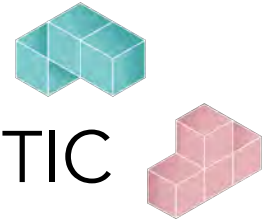


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DESIGNING SCALES OF DOMESTIC MENDING IN FASHION

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ABSTRACT

This workshop explores mending practices as a personal and domestic response to the overwhelming problems of fast consumption and waste within the fashion industry. Participants are invited (but not required) to bring one garment, which has holes, tears, stains, or other kinds of damages, and to co-explore domestic mending in fashion with other attendees and researchers. This practice-based workshop aims to further substantiate the on-going discussion of how to engage people in mending. In particular, it seeks to understand how design for different scales of engagement can meet personal preconditions and ambitions.

During the workshop, we will test a pre-defined set of aesthetic parameters (structure, colour, materials) and the most versatile mending techniques, swiss darn and needle weaving, by using redesigned mending tools to explore how design can facilitate scales of engagement.

WORKSHOP DESCRIPTION

The workshop aims to address an alternative present and future of fashion by using design to re-introduce mending as a practice of care and finding deep joy in already existing clothing. There is a rich tradition in

mending practices which comprising techniques, equipment and tools. These set of practices in contemporary Western societies is virtually dying, while in the past, these practices were strongly tied to local identities and cultures, and the knowledge of repair was maintained within educational school programs, and across generations. Re-introduction of mending practices, facilitated by artefacts (see figure 1), can enable people to raise their individual and collective capability and capacity, and become a joyful way of engaging with clothing. Moreover, it can be seen as an alternative to the desire for purchasing new items.

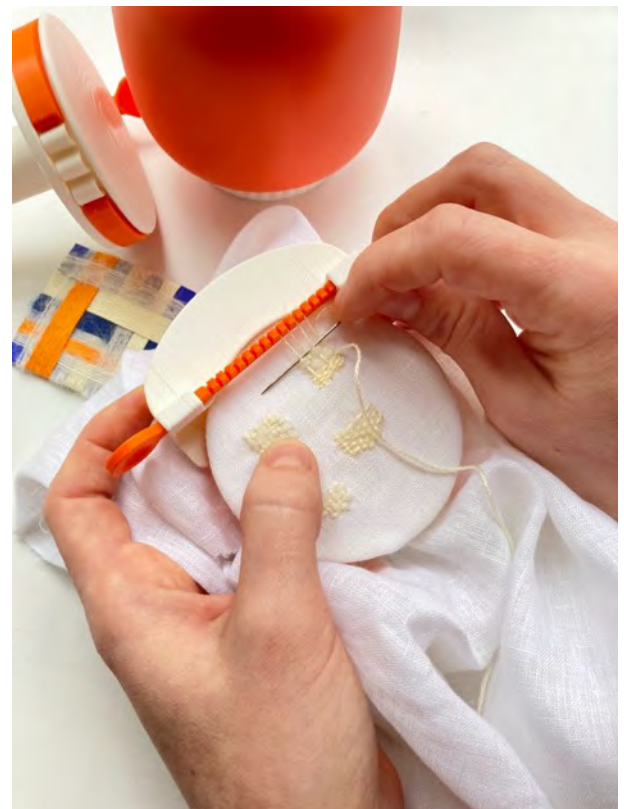


Figure 1: Re-designed enabling artefacts: 3D printed mending mushroom and darning tool.

MENDING: STATE OF THE ART

The fashion industry, in the last several decades, has been dominated by fast rhythms of low-quality production, fast-changing collections (Allwood 2006; Fletcher & Tham, 2019; Fletcher & Grose, 2012). As a consequence of environmental and social impacts caused by the fashion industry, younger generations have started to adopt de-materialisation as a strategy of resistance to capitalism and consumer culture, which have resulted in a gradual transition from fast to slow rhythm of consumption (Klingseis, 2011; Gurova, 2015).

The slow rhythm of consumption with its characteristic features (popularity of handmade locally produced fashion products, upcycling, recycling, personalisation, circulation, repair, and maintenance) results in increasing the lifespan of clothing and returning to a more frank recognition of actual, tangible objects, not just their symbolic value (Clark, 2008). Furthermore, fashion is a form of communication capable to facilitate social interactions within a specific social group. It allows individuals to construct abstract meanings, established and socially recognized, through the visual language of the dress (Chon, 2013). The body surface is seen as an interface, which projects a desired self onto the external world (Gurova, 2011), and links the relationship between human persona and body to body and society (Barthes, 2006). Consequently, the circular process of interaction between individuals and society affects the emotional responses of others by the agency of fashion objects. Therefore, the fashion object creates an aesthetic code (Simmel, 1998; Gurova, 2011), which allows us to cultivate and communicate an aesthetic value and develop a form of social identity.

Within this landscape, the growth in popularity of mending is a personal response to the overwhelming problems of fast consumption and waste (Brayshaw, 2020). At the same time mending opens up an opportunity to engage with textiles and clothing – and might even create personal expressions in fashion (see figure 2).



Figure 2: Participants' exploration of mending practice.

The main obstacles of garment mending are the lack of skills, time and equipment (Clark, 2008; Gwilt, 2014; McLaren & McLauchlan, 2015). As a consequence of fast rhythms of consumption and the abandonment of mending practices, also the mending tools went into disuse. Today most of them are not produced anymore and are difficult to find. As a part of an ongoing PhD study in mending practices, author 2 has redesigned a series of traditional mending tools to be 3D printed for local production. This offer an easy reproduction with the potential to act as vehicles for challenging perspectives, gathering voices, encouraging new behaviours. In continuation hereof, we are interested in how design can accommodate the main obstacles of garment mending and initiate the engagements with these practices.

DESIGNING SCALES OF MENDING

Designers in fashion have a well-developed set of skills in working with textiles and aesthetics colours, patterns, textures, shapes etc. (Ravnløkke, 2019). We propose to utilize this knowledge in combination with traditions in mending practices to generate a pre-defined set of aesthetic parameters of different scales of engagement with clothing. Mending comes with challenges in relation to the individual mender's preconditions and ambitions (Twigger Holroyd, 2018; Durrani, 2019). This research illustrates how design approaches can guide, support and inspire at different levels. Does one for example prefer an invisible mending, a more visible one (see figure 3), or a mending that stands out and add decoration as a part of the result.



Figure 3: Authors own exploration of mending practice.

On these premises, the workshop *Designing Scales of domestic mending in fashion* aims to address an alternative present and future of fashion by using design to re-introduce mending as a practice of care and finding deep joy in already existing clothing; and to generate data for ongoing research projects at LAB for Design and Sustainability at Design School Kolding. It focuses on the study of slow rhythm of consumption in the field of fashion, addressing its attention to the practices of mending, both traditional and new. The intent of the workshop is to gain knowledge of the participants' understanding of mending practices, and co-explore mending's pre-defined set of aesthetic parameters to allow the scalability of the practice on a domestic level.

PRACTICAL OVERVIEW

The workshop is based on participatory textile making principles: informed participation, inclusivity and mutual respect, and appropriate planning and resourcing (Twigger Holroyd and Shercliff, 2020). On the practical level, the participatory mending workshop will take place at Kolding Design School in an acoustically isolated room with the abundance of natural light (1.23), which would be appropriate to create a relaxing atmosphere of open exchange and simultaneously challenge the established hierarchies among the maximum number of ten participants. The acceptance will occur by signing up. Participants will be given informed consent for data treatment

Co-explorers will be invited (but not required) to bring one garment to mend, which have holes, tears, stains or other kinds of damages. For those who are unable to bring their own damaged garment, there will be a selection to choose from at the workshop. The workshop facilitators will, likewise, provide materials, equipment and tools for the making activities as a part of the co-exploration. It will consist of a set of guidelines as well as physical artefacts such as textile samples, several typologies of threads and yarns, available in different colours, and 3D printed mending tools which enable explorations of the most versatile mending techniques: swiss darn and needle weaving.

Facilitators will support participants along the making-mending process, which is scoped for half a day. We suggest the duration of three hours, however, since mending activity requires time, it could have a duration of the whole day (depending on availability of time dedicated to the workshops). In both cases, it will be divided into three main sessions:

- Welcoming the participants, including the short round of presentations to allow the acclimatizing before actively joining into co-exploration. Secondly, we will give an

introduction to the research, constituting the base of this workshop (approx. half an hour).

- Making activity (approx. two hours), which is a core of the participatory process alongside the collective narrative towards envisioning scales of engagements in domestic mending practices.
- Reflection and evaluation, drawn on different perspectives, both participants' and facilitators'. This phase will have a semi-structured nature to allow the emergence of unexpected (approx. half an hour).

Finally, we hope that some of the participants will wish to continue the development of their mending practice within their own homes. Therefore, to express our gratitude for their participation and co-exploration, we will provide them with the mending kits as a take away and will exchange the contact information, aiming to inform the participants about the development of further research process.

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