhi.



Even the women.

Opinion



**WHERE  
DOES YOUR  
RECYCLING GO?**

Opinion



**You Can Train Harder  
To Prove The Scientist  
And Critics Wrong**

Opinion



**DICK CHENEY AND  
DONALD TRUMP  
GO HUNTING....  
BIDEN 2020**

Opinion



**It's Not My  
Job To  
Explain This  
T-Shirt**

Opinion



**पंडित  
DON'T  
PREACH**



## Word and Graphical Provocation Series

### Opinion

#### Singh Says

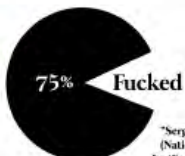


**"Drink Liberal-Lite  
It's like the original,  
now with Dental!"**



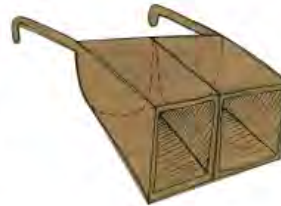
### Opinion

**Whenever I wonder if I  
should go back home, I  
remember my home  
makes that choice for me.**



"Sergio Clavito, president of ANIF (National Association of Financial Institutions) proposal of lowering the minimum wage to 75% for people under 15 years old for a year."

## Graphical Provocation Series



# InfoWear through Exhibit

Media Representative  
Information Curation

This exhibit highly differs from other forms of engagement that the project offers. In this scenario, users and audiences as consumers lie at the heart of the action. 10 T-shirts and 10 canvas bags are produced with 'Media Representative' information curation method through my personal point-of-view. The news headlines selected ranged in topics from tech, pop culture zeitgeist, most are relevant to North American context. Single-headline placement and multi-headline placement methods were both utilized throughout the products. There is a heavy emphasis on industry-level production quality on the displayed garment, which is made evident from official labeling on T-shirts and tags attached on all. An info banner is displayed in the background as a brief introduction to the project.

Starting from the headlines: they are deeply entrenched in my personal narratives, socio-political background and professional background. From the single-headline display to the multi-headline display, most of the headlines that were curated mimic a distinctive personality that is an extension of my own: humor, sarcasm, irony are visibly prominent.

The display of the exhibit has three levels of user and audience engagement: Look-and-feel, point-of-purchase and direct communication. Throughout the three day exhibit, each level of engagement resulted in various responses. 'Look-and-feel' is the most straightforward of the three, with it needing the least involvement. The exhibit: which involves 20 garments on a rack display and an informational banner consisting the research project's aims and goals, situated in an open space art sale environment invite audiences to visually and physically interact with the works. 'Point-of-purchase' approach, provided by the art sale platform, provides a chance for potential users to engage with the exhibit through a monetary exchange, evocative of the manner in which users would interact with online news content through paywalls. 'Direct communication' approach is provided post-garment purchase, in a form of a garment tag. It invites potential users to directly reach out to the research project by providing visual documentation of them interacting with the garments on the street.



Fig 12. Images of InfoWear through Exhibit held during Student Art Sale 2019 in Emily Carr University.



Look-and-feel, as the most approachable of the three, garnered the most responses. With periods of ups and downs, nearly 60% of all the art sale visitors approached the exhibit by viewing the exhibit, touching the garments and most responded through verbal communication to other visitors. Compared to the look-and-feel approach, the other engagement touchpoints were less popular. One simple reasoning that could explain this scenario are the level of involvements by users and audiences within each approach. Not only do users need to involve more actions with point-of-purchase and direct communication approaches, there are also monetary factor and extra time needed to make a direct contact. This result was comparable with feedbacks given during a critique session of the exhibit involving a group of master of design students and educators.

In this critique session, a couple of pointers were raised regarding the nature of the engagement touchpoints that the exhibit provided. One being the limitations 'point-of-purchase' approach could pose to potentially rewarding user engagements. A more conventional art or design exhibit that is more cognisant of its potential immersive nature of interactions could provide the project with various responses that are unexpected, further than an audience engagements that could only be done post-purchase. This point-of-view would alter the more conventional of nature of the engagement mechanisms deployed in this exhibit. Clothing tags that provide AR scanning capabilities, exhibit display that encourages audiences to visually document it on the spot



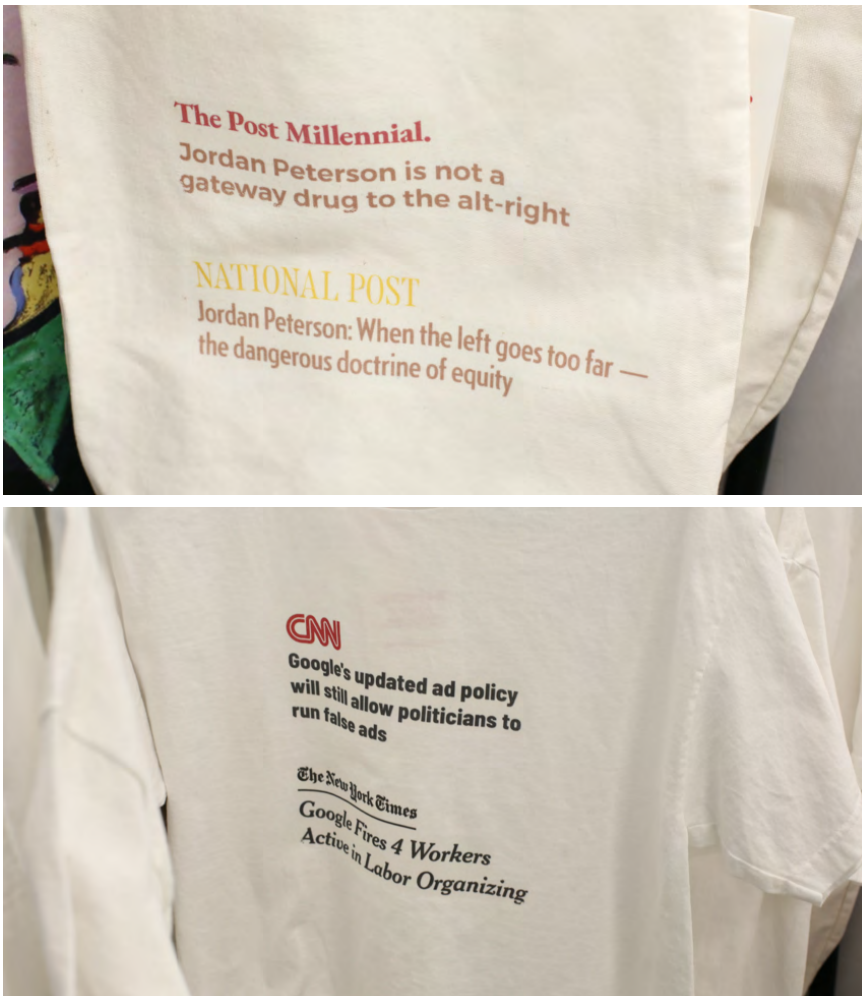


Fig 14. Some garments produced for the InfoWear Exhibit.

are amongst specific comments given in the session. Secondly, it would be beneficial to be cognisant of the nature of curation the news headlines displayed are filtered through and making the curation mechanism to be approachable to the audiences. Some of the news headlines displayed evocative of a Twitter “retweet” mechanism, what are the possibilities and implications of having a physical manifestation of an interactive “retweet” mechanism.

However, limitations of an art fair display considered, the fairly popular ‘look-and-feel’ approach provided an evidence of possible mass interactivity of the project in a highly curated, indoor setting. With audience commentaries ranging from appraisals to contemplative engagements with a personal narratives evoke through multiple headline display, it is worth noting the high amount of interactions already made through touchpoints in the current exhibit. It also opens up possibilities of a separate exhibition dedicated for the project.

# Analysis & Reflection

There were three main factors within the research interactions which influence the results of the research project:

1. Types of information curation within each actions
2. Performative nature of wearing the garments
3. Interactions among participants and audiences.

By analyzing these three factors we can notice patterns that could inform the direction of the future research and actions.

## Types of information curation within each actions

Within specific actions throughout the project, one important category of difference is between *information reposting* mechanism (attributed to 'Media Neutral', 'Media Representative', 'Cut-and-Paste' and 'Self-Translation' methods) and *information creation* mechanism (attributed to 'Op-Ed' method). Within the *information reposting* mechanism, evocative of our behaviour on social media platforms, most users find the methods incorporated to be easier to follow and provocative enough for interactions with audiences. The news headlines displayed, especially when visually paired with the news source, provides a more effective way for audiences to understand and interact with the issue brought up by the headline. These two mechanisms have different results in the effect they had in influencing internal dialogues within a participant's psyche.

## Performative nature of wearing the garments

These two garment forms created different results in the interaction and performativity aspect. The early experimentation results in many garments that were inherently unwearable for two different reasons: the health hazard that some materials will inflict on the body and the feeling of intimidation that the fashion semiotics inflicted on the garments have on the participants. However, some garments were wearable enough for some participants to perform and resulted in unique, one-of-a-kind DIY garments that are more of a personal statement than an easily replicable clothing piece. For instance, a garment that Benjamin wore during his travel period in NYC was singed and burned just enough to convey his point-of-view complementary to the news headline printed on the garment. Another example would be a cropped T-shirt with names of New Zealand bombing victims which, married with a minute of silence, became a performative piece. In a sense, this garment creation form becomes a performative extension of a participant's narrative and point of view that they bring into the garment as an action.

## Interactions among participants and audiences.

What the latter, simpler and more straightforward garment form lacks in individual performative aspect, it makes up in the interactions that the participants had while they wore the garments. A simple, unadulterated white T-shirt, with a news headline clearly printed and the news source highly visible, seemingly allowed the participants to function as a 'walking billboard', in the sense that their body became a canvas where the news headline commanded attention of audiences. Because of the simplicity of the clothing form, participants very often wore the garment while they went about with their daily routine where they were physically confronted by other individuals within their social and

garment worn. Upon observation, casual interactions on the street are plentiful. They range from complementary comments about the garment, brief verbal inquiry upon the nature of the project, and some even lead to group talks within their circles about the nature of messaging on garments. However, deeper conversations that allowed them to verbally unpack preconceived notions about the news headlines they were wearing typically happened within a participant's close group of individuals: family members and partners. A plain T-shirt with a clearly printed news headline on top allowed the garment to be inherently an entity separate from the participants wearing them.

### Research Outcomes

The results aforementioned refer to the physical garment result and the psychological internal discourse among the participants. It's important to see both the garment result of the project and the internal dialogue of the participants, particularly how they start to unpack their personalized media bubble. Two different types of garments were produced as a result of different forms of individual participation, starting from the early experimentation project phase. The garments produced in this phase were highly experimental in terms of wearability and cohesion of messaging on clothing. Unconventional materials were used (staplers, duct tapes, office supplies) to visually convey a participant's point of view of a particular news material. This method results in garments imbued with a highly particular and individualized messaging which uses fashion semiotics heavily. Contrast this to the latter garment iterations that were heavily influenced by Munoz's and Kim's creative recommendation to lean in on actual worded semiotics of the news headlines. Within the three latter InfoWear iterations, the garments focused on the sole function of carrying headlines, and are largely unadulterated physically.

A more significant result of the project is attributed to the psychological results within a participant's psyche. The different results from headlines coming from pre-existing news sources compared to fabricated news headlines by participants have different impact in a person's internal analysis of the experience. While the pre-existing news headline display approach garnered more casual interactions on the street, conversations that unpack the nature of the news headline very often happened within a participant's familiar social circles: with close family members, friends, and colleagues. It is within this space that the fabricated headlines were effective as well. However, the pre-existing news headlines seemed to provoke deeper and more compelling conversations compared to the fabricated headlines. The result suggested that while the fabricated information pieces can deliver an issue that is more personalized in nature, a user's personal bias within the 'Op-Ed' curation process can prevent potentially unexpected conversations with audiences. This can result in an internal reflection on a participant's mind on the nature of socio-political affiliations of their social circles. Participants may have gone out into the world with a preconceived notions of the interactions that would happen. Displaying a personal narrative through clothing that does not result in the types of interactions that one expected poses a challenge on the gravity of the issues on a participant's mind. The resulting thought process pushes a participant out of their comfort zone and opens a pathway towards unpacking their personalized media bubble.

# Future Direction

In its current form of implementation, the research project encourages participants to 'perform' garments they have made, visually documenting the experience, and reflecting internally on the results. However, to delve deeper into the multidisciplinary nature of the research inquiry, the project could benefit from requiring a '360' participation in which participants follow previously agreed upon and enforced guidelines concerning the visual documentation and locations where the garments could be worn. This way, the project allows for a natural social media recycling process where the garments would have multiple touchpoints other than the street that could encourage further engagements with a wider scope of audiences.

The methodology of the research project, which consist of multiple new curation mechanism could benefit from further exploration in future iteration of the project. As it stands, four new curation related to the *information curation* mechanism were more effective in its mission to replicate each participant's media environment. The wide-reaching, scattershot nature of the mechanism of information curation produced similarly wide-arrange and varied garment results, with a focus on individual agency. However, in the future the methodology may benefit from a deeper focus on *information curation* method which retains visual elements of pre-existing news headlines.

Furthermore, there are three elements within the research space that could benefit from further evolution in form, or to potentially inform other practices.

1. The material aspect
2. The workshop framework
3. Research framework as publication

## The Material Aspect

The material aspect of the project as it stands alleviates the pressure upon users to be an expert in fashion semiotics. However, a more diverse clothing options and forms from myself and the users could open up pathways that perhaps T-shirts and canvas bags were not capable of doing. A deeper critical analysis which could open up would be, what are the benefits which the medium of clothing could bring forward in a digital-first, sustainable era?

## The Workshop Framework

As it stands, the current workshop iterations have provided a platform for participants inside and outside of the field of design to critically engage with news headlines in an immersive way. Testimonies gathered proved that individuals-at-large do have interest in developing a more critical mindset to news consumption. A future workshop implementation geared towards younger and senior audiences, particularly those who are more susceptible to falsified



Fig 15. Example of the media recycling method. Tote bag produced during the group workshop posted as an Instagram Story

information online, would be of benefit. A particular emphasis would be to develop news literacy among this population through information curation methods previously enacted by participants. Building an interest in news readership, making self-fabricated news headlines with emphasis in factual information and developing a critical eye in deciphering meanings behind pre-existing news headlines are actions that could be involved in a workshop with or without garments.

### Research Framework as Publication

The research framework that was developed has potential for further experimentation and dissemination which would bring insights to the current media platform. One obvious pathway is developing a publication or media platform which taps into user-generated content as a main element. A benefit which this publication form could present is storytelling which shines a light on non-mainstream issues. A current relevant example is Gay Mag, which was started by Roxane Gay on Medium.com (<https://gay.medium.com/>). Another form which this could evolve to, is the incorporation of non-conventional mediums for storytelling into publication. Similar to the usage of clothing in this project, other mediums of engagement could be integrated to foster a critical information dissemination.

A final aspect of the project which could prove to be increasingly relevant within the digital information space is perhaps the tactile form of 'augmented information' on a real-life subject and object. As a new form of information technology, augmented reality or AR is permeating through the most popular of social media platforms, through a report by Chuck Martin on MediaPost (2019). Current implementations include a gaming app (Pokemon Go), widely used social media platforms (Snapchat, TikTok, Instagram through Face Filters, Facebook), and various utility apps (Google Translate, Google Maps, Amazon). Albeit the niche aspect of the project form, as augmented reality technology mature we will continue to see the blurring of real-life subjects and digital forms of information on our devices (Graham, 2020).

This begs the question, how can designers implement a critical methodology which would foster a better information realm to avoid issues pertaining digital information platforms that we are facing today? The gravity of current fake news, information overload, and resonance of user-generated content would be amplified by this new set of technologies. In a sense, the form of the research project exist in this realization and impending future. The next steps would be to widen the scope of this inquiry, conceptualize this realm of 'augmented information' and implement news curation mechanism for various use cases within this realm.

In the past years, the late Steve Jobs often talked about the premise of the intersection of technology and liberal arts in his public keynotes. He often cited this knowledge as the grounding principle of products developed by Apple in its mission to serve highly accessible products towards its consumers. However, a crucial aspect in the current digital information era is that this premise is not only relevant towards the designers and the makers, but also the consumer, the end user, or in the case of this project the readers. The challenge, and the hope, in the current time is to develop this intersection further by integrating the aspect of humanities in a collective mission towards intentionality and knowledge of the repercussions in the field of design.



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# Appendices

The following are extensive visual documentations of each research iterations. They are complementary to previously added images within each document sections

## Appendix 1 Personal Garment Experimentations

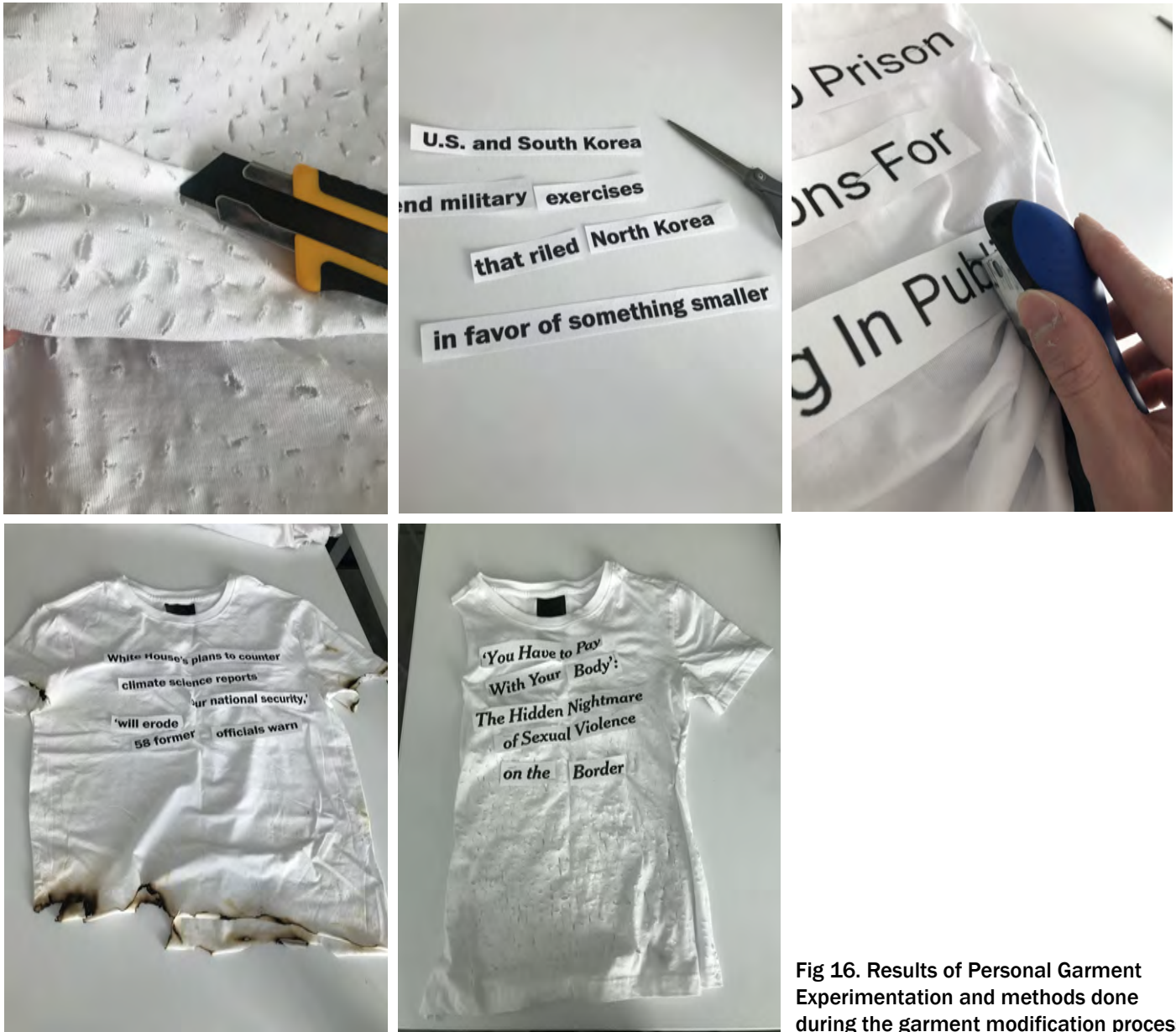
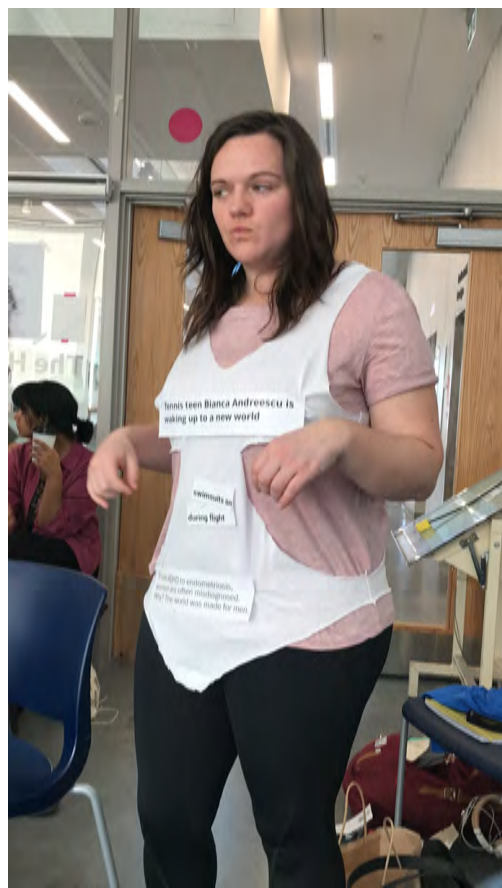


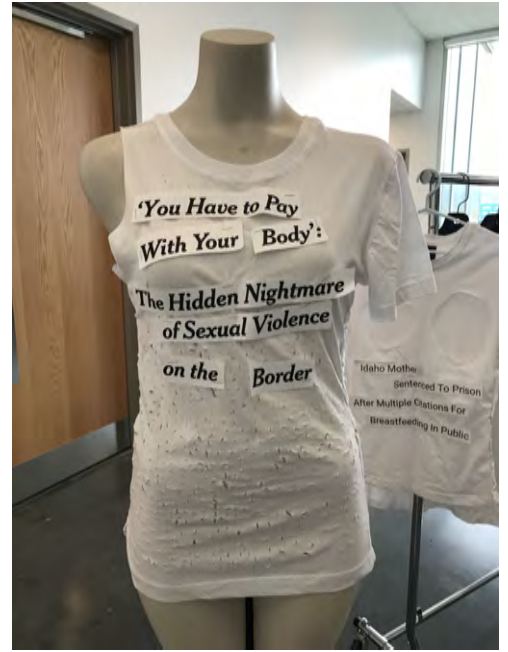
Fig 16. Results of Personal Garment Experimentation and methods done during the garment modification process.



Appendix 2

Early Implementation of Group Workshop





**Fig 17** (Previous Page). Various shots of participants' actions during Early Implementation of Group Workshop

**Fig 18** (This Page). Garments exhibit in Emily Carr University as a result of early phase experimentations



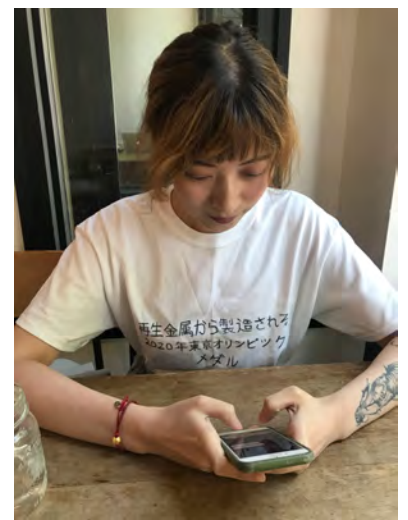
## Appendix 3

### InfoWear through Individual Workshops













<b>Adine Halim</b>	Headline related to her profession as a visual artist - local news source	Few casual conversations In-depth conversation with three artists in a gallery exhibit, a friend and a partner. Worn in Jakarta
<b>Wuchen</b>	Headline related to an upcoming event in local context (2020 Tokyo Olympics) - local news source	Few casual conversations In-depth conversation with a good friend and travel partner in Tokyo
<b>Benjamin Espinosa</b>	Headline related to local issue in home base - local news source, worn abroad	Few casual conversations In-depth conversation with a distant family member in NYC
<b>Rhian Tate</b>	Headline related to her profession as a designer - global news source	Few casual conversations In-depth conversation with some co-workers and family member in Vancouver
<b>Maggie Michella and Family</b>	Headline related to her profession as an art director - global news source	Some casual conversations In-depth conversation with friends and colleagues in Los Angeles
<b>Jonathan Yaputra</b>	Headline related to local context - local and foreign news source	Plenty of casual conversations in the forms of questions, compliments, inquiry of availability In-depth conversation with friends and colleagues in NYC, Los Angeles and Vancouver

## Appendix 4

### InfoWear through Group Workshop



Fig 19. Various shots of participants' actions during a Group Workshop setting.



When was the last time you received a piece of information that challenges your preconceived idea/opinion?

Last night I saw in on a friend's ins story that there has been allegedly ~~very~~ two very recent attempted abductions of by car in Vancouver. One happened very close to Commercial Dr. which is where I live. Although I didn't see any news coverage of these two incidents and am not sure of the authenticity it still challenged my idea that Vancouver is a very safe place to live and go out alone after dark.

Who delivered the information? What was the medium?

A friend who screenshot of her friend who took a screenshot of her friend's Instagram Story. (Many many reposts)

How did this new piece of information influence your actions/life decisions?

I had a second thought about going to late night movies but still decided to go. Just will pay more attention to any suspicious people or vehicles when I am on the street at midnight.

Name: Hailey

When was the last time you received a piece of information that challenges your preconceived idea/opinion?

On a Facebook group (2000 white VANCOUVER), someone wrote a post about how she spotted a "rich, white woman (in a white car)" taking recycling out of people's backyards a day before the collection and how do not a the "dirty addicts" or not well to do people who are doing this anymore. Basically, she was more offended that someone who would make a collection - rather a normal result every time you bring a recycling to a house. My opinion of decent matter who did it without them knowing was not.

Who delivered the information? What was the medium?

group members of 2000 white Vancouver Facebook group

Post

How did this new piece of information influence your actions/life decisions?

\* didn't really influence but made me think about how it's all about appearance like we're trying to always go through recycling items to stores but not willing to do that by our recycling.

BEHAN

Name: Mehdi

When was the last time you received a piece of information that challenges your preconceived idea/opinion?

We been receiving loads of information that are absolutely horrid, but to name the last one, it's about some revelations made by the Interp regarding Brazil's Federal Prosecution institution (if not illegal) to press info and remove from the government the Labour Party. A former president of the Republic is in jail because of these strategies and we are so willing to free him up.

Who delivered the information? What was the medium?

Olivia Griswold's portal "The Intercept Brazil"

How did this new piece of information influence your actions/life decisions?

That backs up what everyone from the left wing of that have believed in Brazil always knew. These revelations are important because it somehow brings awareness to the ones fooled by the judiciary and conservative media.

Name: Ricardo



Fig 20 (Above). Samples of questionnaire distributed to participants leading to the Group Workshop.

Fig 21 (Left). A garment result performed in New Delhi.



## Appendix 5

### InfoWear through Exhibit



Fig 22. Shot of InfoWear Exhibit, garment tag and garment produced.

