

# WE , THE GARMENT PRACTITIONERS

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## ABSTRACT

I am a garment practitioner, and so are you.

Wearing clothes, washing clothes, folding, touching, feeling, sensing, looking -  
Continuously engaging with materials in relation to our own bodies.

We gather experiences, histories, memories and tacit knowledge that we carry in our  
bodies as we open up our wardrobe another day.

We are forming connections, both on a physical and emotional plane.

What is a fashion practice that centers itself around these connections?

Attempts at translating experiences of private everyday garment-practicing, into  
questions and expressions for public audiences and spaces.



Photo: Einar Fuglem

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## INTRODUCTION

This project is an ongoing investigation into what it means to be a practitioner within the field of fashion. It is both a project and a process of shaping and cultivating alternative ways of practicing. Rather than starting from the more commonly explored social, cultural, visual or functional sides of the field, I choose to start from our everyday experiences and personal relationships with clothes. The mundane everyday-activities, moments we share with our clothes in solitude, the acts we carry out before entering into the spaces of being seen. The dressing, the trying on, the care, washing, mending and folding, as well as acts of making, changing, connecting and bestowing value and meaning to the things we wear on our bodies.

This is not one project with one question and one answer, it is an investigation through a series of questions, experiments and happenings - And instead of striving to provide definite answers to questions that might not have one, the results are rather reactions, responses or acts of processing, looking, sharing and opening rooms for reflection and thought. Taking a step away from expectations of constant production and delivery, letting the project unfold in its own pace and right. Taking agency to *fashion* new methods and formats.

In the same way all small acts, individual garment-relationships, tacit experiences and memories make up a wardrobe, this project takes the form of different *Pieces* that together draw out a sense of the whole. The pieces are being formed through the act of carrying them out, committing to stay in the process and letting the things that occur naturally lead the way and inform the work. A piece might take on one question, but spark new ones along the way. This means *the way* the project is carried out is just as important as the objects or «results» coming out of it. Exploring ways to «be» with materials, and shaping relationships with objects through giving/showing/spending/sharing time, care and respect.

## BIO

Annikken Wilhelmsen is a fashion and/or garment practitioner based in Oslo, Norway. Currently enrolled in the MA Design program at Oslo National academy of the arts - with a BA from the same department (2021), she is exploring the possibilities of what a fashion practice can be outside of the dominating commercial systems. With an investigative and speculative approach she moves in the between-spaces of art, fashion, design and research. Central to her work is the understanding of clothes as objects, containing multiplicities of values, functions and relations to bodies and surroundings. Creating textile expressions, installations, performances/happenings and garments - focusing on the physical experiences of wearing and the everyday acts of practicing, living, looking, making, feeling and being with clothes. Continuously working to challenge, rethink, recontextualize and redefine the values and ideas we have of what fashion is - and can be.

## BACKGROUND

Ever since I started my journey as a clothing designer I've grappled with the question of *why* this field is so interesting to me. And I find myself in a conundrum, where my reasons of interest often don't match up with the dominating interests of the general public- and industry at large. I'm struck with a feeling that the main perspectives, conversations and representation of *fashion* we are subjected to through life, media and society don't necessarily reflect its true impact and value at a personal level. And therefore gets dismissed, diminished and de-valued by many as something inherently superficial and unimportant. When in reality clothing is something we spend the majority of our lives surrounded in, continuously engaging with on a day to day basis, whether we are aware of it or not.

The kind of representation of fashion that pushes trend, image, celebrity and the thrill of something «NEW!» unfortunately often comes hand in hand with overconsumption, exploitation of garment workers, human rights violations, resource depletion, enormous amounts of textile waste shipped away, avoiding responsibilities, and big money in the pockets of already big corporations rather than the ones actually making the clothes. The conversation on all the wrongdoings and hyper-capitalistic tendencies of the dominating industrialized fashion industry is one we could spend an eternity unpacking. But it is not one I will attempt to take on right here and now.

I cannot go in and change what has already been done, and I don't have all the answers to solve all the problems. What I *can* do is to map out a path ahead from where I am standing, right now, as a practitioner in the field of fashion. Clothes have been made, and perhaps we don't necessarily need to make that many new ones - but rather relate to the ones we already have differently? That is why I find my main interests at the level of the garment life-cycle that is not one of production, but in the homes, the wardrobes and bodies that clothes live in/on. Where they have relationships with their owners. Relationships that have potential to go deeper, become more meaningful and hold more value - in more ways.

There is already a landscape out there of inspiring fashion practices and people working to rethink, redefine and reroute from ways of operating that have proved harmful. Researching, creating, writing, questioning, sharing and challenging the limits of what fashion is. These are the ones I hope to position myself amongst. Contributors such as Warehouse collective, Femke De Vries, Anouk Beckers, Joke Robaard, Julia Valle Noronha, Atelier Hoko, other students in programs like *MA critical fashion practices Arnheim*, and even people like my own supervisor - Ida Falck Øien and her partner in HAIKw/ Harald Lunde Helgesen to only mention a few.

During my BA I started dipping my toes into this field of critical, experimental and hybrid practices, resulting in the project "Garment Dialogues» (Wilhelmsen, 2021). An investigation into the physical dialogues between mind, body and object. A project which can be considered an important stepping stone towards the contents of this MA. It set me on a path I intend to keep following far beyond this project.

## DEFINITIONS AND ROLE ASSIGNMENTS

Before we enter the project we need to lay down some definitions and assign some roles. I will be using a selection of terms that might seem similar or repetitive, but I assure you they are carefully chosen for their distinct meaning - and should be read as such.

**PRACTITIONER** - Person - Who

**PRACTICE** - Actions - What

I am a **GARMENT PRACTITIONER**, and so are you.

Everyone that wears or owns clothes in any shape or form fall under this category.

All interaction with clothes is by my definition a form of garment practicing. This practicing can be more or less active or conscious, yet every act counts - even just looking, or choosing not to interact. It is something personal, and often (but not always) silently performed as everyday tasks, habits or rituals.

I am however also a **FASHION PRACTITIONER**, which you might not be. A fashion practitioner is different from a garment practitioner in that it entails a different level of active participation. It is something you have to choose to be part of, as it also involves the element of «fashioning» - or in other words **making** something. You can have a garment practice without much knowledge, but a fashion practice demands more interest, more knowledge, experimentation and a certain willingness to share it with others. The choice to move from private garment practicing into a more public domain, is the basis of what I define as a fashion practice. Also in this category the level of activity can vary - starting from simply dressing more extravagantly, **making** garment-assemblages, giving more consideration into your clothing choices and relations than the average garment practitioner or more consciously conveying something through your way of dressing. All the way to actually making clothes or other forms of expressions in the context/realm of clothing.

I am reluctant to call my own practice either- or of these categories, because it resides somewhere in the flux between the two. Actively putting myself in the between-spaces to search for what is there.

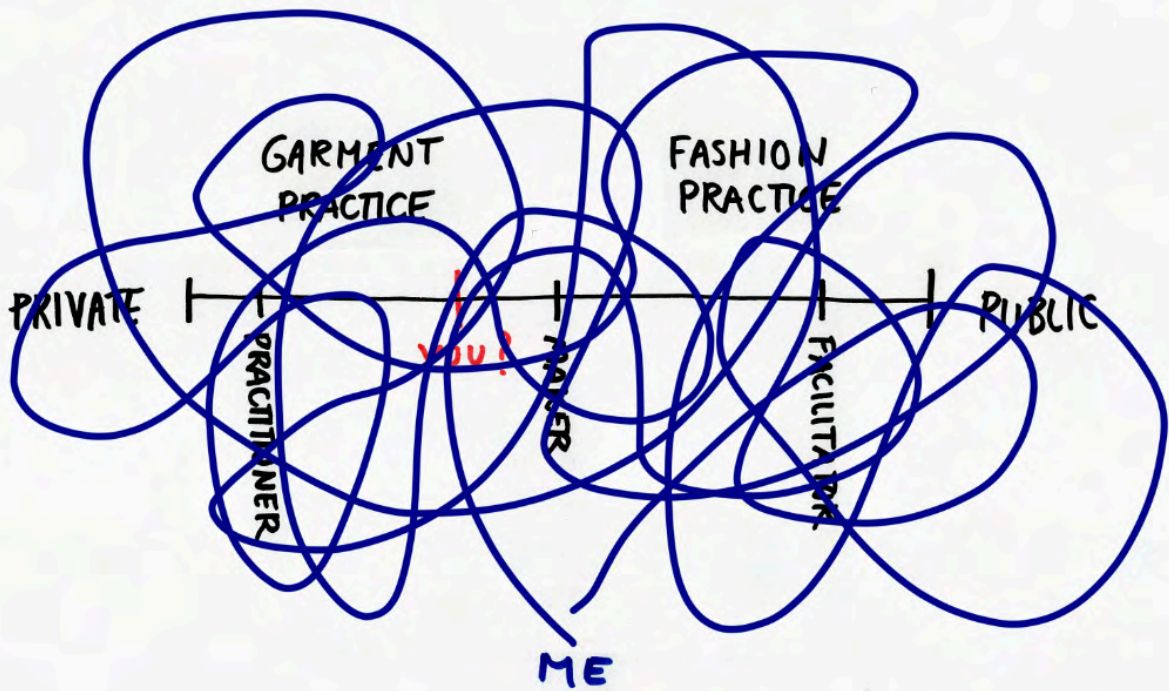
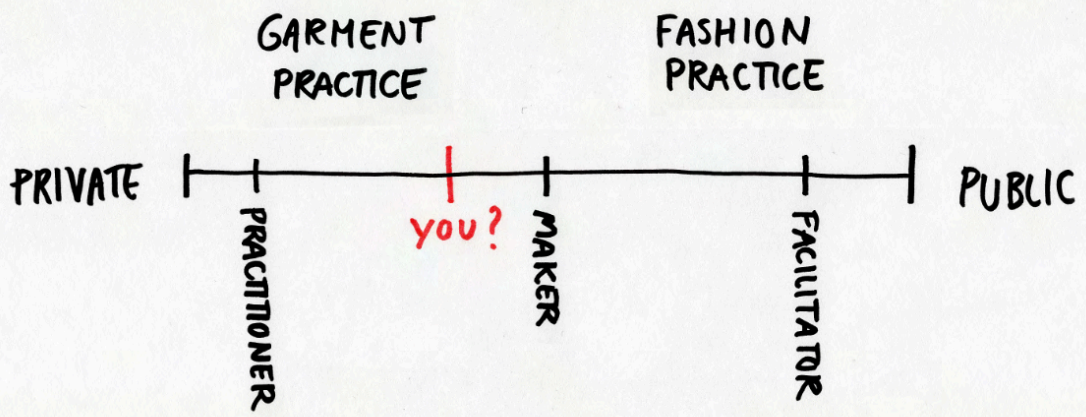
In this between space I move between the roles of:

**PRACTITIONER, MAKER or FACILITATOR.**

In some instances I'm only garment **practicing**:

Doing things with my own clothes and wardrobe, for my own sake, in my own spaces.

But as I start to move forward with the observations and questions arising in the practicing, I take on the role of **maker**. Making different forms of material or non-material responses to these ideas, occurrences or questions I've gathered through my private practice. The **maker**-role is placed somewhere in the middle, as the making often happens in private but is ultimately done to express something to others (move into the public). Lastly, after making I can enter the role of **facilitator**. Fully stepping into public space, either to facilitate a happening, performance or interaction, to show the fruits of the making processes or simply moving my own private practicing into live formats for an audience - facilitating for reactions, engagement or conversations. The facilitator aims to bring others into the overall practice in some shape or form, not necessarily to make them develop a full fashion practice of their own - But at least to become a more conscious garment practitioner, and offer a taste of what it means to be **making**.



## DESIGN AS A METHOD

In the design field you would traditionally speak of method in the sense of «a process towards a designed object or result», the **how** you arrived at the destination. Method as a means to an end. In the case of this project I've found that my method is not oriented towards results or designed objects at all, but rather the other way around. Using design to develop method, to arrive somewhere new and unknown.

Method → Design

Design → Method

The designing parts lies in the *how*. *How* I do things in my assigned roles, but also how others do things in their personal garment practices.

Im attempting to design sets of action, ways of doing, ways of understanding, ways of practicing. And I acknowledge that might also be a form of result or goal-orientation, but part of the method is also insisting an openness to the process. Where designers often strive to construct and control their creations, something I've often felt inclined to do myself, i now wish to allow a different dynamic. Where I am *responding* to things that occur along the way, rather than trying to control them.

I practice, I respond to something i discover - through making or facilitating, let others have their own responses to something made or facilitated, and a dialogue is opened. A rhizome of connections between the different phases. «The lines are not starting from one place and branching out from it. There is no centerpoint but every component is an agent interconnected with the others.» (Wilhelmsen, 2023, p.19).

I could not explain my own methods much better than this phrasing from a book so suitingly named just «Method».

*"A process that moves unsteadily between choice and chance, conceptual control and wishful thinking, theoretical influences and imitation, construction and post construction, visions and fantasies, notions and delusions, laziness and mania, miscalculations and unexpected success, practical and physical limitations, cowardice and courage, and so on."*

(Ehlin et al., 2016, p.15).



## PIECES

A PIECE = A QUESTION / IDEA / STATEMENT / PROMPT  
A SOMETHING TO EXPLORE

All the pieces of this project have been done during my time in the masters of design program at Oslo National Academy of the Arts. As some of these pieces began almost as long as 2 years ago, they are more fleetingly connected to where I stand now than others. For the sake of the reader I will not go as thoroughly into detail on all of them, but put more focus on the ones most relevant to this final masters delivery - and where my project stands at this point in time.

The last piece «SHARING TIME - FREE STITCHING» is the piece I am currently standing in the middle of. A culmination-piece of sorts. If you do not plan to read through all the pieces, i at least encourage taking some time with this one.

Also for the sake of this document, the pieces are not presented in a time-chronology, but rather in an order where you can follow the connections between different topics and questions raised.

To set the scene, an entry-point.

Throughout my masters i started looking into the fluxus movement as a reference point on how to deal with topics of the everyday in an artistic context.

The work of artists such as On Kawara and Yoko Ono, stood out to me as their artworks of seemingly simple form was able to hold so much greater meaning.

On Kawaras «Date paintings», «I got up» postcard series and «I am still alive» telegrams (Kawara et al., 2015) read to me as a testament to his own existence in time.

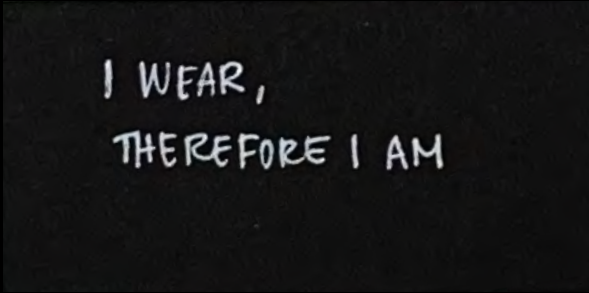
Confirming each time that he is present and alive and making something, and that this is something valuable in it self, worth acknowledging. Making a mark, confirming a presence and an action. Also Yoko Onos instruction pieces (MOMA, 2024), simple sentences or prompts that are able to let the reader partake in a form of performance - or spark thought or reaction. It is not the piece of paper and the words on it that is the actual art, it is *you* doing it, experiencing it, thinking about it that is the real output.

These formats lead me to also discover the works of Jenny Holzer.

Her practice of delivering words and ideas in public spaces (Hauser & Wirth, 2024), felt like the last puzzle piece I needed in this triangle of inspiration-sources.

Working with fashion can sometimes feel like a maze of cliches, where we are at a point where most things have been done before, and trying to present anything you come up with as *new* or *original* can feel almost fraudulent. Her way of claiming the cliches, in her collected oneliners or «Truisms», felt like a way of reshaping them into something else. That a cliché that is taken seriously, as a given truth, can becomes somewhat of a personal doctrine or dogma. A tool perhaps?

I decided to gather some truisms of my own, to lay out a baseline of truths for my own project. But I choose to present them as truisms with a question mark as I have decided that they are not static. They have changed multiple times throughout the process of this project, and will continue to do so. Some are removed, some added, others rephrased or edited. But as of now these are my working truths.



I WEAR,  
THEREFORE I AM

I REFUSE TO WEAR ANYTHING  
THAT DOES NOT FEEL LIKE  
A PART OF MYSELF

IF THERE IS A SYSTEM  
YOU MUST BREAK IT

YOU ARE NO DIFFERENT THAN  
YOUR GARMENT.  
YOU ARE BOTH REAL, PHYSICAL  
THINGS IN THE SAME SPACES  
↑  
COMPOSITIONS OF VARIOUS MATERIALS IN  
A BODILY SHAPE

ACTS OF CREATION IS BOTH  
DESTRUCTION AND CARE

I STRONGLY DISAGREE  
WITH THE CURRENT STATE  
OF AFFAIRS IN THE FASHION  
INDUSTRY

GARMENTS LOVE TOUCH  
THEY YEARN FOR SKIN CONTACT  
LIKE A NEWBORN CHILD

ANGER OR HATE CAN BE A  
USEFUL MOTIVATING FORCE

REPETITION WILL ALWAYS  
LEAD TO SOMETHING NEW

ALTERNATIVE FASHION  
SYSTEMS DO NOT ALL HAVE  
TO BE GRAND

TIME IS RELATION  
(CONNECTING, SLIPPING, UNRAVELING,  
ERODING, BLENDING, MERGING)

WOOL IS THE ONE TRUE  
MATERIAL TO RULE  
THEM ALL

TIME IS VALUABLE

## GARMENT SYSTEM

## MAKING

Getting dressed is for many quite personal, it touches into your sense of self, how you are perceived in the world, how you feel on a particular day, relation to your own body, surroundings and people, sense of belonging, sense of comfort/discomfort, a transition from private to public, as well as meeting your choices from the life you have already lived, the things/garments you have acquired, their history, the garments you wish you had, those you left behind, and so on. On the other hand it can be viewed as quite operational. You perform a series of movements and actions to achieve a goal, which is to cover the body, for protection, heat regulation and adhering to the rules and standards of existing in society. It's a task, moving from a to b, following a sequence to complete, finish and move on to the next one. To observe dressing like a scientist observing lab rats. For a while i went down this analytical, documenting and systematic route. Could an attempt at removing individuality, feelings and personal factors make these things even more apparent in their absence? Would it cause some level of discomfort not to acknowledge it?

## TOPOGRAPHIC ANATOMY OF GENERALIZED GARMENT SHAPES

This path started with another act of establishing a baseline. If I want to rethink or change ways of operating, it was apparent that I needed to establish the base understanding of which we are trying to move away from. This resulted in developing a system of standardized garment types, related to the anatomy of the body, that also takes into account the variables of coverage and how this changes the movements required to put them on. A system that can indicate a main category to generalize - but also opens for different levels of complexity and nuances if needed.

In the beginning it instinctively felt a bit wrong, as doing this made me draw lines to the industry tendencies of overgeneralization. Like sizing, for instance.

Why would I want to generalize when my instincts and values says the opposite, that clothes should be made to fit the individual body and not the other way around.

Am i just following along on a path of missteps in the development of the industry?

To some extent this might read as just another PDM (Product data management) system. However, it also felt conceptually interesting - as a language, a way of not just describing garments as products, but also shape, coverage and movement at once.

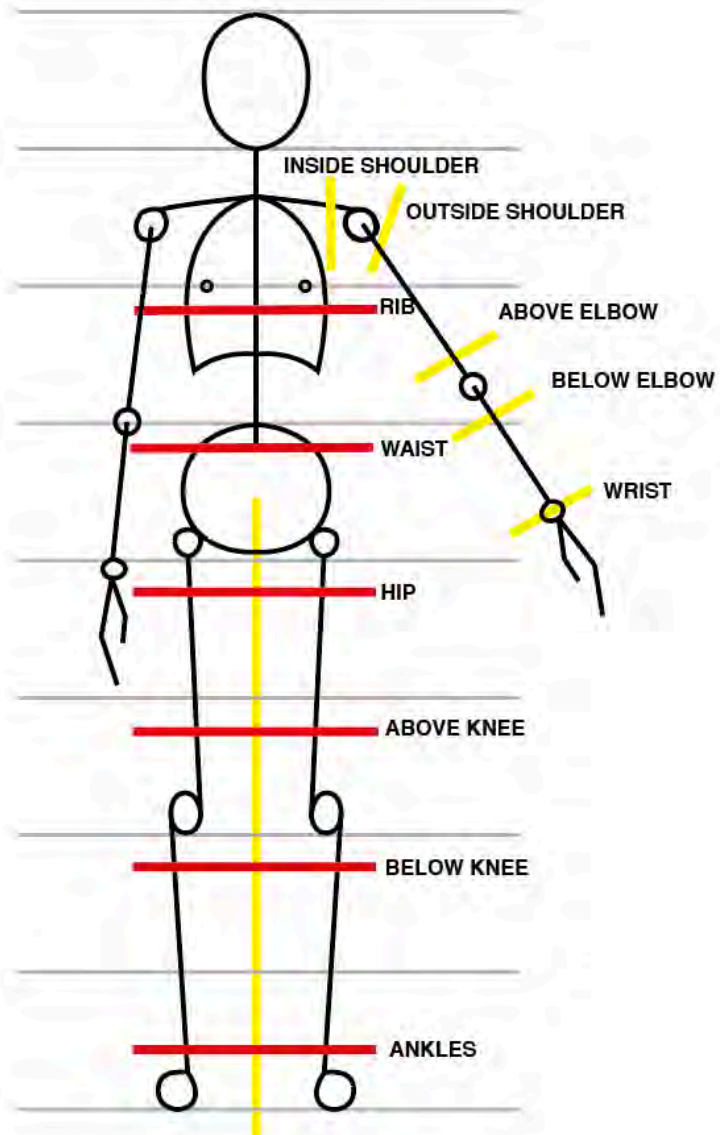
A language not to communicate for sales, but for usage, function and understanding of interaction possibilities with the objects. A body centered garment language perhaps? Possibly an instruction manual more than a sales catalogue?

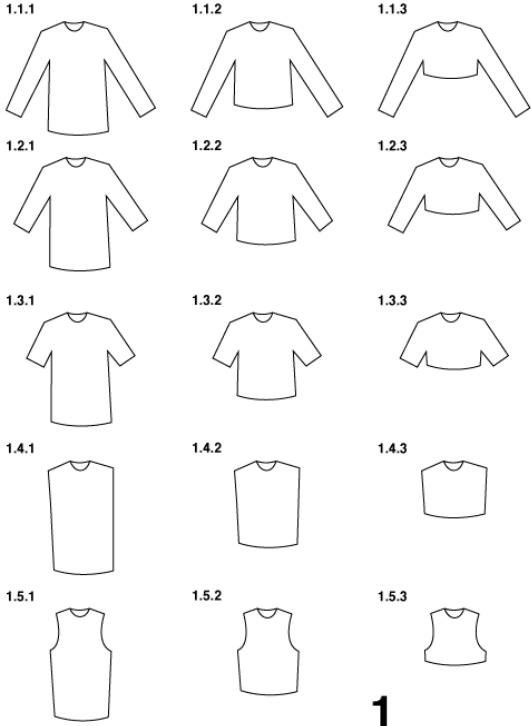
# A.B.C

A = GENERAL CATEGORY

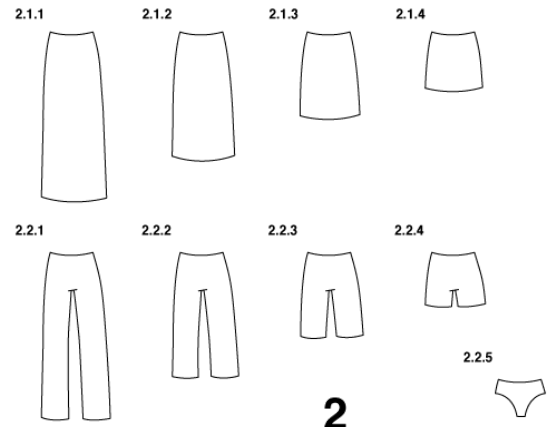
B = LIMB DEFINITION

C = GENERAL DEFINITION

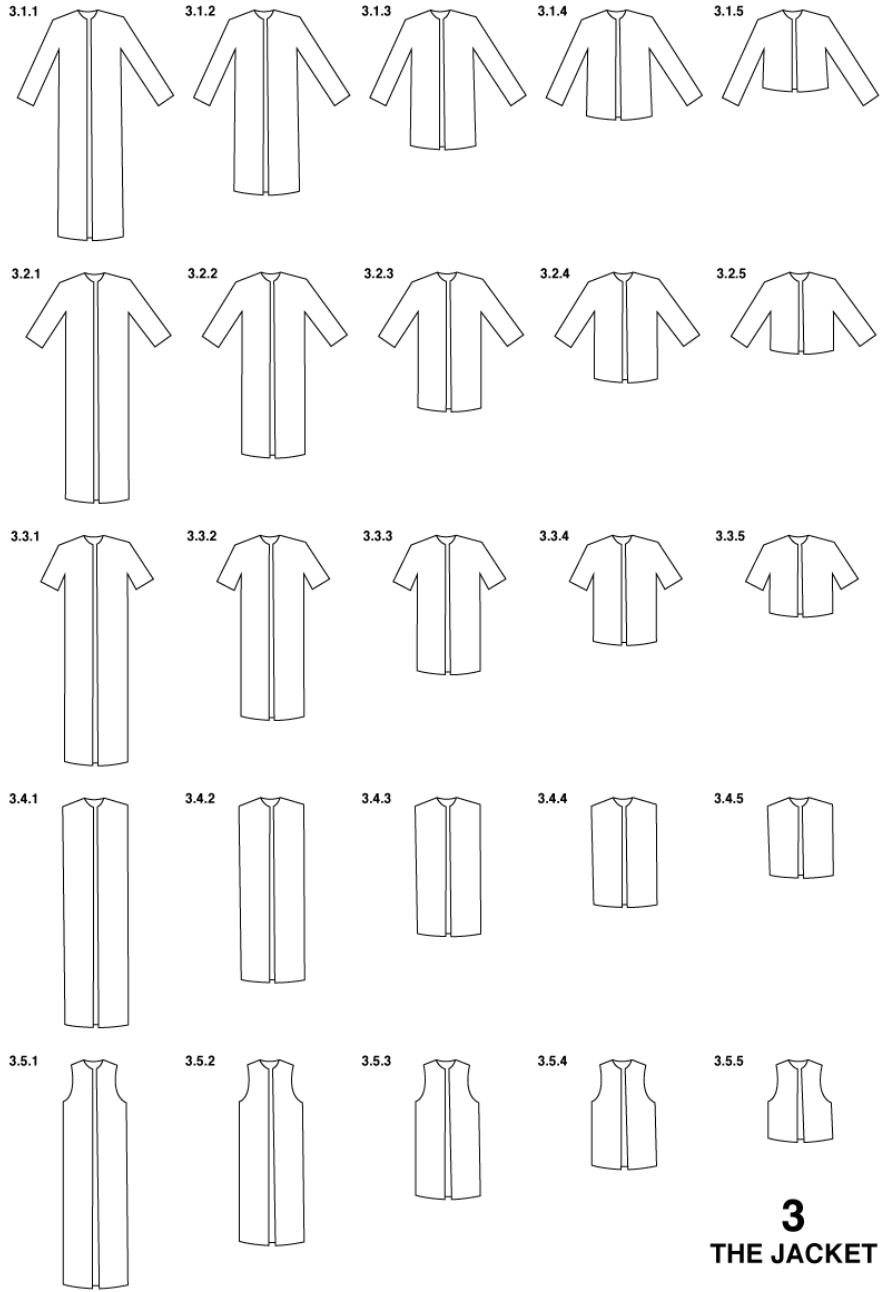




**1**  
**THE TOP**



**2**  
**THE BOTTOM**



**3**  
**THE JACKET**



Garment shapes 1.1.1 & 2.2.1 presented in KHIO Reception gallery, group exhibition 02.11.23.

Photo: Einar Fuglem

**GARMENT SPECIFIC MOVEMENT STUDIES**

After developing my system of garment shapes, I wanted to go further in also understanding the movements embedded in them. The choreography each shape holds. Together with two dancers, Aron Tweve and Ine Halvorsen, from second year BA Samtidsdans at KHiO we spent 2 hours documenting a series of these movements. Taking on the movements related to one garment from each main category of my system. Before the workshop I made three of these garments in white cotton fabric, in an attempt to make them visually as plain and «sterile» looking as possible. Leaning into the idea of this part of the research being almost clinical and stripped of emotion. We then documented the dressing- and undressing sequence of each garment before trying to recreate the choreography without the actual garment present. This became quite interesting, both because of the differences that occurred between the actual dressing, and the recreation without the garments, but also because of the conversations that happened with the dancers. The two had vastly different ways of putting on the different garment types, and it turned out to be a lot harder to recreate the movements than they had expected. They also found it hard to think of these movements as dancing in the way I had imagined it as choreography, as they were more present in their personal selves than their stage persona. The familiarity of the movements felt more like a mime game or acting, so the issue of defining what kind of «dance» or «choreography» this was *supposed to be* became a topic. The main discrepancies between the movement *with garment* and *without garment* was things like tempo/speed, angles of the body, weight distribution, adjustments and smaller details in the movements - ex. Angles and placement of hands, feet, head etc. We could have spent time trying to perfect the movements, but it proved more interesting to just do a single take and examine the material for what it was. The discrepancies could possibly tell a story of our awareness in these moments, how distant our own perception of what we are doing and how we are moving might be from reality.

**VIDEO DOCUMENTATION FROM THE STUDIES:**

( 1.16 min )

<https://vimeo.com/942492698/4f84d59628>



## TOPOGRAPHIC MOVEMENT NOTATION SYSTEM

Being left with a lot of documented material from my movement studies, I was not sure exactly where to move forward. After testing one way of exhibiting, together with my class, my head was suddenly very much stuck on format - how to show and communicate the materials I had generated and was sitting on, rather than jumping on to the next idea. I began printing and arranging still- images from the movement films, as well as drawing and tracing the images into abstracted figures to emphasize the movements in each frame. While doing this and having conversations with tutors, the idea for a new system emerged. If I could create a number code system for garment shapes, could I possibly also create a code for the movements embedded in them? Another step by step manual in coded language to describe a generalized way of relating to body-centered shapes.

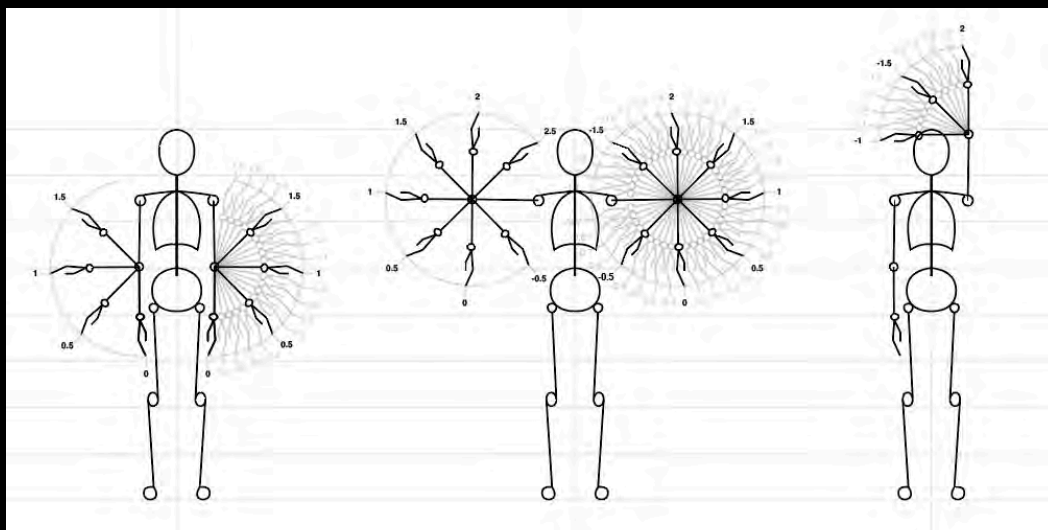
So I started making diagrams from a stick-figure representation of a body, trying to show the possibilities of movement in arms, legs and joints from different perspectives- and then numbering it. My idea was that all the numbers could be written out in a sequence that explains the still shots from the previous movement studies, but this would prove to be incredibly difficult. The more I worked with the system, the more problems I encountered. It would progressively get more complicated as I added different joints, and as the POV changed from front, to side, to above, the numbers no longer corresponded between perspectives. I simply could not follow my own logic any more and had to stop at this point to reevaluate what I wanted to achieve with the system to begin with.

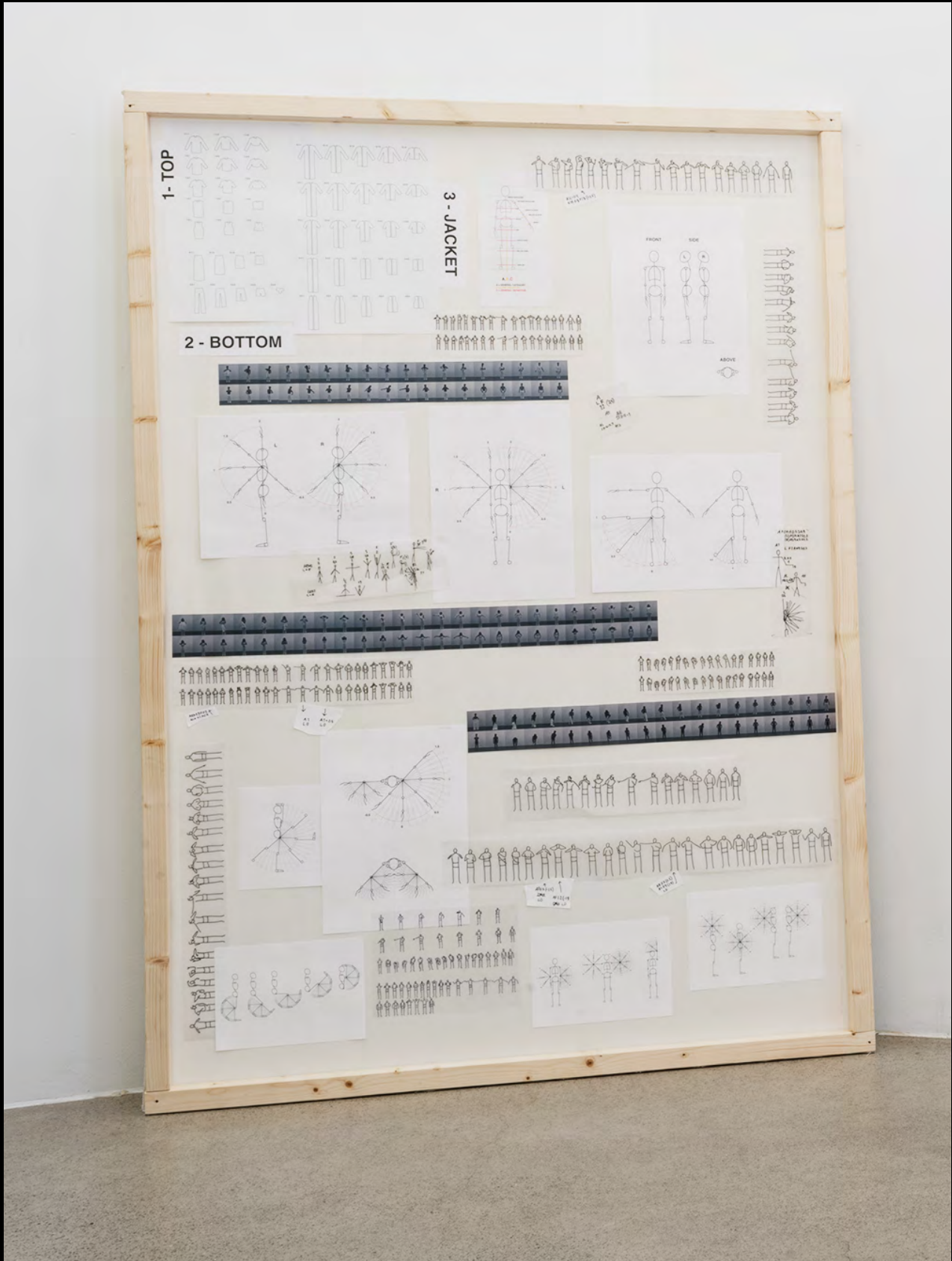
What level of detail is needed, and should it even be understandable for anyone other than myself, or even just a computer for that sake?

My intention was never to create a data program, but as the numbers complicated, the need to look to existing logics and systems started to appear.

Perhaps I had reached a limit to how much I could create solely from my own mind, and this is the point I have to start reading into the works of others. Either to assist my systems, or completely contradict them and take me in a new direction?

The system is now left behind (Fermenting?), maybe to be revisited at a different point in time with new perspectives.





A system- or framework presented in a frame.

Photo: Einar Fuglem

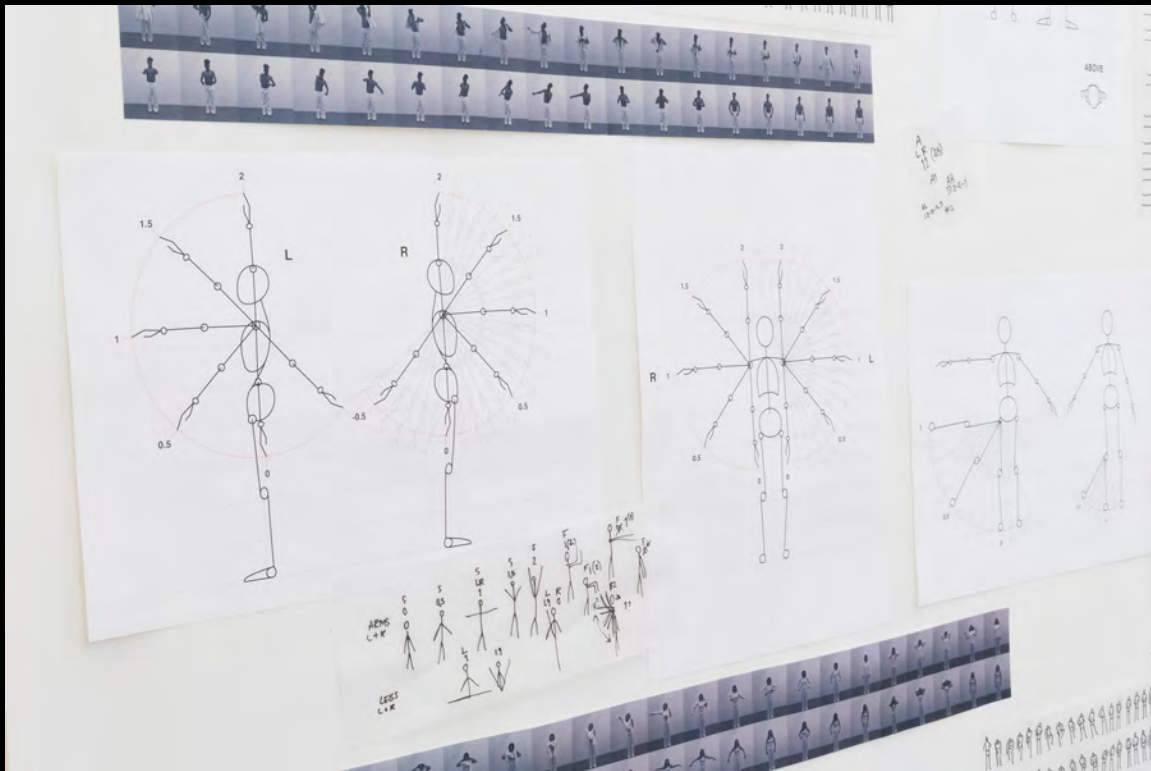
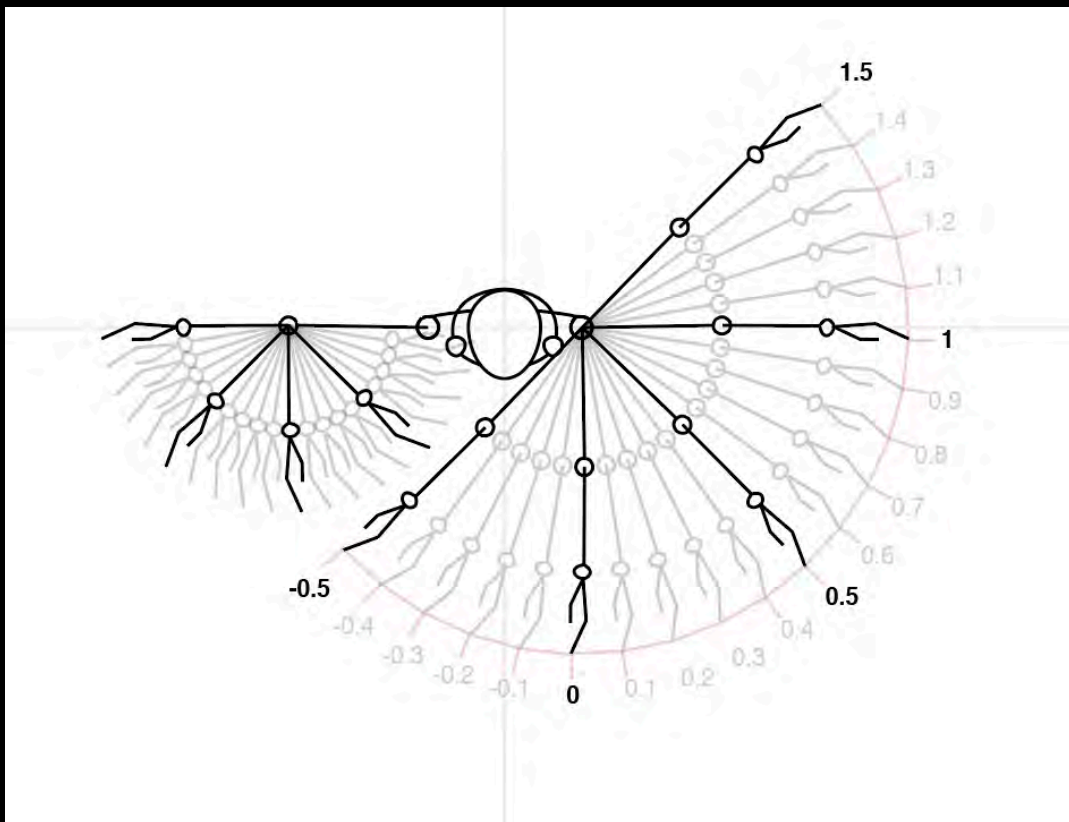


Photo: Einar Fuglem



Breaking my own systems, challenging standardized garment shapes.

For this piece I decided to have a look at the concept of Deconstruction, which i have previously lightly touched upon, but also somewhat avoided. The tradition of deconstruction in fashion carries a lot of connotations, and the word itself has been used so many times, in so many ways, that it can feel a bit worn out. A cliché of sorts. That is why I've tip-toed around the term when working with projects in its periphery, but chose this time to approach the term anew. However with a slight twist. Instead of deconstructing already constructed garments, I decided to explore different ways of deconstructing the body itself.

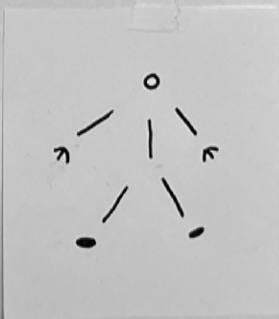
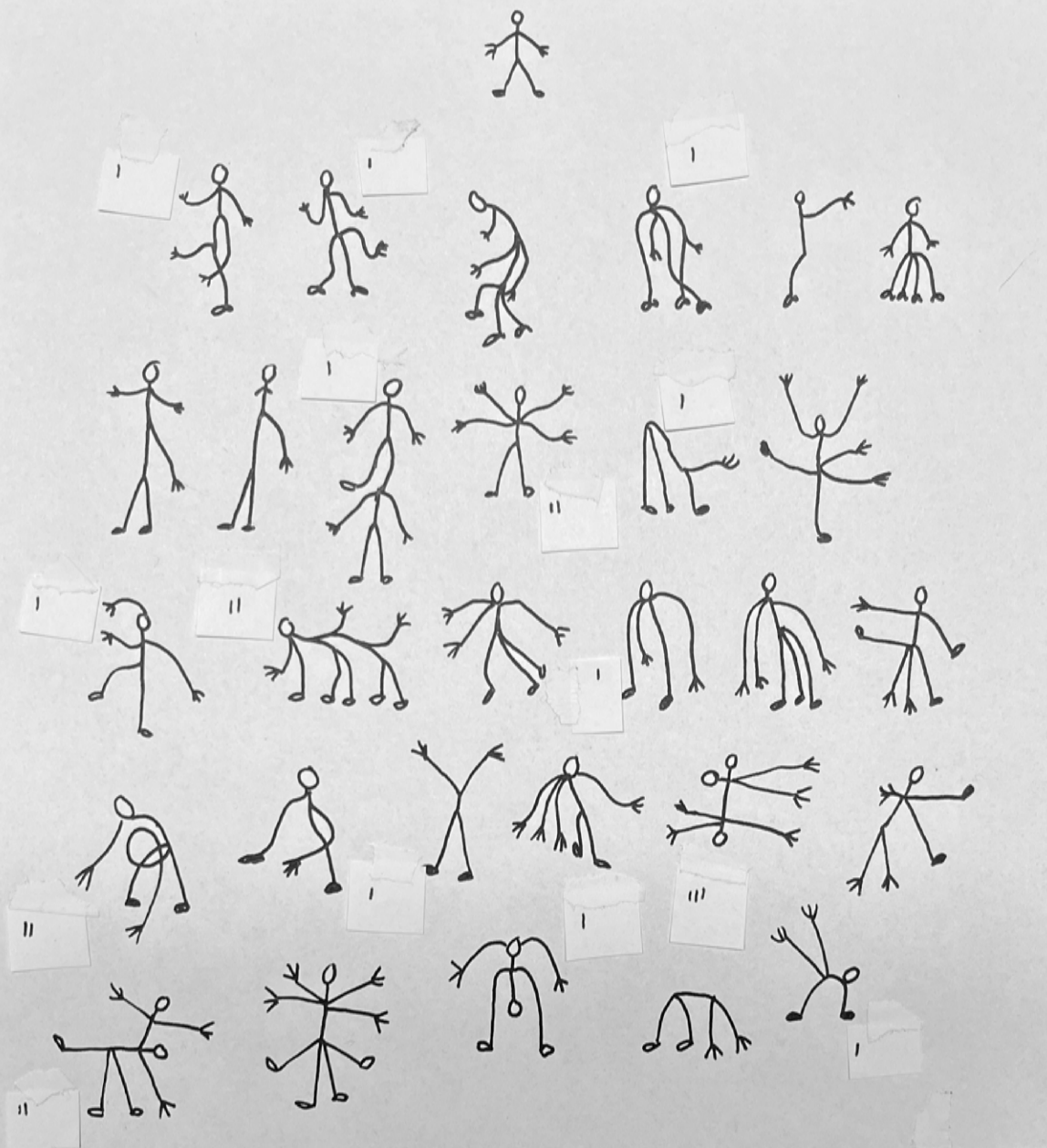
By deconstructing the body and reconfiguring it in new ways, into bodies that don't exist in the real world, the idea is to generate garment compositions that challenge the pre-set notions of what a garment should look like- and then also how you should relate to it. If it isn't made for your body, you cannot wear it in the expected way, and you are faced with the challenge of having to choose for yourself how to wear it.

The familiar choreography of putting on standardized garments is challenged and you are forced to rethink your moves. I wanted to remove the comfort of habit and make people aware of their own dressing patterns, needs, feelings and desires.

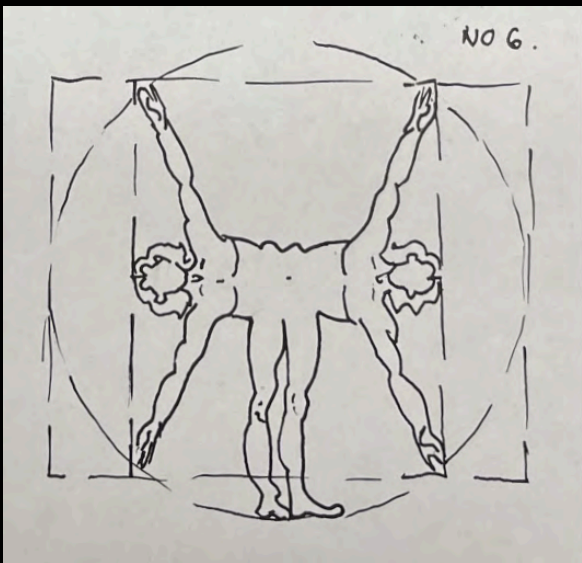
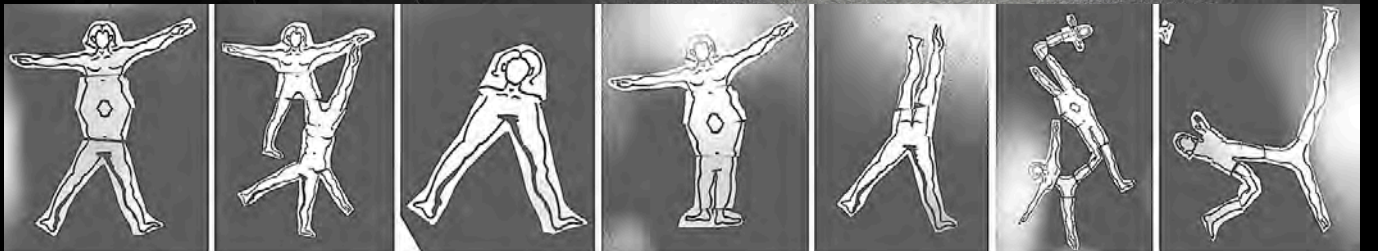
What do you actually want from this textile object when you place it in relation to your body? To materialize these ideas I started doing different kinds of experiments to generate new body-configurations. First by creating a kind of body puzzle with sets of different body parts and attempting to put them together in new ways. Then interpreting, redrawing and attempting to make some sense of these new bodies so I could start constructing clothes for them. What the actual garments aesthetically looked like was not as important as the construction itself, but I decided to add some varying distinctive garment attributes to suggest recognizable uses that may or may not be functional on a regular body. Like collars, zippers, plackets, loose ribbons that can be tied etc.

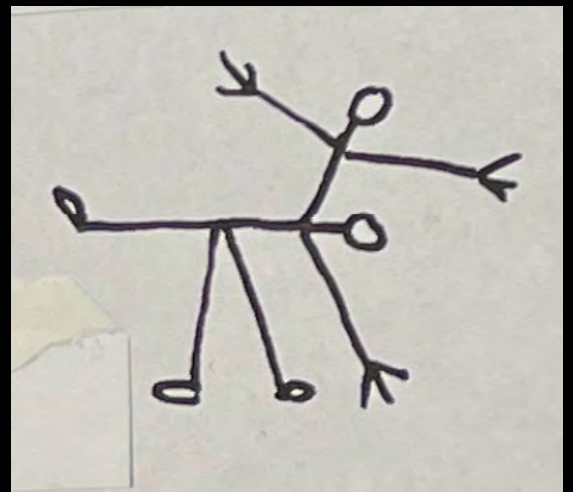
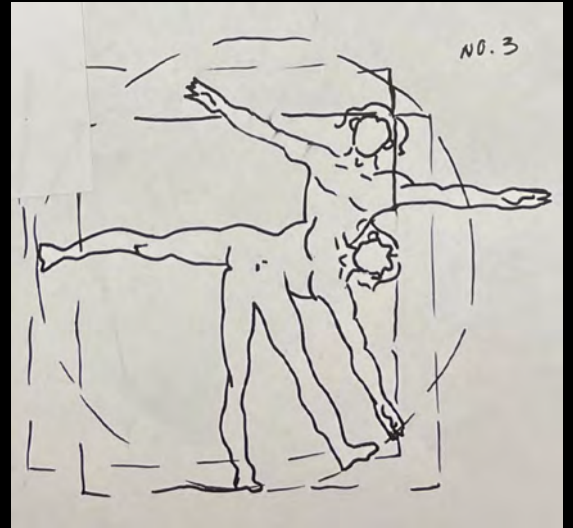
This was worked into three different toiles ,for two of the different body-compositions, ready to be tested on real bodies.

Lastly i chose to make a more finished prototype of one of the garments to add movement and adjustment-functionalities, but also to explore how the test-garments read differently than a "finished" piece. By using higher quality materials and proper finishes it could more easily camouflage as a regular garment, and the effect of interacting with it could play out differently than if you already expect it to be something different.



BODY CONFIGURATIONS





## DRESSING BOX 1, VARIABLE

## FACILITATING

Encouraging different ways of wearing objects.

My first dressing box experiment was made for a group exhibition with my class in the reception area at KHiO. In this period I had been developing objects prompted from the sentence «As few garments as possible, to generate as many outfits as possible. «Variables» as i liked to call them. Textile shapes containing some of the affordances of recognizable garments, yet playing a trick with your expectations. In the same spirit as both my BA, and New Bodies, I was trying to make shapes that demanded new ways of relating. But just making the objects did not take me much further than what i had been able to accomplish before, in my other pieces. So I decided to treat this exhibition as a research opportunity. Rather than just displaying my objects to be looked upon, I facilitated a dressing box, or something resembling a fitting room.

A familiar place to try on clothes in a public setting. Trying to reach a point of just enough privacy to make an audience comfortable to engage and interact with my objects, yet still open/public enough that it could be easily entered and observed without demanding a lot from the participator in the gallery space. Not asking audience to act as performers in the room, rather enter a box and have a moment, somewhat privately, interacting, and choosing for themselves if they want to contribute by documenting it.

Three sheets of sheer black cotton fabric hanging from wires, creating a box up against a wall, a mirror, two identically shaped objects of different textile qualities, a text prompt, and a single use camera.

«Can you find a way to wear this that no one else has done before?».







Photos: Magdalena Mikalsen

A response to the problem of «real» vs performance.

One thing I've discovered since my BA, which was quite performance-based, is that I find less interest in constructing performative acts, than trying to reflect the genuine ones. How can you take something personal and real - shine a light on it, direct the attention to, and move it into a public space without distorting the realness of it? This is a truly tricky task, when some would argue that an action becomes a performance as soon as an audience is present. Can you then do anything in public without it being a performance? What is the activating factor in going from action to performance? Is it the knowledge or the consciousness that someone is seeing it? The intention - Is it being done to be done, or to be seen? Or both?

This led me to the idea of another exhibition experiment where I wanted to explore the tension between private and public in the dressing act.

When getting dressed in the morning we are in our most private space, often in our own bedroom, often alone, but are still very much concerned with the eyes of the public. This tension I found both in the everyday experience of dressing, as well as for myself as an artist working with the topic. Asking people to share, document, and show how they dress was a lot harder than I imagined. Both because people felt exposed sharing, but also because I felt uncomfortable asking people to expose themselves in a way I'm not sure I would be comfortable doing myself. *How* to ask people was a topic of discussion, and what are the ethics of sharing and handling information when- or if someone agrees. And what are the ethical repercussions if I'm not asking at all but gathering in secret?

In the midst of grappling with these questions I built a white box that would function as a dressing room, with the white garments from my previous experiments hanging on the inside. In the box I attached a clearly visible video camera in the top corner, and the image from this camera was projected on the wall outside the box. When you are in the box, everyone on the outside can see you, but you cannot see yourself. And as soon as you exit the box, the image is gone, so you can never truly see yourself, but can watch as other people enter the box. I had the camera running for almost the whole day the exhibition was up, and recorded the reactions of people that came by.

As I hadn't put any other information than the question «Are we getting dressed in the white box?»

in the room, it was quite interesting to listen to people discuss their interpretation. Some talked about surveillance, many said they felt uncomfortable, that the clothes themselves were «creepy», while others thought it was fun, making it a show for their friends on the outside watching. Not many would actually put on the clothes, which was totally fine, as it somewhat proved how exposed and unnatural the situation presented. The fact that it sparked conversations and evoked some feelings in people, even if it was not the ones I started from, made the experiment worthwhile.





## SHOWING CARE 1 - OPEN DRESSER

## PRACTICING/ FACILITATING

Bringing my private practicing into public spaces.

Presentation in the aftermath of delivering my theory thesis. Bringing the pile of clothes sitting on top of my dresser at home- to school. Sorting through it, picking out laundry, folding and preparing my pile for the Christmas holidays, talking through the actions in front of my class, professors and staff in the Black Box at KHIO.



## SHOWING CARE 2 - LAUNDRY DAY

## PRACTICING/ FACILITATING

Again bringing private practicing to public spaces.

Spending a day doing my own laundry in the white box gallery.

Garment-practicing with open doors, welcoming people to watch, hang out, help or react however they please.

Video documentation:  
(1min)

<https://vimeo.com/942508011/820019f1df>









## **"NOTES ON VALUE" SHORT ESSAY**

## **MAKING**

A short essay reflecting on the value of objects through a personal story of my fathers old record-player. The essay can be read in the student-publication «Reality Playlists—Loads of Text: Hives, Dens, Expanses» (Barth, 2023, p.6) Published on Oslo National Academy of the Arts digital archive KHIODA.

# NOTES ON VALUE

Annikken Wilhelmsen

In my creative practice I keep finding myself returning to the topic of value, but in attempts to define this concept I tend to only find more questions than answers. Is *value* an intangible set of principles, ideas and convictions? Is it money, possessions, or *capital* in a broader sense? Or simply variations in colors, hues, tones or sound? What is my value as a person, artist, friend, student? What are the values I live by, that drive me? What is the value of the works I create? What are your values compared to mine? What are the values dominating the industry which I am about to embark upon after my studies? What are the values of the past, the present and the future? What is highly valuable to one, can have no value at all in the eyes of another. How can you then start to create value in this ever changing landscape of different parameters? At times this bothers me to the point of feeling paralysed, but I search for solace in the same way I deal with creative blocks: by taking physical action and looking to the materials. In this case the material is an object, and the action was to bring the object to my class for my media presentations in our theory class.

My father's old record player (or turntable to be precise) is the most valuable object in my possession. This specific object entails so many layers of value, in its physical presence, its history and the feelings connected to it, to the point it has become a personal symbol of the many shapes of which value can take. My father bought the record player around 1977, not long after moving south to attend engineering school after growing up in the very north of Norway. He had just started earning his own money, and decided to drive to Oslo to visit a demo-room for hi-fi equipment at the Bristol Hotel, looking to get the best possible sound system available. Every time he tells this story he insists on bringing up how it was worth as much as a car at the time, and that he even invested in these huge speakers the size of a door that could barely fit in the actual car on his way back home. However, I like to think of the story of the turntable as a lot more than the price that was paid at the time of its acquisition. It was an investment of hard earned money, it was joyful, a bit nerdy but also a rare treat for someone who these days tend to buy only the quickest, cheapest alternative of most things. Maybe it was a reflection of the time, his age, life situation an act of

independence and so forth, which in some ways are similar to where I am at in my own life at the time of writing this.

The turntable was brought home, and in the following time he would not only use it, but take pride in caring for it, and even adding to its value. A special vinyl-vacuum was used on every record before playing to make sure no dust would damage either the record or the needle, and to stabilise the player he custom ordered a 23kg, 5cm thick black granite stone slab engraved with the «Micro Seiki» logo from a gravestone supplier for it to stand on. The player served its duty for years, until record players eventually became obsolete, and it was tucked away in the attic. There it would sit dormant until one day, in my early teens I came across it. My newfound curiosity sparked the latent interest of my father to bring it back out and restore to its former glory. Time had taken its toll and parts were difficult to get hold of as the manufacturers were long gone and the amount of people with knowledge of these things had become scarce. After sending it between multiple hi-fi-centers and on a round-trip to Denmark, the story would go full circle as an old teacher at the same engineering school my father went to eventually was able to repair the turntable, and it was placed in my childhood bedroom.

Years was spent trying to convince my father to let me bring it along after moving to Oslo. Maybe because he insists it is still worth a lot of money and he could sell it on ebay, or because trust was damaged in an unfortunate teenage party-accident where I managed to break the accompanying granite stone in two. However I believe firmly (though he will never admit it) he was not quite ready to let go of it simply because it means a lot. It is rooted in memories, a story of his life, now moving on to be a part of mine and the one we share together. The times are different, yet my story with the object starts around the same age he was at the time of acquiring it over 40 years ago. There is a sense of connection. In this age where music exists mainly on streaming platforms, the act of putting on a physical record on a record player has a different weight to it. Physical interaction with the object, the act of choosing which record to play, and listening to it from start to finish constitutes a deeper appreciation and consideration. Not to mention from my designer point of view that the visual, aesthetic and technical design-qualities of the turntable are (subjectively) impeccable.

I keep wanting to create these intangible values, or impose it on objects while being painfully aware that my mission is impossible. The value lies in the fact that it can't be forced, it is embedded in time, relation and experiences that you cannot impose on either objects or people. It is in this sense truly genuine. *Jeg unner deg\** the feeling of connection, gratitude, and joy of relating to *things* around you in the way I do with my fathers turntable. And despite the contradictions I hope to embed at least some resemblance of this value in the things I create.



Platespilleren 1979



Platespilleren 2023

\* Norwegian phrase, in this context loosely translating to «I wish upon you», or «I find you deserving of»

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Wilhelmsen, A. (Circa 2012). Breaking the granite stone slab [Authors memory] (A. Wilhelmsen, Ed. 2023). Kongsberg, Norway

Wilhelmsen, A. (2023). Hans Tommy Wilhelmsen's Micro Seiki ddx-1000 in Annikken Wilhelmsen's living room. [Photo] Private collection. Oslo, Norway.

Wilhelmsen, A. (2023, 24. mars) Historien bak min fars platespiller og refleksjoner rundt verdiløppfatelse av objektet [Mediepresentasjon] DE545\_1, Teori 2: Teoriutvikling, Kunsthøgskolen i Oslo.

Wilhelmsen, H. T. (1979) Hans Tommy Wilhelmsen's Micro Seiki ddx-1000 in his home. [Photo] Private collection. Kongsberg, Norway.

Wilhelmsen, H. T. (Owner & Father) & Wilhelmsen, A. (Inheritor & Daughter). (2023) Hans Tommy Wilhelmsen's Micro Seiki ddx-1000 (ca.1977) [Turntable]. Private collection.

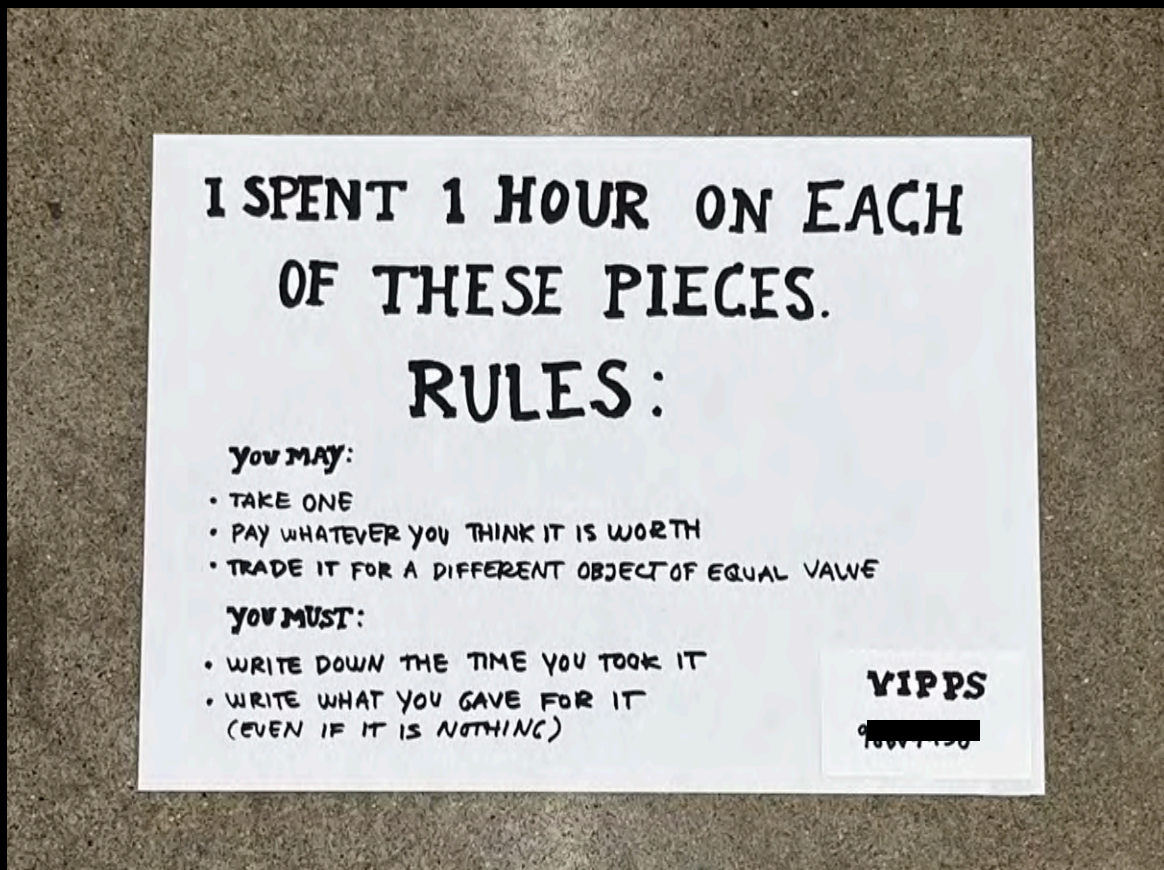
Wilhelmsen, H. T. (Personal communication, 23. Mars 2023).

## GIVING VALUE - I SPENT 1 HOUR

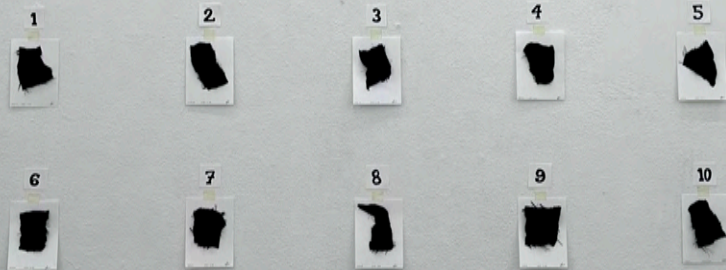
## FACILITATING

An exhibition to let a *public* decide value or desirability of a textile object. Inspired by the same artists I mentioned in my *Truisms?* piece I started a stitching-practice that I will delve further into a bit later in this document. However I began this stitching-journey by working on small scraps of wool fabric floating around my desk area. Each scrap piece received exactly 1 hour of full attention, stitching freely, adding different threads and textures, lines, shapes, sequences etc. before mounting/stitching it onto a piece of paper, dating it and signing it. To me this was 1 hour of connecting to the material, becoming acquainted, giving something to it. But it was also labor. Intense working and focus, nonstop for a set amount of time. Seeing as I am an educated designer, and this is about to be my livelihood, what is an hour of my time worth? Is the human-hand-object-emotion connection, that is so important to me personally, even a part of the equation when the object is presented to someone else? Does the fact that the object is made from scraps, take away from the work, care and attention that is given to it in that 1 hour? Where does it land on the value-scale after I spend my time with it?

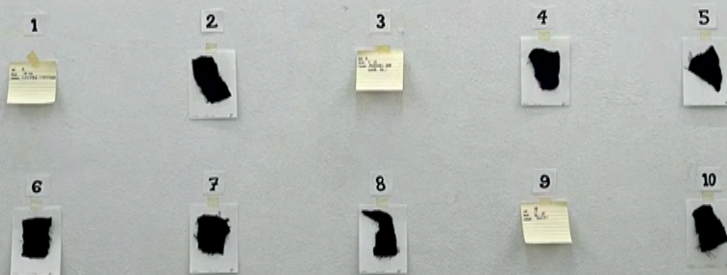
I made 10 of these pieces and hung them on the wall of a gallery, on the floor was a sign with the prompt for visitors to take one, and pay whatever they found it worth - in money or objects.



# I SPENT 1 HOUR



# I SPENT 1 HOUR



5 hours later

1

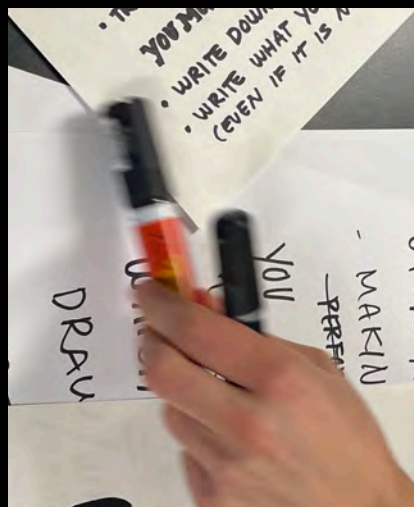
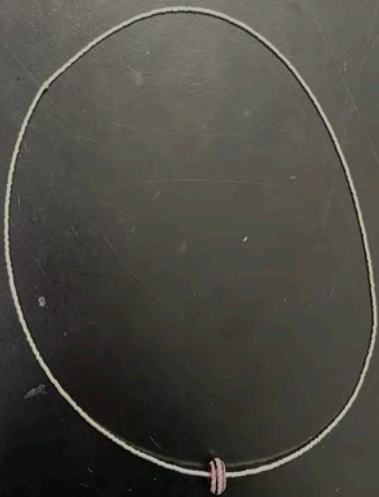
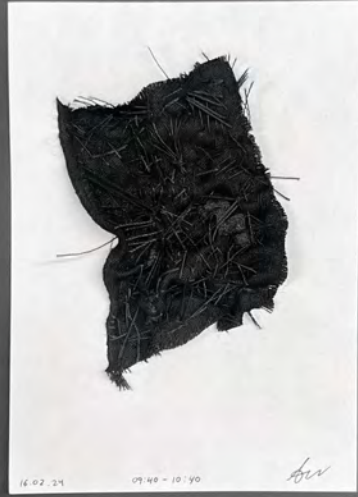
NR: 1  
 TIME: 18:00  
 I GAVE: COLORS + TEXTURES

3

NR: 3  
 TIME: 5:12  
 I GAVE: MARKERS AND  
 SOME KR,-

9

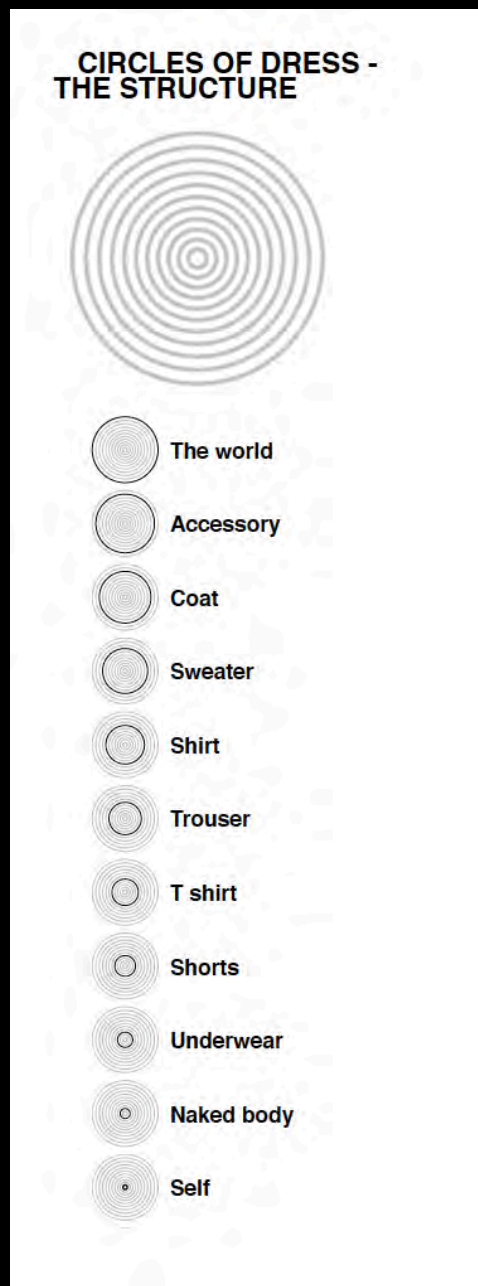
NR: 9  
 TIME: 16:15  
 I GAVE: SUSHI



Experimental theory thesis from the last months of 2023.

Structuring text passages & images around the layers, or *circles* of dressing, working from the world towards the inner self with a sense of jazz. Each segment of the essay falling in its own layer, but not stuck to the linearity of the structure. Like sound waves, beats or rhythms, somewhere between system and improvisation.

A structure, and a non-structure, reflecting on different aspects of dressing, embodiment, object relationships, systems and care. Essay can be shared upon request.



# SHARING TIME - FREE STITCHING

The current culmination of this project, where i am standing now.  
Connecting to materials through free-stitching.

*I spend hours and hours stitching on a piece of fabric.  
There is no end goal, and no system to it, some stitches are long, others short.  
Some move consecutively in nice lines, others fall wherever they please.  
Over, under, across, into, between, and so on.  
There are multiple different threads, some are thick, some so fine you can barely see them, some cotton, some linen, some wool, some silk, some polyester.  
The more time we spend together, the closer we become.  
We connect, through touch and through coexisting in the same place at the same time.  
Together. We are changing each other, and now we are not the same as the day we met.  
There have been changes to the fabric of our being,  
however small and insignificant it looks from afar.*

In trying to convey the connections we make to our own clothes, to our favorites, the ones that stick around, I once again keep encountering cliches in the doorway. Maybe this is the clearest case where the problem of «real» constitutes itself. In trying to exemplify, document or share someone else's garment relations, it only becomes more apparent that it is not the same as the feeling of being in it yourself. The feelings I know, and are trying to bring forth might not even be the same as yours to begin with. Attempts at insisting that they are real and genuine, and should relate to you as such, becomes a constructed narrative - a nice little story with a moral lesson to be learned. And here lives the cliché.

I was left with the question of how I can bring forth this notion in a way that felt genuine? What are we *REALLY* looking at here, is it the human and the object, or is it the **connecting** itself. Can i translate this into a different expression, wash away the excess, perhaps avoid some cloudiness by omitting the shapes of bodies and clothes , and with that also their whole package of prejudices and preconceptions as *Fashion-objects*.

If we have both a physical and an emotional side of connecting to clothes - We can evoke or trigger a sense of the physical connections through recognizable garment shapes, but I didn't feel like the emotional connections could be *represented* justly in a bodily object. It is the sum of *time* you spend with it and the sensations, memories and experiences you have together that shape the emotional connection. A garment that is not your own gets more immediately read through its visual and physical form. The physical attributes will too easily overpower the emotional perspective.

So let's rather detach it completely, is there another way to convey this connection - Meeting the material at a different stage of its lifecycle?  
Can these tacit experiences of material relations be translated into the act of stitching?

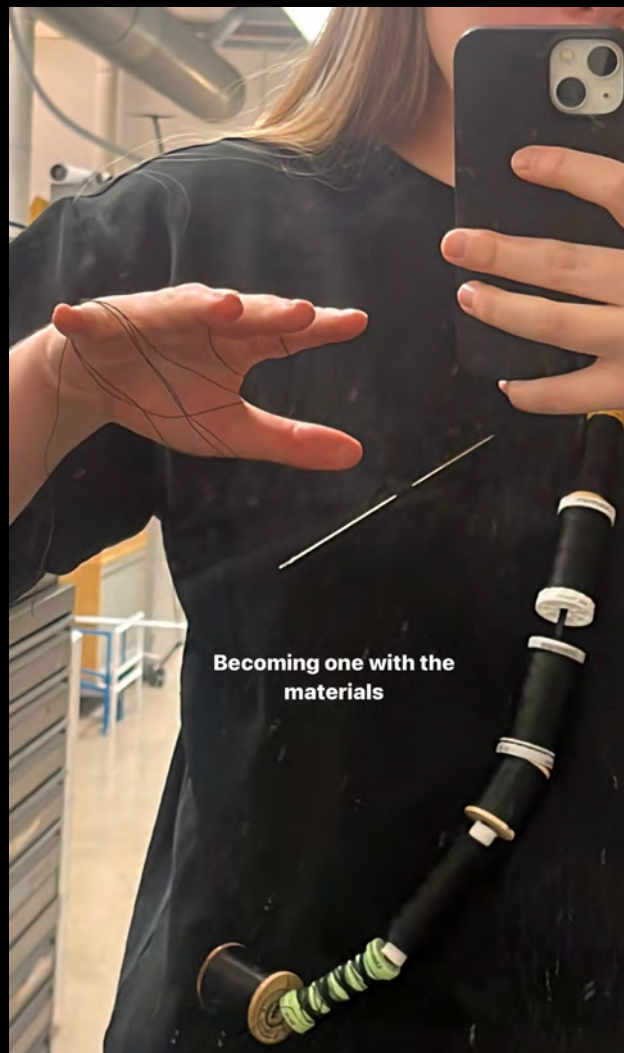


I meet my materials in a stage of transition. The materials are already industrialized objects, they have been through multiple processes, from the bodies of animals, to the hands of people and in the clasp of machines, to become what they are now. Woven wool textiles.

At the stage I meet them, they were either intended to proceed into the possession of some commercial agent or as waste, circling back into a new process. However they were intersected. For a time they are to stay with me, to be cherished, given full attention, attended to, cared for, looked at, changed and ultimately worn - on the frameworks of bodies or other forms.

It started with my 1 hour scrap pieces that we touched upon earlier. If these were determined to not be worth much more than small trinkets or commodities, what happens if we move the scale up. Not using scraps, but several meters of high quality textiles, specifically sourced for this purpose, and not just an hour, but days, or weeks or months.

So i began stitching, and with it came all kinds of new questions.





From my workspace in the MA-Classroom at KHIO

Thoughts while stitching:

- Abstract or image?
- Drawing or stitching?
- Meaning or no meaning?
- Intention?
- Is this for me or for you?
- What is the significance of this?
- Is doing it enough?

## FABRIC 1

The first fabric was 4 meters of Italian black wool satin. I hung it over one of the frames that I had left over after taking down my second dressing box. I used sewing threads of many different kinds, and counted the first 30 hours of stitching over a couple weeks before the hours proceeded into the unknown. Stitching black on black was my own testament to slow and silent practicing, one you cannot see from afar, but you have to move up close and personal to really *get* the scope of. A piece that demands time, where the stitching is for me, not an audience.





*«Embroidery conveys the touch and negotiation of hands in motion, and allows space for individual agency, processes of undoing, redoing and intimate imagining. (...) that can be practiced and evidenced through everyday acts of sovereignty such as stitching.»*  
(Black & Burisch, 2021, p. 217)

## FABRIC 2

The second fabric was 3 meters of the quality «Mandal» from Gudbrandsdalens Uldvarefabrikk, which I and a couple classmates visited in the beginning of February 2024. This is a quite a heavy quality meant for furniture. Consisting of 98% wool and 2% polyamide in the color «sesame» (Black warp and beige/light brown weft).

I used thick black wool yarns from Rauma Garn which me and the same group of classmates also made a visit to on a previous trip in the fall of 2023, some black linen thread spun at the respective factory, as well as thin wool yarn cut-off scraps from the production at Gudbrandsdalens Uldvarefabrikk.

Immediately this piece grabbed a different kind of attention than my previous months of silent stitching on black fabric. People started approaching, asking questions, looking for images and forms in the stitches. The thicker threads made the visual expression louder, and I could fill the surface with lines much faster than before. It became a step towards speaking up, or letting others in.

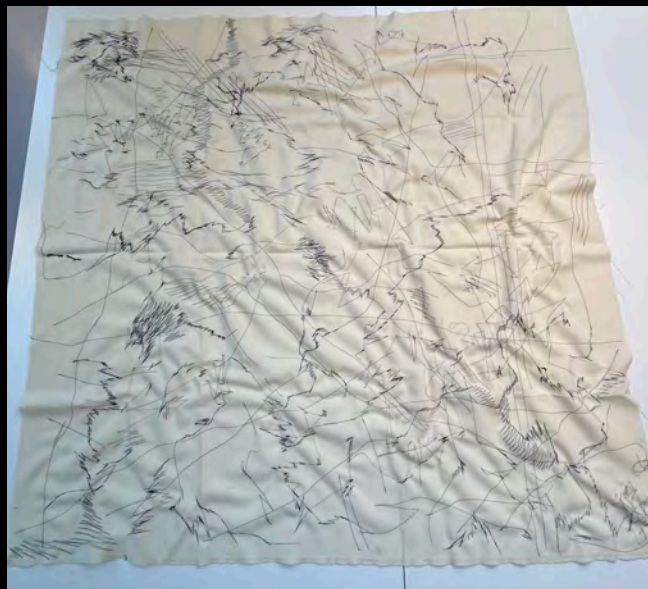
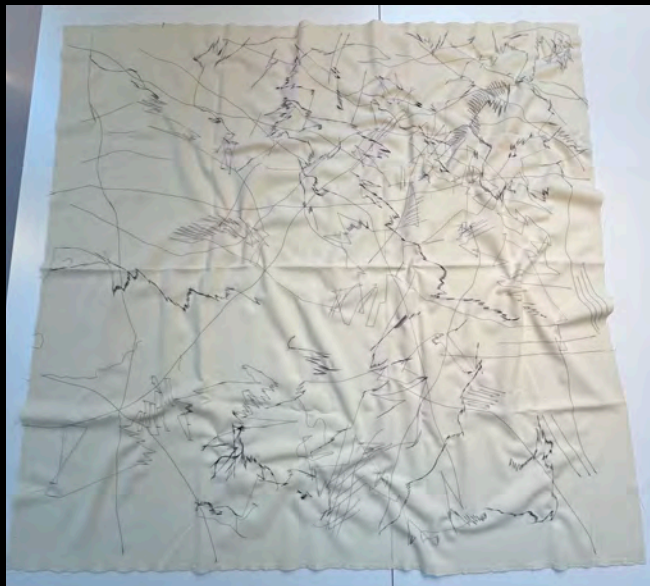


### FABRIC 3

The third fabric was 2 meters of untreated/uncolored 2-shaft woven wool from Gudbrandsdalens uldvarefabrikk, often used in the making of Bunads (Norwegian national costume). I decided to take this one on a different journey, as I began to question my own idealization of the hand-material connection. What happens if we place a machine in between the two. Can I still conjure a sense of connection even if it is through using an industrialized instrument such as the sewing machine. Another level of pacing up, where the machine wants to move fast, but I have to force it to emulate the opposite.

This maneuvering of the machine to imitate my own hand-stitching became a full body experience, stomping on the foot-pedals, twisting and turning the fabric, jerking it back and forth, right hand on the back-stitch pedal in inconsequent beats, twisting the wheels of stitch length and tension, fastening, not fastening, lifting presser foot and maneuvering fabric to create floating threads, fastening, or stitching straight lines, stopping, going. A whole ensemble of movements and actions, moving much faster, yet with the same focus and determination. Only now the focus is shifted towards the machine, and not so much the material itself. Almost a form of dancing with the machine, leaving traces- or footprints on the fabric as a result. In my synthesis essay I reference Gilles Deleuze on the matter of assemblages, «*If you combine a man, with a horse and a stirrup you no longer only have the separate entities but a symbiotic "man-horse-stirup", a new "war entity"*» (Robaard, 2016, p.299). Which is somewhat resembling my experience of stitching this fabric, becoming a new entity with the machine and material.





Hour-progression





## MAKING, PRACTICING, FACILITATING?

In the stitching I found a middle ground between all my roles.

From the beginning, my stitching was obviously a form of making, I was doing something to/with a material, changing it, adding to it, or taking something from it? Puncturing with a needle, disturbing the pristine smooth surface, adding tension, marks. Drawing with threads, yet resisting the figurative. The story is not in the image but the act and the process. I counted hours, but eventually my stitching became a silent processing of the feelings and questions I carried in me, and the hours went by and i stopped counting. It truly became a form of private practicing, even while doing it in a workspace amongst my classmates, I put on my headphones, blocked out the surroundings, and gave my undivided attention to the fabric in front of me. Making and practicing all at once. Eventually the facilitation potential also became apparent. Through doing this in the common MA workspace, people started reacting, coming over, asking questions. My consistent stitching in the corner of the room evoked a curiosity in others. And i began to play with the thought of how to bring this **out** even further.

Realizing the potential to not only share my time with materials, but that it also might be of interest to share my stitching practice with other *people*, I embarked on a new line of questions. *Where* does it happen? *How* is it presented to a public? And *Who* gets to take part?

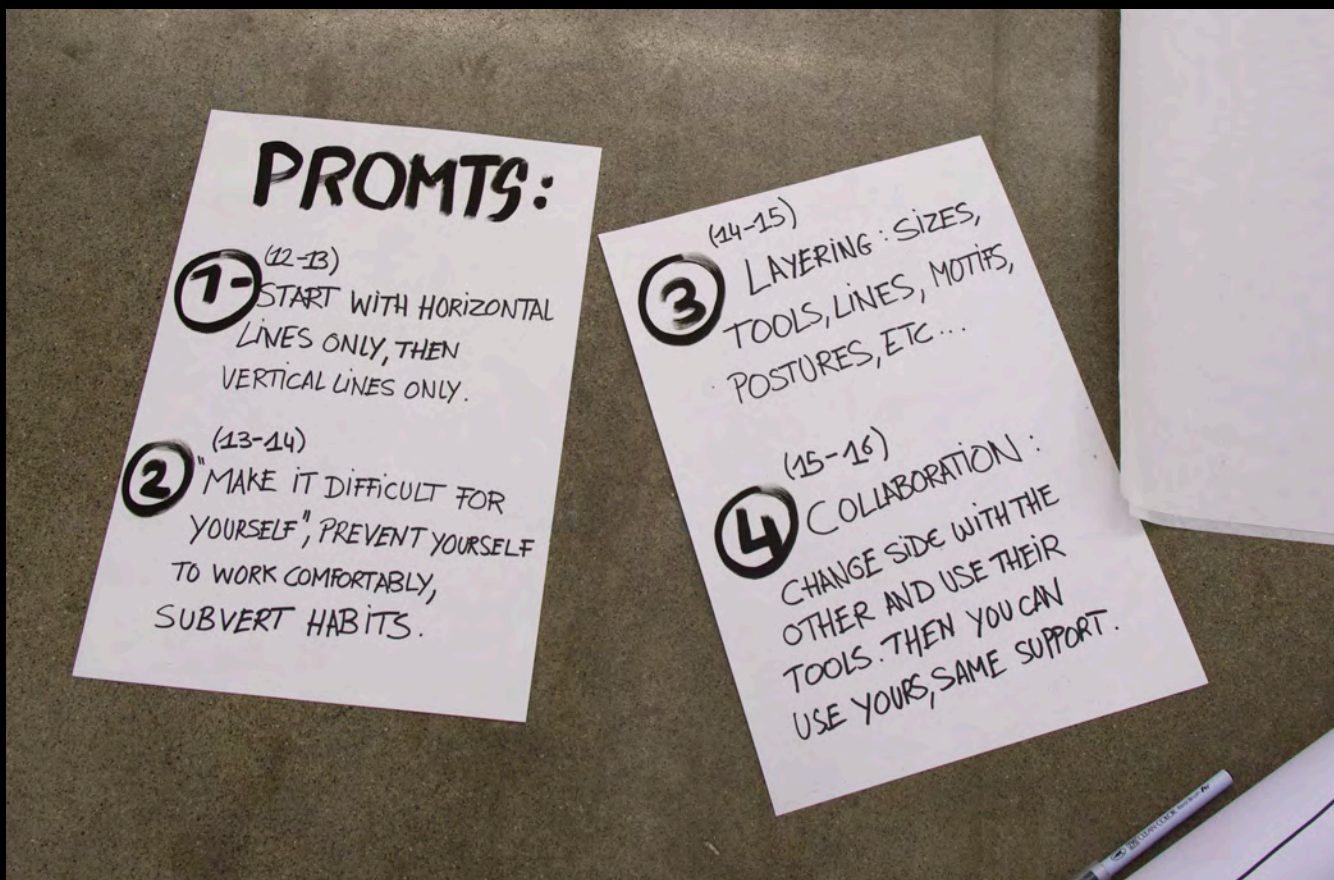
## DRAWING/STITCHING LINES ACROSS DISCIPLINES

In collaboration with my classmate Nicolas Vittori from MA Graphic design & Illustration, who at the time was exploring the making of marks and lines through drawing, we set out to occupy a gallery space for a day. Aiming to work on our own stitching/drawing opposite of each other in an open gallery over a span of several hours.

We made a series of prompts we would work from- an hour at a time, challenging our own habits and ways of line-making, looking to see if working in proximity with another field could inform our methods. Seeing as this was happening in a space open to an audience, we left supplies out to allow potential audience to react to what they witnessed in the form of either drawing or stitching. Taking part in the line-making.

VIDEO DOCUMENTATION :  
(55 seconds)

<https://vimeo.com/942967539/d6335c84c8>







Making lines on each others work

## FORMATS OF SHOWING

I continued my pursuit of going public through various attempts at exhibiting or showing my fabrics in different formats.

The same week as my collaborative work-session with Nicolas, I was also able to use the gallery as an exhibition space. Having worked on several fabrics at this point, and having done my open laundry day in the same room, I began my format-testing by displaying the fabrics on clothing lines together with my laundry. Keeping in the spirit of bringing along elements from previous pieces, but adding, reconfiguring and trying them out in new ways.

Some questions arising:

How do we read the fabrics when presented in connection with clothes?

What does the drying lines do to the sense of value?

How does the context of «Gallery room» inside of an art school shape the perception of the work?







## STICKS, STONES & STITCHES

The next step became to move outside of the safe walls of the school, onto a group exhibition at Kunsternes Hus, as a part of the KHIO Quarterly exhibition program going on this spring. Together with two classmates from MA Interior & Furniture design, Lloyd Winter and Kjetil Smedal, as well as Lieu Le from my own program, we applied for an exhibition spot at the Academy room. We found common ground in that we all worked with materials in quite a stripped down form, approaching them with a curiosity for their agency. Exhibiting together with a group opened for new ways of reading my fabrics with- or against the others, and showing at a well known art-institution such as Kunsternes hus was a step into the territory of the art world.

Questions arising:

Would my fabrics read fully as textile art in this location?

How does the works of my co-exhibitors reflect or influence my works in the space?

What happens when i stretch my fabrics onto wooden frames, dressing another form of body?

Do they read as images or pictures?

How does hanging them on walls differ from the clothing lines?









## GRADUATION SHOW

Next up was the KHIO Clothing & Costume design graduation runway show. An annual event bringing together the graduating classes of both BA and MA to show the works in a more traditional fashion-show context. As i had not made any actual clothes at this point, i found it interesting to see how my framed fabrics could function in this format. Being pushed around on a runway, showing an action I repeatedly found myself doing in the «backstage» of my project, as an act of labor. Moving stuff around, putting them in new places, passing by people in the process, being observed around the school areas with my objects and tools.

But in arranging for people (friends/models) to push these frames on a runway I was met with the inevitable - people must be dressed. And as this was by any definition a type of show-format that is arranged and constructed to be seen, the clothes needed some consideration. My project is titled with a «we», so a coherency in the group would only be fitting. And as I am trying to let others into my own way of practicing, why not have them resemble my own kind of uniform? I could easily have gone out to buy these outfits for my models, but in doing so I would have to compromise my values by not knowing the circumstances of how these clothes were made. So I decided to make simple, black, work-wear outfits of from scratch. Taking my responsibility of making with care, and further caring for what happens to them after.

A new addition in my collection og pieces - to bring along to the next.



Photo: Håkon Borg, Magpie Visuals



Photo: Julie Hrcirova / Studio Abrakadabra



Photo: Julie Hrcirova, Studio Abrakadabra



Photo: Kristine Jakobsen



Photo: Kristine Jakobsen



## OPEN STITCH SESSIONS

Lastly we have the element of audience participation. I have shown my own stitching in various ways, but if I want people to actually take part in *this* way of practicing I need to facilitate spaces for people to also enter the *making* phase. I tried this on multiple occasions, first in the white box, then amongst friends and classmates, but the most important one being in the days after our graduation show.

Once again I had the opportunity to use the academy room at Kunstnernes hus.

This time as a part of the Clothing & costume departments

«*DELIVERABLES: Live formats from the sewing room*» program.

An additional presentation platform for the graduation-projects that would be better shown in other formats than on a runway.

Here I arranged an ongoing stitching-session for a day. With classmate Lieu Le working on her own project in the room simultaneously, I began stitching on a larger piece of fabric while also encouraging visitors to join in and stitch along with me. A simple setup of a roll of black wool 2-shaft woven fabric from Gudbrandsdalens Uldvarefabrikk hanging from the ceiling, a selection of yarns, threads and needles, some pre-made sewing kits of threads and needles scattered on the floor, and an invitation to stitch along.

This is where I'm left standing at this point, stitching by myself in both familiar and unfamiliar spaces, will you stitch along with me?

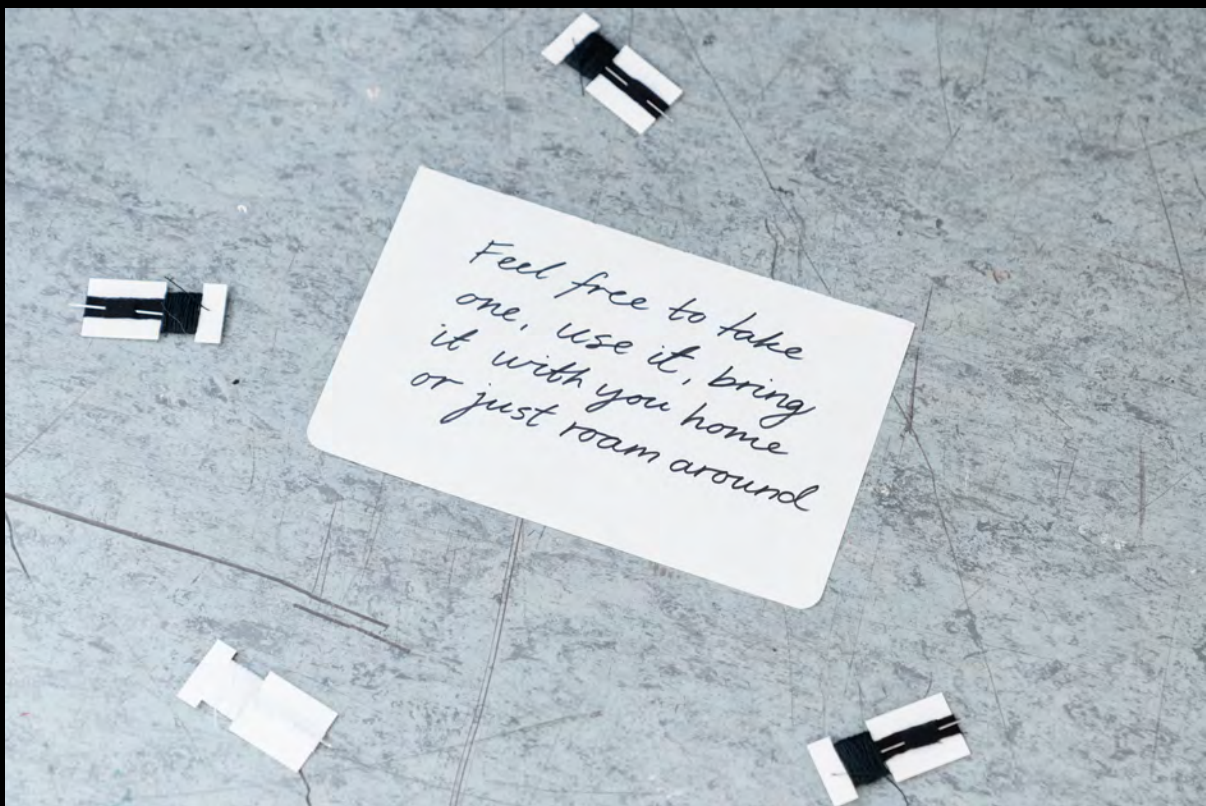


Photo: Einar Fuglem



Photo: Einar Fuglem



Photos: Einar Fuglem



Photo: Einar Fuglem

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