

UPCYCLING THE ROLE OF DRESS IN FEMALE AGING – FASHION, STYLING AND THE UNDER-REPRESENTED.

TINA HAAGENSEN

This project is about upcycling the role of fashion in female aging, to challenge stereotypes and social stigma directed towards aging women through the narrative of *"The New Tanten"*.

I have executed this through my design practice, where I have created a wardrobe for a re-imagined version of Tanten.



My "Twinsy" Danielle Korneliussen, for Steen & Strøm campaign.

I went into the MA program aiming to expand my practice as a designer. I was not sure how this would play out, but I knew I wanted to explore the possibilities of textile development, and to work with beauty.



Designerspirene/Project Runway Norway 2007. Models Heartbreak Pholk. Photo Strix/TV3.

"Tina, you challenge how we look at clothes, you bring in something new and you are in many ways controversial. You have a fighter in you, on behalf of the beauty in the world, which is rare". Peter Løchstøer, 2007.

The pursuit of beauty is my signature.

Beauty speaks to the emotions and describes how one observes something, while truth speaks to the intellect and describes how something is, what exists.

From my viewpoint, staying true to oneself and one's work is a form of beauty.

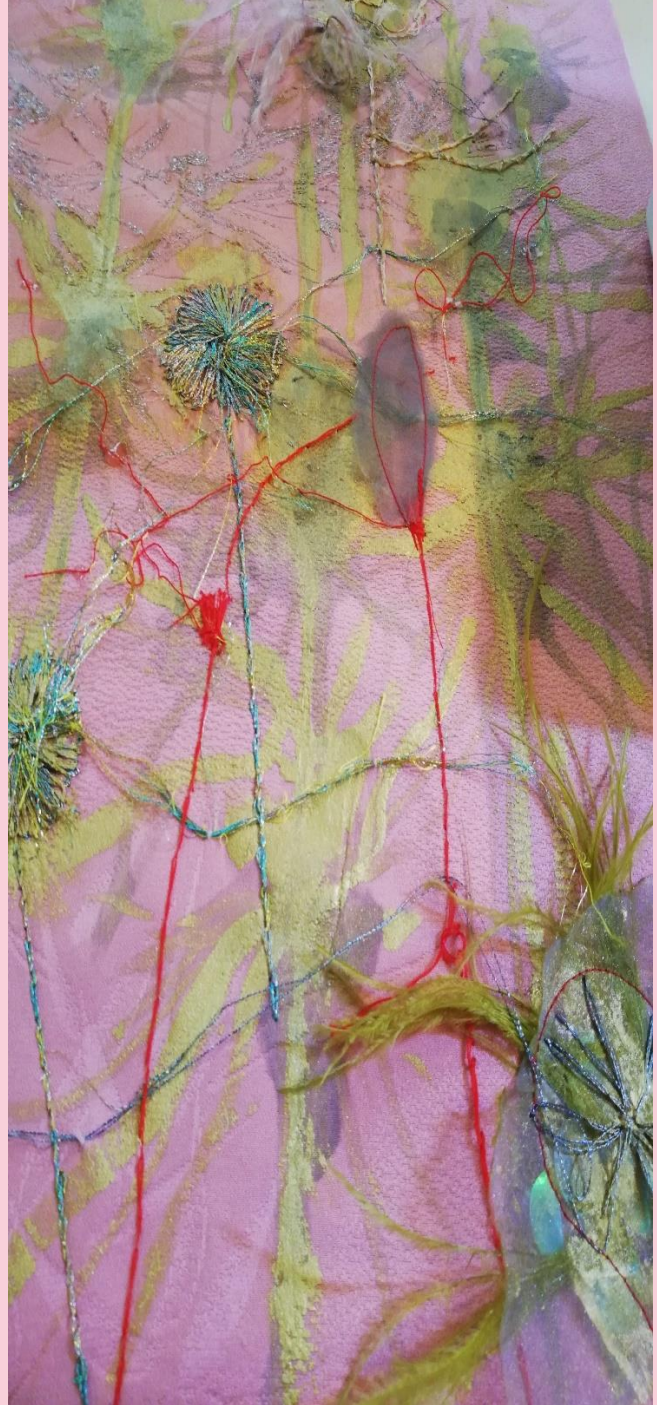
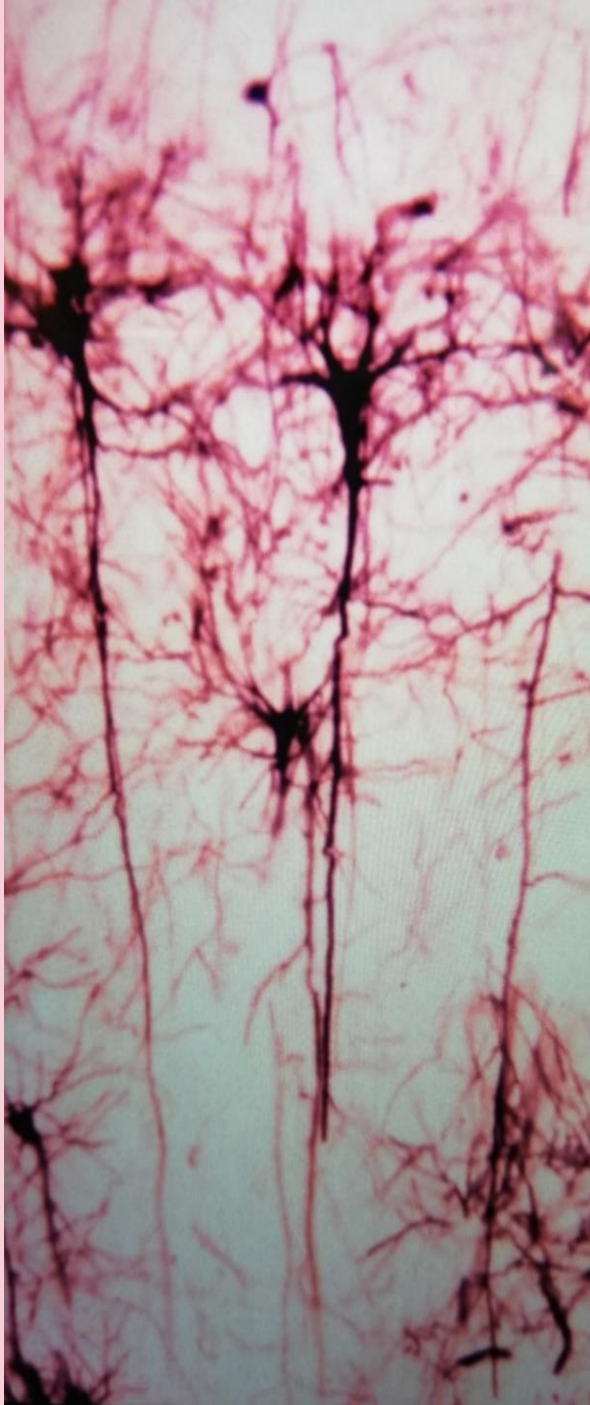
However, beauty takes on many forms, and not all art is beautiful.

But on a certain level the truth itself is beautiful, even if it shows ugliness.

Whatever we consider beautiful evokes feelings. Our happiness and sadness, delights and disgusts are all closely linked to our nervous system.

When we are exposed to beauty, the pleasure and reward center is switched on and activates a feeling of euphoria.

But there is also a connection between beauty and the darker side of life, and the beautification of the gloomy, disturbing and manic.



Manifesto of Beauty. Re-creating *Astrocyte* cells in the central nervous system as flowers: embroidery on upcycled Kimono silk fabric. TINA HAAGENSEN design ©

I am interested in where we draw the line between the traditionally beautiful, and where it becomes excessive, pushing "beauty" into the tasteless and gaudy. Even so, I believe there is value and beauty of its own in becoming a character; building an identity and a persona through self-expression - even in defiance of what is commonly regarded as beautiful.

"Le laid ga peut devenir beau, le joli jamais - The ugly can be beautiful, the pretty – never". Paul Gauguin



Collab with MA Dance. *Preserving flesh in plastic wrapping.*
(Group project: Rintaro, Lisa, Tina).



Bunad-inspired blouse upcycled from vintage Japanese silk Kimono fabric.
TINA HAAGENSEN design ©

Years of experience and knowledge from the textile and fashion industry, and a background as a designer and visual merchandiser, I still have the urge to cultivate and expand my own design expression by constantly moving forward with a curious mind.



Own-design fabric dressed on the moving body. TINA HAAGENSEN design ©

My primary intention for the MA was to give myself time to reflect on my needs as a designer, both on a theoretical and a practical level.

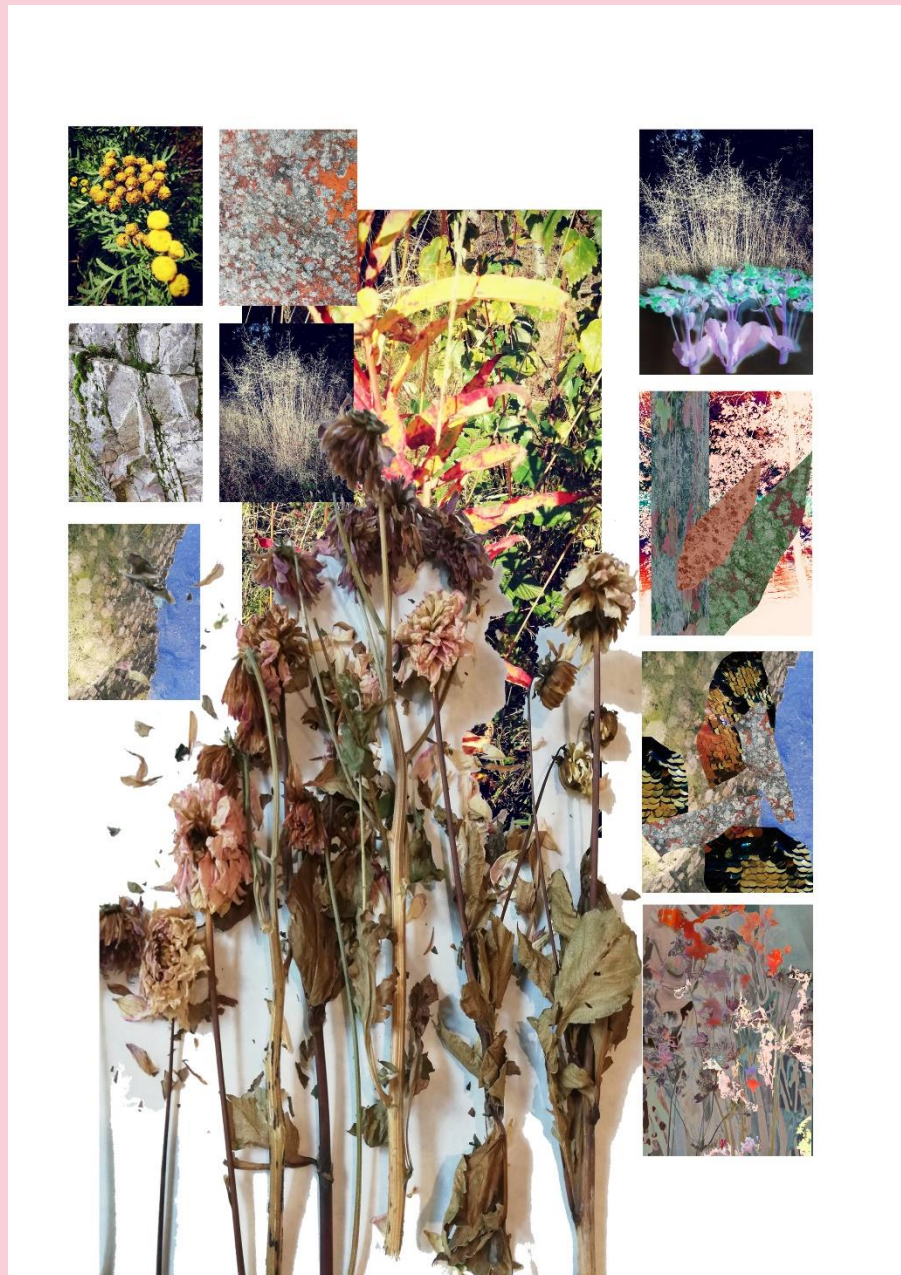
Living in a hyper-efficient world with countless tools meant to streamline our everyday lives, I wanted to free myself from the pressure of efficiency and experience a calm space to read, write and work with something tangible.

My design process is non-linear and organic, and this is reflected in the development of my MA project.

I communicate through feelings, intuition, and narratives.

I emphasize the ideas in advance of a project, and being in a state of flux, the process moves through "laboratory work", which allows for a dynamic approach where I can experiment freely.

In hindsight, I believe I have strengthened my practice, and through research been able to immerse myself in a variety of work that have subsequently shown to be connected.



TINA HAAGENSEN design ®

The project began with my interest in creating my own textiles.

A few photos of withered plants from a forest hike were my entry to textile development.

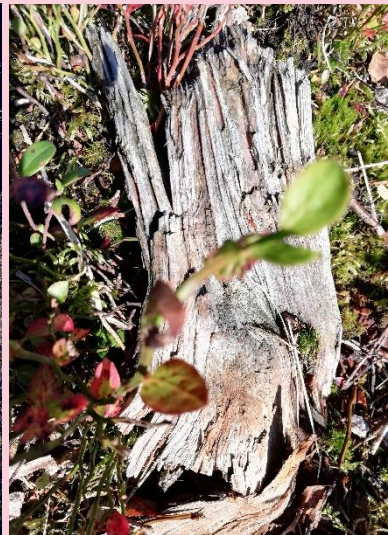
By manipulating the pale and insignificant through digital tools, masking them with colours to the unrecognizable and "unnatural", they became the basis for a variety of textiles.

By always returning to the images - as well as getting access to equipment for manufacturing weave, knits and prints - the tryouts were all "growing" from the plants, although the end results turned out to be as different as the materials allowed.

A short introduction to the material development:

PLANTS IN OCTOBER

A forest-walk late fall, photographing withered plants - the starting point for what would ultimately become textiles.



Frognerstøen, Oslo, October 2019.

DIGITAL PRINTS

A "full makeover" in Photoshop - masked and beautified in unnatural colours.



TINA HAAGENSEN DESIGN ©

SCALING PRINTS

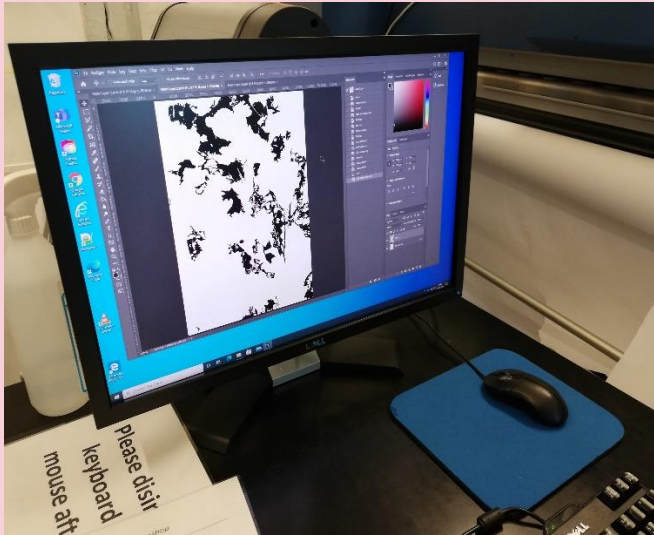
Try-out of the prints in different scales, using a projector on a white dress in a dark room.



TINA HAAGENSEN design ©

SILK SCREEN PRINTS

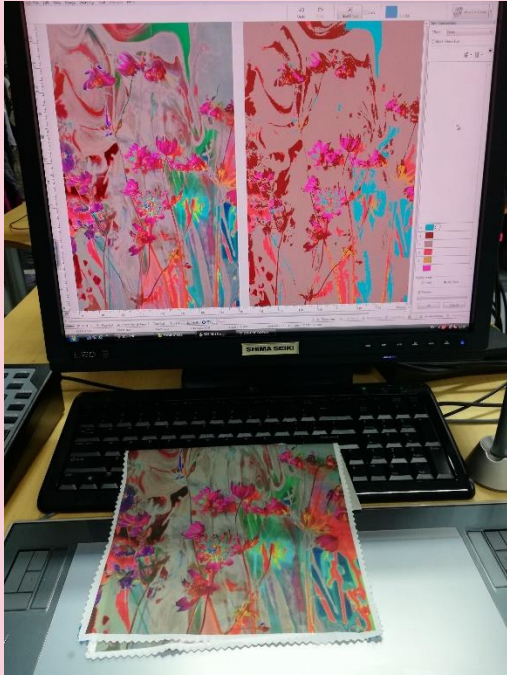
Silk screen frames, using three layers only.



TINA HAAGENSEN design ©

DIGITAL KNIT - MERINO

Digital knit - combining merino wool and viscose yarn, six layers.



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DIGITAL KNIT - LUREX

In a lighter viscose quality. One layer.



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HANDKNIT

Focus on yarn combinations, colour placement, volume and thickness.



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HAND WOVEN FABRICS

Clasp weft technique, wool yarn on a 4-shaft table loom.



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STENCIL PAINT

1 layer print made as stencil paint.



TINA HAAGENSEN design ©

HAND PAINT

Freehand paint, interpretation of the print.



TINA HAAGENSEN design ©

UPCYCLED FABRICS

Upcycling of vintage Japanese silk Kimono fabric.



TINA HAAGENSEN design © Photo Siren Lauvdal. Model Nina Dahl / Team Models.

FELTING

Wool on viscose chiffon, to replicate old and wrinkled skin.



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SKIN PRINT

The felting gave me the idea of photographing my own, wrinkled skin with tattoos and scale it up for digital prints.



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CREATIVE FABRIC

Made from nearly 100 meters of viscose chiffon, boiled, dyed, cut into strips and sewn onto a padded base. Inspiration: the sunrise in Northern Norway.



TINA HAAGENSEN design © Photo Siren Lauvdal. Model Nina Dahl / Team Models.

I always had a sentimental sense of the historic past, and I am bringing it with me into the contemporary.

I value the poetic memories of objects, how clothes can be linked to stories.

The worth in a well-used wardrobe is the opposite of fast fashion, which we rarely keep long enough to create a relationship with.

Simply looking into a wardrobe can evoke feelings, and a connection to past experiences.

Upcycling has always been an integral part of my design practice. Hand-me-down and flea market finds were part of my upbringing, and a motivation for learning how to sew. Being able to give new life to old garments is an important endeavor to me, both for the environmental and creative benefits, but also as a protest against overconsumption in modern society.

The devastating impact of fast fashion is one of the most pressing challenges in the industry, and this makes it even more important to me to embrace a sustainable approach with a focus on artisan craft and local, small-scale manufacturing.

One other benefit is that slow work allows me to make changes underway, which meshes well with my spontaneous approach to design.

Upcycling has turned out to be a recurring theme throughout the MA, starting with the photos of the withered plants upcycled to an unrecognizable and fresher palette, which also emerges in the re-use of old materials and sewing patterns, as well as the notion of reimagining Tanten.



Jackets upcycled from vintage Japanese silk kimonos, TINA HAAGENSEN design ©

“You do not only upcycle old textiles and clothes, but you also upcycle people” .

Theo Barth.



I have emphasized several fields of interest, from beauty and aesthetics, maximalism and originals, to old and extinct handcraft techniques - all of them being a reason to celebrate.

However, there is a comprehensive discussion of more troubling causes, narrowing down on ageism.

I have long been aware of negative social attitudes towards aging, but it is through research that I have given it full attention.

It was something that became a key part of my project over time, finding that it resonated with me both personally and as a designer.

Society's obsession with youth manifests in several harmful ways, and I chose to tackle the topic of gendered ageism specifically, which is the combination of misogyny and ageism.

Aging women in particular face a strict set of codes that determine what is deemed "appropriate" to wear, and this can lead to a fear of expressing oneself authentically, becoming almost invisible as to not risk ridicule or rejection from society.

I have an emotional investment in my work, and I find motivation in having a meaningful narrative to work with. Involving the topic of age discrimination in my project is my way of shedding light on a problem that is not widely talked about.

Through my design, anti-ageism and Tanten, I can tell a story and offer a vision of a better reality than our current one, where aging women are free from this sense of scrutiny and judgment.



Danuta Danielsson became a symbol for Tanten. The usually quiet woman who stretches and literally strikes a blow for the equal value of all human beings. Photo Hans Runesson.

Tanten is a Swedish cultural phenomenon of women from the working class, born between 1910 and 1930, embedding qualities such as resilience, confrontation, and civil courage. She is described as "The Invisible Everyday Hero".

Linked to social democracy in the 50's, she belonged to a generation who never had a youth culture of their own. Tanten is a cursor for being a grown-up, with the respect that brought along. Her job was to care for her home and family, and her hobbies were always of a practical form.

In modern times, Tanten is regarded a symbol of something outdated, no longer interesting. Usually described as someone we do not wish to be viewed as. We often refer to Tanten as a metaphor for "an aging woman": obsolete, frumpy, and no longer of relevance.

However, with no sexual connotations and being free from the male gaze, there is also a dimension of independence, not being forced to meet the expected demands on how to dress. It is important to emphasize that one of the critical points about Tanten is that she was inclined to follow *The Law of Jante*, being restricted and oppressed - something I on the contrary want to oppose.

Making clothes that reveal exposing skin and body parts is something new to my designs, as I usually opt for a modest and fully dressed looks. From this emerged the idea of Tanten and her wardrobe - not to be replicated, but rather turned completely around, to promote a highly visible, strong woman who is not afraid to claim her space and dress for herself, and not for others.

The New Tanten holds many of the same basic values and qualities as her predecessor, but is far more radical, playful, outspoken, and visible, using clothes as a powerful tool.

I chose Tanten as my muse because it provided me with a protagonist for my narrative, and I found that her positive qualities resonated with me.

Being the narrator gives me the freedom to shape stories around topics that concern me, and I convey these stories through my practical work.

Fashion is obsessed with youth, of which mature women cannot identify with. There are expectations connected to clothes, and about how we visually present ourselves to the world, that will do something for our self-esteem, self-confidence, and self-image.

Being aware of the fashion- and magazine business, which are preying on women's insecurities in "what NOT to wear", Tanten is free from society's norms and rules. By exposing aging women in fashion, she is contributing to a turnaround.

Being a figure that has traditionally been regarded as invisible in society, I wanted to take on the challenge of making Tanten visible by putting her in a new context. My hope is that people will be able to get a glimpse into her lifestyle through her wardrobe. I wished to liberate her from old patterns and demands, and to rather bring in a feeling of catharsis through the clothes; filled to the brim with strong visual impressions that can evoke emotions, being provocative, chaotic, and loud.

I am upcycling the notion of Tanten - she is showing that "Tantness" is *in Vogue*!



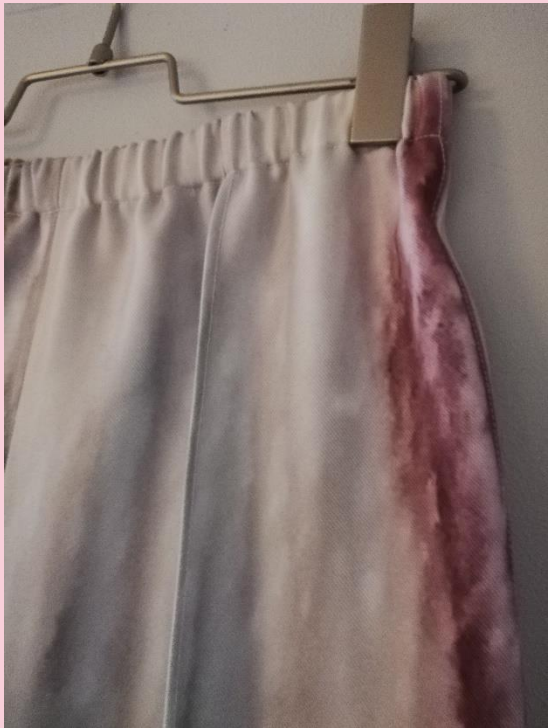
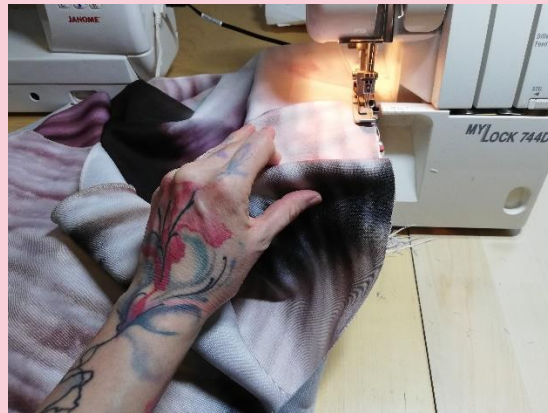
Silk screen printed shirt TINA HAAGENSEN design © Make up and photo Linda Nicolaysen.
Hair Lars Eriksen Eitran. Model Nina Dahl / Team Models.

Given that I was aiming for a full set of garments, I had to work around the time constraints. I wanted each garment to have character yet keeping the shapes simple was essential in working efficiently and saving time.

I decided to re-use and alter old patterns with primary cuts, to prevent the textiles from being cut into too many parts.

Using simpler cuts both helped highlight the textiles - a central element in my project - but also to provide a versatile and comfortable fit for different body shapes and ages.

I also played on references to "geriatric functionality", of which consists exclusively of technical solutions as tie-bands, Velcro, elastic, drawstring and press buttons.



TINA HAAGENSEN design ®

I want to emphasize that comfort can also be about wearing clothes that looks nice on the body, that makes us feel good - not that the precondition for comfort is whether the garment has sufficient ease. Some are at their most comfortable when dressed to the nines!



TINA HAAGENSEN design ©

Simplifying the garments allowed me more time to delve into handcraft, embellishing the garments through embroidery, painting, and other techniques. This helped in retaining a “handmade” look, as I did not want the clothes to look too manufactured.

Making a wardrobe rather than a collection allowed me to embrace this, focusing on giving each piece its own charm and identity, rather than being preoccupied with cohesion.

I have used all my own-made textiles, allowing the different qualities to “decide” the final look of the garments.

Even though I did not plan each piece ahead, I was determined that I wanted the clothes to be bold and bright to challenge notions of what aging women should wear, the vivid fabrics and ornamentations contrasting with the simple cuts.

Maximalism is my own visual language, and I view it as a provocative, powerful tool to show individualism.

I wish to challenge the way we think about clothes and the urge to categorize other people. In essence, I view maximalism as a celebration, a generosity of inviting things in, asking us not to take life too seriously.

I find that this also underscores the intention of my project, to allow women the freedom to take up space through bold, bright, and vivid garments - a playful approach to dressing up without concern for what is considered appropriate.



TINA HAAGENSEN design © Photo Xenia Villafranca / Tara.



TINA HAAGENSEN design ©
Photo Siren Lauvdal. Model Nina Dahl / Team Models.

I see this MA as an investment in renewing my own learning process, to have been in a professional environment with competent and generous professionals.

This MA is a luxury that I have indulged in, as time is a crucial necessity to go deep into a learning process. It has been challenging, but most of all extremely rewarding.

My work method is the materialization of ideas, and ageism is the soundtrack to my artistic practice. I have created a new language for expressing my work, emphasizing the role of dress as identity and fashion in society.

The process of making Tanten's Wardrobe was an intense period of exclusively practical work. I am pleased to have found the starting point early in the process, which worked theoretically, methodically, and practically.

There is by far higher pressure applied on women in respect to age.

Research shows that there is considerably stronger evidence of discrimination against older women than older men.

In addition, women deal with the term lookism; discrimination based on a person's appearance.

Older women may be praised for their life-experience and wisdom, are encouraged to look youthful, but not look "desperate" as if denying their age!

Social criticism can lead to shame, hiding and invisibility.

By looking into shame theory in addition to ageism, I have gained valuable awareness of the many problems in the fashion industry, and the impact this has on aging women.

We observe the physical decay in natural aging, which can create dislike of oneself.

This is the introduction to withdrawal and becoming invisible, due to worry of a judgmental society, embarrassment and criticism.

Shame creates silence, so aging women tend to remain quiet about any humiliation they face. Shame needs to be acknowledged and understood before it can decrease and be overcome.

This has motivated me to investigate the possibility of creating a platform for anti-ageism in relation to fashion, and to consider this group as my target audience.

I can contribute to highlighting this topic by continuing a visible design practice, in addition to promoting anti-ageist content.

The topic of ageism is socially relevant, and due to its comprehensive scope, it touches on many different areas in society.

To form a basis for discussion in the public space, as I believe it is something that can live on, in forums, exhibitions, lectures, articles, and debates.

I believe the most important step towards ending ageism is to be mindful of its existence, and to be vocal – and visual - about it. And what sense does it make, to discriminate against a group that everyone is going to join eventually?

While my initial intention was to bring beauty into the world, I ended up focusing on a deeper meaning, and discovering my purpose as a designer.

Maybe Beauty can be just that: finding a purpose!

THANK YOU:

Tutor Peter Løchstøer

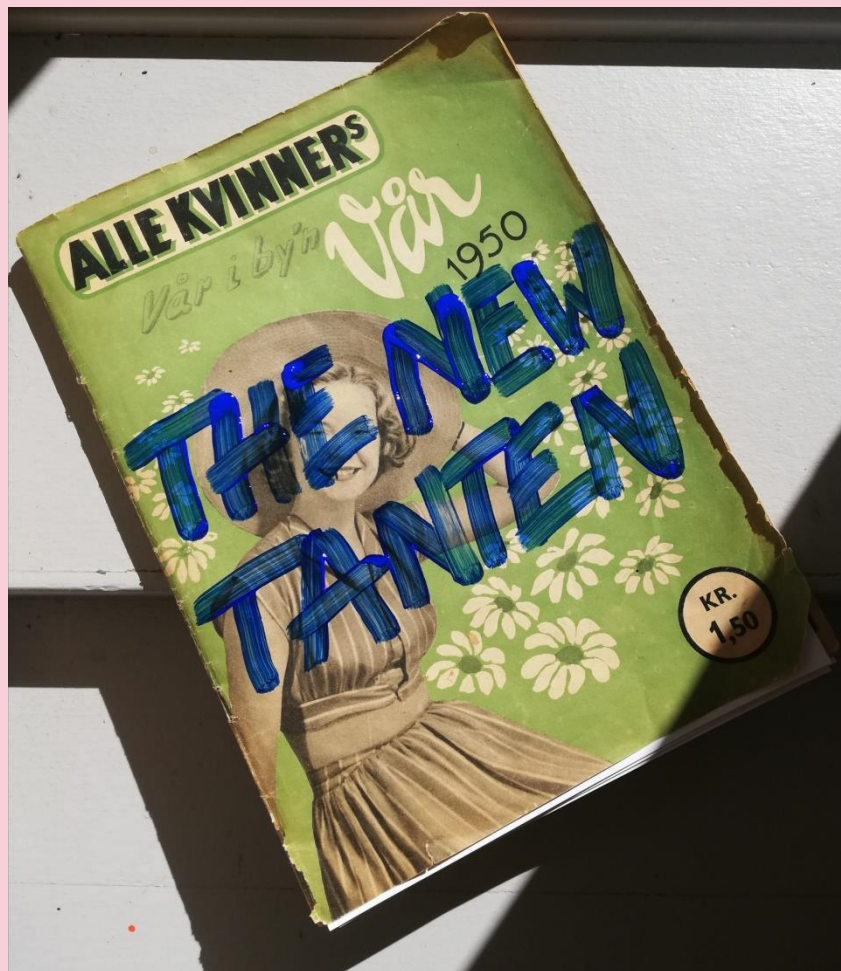
Kirsti Bræin - Theo Barth - Maziar Raein - other professors and lecturers - class

| | |
|--------|-----------------------|
| Model | Nina Dahl/Team Models |
| Photo | Siren Lauvdal |
| Hair | Lars Eriksen Eitran |
| Makeup | Linda Nicolaysen |

Sparring-partner and critic Ella

My family and friends

Dagfinn, Julie and Freja for patient workshop assistance



Upcycling my mum's women's magazine from 1950!