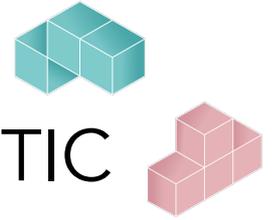


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# DESIGNING SCALES OF DOMESTIC MENDING IN FASHION

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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 asked 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. The aim of this practice-based workshop is to further substantiate the ongoing 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 mending spectrum, consisting of aesthetic parameters such as structure, colour, materials and the most versatile mending techniques, swiss darn and needle weaving. By using redesigned mending tools, we will explore how design can facilitate scales of engagement with contemporary mending practices in fashion.

## 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. This 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 and 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 offers 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 mending that stands out and add decoration as a part of the result?



Figure 3: Authors own exploration of mending practice.

The workshop Designing Scales of domestic mending in fashion aims to address an alternative present and future of fashion by using design to make mending an activity in fashion which may cultivate other interests than the dominant market-driven fashion.

On these premises, the workshop intends to gain knowledge of the participants' understanding of mending practices, while testing the prototype of our mending spectrum and its aesthetic parameters (structure, colour, materials), which has been developed

to explore how design can contribute to other relations and engagements with clothing and fashion.

The spectrum of mending concepts builds upon the initial mapping of possible typologies of garments' damages, corresponding to the range of repair treatments, combining the techniques, materials and colours. The spectrum consists of 9 mending concepts; all are flexible in terms of expression, aesthetics and finish, and correspond to multi-functional mending tools. Moreover, to meet the menders' different scales of engagement, the spectrum has been developed at 3 levels of ambition and skill-set. The authors' approach to investigating the scalability through design aims at understanding to what extent do people want to engage with mending. Consequently, the study is focused on the growing number of people who would like to engage with mending practices. The authors aim to raise a possibility for cultivating activities related to slow fashion, while simultaneously obtaining more knowledge on the possibilities and limitations for scalability.

The intent of the workshop is to gain knowledge of the participants' understanding of mending practices, and co-explore the spectrum of mending concepts and aesthetic parameters. In that way, the co-exploration of the workshop will contribute to generating data for ongoing research projects at LAB for Design and Sustainability at Design School Kolding which focuses on the study of slow rhythm of consumption in the field of fashion.

## WORKSHOP 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 online from Design School Kolding with a maximum number of 10 participants.

Workshop participants will be asked to bring one garment to mend, which have holes, tears, stains or other kinds of damages. This garment will be the basis for the making activities and co-explorations with other participants. All necessary equipment, tools and materials will be provided by the workshop facilitators and posted to the participants before the workshop. These 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.

During the workshop, participants will be guided to use the equipment, tools and materials to explore the presented concepts of domestic mending while engaging with their brought along garment. The explorations of the workshop are to be used as a study of how design can encourage contemporary fashion activities which

cultivate other experiences compared to the more market driven fashion. Workshop participants will contribute to ongoing research by challenging perspectives, discussions on encouraging new behaviours, and enabling the exploration 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 (3 hours), and will be divided into 3 main sessions of introduction, mending practice and common reflections.

## PROGRAM

### 13:00 – 13:30

Welcoming the participants

Introduction to the ongoing research and finding, constituting the base of the workshop.

### 13:30 – 14:00

Introduction to the concepts of domestic mending, as well as the posted equipment, tools and materials, including a short warm-up activity using breakout rooms.

### 14:10 – 14:40

Making a diagnosis of the brought along garment

Initiate mending activity by employing the provided guidelines.

### 14:40 – 15:30

Engaging with domestic mending. Participants will individually work on their mending project (with the supervision of 2 workshop facilitators in breakout rooms).

### 15:30 – 15:55

Reflection and evaluation, drawn on different perspectives, both of participants and facilitators.

### 15:55 – 16:00

Concluding remarks and thank you for participating.

## PRACTICAL INFORMATION

Finally, we hope that some of the participants will wish to continue the development of their mending project initiated during the workshop. Therefore, we will exchange the contact information, aiming to inform the participants about their contribution and the development of further research process.

Shortly after subscribing to the workshop, participants are invited to contact the facilitators of the workshop and to provide their address, where all the necessary equipment will be posted. Moreover, participants are invited (but not required) to send a statement of interest, and shortly describe their research area, expectations and motivations in taking part in the workshop.

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