Towards a practice of unmaking

The essay film as critical discourse for fashion in the expanded field

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Abstract

Going against the traditional productivist nature of fashion design, this practice-based PhD proposes a strategy for critical fashion practices in a research context at the intersection of fashion, fine arts, and film methodologies. This interdisciplinary strategy investigates fashion in the expanded field, exploring fashion practice as a form of critical thinking, questioning the fashion system itself: a practice of unmaking. The purpose of this research is to develop a practice-based method of producing an essay film as an artistic reflection critically discussing the problems of the fashion system, providing new insights into the way a fashion designer develops new approaches that can expand the action spaces available for fashion. Since the etymology of the word 'fashion' relates it to the Latin *factio*, meaning 'making' or 'doing,' to 'unmake' fashion carries in itself a paradox: it is both a metaphorical undoing and a methodological one, a practice of fashion resistance by not producing clothing, a deconstruction of fashion in order to understand what its made of – like unpicking the seams of a jacket in order to analyse its construction. It de-constructs underlying assumptions regarding a transition to post-productivism, exposing the limitations of current market-driven fashion design processes. Drawing on Rosalind Krauss's notion of sculpture in the expanded field (1979), as used in the discourse on cinema (Bardon et al., 2015), this research documents the development of experimental fashion films since the 1980s and the interdisciplinary fashion practices that stand at the edge of the fashion discipline. It investigates how thought experiments can steer the creative process towards a critique of fashion, drawing from modernist conceptual and de-materialized art practices towards the development of a conceptual fashion. The research methodology developed within the practice extends the potential of communicating through the essay film format in order to critique fashion within the contemporary context of heightened concerns about climate change and environmental issues induced by mass-production, fast-fashion, and global fashion distribution and consumption. This is developed through a juxtaposition of allegorical images resembling a thought process: the fashion image is used as a thinking-form for constructing a critique of its own systems. The thesis emphasizes the importance of taking a critical stance to fashion due to the lack of reflection within current fashion practices, synthesizing a body of knowledge to inform practitioners

of experimental, critical fashion while revealing complexities within the communication of these concerns, proposing fashion as the representation of a deconstructive thought where dress itself becomes 'immaterial'.

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Chapter 1. Introduction

1.1. Introduction

The nature of a PhD in contemporary fashion practice is one of constant change and reflection on the processes of investigation, where the questions raised will evolve in response to the gathered information through comparative analysis and reflection on the developed practice. The intention of this practice-based research is to provide new insights about how fashion practitioners can develop a critical fashion practice in the context of increased concerns over global environmental issues. The investigation, developed as an artistic reflection, explores film-making in the expanded field of fashion, exploring a critical understanding of the fashion system regarding the way we produce, consume, and discard clothing. The research methodology developed within the practice extends the notion of fashion practice across disciplines through the development of an essay film. The experimental essay film is a fragmentary composition of thoughts, presented as images, soundscapes, and narration that convey a message. The content takes the form of small visual poems that create an on-going abstract flux of ideas that can be read by the viewer in many ways. I do not intend to close the reading, but to create a path for the viewer's own interpretation by developing a portrait of worries and thoughts found in the fashion landscape, shaping them through a collage of allegories juxtaposed with real documentary images. The essay film has been developed in a collaborative practice with a small film crew. The research explores how interdisciplinary and experimental fashion practices facilitate a space for discussion and resistance for the fashion practitioner today, by not being inside the commercial arena, placing these practices in an intersection between fashion, art, and film. The research project is set in a climate of worry about a sustainable future for all, as fashion is an area for both research and critical debate about its own paradoxical position. In an academic context, critical fashion has, to date, been discussed between theorists, critics, and academic historians through cultural studies and fashion theory. This research responds to a need for an analysis of the contem-

porary practice from the perspective of the fashion practitioner as a critic. The thesis will synthesize a body of knowledge to inform students and practitioners of conceptual and experimental fashion and reveal the complexity of developing a critique within a capitalist framework. The project documents the emergence and development of experimental fashion film and interdisciplinary practices at the threshold of the fashion discipline. It is argued that it is necessary for fashion practitioners to review the way in which they reflect on their practice, and explore a broad notion of fashion practice as a means for critique, where concept and research are central to the practice of fashion.

1.2. Rationale

> I build something up by disturbing something (destruction–structure–construction). (Hanne Darboven in Alberro and Stimson, 2000:62)[1]

The statement above was sent by conceptual artist Hanne Darboven to the art critic and curator Lucy Lippard, and it opens up my rationale to situate this thesis within a conceptual artistic practice framework, connecting its research method to conceptual art strategies of operating: in conceptual art practices, the concept is the result. Whereas, although I do not see my practice as a straightforward conceptual art practice, I do feel the need to acknowledge its inherited conceptual strategies, as described by Lucy Lippard's analysis of dematerialisation (1973, 1997), where the concept is privileged over the end result.

This research started from a need to understand if there was a change to the role of the fashion designer in response to the growing concerns regarding sustainable fashion in the twenty-first Century and if so, what could be a new role for fashion practitioners. Coming from a working background in the fashion and

1 This statement was sent by Hanne Darboven to Lucy Lippard in 1968 and published in: Alberro, A. and Stimson, B. (2000) Conceptual Art: A Critical Anthology, Cambridge, Mass., The MIT Press.

manufacturing industry in Portugal after my BA in fashion design in 2004, I had experienced the 'production line' as a blind working process where the workers were reduced to human machinery. In the Fordism manner, in a factory where I worked in 2004, the production line workers were seamstresses who did not know how to assemble the trousers they were making, they knew only one small component of the entire operation; the main seamstresses (three or four) were specialised in all operations, and only they would know how to produce the entire sample. Their work was based on sampling and teaching the other workers beneath them how to execute their operations. Coming from a family of factory workers (three of my grandparents were factory workers), I quickly identified with the seamstresses who were part of the production chain. The repetition of the seemingly choreographed gestures and speed of the production line (with screens counting the daily production) made me question if I wanted to take part in the mass production system (this will be explored further in chapter 4). At the time fast-fashion system was gaining relevance and Portugal, as a cheap labour site, was an important producer, a great part of the Portuguese clothing industry still survives by manufacturing for international brands or companies (Soares, 2011). In 1986, Zara opened its first store in Porto, the first one outside Spanish borders so it was the first in the now very well-known Zara global expansion (Soares, 2011). There is a problematic position for fashion practitioners regarding production, since design is situated in history as emerging with the Industrial Revolution, which defines its role as seen exclusively in relation to the manufacture of products for the market, responding to a need to create for mass production and mass consumption. What role can design professions play in this difficult landscape of environmental sustainability and productivist framework? Is fashion design inevitably bound to the creation of commodities for a global market? Or can fashion design be read within a broad notion of design? This thesis questions the boundaries of fashion by displacing the role of the fashion designer from the production of fashion to its negation and to the development of a 'de-materialized' (developed in chapter 2) practice (in both a metaphorical and a literal sense): to the 'undoing' of the fashion system.

1.3. Definition of key terms

1.3.1. Defining fashion

For the purposes of this study, and in respect of existing definitions of fashion, the term 'fashion' is used here as an inclusive term to describe both the material and immaterial ideas of fashion. The fashion theorist Yuniya Kawamura explains how fashion carries with it an undeniable immateriality but reveals itself through a materiality: 'fashion as a belief is manifested through clothing' (Kawamura, 2005:1). This research tries to unpack the dynamics of fashion as a concept and make sense of it through the use of film as a critical tool for research-practice.

The definition of the word fashion seems deceptively easy but in fact when we look at fashion theory we may find an ample discussion about its meaning (Barnard, 1996). The fashion theorist Clemens Thornquist refers to 'the relevance of the ontological problems of fashion concerning the nature of being or becoming, of fashion design' (Thornquist, 2014:42), pointing out that foundational ontological and logical dimensions of fashion need to be developed just like 'new words or a new grammar is needed to explore a particular issue from a different perspective' (Thornquist, 2014:54). From a researcher's perspective, writing about fashion means to go to its etymological roots to try to understand where it comes from. The theorist Malcolm Barnard proposes, at the start of his book *Fashion and Communication*, the etymology of the word 'fashion' is related to the Latin *factio*, 'a making or doing' and this relates fashion to production, to making *facere* (Barnard, 1996). This means that to 'unmake' fashion, as I propose as a title for this research, carries in itself a paradox: in undoing fashion we are going against its own original meaning of 'doing', which makes it a critical action to start with. 'Unmaking' is here both a literal and a metaphorical undoing, a methodological one, a practice of fashion resistance by not producing clothing, and a deconstruction of fashion in order to understand what it is made of, like unpicking the seams of a jacket in order to analyse its construction; hence the fragmentary nature of my research and methodology.

In his book *Tigersprung: fashion in Modernity* (2000), the fashion theorist Ulrich Lehmann, refers to the fragmentary nature of fashion in his introductory chapter:

> Fashion is the supreme expression of that contemporary spirit. It changes constantly and remains necessarily incomplete; it is transitory, mobile, and fragmentary. This quality ties it in with the pace and rhythm of modern life (Lehmann, 2000:11).

The fashion historian and theorist Elizabeth Wilson explains that fashion, like 'all cultural phenomena especially of the mythic kind, [which] are curiously resistant to being imprisoned in one ... "meaning"' (Wilson, 2003:10). The way that I will be using the term fashion within this thesis is in its broader sense, as in Kawamura's definition, as a belief in a conceptual and ideological sense, and also complex and layered as in sociologist Joanne Entwistle's sociological notion:

> Understanding fashion requires understanding the relationship between these different bodies operating within the fashion system: fashion colleges and students, designers and design houses, tailors and seamstresses, models and photographers, as well as fashion buyers, shops and consumers (Entwistle, 2000).

In her seminal book *The Fashioned Body* (2000), Entwistle describes how literature about fashion shows a divide between the studies of fashion's production and the studies of consumption and the meanings of fashion. Entwistle introduces the 'idea of dress as situated bodily practice as a theoretical and methodological framework for understanding the complex dynamic relationship between body, dress and culture'(Entwistle, 2000:11). The fashion system under capitalism comprises very particular relations of production and distribution for Entwistle; subsequently, new studies about 'Fashion' and 'Dress' need to address interconnections between production and consumption and consider the relations between different agents, institutions, individuals and practices (Entwistle, 2000:208-209).

I am looking at fashion as a belief but also in an intrinsic relation to a system, or systems, that understand fashion as a theoretical and methodological framework for understanding the complex dynamic relationship between the body, dress, and culture. I describe my practice as being rooted in fashion but no longer subdued by its disciplinary boundaries. Fashion practices are what I do in order to

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understand what fashion is. My desire to write about fashion comes from a need to clarify what fashion is, and to discover if my position as a practitioner within the fashion spectrum can be a critical one. One of the things that this research tries to do is to contribute to debates about what new possible roles fashion and the fashion designer might have in the twenty-first century.

1.3.2. Fashion in the expanded field

The concept of 'fashion in the expanded field' is here developed as a parallel diagnosis between Rosalind Krauss's 1979 article 'Sculpture in the expanded field' and the present condition of fashion practices, where the commonly used medium of clothing are replaced by other media (such as film) or clothing itself is deprived of it's functionality and explored as metaphor or symbol. Fashion in the expanded field will be used here as a term that facilitates the understanding of what might be a post-disciplinary approach to fashion. This notion is here analysed not only from within my own practice, but also that of my peers who, in the last two decades, have been developing new pathways for fashion practices that question the role of the discipline and the media used (see chapter 2 for further development).

1.3.3. Critical fashion practice

Critical fashion is an approach to fashion practice with the goal of pushing fashion research beyond an agenda of simply reinforcing the values of consumer culture and to instead embody cultural critique in the practice itself. The term 'critical fashion' has been used outside academia with little or no accurate definition. One of the first uses of the term 'critical fashion practices' within a context that was looking to define what it meant was at the *Forum for Fashion Design & Visual Art Practice* presented under the title *What is Critical Fashion Practice?* on 25th November 2015 at the London College of Fashion. The event was chaired by Caroline Stevenson, a curator, researcher and Lecturer in Cultural and Historical Studies at London College of Fashion. Also present were Johannes Reponen, course leader for a new integrated Masters degree in Fashion Media Practice and Criti-

cism in London College of Fashion; Ruby Hoette, Lecturer in Design and convenor of the MA Fashion at Goldsmiths, University of London; Anja Aronowsky Cronberg, the editor of *Vestoj - the Journal of Sartorial Matters*; Louise Rytter Louise Rytter, creative strategist working in a multidisciplinary field of exhibition curation.

The first academic publication addressing the notion of critical fashion practice was a book published under the title *Critical Fashion Practice, From Westwood to Van Beirendonck* (Geczy and Karaminas, 2017). While dedicated to the same field of expertise, the authors do not approach the subject from the perspective of the practitioner, nor examine how to build strategies of unmaking. Critical fashion uses fashion's vocabulary and tools to challenge assumptions, preconceptions and givens about the role that fashion can play (in a similar way to the definition of critical design). The difference between the term 'critical fashion' and 'critical design' is first and foremost that the object of the critique here is fashion itself, and not necessarily design. Whereas in critical design projects the focus is design centred, in critical fashion there is the questioning of fashion's meaning/role in order to challenge assumptions, preconceptions and givens about the role of fashion and of fashion practitioners. The term 'critical design' shares numerous similarities with the term 'critical fashion' as being synonymous with a movement that utilises the design or fashion design practice as a form of critical investigation. The term 'critical design' was coined by the designer and theorist Anthony Dunne in 1999 and defined as using 'speculative design proposals to challenge narrow assumptions, preconceptions and givens about the role that products play in everyday life' (Dunne, 1999). Critical design does not necessarily need to be built; just the idea of the object itself can be enough to encourage reflection. Such concerns fit with the utopian architectural experiments of the 1960s of Superstudio and the early post-modernist era where the notion of a critical practice was established, 'perhaps from the ruins of Pop Art and Arte Povera' (Angelidakis et al., 2015:14). In the article 'The Pillow: Artist Designers in the Digital Age'(1997) Gaver and Dunne had described the notion of an artist-designer that would be a starting point for the notion of 'critical design'. They discuss the role of artist-designer operating in a

conceptual design context. They present a design-centred methodology in which hypotheses and ideas are explored through design. Critical Design employs methods that are usually associated with fine art practice. In their book *Design Noir: The Secret Life of Electronic Objects* (2001), Dunne & Raby state:

> Critical design, or design that asks carefully crafted questions and makes us think, is just as difficult and just as important as design that solves problems or finds answers. Being provocative and challenging might seem like an obvious role for art, but art is far too removed from the world of mass consumption and electronic consumer products to be effective in this context, even though it is of course part of consumerist culture (Dunne and Raby, 2001:58).

1.3.4. Essay film

This thesis's practice component is an essay film, with its background of political resistance and intellectual freedom. The essay film allows for speculation on specific pre-formed subjects and seems to be in the perfect position to mediate the relationship between my practice and my written thesis. The term essay film was first coined by the filmmaker and artist Hans Richter in the 1940s. Richter believed that the artist's duty was to be actively political, opposing war and supporting the revolution. It was not until 1958 that one essay film in particular, Chris Marker's *Letter to Siberia* (1957), was designated and theorized as such by the French critic Andre Bazin in the French *France Observateur*, 30 October 1958. Difficult to define as a genre, the essay film is considered a hybrid between documentary and personal reflection (Darke, 2014).The notion of 'personal reflection' is here understood as a 'situated knowledge'. Stated briefly, Haraway's article 'Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective' (1988) offers an excellent exposition of the concept. Situated knowledge questions the foundational myths of traditional objectivity: the subject as a simple, singular point of empirical knowledge-gathering, the scientific gaze as an omniscient observer, and the object of inquiry as passive and stable. Through 'situated knowledge, subjects become complex contraptions made of biological vision and personal will, and the scientific gaze is dissolved into a network of contested observations' (Haraway, 1988: 575-599). The personal in the essay film reflects the political status

quo (with the implication that the personal should be examined to provide insight into the political); the personal serves the political status quo; one can make personal choices in response to or protest against the political status quo[2]; Feminist scholarship, cultural studies, and critical theory suggest the multiple ways in which the researcher's subjectivity is shaped by and shapes the subject of her study. Situated knowledge is a form of objectivity that accounts for both the agency of the knowledge producer and that of the object of study.

> (...) to portray the object of knowledge as an active, meaning-generating part of apparatus of bodily production (Haraway, 1988: 595)

Expanding the documentary genre, the experimental essay film is a fragmentary composition of thoughts that takes form through the basic structural elements of cinema: image, sound, and editing, also giving relevance to text, which sometimes is expressed via a narration (for further discussion see chapter 4, see pages 170 and 171).

1.4. Situating fashion practice-based research in the field of fashion studies

> The fact that, in postmodern times, fashion has been able to present itself as a factor of identity is a clear sign that, contrary to the common philosophical idea, neither fashion, nor thinking on fashion, imply frivolity (Gonzalez, 2010).

The citation above responds to my early concerns, when I was a BA fashion design student (2001–04), of fashion being frivolous or superficial. The politics of fashion were at that time hardly ever considered. The field of fashion studies has been, in the last two decades, constantly evolving into an incredibly multidisciplinary field and gradually the term fashion studies has come to refer to the study

2   Donna Haraway's seminal essay, 'Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective' (Haraway, 1988), in which Haraway tackled, head-on the debates in the 1980s between feminist philosophers of science who sought to redeem the practice of science by purging it, as much as possible, of bias and those philosophers who insisted, in classic postmodern fashion, on the relativism of truth claims. Haraway develops the idea of "situated knowledges" and "partial perspective", situatedness entails taking responsibility for the positions from which we articulate our beliefs and claims. Taking responsibility for a position is not just a question of owning up to the factors determining what we see but of working, learning, trying to see differently, and especially of adopting a position "from below," that is, from outside dominant regimes of power. The very possibility of seeing differently imposes a responsibility to decenter ourselves from inherited perspectives by adopting "techniques of visualization." Defending, first, an account of the field of fashion as open and dynamic, rather than as a closed field to be mastered by the all-knowing subject, responsibility here is not the abandonment of "rigour" but a rethinking of our techniques of knowing.

of fashion in its broad meaning. According to fashion and cultural theorist Efrat Tseëlon, the field of fashion studies has been in search of an identity (Tseëlon, 2012) covering many areas of research across many disciplines, from history (including costume history), philosophy, sociology, anthropology through to cultural studies and media studies (Rocamora et al., 2016: 2). In the book *Thinking through Fashion* (2016) fashion theorists Agnés Rocamora and Anneke Smelik described how the study of fashion now covers a wide terrain, ranging from 'production to consumption and systems of meaning and signification, and scholars need an equally wide array of methodologies and theories from many disciplines' (Rocamora et al., 2016: 2). Fashion is therefore an interdisciplinary field of knowledge, that has emerged from theories and findings, that crosses disciplinary boundaries to contribute to its formation, and integrates diversified methodological strategies. This idea is also explored in *The Handbook of Fashion Studies* (2013), dedicated to the mapping of fashion methodologies in the 'field of historical and contemporary fashion theory' (Black, et al., 2013:1-12). Although the key areas identified are carefully situated in the context of expanding 'fashion studies' providing an integrated holistic view of the current state of fashion studies (Black, et al., 2013:1-12), bringing a 'parallel treatment of theory and practice situating them as scholarly perspectives that inform and reflect on each other' (Black, et al., 2013:2), the volume still did not include fashion seen from the fashion practitioner perspective through their practice. The interdisciplinary nature of the field has been cultivated in academic journals, *Fashion theory: The Journal of Dress, Body and Culture* (1997), *Fashion Practice: the Journal of Design, Creative Process and the Fashion Industry* (started in 2009) and *Critical studies in fashion and beauty* (started in 2010). Diana Crane (Crane, 2010:169–179) proposes a theory about facilitating interdisciplinary conversation by creating 'in-between the fields' with little in common, theoretically and empirically (Tseëlon, 2010:13). Although writers have been interested in fashion and dress since as early as the thirteenth century, it is a common assumption among researchers that fashion is not a topic that has been taken seriously by academics (Barnard 1996, Kawamura 2005, Lehmann

2000, Lipovetsky 1994). The academic interest in fashion and dress as a legitimate research topic began to emerge as fashion changes were taking place more rapidly during and after the Industrial Revolution in the latter half of the nineteenth century (Kawamura, 2011:4). Academic journals started emerging after the late 1960s referring to costume and textile research, and although there was progress within the field, like Anne Hollander's seminal book *Seeing through clothes* (1975), there was very little interest in developing academic research in the fashion field until the 1990s. Building on the increased 'blurring of genres' and disciplines in the 1970s and 1980s and the paradigm shift toward the emphasis on contextuality and constructionism, 'fashion studies started to crystallize more clearly during the 1990s' (Jenss, 2016: 7). One of the texts clearly signalling this turn was Elizabeth Wilson's essay 'Fashion and the Postmodern Body' in the book *Chic Trills, A Fashion Reader* the scholarly inquiry of fashion in the early 1990s and one of the first 'reader' type publications in the field (Ash and Wilson, 1992).

The journal *Fashion Practice, The Journal of Design, Creative Process & the Fashion Industry* (2009) was the first peer-reviewed academic journal to cover the full range of contemporary design and manufacture within the context of the fashion industry. Design processes and new technologies fuel the most vibrant areas of fashion practice and commerce today, yet they have been largely ignored by scholarship. *Fashion Practice* fills a major gap by providing a much-needed forum for topics ranging from design theory to the impact of technology, economics and industry on fashion practice. I would argue this journal is valuable not only for providing an understanding of fashion as a multiplicity of complex systems by acknowledging fashion as an embodied practice situated within the capitalist system, but also for its analysis through an interweaving of theory and practice, thinking theory through practice and vice versa (see 1.6 and chapter 4 for further discussion). To help explain the need for this type of research in the field of fashion studies, this thesis will address the scarcity of perspectives on fashion practice and theory developed from the viewpoint of practitioners in academic practices.

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1.4.1. The Gap in Knowledge

There are numerous studies on fashion from a theoretical perspective (as described in the previous section), and investigations about the meaning of fashion, especially since the 1980s and 1990s. Missing, however, are investigations about the meaning of fashion from the perspective of the practitioner. The definition of the word fashion is part of any article, book, or thesis regarding fashion research and theories, but what would it mean to understand fashion from the practitioner's perspective? It was noted as early as 2000, by the fashion designer and educator Ian Griffith, that:

> The voices of practitioners, or indeed, the practice of fashion do not figure large in its academy, and consequently a whole world of information is hidden from view (Griffith, 2000: 89-90).

Although he pointed out this area of knowledge that was unexplored until the turn of the millennium, the academic journal *Fashion Practice: the Journal of Design, Creative Process and the Fashion Industry*, answered this increased interest in practice, creating a space for the practitioners' voices, extending beyond the humanities and social sciences, into the integration of fields of 'theory' and 'practice', showing the impact of design thinking and design-based research in the last decade (Jenss, 2016: 9). I believe that the journal *Fashion Practice* has created the space that could have been taken over by practice-led or practice-based critically oriented articles but these are still rare within the journal. When practitioners write, they explore their synergies with the industry or their technical knowledge but very rarely (with the exceptions of practitioner-theorists Otto Von Busch and Clemens Thornquist) the understanding of critical fashion practices or how practice can construct its own understanding of what fashion is. Interestingly, since the comprehension of fashion practice knowledge is often perceived as 'tacit knowledge', a brief look at the etymology of this term might explain why it can lead to difficulties in the understanding of fashion practice as having critical agency. Derived from the term *tacitus*, the past participle of *tacere*, or 'be silent' in Latin, *tacit* may refer to either silencing of a voice or the impossibility of articulating something in words.

The Oxford Dictionary (Oxford University Press [Online], 2017) classifies the adjective 'tacit' as 'understood or implied without being stated'. Although fashion practitioners have long been quoted in interviews, they rarely have a first person voice and rarely write about their practice. The implied assumption that fashion practice is embedded in tacit knowledge has long silenced a discipline that was already condemned to be constantly considered as frivolous and lacking in relevance rather than addressed as an academic discipline. What I believe is missing in previous research is the approach that does not assume a separation between subject or object; instead, the artistic practice itself is an essential component of both the research process and the research results. However, this is not the first academic research thesis in the field of fashion towards the development of critical practice-based artistic research. The fashion activist, designer and theorist Otto Von Busch has developed very relevant research in his PhD thesis *Fashion-ology* (2008), which developed fashion 'hacktivism' methodologies, and his further research in the field of activist and disruptive fashion practices. Of relevance also is the work of design facilitator, educator, writer, and activist Alastair Fuad-Luke and his project for *Open Fashion Design Network, Mode Uncut: Activating Disruptive Fashion Modes and Practices*, wherein he proposed a definition of design as activism (Fuad-Luke, 2009: 3). Although these two researchers designed critical approaches to the environmental problems of twenty-first century fashion designers, their focus is on developing strategies for collaborative and co-designing practices. They also did not define what a critical fashion practice is or map an expanded field of fashion practices. My approach in this research project therefore departs from my own practice, diagnosing an expanded field of fashion as a parallel to my own practice, where a genealogy of critical fashion can be traced and clearly defined by finally devising a strategy of 'unmaking' for fashion through the use of film. Fashion studies are becoming more established as a discipline, although some might argue that remaining a multi-methodological and an interdisciplinary area of study would be better; nevertheless, fashion practice as part of fashion studies remains itself under theorized from the perspective of the practitioner.

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1.5. My previous fashion practice (from 2005 to 2013)

Given the broad scope of my previous practice, in the written element of the thesis I will investigate, question, and write only on a specific part of it that I believe to be relevant to this research. I consider it important to explain the roots of my practice and my creative process because my current practice rests on my previous projects and there are echoes of my previous works in the recent one, I see my practice as an ongoing project. I will also address how the methodology chosen for this thesis is deeply related to my modus operandi as a fashion practitioner and is first informed by the works analysed and by the fashion practitioner's own voice. Documentation of previous projects of the artistic practice, developed prior to the doctoral period, will be integrated throughout the written element which relates to the topic that I will explore and develop in the next chapters.

1.5.1. Modus operandi: the importance of process in my fashion practice

There are three key moments of my own practice previous to this thesis, that allow me to elaborate on how I have moved away from a commerce-centred fashion design practice to an experimental artistic fashion practice. Since 2005 (the year I started my own brand) my practice has been moving further away from traditional fashion design practices towards a more artistic-oriented practice, I divided this introduction to my practice into three essential moments:

- My first fashion collection *Implicit Memory* (2005)
- The Project *Mimesis/Fac-Simile* (2008)
- MA Fashion Artefact project *An impossible wardrobe for the invisible* (2011)

a) *Implicit Memory* (2005)

My Spring/Summer 2006 collection *Implicit Memory*, was presented in the catwalk of the Lisbon Fashion Week on October 15, 2005 in Lisbon, Portugal (see figure 1). As a fashion designer focused on investigation, my approach was centred on

Figure 1 *Implicit Memory*, 2005 Photo: Rui Vasco, courtesy of the Lisbon Fashion Week

the process and not so much on the end result, similarly to the artists working with conceptual art in the 1960s and 1970s. I was interested in developing a way of translating the mechanisms of memory into form, because I believed that in order to understand fashion I would have to understand its relation to memory. I developed a quick three-dimensional 'sketching' process with found clothing that I would work as an assemblage: they would act as clothing items remembering other items (for example the shirt 'remembers' a jacket) and half-forgotten pieces (erased details of a garment). The poetics of fashion were explored in processes where I would translate forgetting (via the physical erasure of shape and motifs or the destruction of some fabrics) and remembering (through 'collage' and putting pieces together). I was interested in alternative means to the fashion show for showing clothing items (since its speed did not allow the audience to see the extensive hours of work that were sometimes dedicated to the construction of a garment) and looking at the artist Bruce Nauman's performance piece *Walking in an Exaggerated Manner Around the Perimeter of a Square* (1968) which took me

to Samuel Beckett's *Quadrat 1+2* (1982). The instructions for performance in my work were influenced by Yoko Ono's instruction pieces, where she instructs participants to perform certain activities, and artist Bruce Nauman's *Performance (slightly crouched)* (1968) reproduced below as an example of how these instructions would be written:

> Performance (slightly crouched)
> You must hire a dancer to perform the following exercise each day of the exhibition for 20 minutes or 42 minutes at about the same time each day; the dancer dressed in simple street or exercise clothes will enter a large room of the gallery. The guards will clear the room, only allowing people to observe through the doors. Dancer, eyes front, avoiding audience contact, hands clasped behind his neck, elbows forward, walks about the room in a slightly crouch - as though the ceiling were 6 inches or a foot lower than his normal height - placing one foot in front of the other heel touching toe, very slowly and deliberately. It is necessary to have a dancer or person of some professional anonymous presence.
> At the end of the time period, the dancer leaves and the guards again allow people into the room. If it is not possible to finance a dancer for the whole exhibition period a week will be satisfactory, but no less. My five pages of the book will be publicity photographs of the dancer hired to do my piece with his name affixed (Morgan, 2002:317).

Influenced by their practices I planned a performance action, studied possible arrangements on the catwalk space, and developed a sequence of fifteen minutes, where the models slowly entered the catwalk and placed themselves in the perimeter of a square facing the audience and stayed still for a determined period of time. Instead of rushing the presentation with the usual models walking back and forward, I did a static presentation, probably also influenced also by the work of Italian artist Vanessa Beecroft. Sound was also crucial: the background sound for this event, noises mixed with samples of music by composer Iannis Xenakis (I was interested in his compositions that introduced spatialization by dispersing musicians among the audience, such as *Terretektorh*, 1966). The audience had to acknowledge the presence of the models and also the details of the garments since they were in front of them. The most characteristic thing was an awareness of time and presence. While the traditional catwalk fashion show is characterized by being a parade of fast-moving bodies, I wanted to create a disruption in the flow of the fashion week, a sort of moment of silence and engagement with the audience.

b) Project Mimesis/Fac-Simile (2008)

My 2008 exhibition *Fac-Simile*, was about the making process of the *Mimesis Project* as in 'process art'. The project emphasised the 'process' of making (rather than any predetermined composition or plan) and the concepts of change and transience (as elaborated in the work of such artists as Eva Hesse, Robert Morris, and Bruce Nauman). The visitors to the exhibition, could see an account of the production process, the hundreds of hours of failures and experimentation, the months of frustration and accomplishment, and moments of pure joy when accomplishing something. Like an archaeologist, I was trying to put together fragments to recover a shape long lost, in the resemblance of a puzzle of bits and pieces of ideas on 'What is fashion?' By describing and recollecting the remnants as in an archaeological station, the results depend far more on the mode of search and research than in the end itself. The picture represented below (see figure 2) depicts 'archaeological cataloguing' used to document my working processes and this allowed the audience to understand the manufacturing process – where the tasks undertaken were strongly connected to failure, repetition, and acceptance
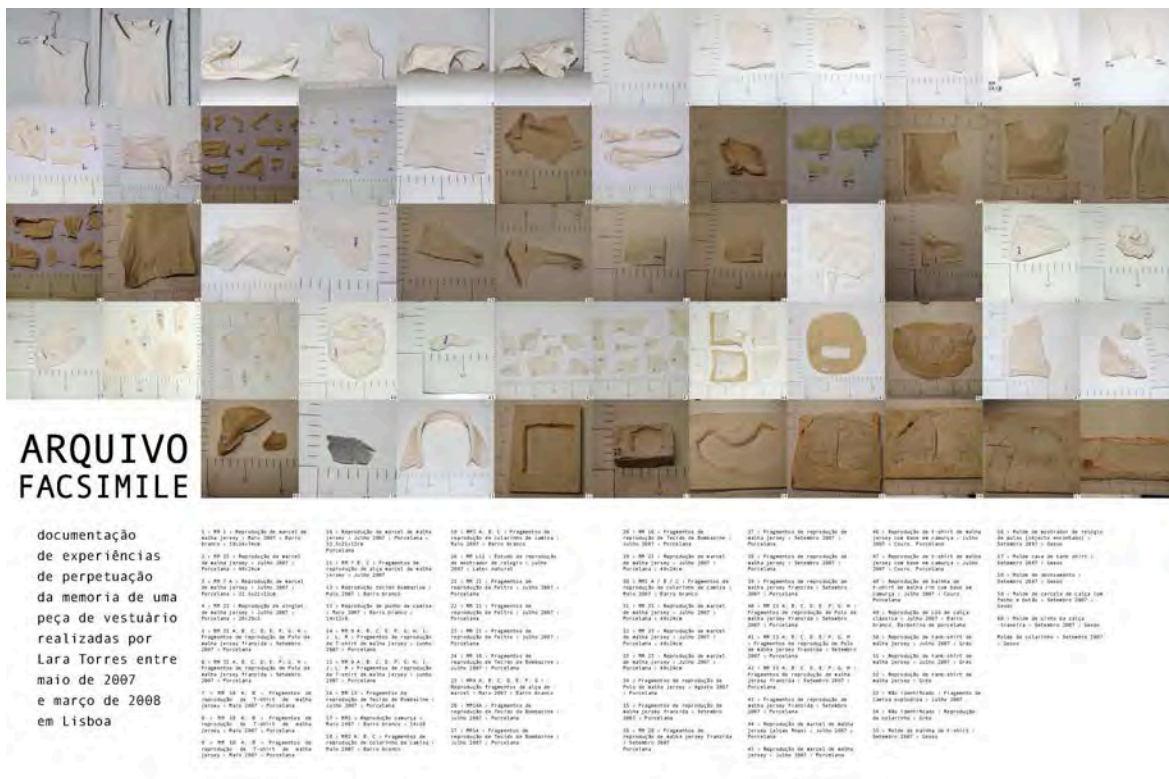
Figure 2 *Mimesis/Fac-Simile* **project, 2012**

of failure as a result. The double spread, published in 2012 in the catalogue *Collecting Collections and Concepts* (see figure 2) for Guimarães European Capital of Culture, shows the photographic archival images of the project *Mimesis* (2012), and the relevance of experiments in the creation process. The audience that visited the 2008 exhibition were witness to all the processes of production, being able to see the errors and failures, instead of being consumers of a finished product. The audience became a witness to the studio work. The possibility of witnessing all the working processes of the products presented added a consciousness of the complexity of creation and production of something. During *Mimesis*, the importance of trace was very meaningful, deciphering the working methods like an archaeological station, depending more on the mode of search and research than in the end itself. As in Walter Benjamin's models (Santos, 2008) that 'underline the importance of the trace, and its meaningfulness towards the deciphering the debris of the world', archaeological cataloguing allowed the audience to dive into a manufacture process that was complex, accessing information that was usually not accessible to the public.

The project *Mimesis/Fac-simile* (see figure 3) was a turning point in my fashion practice, developed in Lisbon between May 2007 and March 2008, after it received a considerable award for a one-year project development with a central department of the Ministry of Culture in Portugal, supporting the creation, production, and dissemination of my interdisciplinary artistic project that investigated practice contamination between fashion, jewellery, and ceramics. In the *Mimesis* project, I developed a collaborative practice with ceramist Mario Nascimento and the jeweller Catarina Dias in translating the mechanisms of memory into form through the exploration of the threshold between these practices. We managed, through the use of the age-old tradition of plaster moulds and the use of natural latex and porcelain, to reproduce clothing pieces from their original form (found clothing pieces) as a disruptive voice regarding productivity and functionality in design methods. Unconsciously I was already dealing with a political side to my

practice, questioning the very system in which products are made and consumed. Unlike industrial production, the methods used here were mostly artisanal, borrowed from other disciplines; they allowed for the reproduction of the clothing pieces. However, during the process, instead of copies, what I achieved were these sort of spectres of the original pieces since there was a translation from a textile material to other materials and sometimes a 'crystallization' of form from soft fluid textile to rigid and fragile ceramic sculptures. By constantly posing the question 'What is fashion?' my practice represented a departure from the role of 'designer as producer' and turned my practice into the embodiment of my own questions.

I have constantly tried redefining the territory of fashion practice, and my work is presented in a broad spectrum of media, but follows a consistent conceptual path: to understand the nature of fashion. By experimenting at the border of the discipline through the mediums of sculpture (see figure 3 and figure 4), performance, and film, I had to learn how to use unfamiliar media within a fashion practice and that allowed for a certain critical distance that came from applying other perspectives when looking at fashion. The departure from a productivist to a post-produc-

Figure 3 Porcelaine T-shirt, the *Mimesis/Fac-Simile* project, 2008

Figure 4 Plaster mold making at the *Mimesis/Fac-Simile* project, 2008

tivist practice was slowly developed. I was strongly influenced by the strategies of experimental art practices of the 1960s and 1970s, where the work became focused on the process rather than the outcome. My fashion practice was a form of answering questions related to what fashion is – through experiment, chance and failure. In the methods developed for the *Mimesis* project, albeit making copies, the clothing pieces went beyond simple imitation to become something other than just a copy; we acknowledged that this gesture was done consciously, and that the mimetic action led necessarily to a failure (see figure 4). I wanted to distance myself from industrial processes of production and in doing so I explored techniques from other disciplines. I developed a practice of contamination by working with a ceramist around the idea of translating the mechanisms of memory and forgetfulness. The objects produced were developed by using a technique of porcelain dipping, where clothes were dipped in liquid porcelain and crystallized at high temperatures, leaving only the trace of the details of the lost piece in the material, all the textures, folds, and wrinkles, while the original piece was lost in the fire. The technique was developed by the use of chance experiments and by trial and error attempts; the loss of one object would be replaced by 'its memory', a sort of ghost

of the garment that would not be wearable anymore, losing its usability but gaining other aspects figure the questioning of fashion's ephemerality, a subject that has been a common thread throughout my practice. In the case of latex 'translations', the original was reproduced in a latex material, keeping all the surface detail, even enhancing surface details sometimes, and there was something very close to failure from the act of passing the piece to safeguard its memory, by making it into a perishable material. At the time I was very aware of that, since I was familiar with the artist Eva Hesse's works from the 1960s and had the same worries. Nowadays there is much discussion about the fragility of the materials that Eva Hesse used:

> She was well aware that latex was a perishable material. She even chose to use it partly because of it. Latex hardens and changes colour. Depending on how thick it is latex can be translucent, but over time it will become opaque. The works that were once white creamy are now a deep amber colour (Fer, 2010).

Like Hesse, I was exactly interested in that. I developed a jewellery line with Catarina Dias that was labelled with a tag that explained that the piece was fragile and that it would grow old, going stiffer and darker with time, and perish. The warning tag asked the users to take special care with the jewellery pieces protect them from light (when not in use), and powder them at times with talc powder to avoid stiffening, explaining that if they did not do this, the piece would end up being lost. There was a transparency to this, about the material's obsolescence and a request for care that was far removed from the relation people usually had with fashion objects of mass consumption. The pieces reproduced found objects that we collected at family homes; there was a need to keep a record of these pieces and, at the same time, an inevitable failure because we knew for sure that these pieces would disappear; like a *memento mori*, they remind us that we too shall die, recalling the ephemerality of all things. The gesture of reproducing found objects and garments and its proximity to failure reproduced the mechanisms of memory, just as failling to reproduce the original, as memory fails to reproduce an event. The process of reproduction was approached through methods that used both traditional ceramic techniques and innovative technical skills that we developed when searching for a process to translate the metaphor of memory and loss into clothing. As Neil Leach

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Figure 5 *Fac-Simile* exhibition view, 2008

puts it in his Benjaminian reflection regarding mimesis, this describes accurately

what happened during our mimesis processes:

> Mimesis here should be understood not in the terms used, say, by Plato, to refer to simple 'imitation'. To reproduce something is to step beyond mere imitation. Here Benjamin challenges the inherited view of mimesis as an essentially compromised form of imitation that necessarily loses something of the original. For Benjamin 'mimesis' alludes to a constructive reinterpretation of an original, which becomes a creative act in itself. (...)To understand the meaning of mimesis in Benjamin we must recognise its origin in the process of modelling, of 'making a copy of'(Leach, 2006).

The image above (figure 5) represents one of the rooms of the exhibition that con-

tained both failed and accomplished experiments with ceramic techniques, a view

of the room with the experiments at different stages of the project, the porcelain

garment reproductions. The process of manufacture was key to the development

of the project. I started to accept the results as they came along be they wear-

able pieces or non-functional objects. It was an experimental fashion approach

where the outcome was never predicted. This experimental approach signifies

here that all the actions taking place in this project are actions where the outcome

is not foreseen, according to John Cage's definition of an experimental action as

'one the outcome of which is not foreseen' (Cage, 1973: 39). During this period I was at a shared studio, everybody around me worked with different media since they were mostly fine artists, and this helped with the possibility of acknowledging different media. The fashion show was a performance done by a selected group of artists and a performer, and the choreography was developed with artist Miguel Bonneville. At the performance there was no backstage; everything was done in the public eye. The performers entered in their underwear and dressed in public, as an opposite of the regular backstage with all the teams involved in construct-ing the perfect image, without showing the construction of that. The audience saw exactly how they got dressed and that the pieces were fragile and could break, so the performers helped each other dressing, elaborating a ritualistic sequence of gestures of some intimacy. Getting dressed is not usually done in public; it belongs to the private sphere. I was uncovering what is usually hidden and unseen. I was trying to show what designers avoid showing, both with the exhibition and the per-formance. Having worked as a fashion designer I used a vast range of interdiscipli-nary media, from exhibitions to fashion film, trying to translate this relation with the ephemeral that was always a critical voice, searching for the attention of the public to deeper subjects.

c) An impossible wardrobe for the invisible (2011)

The project *An impossible wardrobe for the invisible* is a film installation composed of seven films (see url: **https://vimeo.com/album/1533464**), that goes beyond the boundaries of fashion design to rethink the designer's task and open a discussion about the importance of clothing and the transience of fashion. I proposed the film documentation of seven actions shown in an installation piece with seven simulta-neous projections:

1. Woman in the water
2. Two men hug
3. Man sinking to the floor (after Nauman)
4. Young couple

5. The older man sitting

6. Women crossing the water

7. Self-portrait

The project is based on the creation of temporary clothes that are produced with the aim of being destroyed; leaving only the 'memory' of the pieces in film documentation relates to the ephemeral nature of fashion and is also a metaphor for the speed of the fashion processes today. They refer to the loss of the object and the documentation of this loss, the ephemeral nature of fashion and life, the quality and content of memory, issues of loss and disintegration, and the detritus of human existence. The process of disappearance is a design process in itself, leaving sometimes only a drawing on the performer's bodies, the 'skeleton' of a particular garment. The lines of the seams against the performer's body induce a sense of the private, a feeling of loss that is very intimate. Water is also a 'designer' here: water will change shapes and produce the final result. Water has a central place in the practices and beliefs of many religions; water does not only purify objects for ritual use but can make a person clean, externally or spiritually. In each of the situations filmed there is a performer, who becomes an archetypal character that the audience can relate to when watching each film. The clothes worn make them an identifiable character. When they dress, they become the character, a mirror image: a recognizable self projected in a film, bringing to the viewer the consciousness of their own mortality by using design processes that translate the mechanisms of memory into film as a way of communicating these concerns. The interpreters contributed to the collaborative nature of the project, creating the need for establishing a connection between the people and sequences filmed. The result of the films would depend on the collaboration of Pedro Fortes who was filming, and co-editing with me, and the team of performers giving their contribute to each film, in the end this relates to matters of authorship in the project, that is of a collaborative authorship between me, the co-direction of Pedro, and the intervention of water that was decisive for all end results. As in all film practice, it was collaborative by its nature. Although my films are considered fashion films because

Figures 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11 and 12, Film stills from *An impossible wardrobe for the invisible,* 2011

they were made by a fashion designer and presented in a fashion framework, they are already set apart from conventional fashion films by the nature of the images, simply documenting an action, and the lack of styling or conventional stereotypical aspects of fashion images. By its characteristic in-betweeness between fiction and documentary, the essay films that I create engage with the written theoretical research, developing fictional content that challenges perceptions of fashion. Fashion practitioners and the audience engage with the fragmented non-narrative devices I develop, and are led into a critical thinking arena.

1.5.2. Discussion: exploring my fashion practice as a practice of destruction towards a practice of unmaking

My current practice (as research), in which the methods used for editing film are established by a logic of deconstruction, editing a sequence by introducing new scenes to the previous cut, reminiscent of how my designs disintegrate. In my previous practice, deconstruction was approached similarly to the way that Maison Martin Margiela, Comme des Garçons or Yohji Yamamoto explored fashion in the 1980s and 1990s (See chapter 3). My approach to fashion practice depended on a logic of displacement developed towards the dematerialization of the fashion

items, and the concept and process became more relevant than the end result. This development led to my current practice in editing film, with the logic of tearing apart (cutting) a sequence by introducing new scenes to the previous cut. The performative clothes that disintegrate through use like the porcelain-latex shown in the film *Fragment* (2008), or the ceramic skirt of the *Mimesis* catwalk show, were connected to an attempt to materialize fashion's transience - its volatile nature. My projects *Fragment (2008)*, *Mimesis (2008)* and *An impossible wardrobe for the invisible* (2011) are all connected by this aspect of fragmentation and eminent ruin, are moved by the same fragmentary aesthetics and processes. Having worked my way through 'destruction' in my previous project *An impossible wardrobe for the invisible* and finding that the technical aspects of it did most times cloud the perception of the message, I looked into destruction as a method of construction. The editing became a thinking method and simultaneously a form of self-reflection regarding what I was reading or writing at the moment of filming and re-editing of each section. Instead of constructing a linear narrative, the short sequences would be juxtaposed with previous ones and the whole film would be re-edited each time a new sequence was added. This process allowed for a continuously self-feeding movement between the writing and the filming processes (see chapter 4).

There is a movement towards destruction, fragmentation, decay, and 'dematerialization' in my practice previous to the PhD that seemed to lead to the disappearance of the materiality of practice (see figures 13 to 15). In the short film *Fragment* (2008), my first film, the impetus came from the need to document a clothing item that I had developed during the *Mimesis* project (2007–2008) that was constantly disintegrating: the garment was made of a thin layer of porcelain over a layer of latex and would constantly break whenever it was worn (see figure 14). The latex and porcelain tank shirt, had been produced for the *Mimesis* project and was presented in a fashion performance at the Lisbon Fashion Week in March 2008, where I felt that the piece had been neglected because the audience could not perceive the frailty of the piece. There are two important aspects from the previous

Figure 13 Archival image *An impossible wardrobe for the invisible,* 2011

Figures 14 and 15 *Fragment*, 2008 and Mimesis I, 2007 Photo by Rui Vasco, courtesy of the Lisbon Fashion Week

practice that are relevant to my current research practice, the first one is that the process of fashion dematerialization seems to have reached its logical conclusion where the material is no longer the origin of the process and the film is made with the intent of being immaterial but, like the art critic Lucy Lippard pointed out regarding her own use of the term 'dematerialized', as 'a process of dematerialization' or a 'de-emphasis in material aspects' (Lippard, 1973,1997:5). Although it still needs a camera and a projector or other means of showing a digital film, it is not centred in materiality. The second aspect is the unmaking by 'not-making',

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the designer who does not design or the producer that does not produce as a form of resistance, I will discuss this later in this chapter. There is a relevant notion of destruction that seems to be common between some of my projects and the 1960s–70s projects of destruction art and auto-destructive art. My own practice had long been on the verge of dematerialization, in the sense that Lippard uses the term, to describe, even if inaccurately (since sometimes the medium is still material like a photograph or video) a de-emphasis on material aspects of art practice. In my own practice, the use of temporary and fragile materials and transient objects within a fashion design practice developed into a disappearance of the object, resulting in the use of video as the medium to record and document the practice. Previously, I have worked using the fashion film in what I classified as the artistic fashion film format, for the following films:

- *Fragment* (2008)
- *Involuntary Memories* (2010)
- *Wardrobe / Within Timeness* (2011)
- *An impossible wardrobe for the invisible* (2011)

(see Appendix 1 for vimeo links and passwords)

During the Mimesis project, my practice began to underline the importance of trace, its meaningfulness moving towards deciphering working methods like an archaeological dig (see section b). The need to document and archive the breaking piece led to a video document that is essentially a record of the garment 'happening' – breaking and falling apart. The video presents an image of a girl putting the garment on and then sitting on a chair, inducing the garment to crack and fall apart. The film is simple, with little editing, and the main focus is on the sound of the garment breaking. I have treated the video as a documentary record of both the live sound and image with almost no intervention or editing, focusing on recording the memory of an event.

It's important to explain that 'crystallization' of form in the *Mimesis* project was necessarily doomed to fail, for the porcelain sculptures produced in 0.5mm thickness were inevitably destined to be broken. There is a false attempt to keep a solid memory of a garment that is necessarily related to failure, and this once again brings to mind the eternal recurrence of fashion and its fragility.

1.6. An artistic fashion research practice and its theoretical articulation

According to the music theorist and Professor in Art Theory and Research Henk Borgdorff (who has published extensively on the rationale of artistic research), one of the most controversial piece of research in arts and design is based on understanding that no fundamental separation exists between theory and practice in the arts; after all, there are 'no art practices that are not saturated with experiences, histories and beliefs' (Borgdorff, 2006: 7). The most difficult task of this thesis was bringing together theory and practice as one, making part of my contribution to knowledge the development of this methodology of integration of theory and practice. According to Borgdorff, practice-based research implies that the researcher 'documents and disseminates the research processes and outcomes in an appropriate manner to the research community and the wider public' (Borgdorff, 2007:1-2) where the emphasis is in the practice. Thus artistic research, unlike other academic models of research, is knowledge based on the experience of the practice developed by the artist/practitioner. I will describe the rationale for using particular methods and procedures that I have adopted in discovering and recording research information. There are still many disagreements in the debate regarding the issue of 'research in the arts', and perhaps there will always be. The theorist Stephen Scrivener states in the title of his article that 'The art object itself' does not embody a form of knowledge' (2002), although he also states that:

> (...) We might claim that artefacts embody knowledge, which merely needs to be extracted. From this perspective, since art objects are artefacts it is possible that they can embody knowledge in this way (Scrivener, 2002: 5).

While Borgdorff states the importance of clarifying what art practice is, and when

it counts as research (Borgdorff, 2007: 2) and Clemens Thornquist, Professor of Fashion Design at the Swedish School of Textiles at the University of Borås discusses the issues with the artefact in art research, arguing the potential 'of not a single artefact but a series of artefacts to define and demonstrate formal knowledge in itself' (Thornquist, 2015: 111). In this thesis I will argue for the validity of a research practice that is part written document and part essay film, presented as a tool to question and be critical of 'assumptions, preconceptions, and givens' about fashion (similarly to how Dunne and Raby have done towards critical design practices, see section 1.3.3 of this chapter).The practice-as-research form cannot be channelled through rigid academic-scientific guidelines (that is generalization, repeatability, and quantification) but instead, it engages in the qualitative and the unique and therefore requires spaces other than the usual fashion spaces. Artistic knowledge is, in Baumgarten's definition, a 'knowledge of the singular' (Balkema and Slager, 2004:13) and being so, there are difficulties in comprising it within a 'method'; but as Baumgarten says:

> Rather, artistic research is directed towards unique, particular, local knowledge. In that sense, it seamlessly connects with Baumgarten's classic definition of the aesthetic domain where aesthetic knowledge is knowledge about the singular.
>
> Although artistic knowledge cannot be generalized into laws since it applies to the singular and unique - it still is knowledge, says Baumgarten.
>
> However, the emphasis on the singular and unique in the aesthetic domain does not imply that research is impossible (...) After all, artistic research does satisfy a number of fundamental research criteria, such as a focus on communication, a (self) critical attitude, and an emphasis on autonomous research (Balkema and Slager, 2004:13).

1.6.1. Historically bound: the gap between theory and practice

The debate on research in the arts that distinguishes theoretical knowledge from practical knowledge has existed since Greek Antiquity when Aristotle contrasted *episteme* (which can refer to knowledge, science or understanding) with *techne* (craft or applied practice)(Borgdorff, 2006:19). The philosopher Hannah Arendt[3]

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3   Hannah Arendt (1906–1975) was one of the most influential political philosophers of the twentieth century. For Arendt, action is one of the fundamental categories of the human condition and constitutes the highest realisation of the vita activa. Arendt analyses the vita activa via three categories which correspond to the three fundamental activities of our being-in-the-world: labour, work, and action in *The Human Condition,* (1958), an original philosophical study that investigated the fundamental categories of the vita activa (The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, 2016)

refs to an ancient separation that exists between 'thought and action', representing a separation between practice and thinking. Arendt explains that, according to Plato, the thinking activity serves only to open the eyes of the mind – in other words, 'thinking aims at and ends in contemplation, and contemplation is not an activity but a passivity'(Arendt, 1981: 6). The notion that contemplation is the highest state of mind is as old as Western Philosophy, says Arendt; with the rise of the Modern Age, thinking 'became chiefly the handmaiden of science and of organised knowledge' (Arendt, 1981: 6). As a practitioner I believe that fashion is about much more than describing, analysing, and recording. I believe that a criticality is necessary for a field that has often been judged as a futile, superficial and shallow field, one that is now facing a dramatic environmental and ethical crisis (see chapter 2, section 2.6). Theory has been distinguished from practice and action since its most early formation, but contemporary fashion studies needs to integrate both of them. A practice-based research is by definition empirical. However, my process seeks to extend fashion practice methods by placing greater emphasis on reflection and writing. Experimental systems and experimentation in research are the predominant method used within this thesis as a way of exploring unanswered questions, not with the intention of finding an answer but finding new ways to pose questions via practice.

1.6.2. Fashion as practice-based artistic research

I will partially rely both on Borgdorff's understanding of artistic research and Thornquist's articles 'Material Evidence: definition by a series of artefacts in arts research'(*Journal of Visual Art Practice* Vol.14, No 2 110-119, 2015) and 'Basic Research in Art: Foundational problems in Fashion Design Explored through the art itself*' (*Journal Fashion Practice,* Vol.6, issue 1, 37-58, 2014) where Thornquist explores theoretical levels of art practice where art is understood as the function of *techne*. In this study, what I present are not material artefacts but a an essay film, which intend to be a visual cinematic discussion of fashion. As Thornquist clarifies:

(…) For example, to explore a certain social or political problem through fashion

design and dress, some foundational ontological and logical dimensions of the art form may need to be developed. One may, for example, think of this as when new words and grammar in a formal language first need to be developed in order to make it possible to explore a particular issue from a different perspective. Thus, the need to understand and express an issue that is a main concern of another academic field may also be the motive and inspiration for a basic research in the art; however, the actual foundational development of the art discipline is the construction of definitions and models for the theoretic advancement of the field itself. Nevertheless, the crucial ontological and logical aspects of an art form presented here demonstrate the "pure" aspects of any art: basic research in art, defined as the foundational development of the art for the sake of the art itself (Thornquist, 2014: 54).

Thus artistic research, unlike other academic models of research, is a knowledge based on the experience of the practice developed by the artist/practitioner. Methodologies are less well established, and for this reason I will describe in my methodology section, the rationale for using particular methods and procedures I have adopted in discovering and recording research information. This practice is particular and as such cannot be transmitted by models based on repetition. However, although the researcher's practice is singular, the research methods used to explore it and the practitioner's reflection can be disseminated, and the findings of the research are generalizable because they offer other practitioners a way to reflect upon and explore their own practice. The theorist Michael Polanyi theorised tacit knowledge as arising from skilled practice at a time when all knowledge within the university was considered explicit and recordable (Polanyi, 1966/2009:), to propose a simple definition of this 'knowledge that cannot be told' (Polanyi, 1966/2009:4-5). The majority of authors writing on knowledge in art and design identify the foundation of tacit knowledge as 'knowledge that cannot be told', or 'knowing how' but not 'reflecting the breadth of ideas explored'(Polanyi, 1966; 2009: 4-5).

1.7. The research question, aims, and objectives

The research question proposed in this thesis is: How can my artistic fashion practice, which is here conducted through the essay film, create a critical discourse within fashion in the expanded field? The main aim of this thesis is to understand how my fashion artistic research, which is situated at the intersection of fashion, fine art, and film disciplines practice, can produce a critical discourse in an expanded field of fashion, seeking to extend the potential for fashion practitioners to

work and communicate critically.

The main objective is to create an artistic response to current issues concerning fashion practices and their apparently absent criticality. Moreover, I want to understand how the critical dimension of my individual practice can establish a theoretical apparatus through which to engage with fashion studies readership in the discourse on critical fashion practice. I want to be able to articulate practice and theory, not as a theoretician but as a practitioner writing about practice through a knowledge that has been experimented and reflected upon, bridging the gap that currently exists in fashion studies between practice and theory, and finding strategies of bridging critical thought into making. This thesis also aims to add to an understanding of what the essay-film represents within contemporary practices of fashion. In light of the main subsidiary aims outlined in the following sections (that is, expansion of the scope of critical fashion practice), the research addresses two audiences with different fields of expertise: the fashion/art practice arena and fashion scholarship. Since ultimately my contribution is in the area of fashion, it was essential for me to engage with fashion practitioners, film-makers, fashion design students, and the public, not only discursively, exposing my artistic intentions and their theoretical ground, but also directly through artworks exhibited in several art/ fashion spaces to audiences in both spheres. As an educator in Higher Education, I felt the need to contribute to a field of fashion studies from the perspective of the practitioner as my fashion students have often lacked such perspectives.

In order to meet the main aim, the subsidiary objectives of this thesis are to:

- Carry out a comparative literature review of selected authors that provide the fundamental epistemological concepts required to understand the subsequent discussions.
- Investigate current fashion practices of critical fashion.
- Investigate the use of film in fashion and analyse the use of the essay film.
- Evaluate how fashion design processes have changed within the fashion sys-

Practice | Theory

Storyboards | Introduction

Film Shooting
Film Sequence 1
Date: 21-04-2014
Film Sequence 2
Date: 21-04-2014
Film Sequence 3
Date: 21-04-2014
Film Sequence 5
Date: 21-04-2014
Film Sequence 4
Date: 22-04-2014

Literary Review

Editing | Reflective methodologies

Film Shooting
Film Sequence 7
Date: 15-05-2014
Film Sequence 6
Date: 16-05-2014
Film Sequence 8
Date: 17-05-2014

Context

Development | Editing | Reflective methodologies | Development

First Version of the film July 2014

Film Shooting
Film Sequence 09
Date: 03-12-2014
Film Sequence 10
Date: 03-12-2014
Film Sequence 11
Date: 04-12-2014
Film Sequence 12
Date: 04-12-2014

Editing

Film Shooting
Film Sequence 13
Date: 11-04-2015
Film Sequence 14
Date: 11-04-2015

Sound
Date: 04-2015 > 08-2015

Script/Narration text
Date: 04-2015 > 01-2016

Reflective methodologies

Editing | Writing

Reflecting on the methodology

Final considerations

Figure 16 Thesis structure diagram

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tem over the last twenty years.

- Propose an artistic approach to fashion practices based on the concept of de-construction and fashion in the expanded field presented in this thesis.

I should make it clear from the outset that, this project will not engage with debates raised within the fields of film theory and film criticism, as it is not my intention to dismiss or replace these theories. Instead, this project endeavours to offer the reader an alternative way to engage with film in relation to fashion studies and fashion practices; it strives to develop ways of writing *with* fashion practice rather than *about* it.

1.7.1. The research structure

In order to achieve the aims and objectives proposed, extensive consideration was given to devising an appropriate methodology (see chapter 4 for further discussion), which could address the identified gaps in knowledge and subsequent opportunities. In summary, the key features of this methodology can be described as follows: the methodology thrived on the combination of multi-methods modified and adopted both from my own artistic fashion practice (see section 1.9), visual boards, academic and fashion research tools including a literature and contextual review, storyboards, mind maps and archival cards (see appendix 4).

The research structure, shows how simultaneous the practice and theory processes were, allowing a two-way flow of information between them. In the diagram of the thesis structure (see figure 17), the parallel movements between theory and practice are represented showing how they informed one another. The way in which the thesis is structured is the following: the first part of the thesis comprises the theoretical context in which the study sits. Chapter 2 contains the literary review, in which the framework is illustrated and it is followed by a practice review of the expanded field of fashion. Chapter 4 proceeds by proposing the development of a methodology for reflective practices and reviewing my practice reflexively. The

final chapter discusses the findings and concludes. There were several moments where the practice was disseminated in public viewings, and these moments, were important for the making of the thesis. The dissemination of the film was done at several stages of this study and several different venues were used with diversified audiences (art galleries, universities, Fashion Week and museum spaces). The

Figures 17 and 18 Installation view, 2016, Lisbon Fashion Week Photo by Joana Linda View of exhibition, Wellington, New Zealand, 2016

final version of the film was shown in Lisbon, Wellington, Vienna, and London between October 2016 and April 2017 (see images in figures 18 and 19). See below two images documenting the first public screenings of my essay film *Unmaking/ Desfazer* (2016) at the Lisbon Fashion Week from the 7–9 October 2016 at Praça do Municipio n31, and at the exhibition curated by Sue Prescott and Adam Geczy, organized to coincide with the international conference and exhibition *The end of Fashion*, held at the College of Creative Arts, Massey University, 8-9 December 2016, Exhibition Launch at College of Creative Arts, Massey University.

The adoption of traditional methods of communicating research practice-based outcomes might not prove effective for practitioners in terms of disseminating practitioner research or developing discourse within fashion that includes practitioner perspectives. I procured forms of disseminating knowledge that were either hybrid (conference and exhibition together), or exhibition venues in the context of fashion or the hybrid art-fashion context.

1.7.2. The thesis overview

Chapter 1 of this thesis is an introduction to the field of fashion studies, defining the contextual review and establishing the rationale for this research. The research question and aims, explore the reasons why I chose the particular methods from my perspective as a fashion practitioner using film as a research tool. The chapter describes my previous practice that has directly led to the development of this thesis.

Chapter 2 argues for the relevance of establishing interdisciplinary theories and practices to better understand the contemporary field of fashion, challenging assumptions about fashion's role in the twenty-first century and the notion of the expanded field of fashion. It is a context review, an analysis of the postmodern condition of fashion. This chapter explains why there is a need for critical fashion practices in the field of fashion studies, developing a parallel with the early struc-

turalism analysis by Rosalind Krauss (1979) to define and establish a notion of 'fashion in the expanded field'. Situating this practice-based research in the field of fashion studies brings practice into a deeper discussion about its own criticality. Since at the time of starting this research there was no academic research done into the field of critical fashion practice (see section 1.7.2.), defining the conceptual framework of this thesis also required building the theoretical framework for it and establishing the context in which the research would be discussed. This helps to explain the diversity of theories engaged in the process of the research. The theoretical framework used in the thesis, although very diverse, is established in relation to a postmodern understanding of fashion via Marxist Post-structuralist thinkers, thinking practice through Derrida's Deconstruction and the Foucauldian notions of discourse of how power is enacted through docile bodies; thus these theories are particularly useful in an analysis of critical fashion practices and the profoundly social role of fashion.

Chapter 3 presents a review of contemporary critical fashion practices, arguing that critical fashion practices emerged from political forms of radical and anti-design, drawing on mechanisms of subversion and experimentation in conceptual art and deconstruction fashion (1980s–90s). This chapter starts with a mapping of a genealogy of 'unmaking', looking at art practices, like Metzger's and Ono's, fashion practices like Kawakubo's and Margiela's that have taken a critical stance by using destruction as medium. The chapter goes on to identify commentary that focuses on critical design from the perspective of art. This chapter also maps the strategies that have led to the development of critical fashion practices in an expanded field of fashion in the twenty-first century, underlining the changes in current de-territorialized fashion practices that define the current expanded field of fashion, with a particular emphasis on the approach taken within fashion practices since 2000. Usually neglected by current academic texts, they are also more significant in demonstrating a radical change towards a post-product, dematerialized understanding of fashion, suggesting that an expanded field allows fashion practitioners

to engage in a critical discussion of the fashion system. The participation in the exhibition *The Future of Fashion is Now* (2014) is analysed in chapter 3 here for its mapping of an expanded field of fashion. The way my previous films related to the other works in the exhibition influenced my current film's development (See chapter 4 for further discussion).

Chapter 4 is an in-depth discussion of my essay film. The chapter also provides evidence of my research process supporting a reciprocal dialogue between the practice and the theory. Through archival documentation of my methods of research, I review the reasons for the creative choices I have made as the project progressed. This chapter aims to illustrate activities that sustain my strategy for critical fashion tested as a plan of action, designed to achieve critical fashion practices. A survey of several relevant past projects of mine also contextualizes my essay film within my previous practice, which frequently used the same destruction-led artistic methods, because they all seem to have within them deconstructions relating to their own specific contexts of activity.

Chapter 5 discusses the conceptual conclusions I reached as a result of this research. Through a discussion of my project's creation of meaning through visual means and analysis of data collected upon my research journey, this chapter articulates my project's contribution to knowledge and critiques my project with the benefit of hindsight.

Following are five appendices that contain supplementary documents including scene breakdowns for my film, the essay text used for its narration, storyboards, an archive of my research note cards, and transcripts of interviews conducted as part of my research.

Chapter 2. Methodology and theoretical approach

2.1. Introduction

This chapter seeks to provide the methodologies and theoretical framework for critical fashion practices in the present moment, defining the conceptual framework for this thesis. It situates critical fashion practices within the present crisis of the fashion system in the Anthropocene age, where fashion production itself seems to have been rendered obsolete due to overproduction. Since up to 2017, there had yet to be any academic research examining the understanding of a 'critical fashion practice' (see section 1.3.3), defining a conceptual framework for this thesis meant also having to build the theoretical framework in which the thesis would be situated. This might help to explain the diversity of theories engaged in the process. Drawing a parallel between contemporary fashion practices and Rosalind Krauss's notion of 'sculpture in the expanded field' (1979) establishes a speculative understanding of how and why this expansion is taking place. The post-modern condition of fashion is approached here in relation to the fragmentation of my own fashion practice field and that of others, to help establish a diagnosis of the current changes to the role of the fashion designer in the twenty-first century.

2.2. Methodology rationale

In this section, I will provide a rationale for my methodology. I will do this informed by established and well-described methodologies, used in artistic research and social sciences, and also by my previous experience as a fashion practitioner and fashion lecturer. Over the years, I have used a set of methods that have become increasingly tried, tested, and proven. However, before starting this research project, I have not ever contextualized these methods. When I initiated my PhD studies I was in search of both a context to situate my practice and a sustainable approach to fashion; this initial understanding has developed into the need for a critical practice of fashion. The *post-structuralist* philosophers Deleuze and Guattari, explain how their focus was not 'the knowledge or set of rules one is able to apply in any given circumstance, but rather it is the learning process that resulted

in the acquisition of this knowledge' (Bell, 2016:27). Similarly, what I am looking at through this research is not necessarily the answer to the question 'What is fashion?' but rather documenting the process of acquisition of the knowledge while trying to answer that question. As a fashion practitioner, for whom 'making' is an integral part of understanding the world, I make fashion as a way to understand what fashion is. The practice developed here, in parallel to the written text, expands the both text and experimental essay film simultaneously. The film, a fragmentary composition of images, sound, and text, mimics the formation of thought, unfixed in time, navigating from fiction to fact and back again.

In order to develop a practice-based research, I have considered concerns transversal to the arts-based research (see chapter 1) as described in Nelson (2013), in a summary of adjustments from practitioner to practitioner-researcher:

- Specify a research inquiry at the outset.
- Set a time-line for the overall project including the various activities involved in a multi- mode inquiry.
- Build moments of critical reflection into the time-line, frequently checking that the research inquiry remains engaged and evidence is being collected.
- In documenting a process, capture moments of insight.
- Locate your praxis in a lineage of similar practices.
- Relate the specific inquiry to broader contemporary debate (through reading and exposition of ideas with references)(Nelson, 2013:29).

The choice of media itself, digital film, was derived from the intersection of theory and practice, choosing a medium which facilitated the recording of actions and allowed for their revision and re-editing, recorded as a research method in itself. The research, was conducted by myself and the film was done in collaboration with a small film crew: Lara Torres, Director; Joana Linda, Co-director & Camera;

Margarida Leitão, Second Camera; Sónia Baptista, Performer; Miguel Bonneville, Performer; João Caldas, Performer/Maker; Gonçalo Birra, Assistant; John Kannenberg, Sound.

The film *Unmaking* was developed between January 2013 and January 2016, the first three years of this PhD research project. It was originally entitled *This stands here as a sketch for the future* (17th July 2014 – in process stage see at url: https://vimeo.com/100080719) as I believed that it explored film-making within an expanded field of fashion, speculating about what fashion design could be in the future. Later the film was developed into a final version of the film entitled *Unmaking* (2016 see url: https://vimeo.com/222190994).

The collaboration was, as in previous projects (see chapter 1, section 1.5.1), important for the project's development. I openly discussed the film and their contributions with the other participants. Team roles were very well defined from the start. The photographer and director Joana Linda would be the main camerawoman and would also help me with the lighting and photography of the film. She also actively participated in the editing process. I communicated to her my intentions and my ideas via the mind maps and storyboards and we would get together to edit each section of the film.

Every filming period was followed by a discussion and editing period (between 2013 and 2016 there were four editing periods of time in Lisbon, Portugal). The performers received instructions on the day of the shoot and did a one take performance (as in my previous films) where they interpreted the instructions according to what I had told them as well as according to their own bodies and performance experiences. The sound component was crucial to the film because it dictated the mood given to the images, so it was closely developed between February 2015 and March 2016 with the sound artist John Kannenberg. The film crew's contact and participation was important for the essay film's development; although my

direction was the primary lead, I welcomed their comments and we all collaborated in the making of the film.

2.2.1. Research Methodology

Although this thesis surveys a wide range of theories and practices, mainly due to its interdisciplinary nature, there are two major strands that drive the thesis and inform the practice in the production of a critical fashion discourse through the essay film: Rosalind Krauss's notion of 'sculpture in the expanded field' and Derrida's deconstruction and notions of intertextuality in *post-structuralism*. The centre of gravity of the thesis is fashion, from an anti-capitalistic stance, with implications in relation to production and fashion's meaning. There is an attempt to see fashion beyond its commercial limitations and make sense of the knowledge produced within fashion practice. In order to do so, I am providing the contextual framework for a critical fashion thinking in relation to practice by situating it in a *post-structuralist/postmodernist* setting informed by critical theory and broadly settled in Marxist thought, focusing on dematerialized practices as means to move beyond commercially bound fashion practices.

Critical Theory, a methodology accredited to the Frankfurt School, provided a theoretical framework for my research, because it aims to promote 'self-reflexive exploration and assessing the ways in which the theoretical framework impacts critical practice' (Malpas et al., 2006). In this approach, interpretation of data is done through the analyses of existing power relations and exposure of political meanings. Underlying motivations for the acquisition of power, material wealth, or sexual domination are seen as key issues in human relationships. The role of the researcher and a possible bias also has to be taken into consideration. In the middle decades of the twentieth century, there was an academic turn towards modes of thought that foregrounded the role of relationships over that of essences, and to those that championed the importance of differences over fixed identities. These intellectual tropes were characteristic of a broad movement within cultural and

critical theory that can be traced in the simultaneous transitions from modernism to post-modernism and from structuralism to *post-structuralism*.

Postmodernism breaks with the concept that there should be a dominating centre that governs the structure. *The Postmodern Condition* (Lyotard, 1979) can be seen as one of the establishing publications that led towards recognition of this line of thought. Instead of searching for truth, *post-structuralism* aims to voice multiple viewpoints simultaneously. The result of research through this methodology can be a deconstruction of existing knowledge rather than an extension. The disruptive force in fashion collections in the 1980's and 1990's, that was classified at the time by journalists and experts as 'fashion deconstruction', is addressed in this thesis as a theoretical position brought to the practice of fashion in order to transform it, liberating fashion from its functionality by the analysis of its undoing. Reinventing fashion practice to answer new problems and repositioning it outside the commercial framework can help to create a space for the reflection needed to build self-critique. As the intermediary between consumer and industry, design is in a perfect position to host a debate in the form of design proposals explored in performance, installation or film.

In the *Routledge Companion to Critical Theory* (2006), the theorists Simon Malpas and Paul Wake offer an insight into Marxism's ambiguous role in Critical Theory, defending Marx's thematic contribution for it, explaining that what Marx demonstrates is that far from comprising an open and neutral environment, capitalist economy is first and foremost a power structure. The basis of this power structure is class oppression. For Marx, capitalism is a mode of production that revolves around a basic antagonism between two fundamental classes: the bourgeoisie and the workers (or proletariat). As the minority ruling class, the bourgeoisie are defined by their monopolization of the means of production and subsistence (that is all that is necessary to make a living: land, raw materials, technology, and so on). The proletariat, by contrast, comprises the vast majority and they are defined

precisely in terms of their lack of access to the means of production. This is a condition that was created through a power process. By buying up the old feudal estates, the emergent (industrial) bourgeois class proceeded to expel the people that lived there and to redirect them to the new factories in the cities. In this way, the latter were transformed from peasants – with at least some access to productive means (land, livestock, and so on) – into workers without any such access and who were consequently forced to sell their services (their labour power) in exchange for a wage (Glyn Daly in Malpas et al., 2006:28). When theorists Guery & Deleule refer to the 'productive body' in Marx, and the capitalist 'appropriation of the body's powers' is in the sense of 'the subjugation of the organic body to capital, becoming the body of capital' (Guery & Deleule, 2014), this relates deeply to my understanding of fashion as described in the seminal book *The Fashioned Body* (2000): 'fashion is about bodies: it is produced, promoted and worn by bodies' (Entwistle, 2000:1). Addressing the body in my essay film depicts the relevance of the body in fashion – both as site of performance and production (see chapter 4, section 4.4). This notion becomes central to the definition of my essay–film content, depicting hand gestures related to clothes making, juxtaposed with getting dressed or unmaking (unravelling). Although, as Daly pointed out, the history of the relationship between critical theory and Marxism has been an ambiguous one, there have been those who have affirmed an axiomatic connection: that is Marxism as the critical theory of capitalist society. For Jacques Derrida – regarded by many as the philosophical architect of contemporary critical theory – the boundary between Marxism and critical theory is considerably overdrawn. Indeed, he maintains that his own highly influential theory of deconstruction is something that already names a deep connection with Marxist openings:

> Deconstruction has never had any sense or interest, in my view at least, except as a radicalization... In a certain spirit of Marxism (Derrida, 1994: 92, Malpas et al., 2006:28).

Marxism has never comprised a unified position that simply needs to be explained in order to grasp its universal veracity and import. 'Critical Theory' would specifical-

ly aim to critique capitalist social relations; this type of analysis is commonly associated with the *post-structuralist* perspectives of thinkers such as Michel Foucault and Jacques Derrida, and it has also taken on an increasing importance in the Marxist and post-Marxist traditions through such theorists as Stuart Hall.

By offering a reflexive account of my methodologies, when I am presenting my essay film to an audience, I wish not to present them with answers but with questions that motivate them to reflect about their own political agency. My essay film is assembled as a composition of thought in the process of being made, which I expect the audience to engage with the process of replying – they are of course unanswerable questions, but the criticality happens in the process of trying to answer them individually and taking responsibility for answers. The question 'What is fashion?' has been foregrounded in my work; in the section 1.7.6 of this thesis, I have already explained how the study of fashion covers now a vast landscape and therefore scholars need an equally wide range of methodologies and theories from many disciplines. Research into fashion is necessarily bonded to the concept of 'being' due to fashion's own nature of materialising identity. As sociologist Joanne Finkelstein observes in her seminal text *The Fashioned Self* (1991):

> 'We know that appearances are created and that dressing after a particular fashion, is done in order to convey a certain impression' (Finkelstein, 1991:1).

2.2.2. Liquid Times: capturing the fashion Zeitgeist

In her book about *Fashion Zeitgeist: Trends and Cycles in the Fashion System* (2004), Barbara Vinken provocatively states that 'Fashion has become what art had wanted to be: the Zeitgeist expressing itself in visible form' (Vinken, 2004:41-42), and it has been well discussed that fashion tends to be representative of the defining spirit or mood of a particular period of history as shown by the clothing worn in tandem with ideas and beliefs. Often described as ever-changing, as Coco Chanel famously remarked, it is 'l'art de capter l'air du temps', the art of capturing the 'air of the times'. From mid-to-late 1990s, the sociologist and philosopher Zygmunt Bauman began to explore post-modernity and consumerism. According to

Bauman, we are living in liquid times, an age of uncertainty. Bauman writes of the same uncertainties that he portrays in his writings on 'solid' modernity; but in these books, he writes of fears becoming more diffuse and harder to pin down:

> I readily agree that such a proposition may give a pause to anyone at home in the 'modernity discourse' and familiar with the vocabulary commonly used to narrate modern history. Was not modernity a process of 'liquefaction' from the start? Was not 'melting the solids' its major pastime and prime accomplishment all along? In other words, has modernity not been 'fluid' since its inception? (Bauman, 2000:1-3)

In the foreword of his seminal book *Liquid Modernity*, Bauman compares modernity to 'fluidity', the 'leading metaphor' of our stage of modern society, 'the quality of liquids and gases' (Bauman, 2000:2). According to Bauman, what distinguishes both of them from solids, as the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, informs us, is that they 'cannot sustain a tangential, or shearing, force when at rest' and so undergo 'a continuous change in shape when subjected to such a stress' (Bauman, 2000:1-2). Bauman suggests that we are in a time where everything is interchangeable or liquid, a period of continuous change and 'fluidity'. Bauman's understanding of these 'liquid times' translates some of my concerns with the current fashion system, which is based on fast-fashion. Bauman describes an unprecedented setting for individual life pursuits in his 2007 book, speaking of challenges never before encountered:

> 1.   A passage from solid to liquid (institutions, structures, patterns);
> 2.   Power and politics, much of the power to act effectively that was available to the modern state is now moving away to politically uncontrolled global space; the purpose of action is unable to operate at planetary level since it remains local;
> 3.   A gradual consistent withdrawal of communal state-endorsed insurance against individual failure and ill fortune collective action;
> 4.   The collapse of long-term thinking;
> 5.   The responsibility for resolving quandaries generated by the volatile changing circumstances shifted onto the shoulders of individuals;
> (Bauman, 2007:1-4).

If *Fashion Zeitgeist* translates into clothing the signs of time, fast-fashion is the purest form of 'liquid fashion', to appropriate Bauman's term; fast-fashion has changed the paradigm of fashion production and consumption. The speed associated with fast-fashion brands is based – 'quick response' models, based on a manufacturing model that is market-based – held responsible for disposable fashion and landfill fashion crisis because it delivers designer products to a mass

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market at low prices. The objective of fast-fashion is to produce cost-efficiently and respond to fast-changing consumer tastes as fast as possible. This efficiency is achieved through the retailers' understanding of target markets and aligning of buyers and manufacturers in a more collaborative relationship. The fast fashion market utilizes this by uniting with foreign manufacturers to keep prices at a minimum. The Spanish chain Zara, owned by Inditex, has become the global model for how to decrease the time between design and production. This production short cut enables Zara to manufacture and deliver items twice a week to the stores, reducing the time between initial sale and replenishment. As a result, the shortened time period improves consumer's garment choices and product availability while significantly increasing the number of per customer visits per annum.

Bauman's description of the current state of affairs is very easily put in relation to the understanding of fast-fashion: a dissolution of the structure, that is now global and uncontrolled (an example of this being that when there is a scandal related to bad working conditions of fast-fashion production, the brand just relocates to another factory or country). There is an apparent inability to act, for the consumer is no longer able to opt out if other options are unaffordable, and there is definitely a collapse of long-term thinking both from the fast-fashion mega-brands and their consumers, in that they do not plan long term in relation to the future of landfill waste or constant garment replacement. The responsibility is put on the shoulders of consumers who respond to volatile fashion changes. Meanwhile governmental action is not taken that could impose responsibilities on the culprits by setting up limits and fines for overproduction and landfill.

2.2.3. The essay film methodologies

Returning to the topic of Bauman's liquid times and how it is reflected in my essay film, it was my intention from the start to document and display the *Fashion Zeitgeist*, while trying to define fashion itself; Bauman's concept of liquidity also relates to my film practice of montage. The movement in editing together conflict-

ing images and the speed of cut is meant to generate the impression of speed and inability of the *liquid times* to stand still. That translates not only the Zeitgeist, but a visual understanding of fashion (the impermanent that is so characteristic to fashion). Through cutting and recombining short digital film, the edit results in the constant reconfiguration of meanings; the juxtaposition of images allows signs and metaphors to resonate differently between images and as such, their meanings are redefined. We can see an example of this in the studies of Aby Warburg in the early twentieth century. In 1924, Aby Warburg, the influential German art historian and cultural theorist, began compiling and continually reorganising a vast array of images into a kind of picture map: the *Mnemosyne Atlas* (see figure 19). The *Bilde-ratlas* (atlas of images):

> (...) Consisted of a series of wood panels covered with black cloth, to which were attached thousands of images and clippings, often with no captions. Taken from books, magazines, newspapers and everyday sources, this visual material was arranged according to various categories and sequences. The idea for the project, which remained unfinished when Warburg died in 1929, sprang from the method of using images mounted on large boards for lectures and exhibitions; Warburg expanded this practice into a mode through which he could present his ideas in a novel way (Ince and Johnson, 2015: 215).

The panels suggested startling new relationships between the images, proposing what Warburg termed the 'iconology of the interval' (Rampley, 2001). It was the symbolic connections between these fragments that fascinated Warburg – the

Figure 19 *The Mnemosyne Atlas*, October 1929, panel 5 and 6 photo by Warburg Institute London url: https://warburg.sas.ac.uk/

reappearances of forms, gestures and thought throughout history. Interestingly, the designers Charles and Ray Eames had the same concerns and used methods of image juxtaposition to respond to 'the need to devise visual models for matters of practical concern where linear description can not cope' (Colomina, 2001:16). This mode of thinking can be seen in my former approach to fashion design and also to my current film practices. My film montage method is distinguished by a persistent challenge to linearity, looking to the connections within constellations of images and ideas in order to find solutions to problems, and thus blurring the boundaries between the fields in which they operate. Just as Warburg's 'Atlas' was intended as a vehicle for the expression of his ideas about the meaning in images, offering an expansive reading not only of the history of art but also of symbolism of the everyday world, my continual configuring and reconfiguring of groups of images epitomized an expansive attitude towards the field of fashion. The practice of making and analysing connections, which runs through this thesis practice, is not simply a tool for the practice of fashion film; rather, it constitutes a radical and original method for exploring the visual language of meaning that surrounds us.

As I have mentioned in the previous chapter, my project *Mimesis/Fac-Simile* (2008) presented a 'crystallization' of form from soft fluid textiles to rigid and fragile porcelain sculptures, that relates to Bauman's idea by its transient nature, meaning that although the gesture of crystallizing seems to indicate a solid perpetuation of items of clothing, that intention is intentionally destroyed by the use of a fragile material. Breakable, fragile porcelain and latex would decompose, break and potentially disappear. There was in both the *Mimesis* project and *An impossible wardrobe for the invisible* an intention to fail, and an attempt to translate fashion's own nature of transience into form. The change of state that is described by Bauman from solid to liquid was evoked in my films through garments that are water-soluble, so 'fast-fashion' that they disappear into thin air, or in this case water. In the article 'Perpetuum Mobile' (2010) Bauman writes about fashion's 'uninterrupted movement', eternally on the move, needing no stimulus from an external outside

a self-sustained and self-sufficient contraption, as Simmel as put it, 'one can't say that fashion is' (fashion is always becoming)' (Simmel 1992, in Bauman 2010:55-56)(For further development see chapter 2, section 2.2.2).

The research borrows also from methods of analysis from film studies exploring aspects of 'thinking through film' developed in film theory and video art theory. Visual images are used here as means to create meaning, the essay film is used not to illustrate ideas but to embody them in its very form - my intention was that ideas were not illustrated by the film but they were actualized in the film itself. However, it engages with a close study done through film recordings as a critical fashion practice that is primarily situated within fashion studies. David Montero's book on *Thinking Images: The essay film as a Dialogic Form in European Cinema* (2012) was very important in establishing cinema as a thinking medium and to explore the essayistic sensibility in fashion's *Unmaking* (for further discussion see chapter 4 and 5). This idea is also supported by Mieke Bal's *Thinking in Film, the politics of video installation according to Eija-Liisa-Ahtila* (Bal, 2013) and the philosopher Gerard Richter on his notion of 'Thought-Images' which he related to the Frankfurt School of Critical Theory (Richter, 2007) and George Didi-Huberman's understanding of Aby Warburg 'Atlas Mnemosyne' (2013) - all developed in Chapter 4. For Benjamin, the relationship between images of the past and the present worked like the montage technique of cinema. The principle of montage is that a third meaning is created by the juxtaposition of two images, rather than any immutable meaning inhering in each image.

> For Benjamin, the relationship between images of the past and the present worked like the montage technique of cinema. The principle of montage is that a third meaning is created by the juxtaposition of two images, rather any immutable meaning inhering in each image. Benjamin conceived of this relationship as a dialectical one: the motifs of the past and the present functioned as thesis and antithesis. The flash of recognition of the historical object within a charged force field of past and present was the dialectical image that transformed both (Evans, 2000:102)

Thus, my thesis employs a number of different methodologies to study fashion as a critical medium, attempting to integrate theories and methods from critical theory

and visual cultures into a practice-based study. Firstly, a visual culture approach developed through the understanding of fashion as image but also due to the nature of my own practice which is situated in-between fashion and artistic practices, a parallel between fashion practices and artistic practices is useful here not only to situate my own practice but to characterise and understand a change within the field of fashion practices in the 21st century. These notions will be expanded upon and further articulated in Chapters 4 and 5.

2.3. Why Critical Fashion?

To understand why a critical fashion practice is necessary we need to define 'critical' and contextualize it in current times. The American philosopher and gender theorist Judith Butler asks, "What is it to offer a critique?", in her essay on Foucault's Virtue (Butler, 2002). Foucault himself had delivered a lecture in 1978 entitled, "What is a Critique?", This question does not only try to circumscribe critique as an activity but also 'enacts a certain mode of questioning that will prove central to critique itself' (Butler, 2002:212-213). The French philosopher Michel Foucault states:

> One will be surprised to see that one tries to find a unity in this critique, although by its very nature, by its function, I was going to say, by its profession, it seems to be condemned to dispersion, dependency and pure heteronomy. After all, critique only exists in relation to something other than itself: it is an instrument, a means for a future or a truth that it will not know nor happen to be, it oversees a domain it would want to police and is unable to regulate. All this means that it is a function which is subordinated in relation to what philosophy, science, politics, ethics, law, literature, etc. positively constitute (Foucault et al., 2007:42).

If 'critique only exists in relation to something other than itself, it is an instrument' (Foucault, 2007:25). Therefore, in this thesis 'critique' is the instrument to address fashion practices. The design theorist Clive Dilnot describes how the word "criticality" trips uncomfortably off the tongue' (Dilnot, 2008:177). It feels awkward in its use here because, in the fashion discipline especially, critical as a noun, is unfamiliar and therefore it is approached with unease, as suggested in chapter 1. What I am interested in discussing in this chapter is the urgency of criticality in fashion practices. Critique is dependent on its object but its object also will in turn define the very

notion of critique.

According to theorist and historian Ewa Domanska, the etymology of the words 'criticality' and 'crisis', as used by Hippocrates in his medical works, is the Greek word *krisis* that means the turning point of the disease, the 'critical day'(Aristotle) – a sudden change that determines the patient's future condition. As Domanska points out, in this sense, the word 'critical' is synonymous with 'crisis', meaning both the turning point and the crucial moment (Domanska, 2007:198). These etymological considerations are relevant to my argument insofar as I believe criticality is itself the product of a critical moment in my field. The crisis can be easily detected just by looking at the headlines that have spread across the fashion media in the last two years announcing the 'end of fashion' or 'how to fix the fashion system'. Below are just a few examples of fashion headlines from across the last four years:

'Nicolas Ghesquière Finally Speaks On Why He left Balenciaga', Business of Fashion, 28th April 2013, by Jonathan Wingfield

'The fashion industry is "saturated", says Olivier Theyskens', Dezeen Magazine, 30th January 2015, by Dan Howarth

'Made in Britain: UK textiles workers earning £3 per hour', The Guardian, 27th February 2015, by Tansy Hoskins

'Raf Simmons to Depart Dior', Business of Fashion, 22nd October 2015, by Lauren Millian

'Li Edelkoort publishes manifesto explaining why "fashion is obsolete"', Dezeen Magazine, 2nd March 2015, by Marcus Fairs

'How can the fashion industry become more sustainable?', Business of Fashion, 29th March 2015

'Alber Elbaz Pushed Out at Lanvin - Vogue's Sarah Mower Reflects on His Legacy', Vogue, 28th October 2015, by Sarah Mower

'Demna Gvasalia Reveals Vetêments Plan to Disrupt the Fashion System', Business of Fashion, 5th February 2016, by Imran Amed

'How to fix the Fashion System', Business of Fashion, 8th February, 2016, by Tim Blanks

'Three years After Rana Plaza', Has Anything Changed?', Reuters, 21st April 2016, By Rina Chandran

Fashion has obviously had other crises and these debates are not new, but the current debate is pointed out by fashion trend forecaster Lidewij Edelkoort in her

Anti_Fashion[sic] Ten reasons why the fashion system is obsolete (2014), a manifesto for the next decade, where she challenges the consumerist understanding of value, the low prices of fast fashion and regrets that the exploitation of labour is 'critical' in the sense of 'relating to the crisis of a disease'. The crisis of the fashion system that the *Manifesto Anti_Fashion* captures represents the spirit of present times. This is certainly the moment for informed criticality, as the historian and fashion theorist Christopher Breward notes, 'while innovation and standards have seemingly atrophied in the world of fashion business, critique and commentary have blossomed in academia' (Jenss, 2016:XV III). The criticality of fashion practices has rarely been directly addressed (the first publication addressing this notion is being published under the title *Critical Fashion Practice, From Westwood to Van Beirendonck* by Adam Geczy and Vicki Karaminas as this thesis is being finished). I believe that my thesis can help to address the question of 'what' is the 'critical' in critical fashion practices in the current social, economic, and environmental context of fashion practices, especially focusing on the perspective of the practitioners themselves.

It has been discussed often how fashion has rarely been related to critical thinking (Wilson, 1985, Barnard 1996, Breward 1995, Kawamura 2005, Svendsen 2006) and although the field of fashion studies has currently become a major topic of enquiry in social and cultural dynamics of fashion, with many analyses devoted to understanding the complex arena of fashion (Rocamora & Smelik, 2016), it is still the case today and I believe that it is even much more so in what relates to fashion practices.

The peer-reviewed quarterly academic journal *Fashion Theory*, established in 1997 by Valerie Steele, a world-renowned fashion historian based at the Fashion Institute of Technology in New York, takes as its starting point a definition of 'fashion' as the cultural construction of the embodied identity. The importance of studying the body as a site for the deployment of discourses has been well established

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in a number of disciplines. Until the journal *Fashion Theory*'s launch in 1997, the dressed body had suffered from a lack of critical analysis. Theory aims to explain the many practices involved in the making of fashion: practices of representation, production, and consumption, and gives us the means to achieve the critical distance necessary for a full understanding of its layered complexity (Rocamora & Smelik, 2016). Butler, in her essay *What is Critique? An Essay on Foucault's Virtue* (2002), commented on Adorno's text that

> For critique to operate as part of a *praxis*, for Adorno, is for it to apprehend the ways in which categories are themselves instituted, how the field of knowledge is ordered, and how what it suppresses returns, as it were, as its own constitutive occlusion (Butler, 2002)

The difficulty in discussing critical fashion practices lies in the fact that, unlike traditional fashion designers, critical designers and practitioners primarily focus on the communication of an idea rather than the development of a product within a system that has always been product-focused. In this sense conceptual approaches and dematerialized practices offer a valid way forward by being positioned within the realm of ideas and concepts, instead of market centric productivity. The definition of fashion in the expanded field, is proposed in this thesis, suggesting the proposition that in the expanded field, and within conceptual artistic fashion practices, the possibility of moving beyond commercial imperatives and developing a critical anti-capitalistic stance are better. The possibilities of working with means that are dematerialized (see Lippard in Chapter 1) allows fashion practices to move to a sphere of action that allows fashion's aim to be criticality instead of commerce, Conceptualism offers a valid way forward, providing means that exponentiate fashion's critical positioning. As I will discuss in chapter 3, fashion practitioners already question the fashion establishment through their practice by subverting traditional aspects and symbols of fashion into parodies or satires. The critical in 'critical fashion' is about questioning assumptions about what fashion is. Following in the footsteps of the conceptual designers from the 1980s and 1990s, fashion practitioners of the early 2000s prioritized thought over product, offering alternatives to the current production model within the fashion system and using fashion

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practice as a tool for criticality.

2.4. The Postmodern condition of fashion

This section offers a theoretical analysis of the current fragmentation of fashion practices and subsequently of my own interdisciplinary critical fashion practice. The fashion landscape has, since the 1990s, undergone great changes that were mirrored in fashion academic studies:

> The processes of globalisation changed not only the nature of production but also created new relationships between consumers and objects (Tseëlon, 2010).

This is evident in the content of Wilson's essay, 'Fashion and the Postmodern body'(1992) in which she highlights the 'postmodern fragmentation' of knowledge, histories and identities and discusses the increasing impact of media technologies (Wilson, 1992:3-15), late twentieth century-politics and 'the widening scope of globalisation processes following the end of Cold War' (Jenss, 2016:7). Fashion researchers started to slowly move away from 'object-based research in which the focus was solely on tangible clothing items' (Taylor, Breward and Greenhalgh, 2004).

The literary theorist Linda Hutcheon, who wrote extensively about postmodernism, states that there are a variety of understandings of the word 'Postmodern': 'for some it was thought of being a general 'condition' and for others 'a mere moment' (Hutcheon 1989:115). Defining postmodernism in the final decades of the twentieth century and into the new millennium, appeared to be more of a casual reference than a careful definition. A postmodern condition referred to postmodern 'fragmentation' via the constant bombardment of representation and information to which we are subjected, leading to 'fragmentation of knowledge and fragmentation of identity, "the end of the grand narratives"- the idea that we can no longer subscribe to the Enlightenment belief in continuous progress or the grand narrative of Western civilisation' (Wilson, 1992:6-7). This is relevant to my study, for it led to the

interdisciplinary nature of my practice and influenced its fragmentary methods. In Lyotard's own words:

> A postmodern artist or writer is in the position of a philosopher: the text he writes, the work he produces are not in principle governed by pre-established rules, and they cannot be judged according to a determining judgement, by applying familiar categories to the text or to the work. Those rules and categories are what the work of art itself is looking for. The artist and the writer, then are working without rules in order to formulate the rules of what will have been done (Lyotard, 1984:81).

In *The postmodern condition: a report on knowledge* Lyotard describes the 'inevitable condition of becoming', acknowledged also both by philosophers Gilles Deleuze and Zygmunt Bauman. These notions of 'becoming' help to situate my film practice in developing methods of montage, especially quick-cut montage, as a way of juxtaposing ideas, refers to this unstable nature of fashion. Also, the nature of film editing itself, became much simpler with the advent of digital editing.

In her book about Gilles Deleuze, Colebrook describes how post-structuralists 'in general, rejected the idea that we could examine a static structure of differences that might gives us some point of foundation for knowing the world' (Colebrook, 2002: 3-40). When I refer to the understanding of 'becoming' in Deleuzian terms, I consider his position in regards to the unity of Western thought. Not only structuralism, but the history of Western thought had been based on being and identity. We have always imagined that there is some being that goes through *becoming*. What structuralism and phenomenology did was placing 'becoming' in some ground or foundation (like the structure of language for example); in post-structuralism, what we see is a rejection of the idea that we could examine a static structure of differences that could help explain the world. Instead, Deleuze and his post-structuralist contemporaries sought to look at the instability of systems, the way that languages, organisms, cultures and political systems necessarily mutate or 'become'. Becoming is a Deleuzian concept, it is not just another word, but a problem. Deleuze wanted to express the dynamism and instability of thought, and my montage technique seeks to capture that same instability in audiovisual means. This instability of concepts in Deleuze has also been described in Lyotard's un-

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derstanding of postmodernity, as I referenced previously (see chapter 2) and was accentuated in Bauman's analysis of 'liquid times'. It is in this moving, liquid ground that I am structuring my technique of montage, therefore creating unstable sequences of film that alternate between stillness and rapid change. My practice is haunted by its own questioning and it is inevitably fragmentary since, in the current moment, fashion is revealing its own faults, deconstructing from the inside in a very Derridean manner. Lyotard gives the example of Montaigne's *Essays[1]* (1580) as being post-modern. In accordance with this view, I understand from the start that I will not reply to the question 'What is fashion?' because that question is already changing/becoming as it is posed, but what I can offer is a way of questioning it, and that is what film offers. The shift towards self-questioning disciplines and simultaneously self-questioning practices is important for situating my practice historically and also it allows a better understanding of developing an artistic practice 'now'. I intend to use the term 'postmodernism' to 'diagnose' current fashion practices. Bauman posited that a shift had taken place in modern society in the latter half of the twentieth century. It had changed from a society of producers into a society of consumers. This shift had been observed and analysed by Vance Packard in, *The Hidden Persuaders* (1957) and J.K. Galbraith in, *The Affluent Society* (1958). In his books in the 1990s, Bauman wrote of this as being a shift from 'modernity' to 'post-modernity'. Since the turn of the millennium, his books have tried to avoid the confusion surrounding the term 'postmodernity' by using the metaphors of 'liquid' and 'solid' modernity in his books on modern consumerism. Perhaps Bauman's understanding of modernity as being liquid is here essential to understand the present condition of fashion which is characterized by its fluidity. The metaphor for the modern era is one of continuously changing shape, or in the form of Bauman's question, 'Was not modernity a process of "liquefaction" from the start?'(2000). This refers to the famous phrase 'melting the solids' coined by the

1 Michel de Montaigne, was a French writer whose *Essays* established a new literary form. His scepticism is reflected in the French title of his work, Essais, or "Attempts," which implies not a transmission of proven knowledge or of confident opinion but a project of trial and error, of tentative exploration. Montaigne's much-discussed scepticism results from that initial negativity, as he questions the possibility of all knowing and sees the human being as a creature of weakness and failure, of inconstancy and uncertainty, of incapacity and fragmentation, or, as he wrote in the first of the essays, as "a marvellously vain, diverse, and undulating thing." Neither a reference to an established genre (for Montaigne's book inaugurated the term essay for the short prose composition treating a given subject in a rather informal and personal manner) nor an indication of a necessary internal unity and structure within the work, the title indicates an intellectual attitude of questioning and of continuous assessment.

philosophers Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels in *The Communist Manifesto*. Linda Hutcheon's understanding of a poetics of postmodernism is here most useful:

> Instead, I see it as an ongoing cultural process or activity, and I think that what we need, more than a fixed and fixing definition, is a "poetics," an open, ever-changing theoretical structure by which to order both our cultural knowledge and our critical procedures. This would not be a poetics in the structuralist sense of the word, but would go beyond the study of literary discourse to the study of cultural practice and theory (Hutcheon, 1998, 2003:14)

It is in the open, ever-changing theoretical structure that was born out of post-modern thought, that a poetics would seek to articulate a discontent, a critical positioning as Lyotard puts it: 'a cultural process involving the expressions of thought' (Hutcheon, 1988:14). My essay film explores a 'poetics' of film, an open, ever-changing, de-constructed 'unmaking' of the fashion system through the questioning of its structure.

This unmaking is performed within the film itself: as the film was assembled, every time I edited a section and add it to the previous cut of the film, I would re-edit the entire film and re-formulate the message, adding complexity to the narrative and simultaneously trying to simplify the sequences illustrated (see chapter 4).

In 'unmaking' I have introduced a 'negativised rhetoric' as Linda Hutcheon would put it (Hutcheon, 1988:3). The fashion theorist Ted Polhemus, in his text about *Hussein Chalayan, The postmodern designer,* describes how 'the designer in the postmodern age uses garments as experiments in meaning'(Chalayan and Evans, 2005:110), referring to how appearance has become 'less concerned with aesthetics and more concerned with semiotics: making a statement'. There is a reflection on making that is translated in the unmaking of fashion (Chalayan and Evans, 2005:110). There is a tension between the attempt to pin down meaning through the film, and the poetic unmaking, in my previous practice (chapter 1, section 1.5.1) when there was an attempt at 'crystallisation' of the fashion form from soft fluid textile to a rigid and fragile ceramic sculpture clothing/memory. It was known from the start that any mimetic artistic endeavour leads necessarily to a failure, for

there is not in the copy the original aura (see Benjamin). In the problematic representation of the absent thing and in the case of *Mimesis Project* (2008), failure was necessarily connected with memory and forgetfulness, for that was the purpose of the project: investigating the relation between fashion and memory. This failure is now present in the inability to respond to the question 'What is fashion?'. Poststructuralism, Deleuzian and Derridean ways of thinking do not crystallize answers, they provide a 'ever-moving', liquid response – here represented by the unfixed, fast cut montage that relates to Bauman's idea of liquid. Bauman's concept of liquidity relates to the practice of cinematic montage through cutting and recombining fragments, as Deleuze would; cinema 'connects a flow of different images order into ordered wholes' (Colebrook, 2002:31) in his two books published in French in 1983 and 1985: *Cinema 1: The Movement-image* (2013) and *Cinema 2: The time image* (2013),* Deleuze 'saw the cinematic form itself altered the possibilities for thinking and imagining' (Colebrook, 2002:29-31). I do not believe that my practice itself to be postmodern; however, I believe that my practice could only have happened within a postmodern condition, where the grand narratives were dismantled and power structures questioned. Elizabeth Wilson contextualises the rising of academic interest in fashion and dress with the discourse around postmodernity and the end of grand narratives, as Jenss pointed out:

> The breakdown of totalising narratives and overarching underpinning the idea of the Western modernity and civilisation from the Eighteen century onward, in which fashion and its idea of continuous change has been conceptualised as a sign of the progress and modernity of the West and its superiority and distinctiveness from the rest (Jenss, 2016:7)

After the end of everything: the death of the author, the end of the grand-narratives that helped explain the previous centuries, as both researcher and practitioner I find myself in a position where I have to forcefully question the implications of my fashion practice. The idea of fragmentation has been fundamental to my research methods, for I worked through the fragmentation of ideas to edit the essay film that constitutes the practice component of this thesis. I believe that the work of postmodern thinkers forms the basis for my research practice, a practice that is

grounded in some of the notions introduced by Michel Foucault and Jacques Derrida, in an attempt to understand notions like the end of meaning, the political body, and deconstruction.

2.4.1. Fashion In the expanded field

Structuralism, is an approach that interprets and analyses its material in terms of oppositions, contrasts, and hierarchical structures, as they might reflect universal mental characteristics or organizing principles. My points of departure from Rosalind Krauss analysis are related to my position in relation to philosophical deconstruction. Rosalind Krauss is perhaps the most powerful and well-known advocate of structuralism and poststructuralism in art criticism today, and, hence, a powerful authority on Derrida's behalf in the field. Thus, for someone interested in the possible applications of deconstruction to works of art, Krauss's power as a representative of Derrida's thought cannot be underestimated. However, I need to address the tension between Rosalind Krauss's diagnosis of modernist sculpture in the 1960s and deconstructive thinking that is being considered in the analysis of the current state of fashion practices. This is not an a direct application of Krauss's structuralism diagram, but suggests operating where the legacies of Krauss's
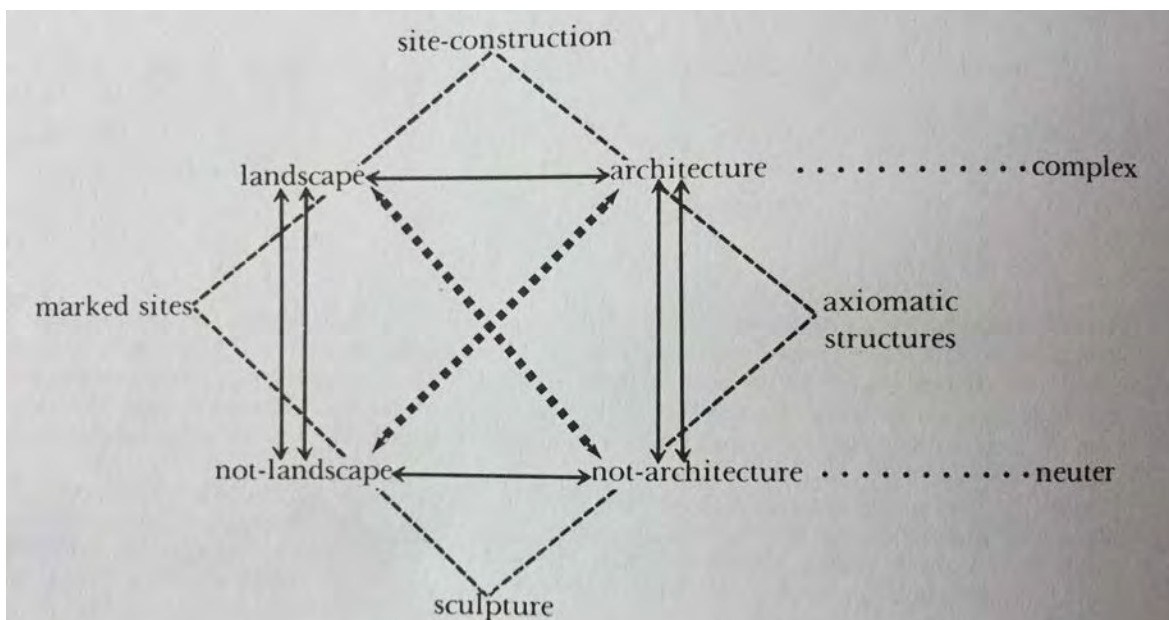
Figure 20 The Expanded Field, diagram by Rosalind Krauss from Krauss, R. (1979) 'Sculpture in the Expanded Field'. *October, 8, p. 37*

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concept enables new points of departure in relation to the fashion discipline. The reason why I do not apply Krauss's systematic grid (see figure 20) is because my criticality is supported by Derridean deconstruction; therefore, from a post-structuralism perspective, there would not be an analysis based in oppositions like the one described via structuralism's grid provided by Krauss. Post-structuralism breaks with the notion that there should be a dominating centre that governs the structure. Derrida's 'concepts' are unstable, and his notion of intertextuality, Barnard states in his book *Fashion as communication* (2002), on 'Fashion, clothing and post-modernity'(2002), can be used to argue that 'fashion and clothing are 'undecidable', their meanings and values are produced and destroyed at the same time' (Barnard, 2002:7). Derrida's 'statements on sign, meaning and signification are open to reinterpretation and reconfiguration' (Biro, 1990). My approach differs from an application of Krauss's structuralism by building on Derrida's deconstruction. While Krauss's method described in the article 'Sculpture in the expand field' (1979) is built on oppositions, via Derrida's deconstruction, which is perhaps less a method of criticism than it is a 'strategy' of interrogating traditional certainties of meaning, consists of the reversal of philosophical binarism. Consequently, a redefinition of the notion of criticism itself, it has broadened the concept of text to include a diverse spectrum of discourse in several disciplines. As Matthew Biro, Professor of Modern and Contemporary Art at the University of Michigan puts it,

> Krauss is therefore not a truly deconstructive art critic. Despite certain deconstructive aspects, the methodology Krauss adopts to break open critical concepts ends up being the means by which she institutes a new orthodoxy. Past critical positions are "deconstructed" solely to show the greater applicability of Krauss's own critical concepts; that Krauss's concepts should themselves be deconstructed is an issue that is never raised in her writings (Biro, 1990:33-47).

Derrida explains,

> Meaning must await being said or written in order to inhabit itself, and in order to become, by differing from itself, what it is: meaning (Derrida, 1978:4,15-16).

What Derrida assumes is that the meaning of any sign 'is always greater than its explicit meaning on any one occasion' and therefore there is always an 'outside' to any discourse which can never be brought into that discourse. As such, Derrida

'avoids the totalising aspect of Krauss's art criticism' (Biro, 1990). The notion of an expanded field of fashion (See chapter 2 section 2.4) conveys a wide perspective of fashion as a 'way of thinking'. In the expanded field, fashion design practices can build a new strategy of thinking about practice and making. What Derrida's deconstruction allows, is not analysing things in terms of oppositions or binarism, Derrida the idea of an interior set apart from, or uncontaminated by, an exterior was a chimera, a metaphysical fiction. Deconstruction as a form of criticism represents a way to relate to the several readings a text could have, in this case the text and the film together as a research practice.

In 1979, the art historian Rosalind Krauss wrote the seminal article 'Sculpture in the expanded field', where she diagnosed the negative condition of contemporary sculpture in the 1970s, addressing the directions sculptural practice took in the post-medium era (Bardon et al, 2015:6-7). Krauss's text was published in *October*, a journal of contemporary arts criticism and theory, and it describes how sculpture in the 1960s and 1970s had become a combination of exclusions. Ceasing to be a positivity, sculpture had become, for Krauss, a combination of non-architecture and non-landscape: 'sculpture had entered the full condition of its inverse logic and had become pure negativity' (Krauss, 1979:36-37).

Krauss refers to the critical operations that accompanied the post-war period of American Art, that would serve as a starting point for an extraordinary malleability of the art disciplines. As a fashion practitioner having worked across various disciplines (fashion and film, sculpture, installation and performance), I have started testing the notion of an expanded field of fashion through the development of a parallel between the present condition of contemporary fashion design practices and Krauss's 1979 diagnosis. This parallel begins with an understanding of the 1970s generally agreed upon that its artistic practices were diversified and split (Krauss, 1985:196-197). According to Krauss, in exploring a negative condition of the monument, modernist sculpture had a kind of idealist space to explore; I

believe that this is the same space of idealism that fashion designers and artists are trying to establish when exploring the borders of the fashion discipline. Krauss explains the condition of post-modern art in the following words:

> For, within the situation of postmodernism, practice is not defined in relation to a given medium - sculpture - but rather in relation to the logical operations on a set of cultural terms, for which any medium-photography, books, lines on walls, mirrors, or sculpture itself-might be used. Thus the field provides both for an expanded but finite set of related positions for a given artist to occupy and explore, and for an organisation of work that is not dictated by the conditions of a particular medium.
>
> (...)The logic of the space of postmodernist practice is no longer organised around the definition of a given medium on the grounds of material, or, for that matter, the perception of material. (...) If sculpture itself had become a kind of ontological absence, the combination of exclusions, the sum of the neither nor, that does not mean that the terms themselves from which it was built-the not-landscape and the not-architecture did not have a certain interest. This is because these terms express a strict opposition between the built and the not-built, the cultural and the natural, between which the production of sculptural art appeared to be suspended (Krauss, 1979:36-38).

Krauss considers sculpture a historically bounded category that, just like any other convention, has its own internal logic, and is not open to change unless the 'category itself is made almost infinitely malleable' (Krauss, 1979:30).

To sum up, fashion over the past fifty years has increasingly become an expression of ideas and concepts more than clothing. Krauss's structuralist model is, and for that matter like most formally arranged categorizations, too absolute to fit examples whose characteristics are exactly defined by their instability. But Krauss's diagnosis permits an understanding of a changing world. Sung Bok Kim asserts that fashion is art, 'because the concepts of fashion and art have expanded to contain both of them' (Kim, 1998: 51-70). The concept of art, according to Lars Svendsen, has 'expanded so radically over the past century that it is hard to think of any object or any event that cannot be incorporated into it' (Svendsen, 2006:107); 'it is now impossible to draw a line between art and non-art' (Svendsen, 2006:107). From this point of view, the question of whether something is art is 'now superfluous, or at least rather uninteresting' says Svendsen (2006:107). What happened within fashion itself was a fragmentation of the field, this fragmentation happened from the inside out. It was not an analysis from the outside looking in; fashion itself was expanding, contaminated by what was happening both with-

in and outside its field. In her article about design in the expanded field, Malene Leeberg interrogates whether 'expanded notion had stretched the category of design too far' (Leerberg, 2009:8), claiming that categories have been expanded so radically that they might dissolve. I do not see this dissolution as having a negative impact, in this fluidity of disciplines we are able to find new pathways for fashion. Krauss detected an erosion of modernist sculpture that had 'entered the negative condition of the monument' (Krauss, 1979:34) in the state of present-day design analysis, developed by Leerberg in 2009, design is described:

> As an activity, design has become more elastic, and contemporary design has transformed into an interdisciplinary practice, crossing boundaries between science and humanities - the knowledge spheres of theory and interpretation. Thus, the doing and making have become notions more or less without limits (Leerberg, 2009:4).

This means that what is designed and how it is designed are radically expanded. The 'how' has become much more important than the 'what'. Fashion as an expanded field, allows the dislocation from the question of 'What is fashion?' to the question of 'how' fashion works which 'frees fashion from stiffening definitions' permitting it's criticality to evolve. To conclude, research in the field of fashion studies is, no longer concerned with finite categories. It seems to me that in liberating fashion from the question 'Is fashion art?' we can allow space for exploring how fashion can transcend the current product-centred approach, and what its identity can be extended to when exploring an expanded field; since fashion is both material and immaterial, it can assert itself into a multiplicity of new answers. The question 'how can fashion be fashion now?' attempts to answer the question 'How is fashion?' and asks what processes can re-define it. While fashion's identity has always been strongly based on materiality (textiles), function, and skill set, this essentialness is now being questioned by several practitioners using an alternative set of media and materials (see chapter 3). The essential materialism of textiles can no longer be considered central to fashion design, since we are moving towards a world where the material is being substituted by the digital. The fashion landscape is moving rapidly from an exclusive model of design to the use of a technology that allows other forms of fashion production and dissemination. A common language that crosses previously defined media is being created. The

use of digital tools immediately challenges each one of those practices and their boundaries. The lines between art, design, and craft are becoming more easily crossed as each appropriates various theoretical, technical, and philosophical aspects of the other, asking us to critically observe the distance between them in contemporary creative practices. Linda Sandino sums it up:

> The identity of crafts has been based on their material specificity, skills, and function designated by the terms used: ceramics/pottery, metalwork, textiles, jewellery, furniture, and engraving/calligraphy, to name a few. By the end of the Twentieth century, however, this material essentialism could no longer be sustained as a defining indicator only within craft as a new concern with the semiotics of materials became evident in the fine arts and design. Rather than focusing on the collapse of genres as arising out of ideological positions, this article will explore materiality in order to expose the common ground between design, craft and art as material expressions, and consider the possible genesis of the attention to the symbolic capital of materials (Sandino, 2004:283).

According to the theorist Sung Bok Kim, postmodern concepts of fashion 'tend toward an interdisciplinary approach so as to embrace diverse aesthetic forms and practices that enrich human experience in the same way as postmodern art'(Kim, 1998:70). It seems that fashion itself become a recognisable subject within the postmodern art world as a result of broadened conceptions of fashion and art (Kim, 1998:70). This expansion in the field of fashion practice will be carefully analysed and mapped in chapter 3.

2.5. The critical In fashion deconstruction

The relation between Derridean deconstruction and fashion has already been explored in depth by theoreticians Alison Gill and Flavia Loscialpo, in the articles 'Deconstruction Fashion: The Making of Unfinished, Decomposing and Re-assembled Clothes' (Gill, 1998:25-50) and 'Fashion and Philosophical Deconstruction: A Fashion In-Deconstruction' (Loscialpo, 2011:13-24), in this section I will build on their seminal articles to further explore its relation to the expanded notion of a critical fashion practice.

My own methodology freely appropriates Derrida's notion of 'deconstruction', or according to him 'deconstructions' in the plural, as a way of developing a

strategy that allows a multiplicity of readings/meanings when creating the essay film. Jacques Derrida is popularly known for a type of philosophical thought that is mentioned often as being unclear and difficult to pin down. Derrida's deconstruction, exposing 'Logocentrism' and a 'metaphysics of presence', strives to unsettle notions of essence of identity or essence as fixed notions (Derrida 1988, Gill in Rocamora and Smelik, 2016, Lucy, 2004), which are ideas I am pursuing in this thesis, since building a critical understanding of fashion is being done upon poststructuralism and a belief in the inability of meaning to be pinned down. It is important to say that deconstruction is specific to its own field, meaning that fashion deconstruction is reversing hierarchies within knowledge particular to fashion practice, and it is, therefore, embedded within the nature of the discipline of fashion itself. As Judith Butler clarifies about Derrida's approach:

> He wrote against philosophical positions that uncritically subscribed to 'totality' or 'systematicity' as values, without first considering the alternatives that were ruled out by that pre-emptive valorisation. He insisted that the act of reading extends from literary texts to films, to works of art, to popular culture, to political scenarios, and to philosophy itself. This notion of 'reading' insists that our ability to understand relies on our capacity to interpret signs. It also presupposed that signs come to signify in ways that no particular author or speaker can constrain in advance through intention. This does not mean that language always confounds our intentions but that our intentions do not fully govern everything we end up meaning by what we say and write (Butler, 2004 [Online]London Review of Books).

Derrida's 1967(first published in French, translated to English in 1976) work *Of Grammatology* introduced the majority of ideas influential within deconstruction. He seems to have appropriated the term from the philosopher Martin Heidegger's use of 'destruction' in *Being and Time* (1962):

> In deconstruction, however, appearance is more valuable than essence. How? Here we could resort to empiricist arguments (in Hume for example) that show that all knowledge of what we call essence depends on the experience of what appears (Online Dictionary of philosophy url: http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/Derrida/#Dec).

Derrida rarely gives one meaning to the term, redefining it and allowing others to redefine the term according to the context where it is being used. Loscialpo pointed out how fashion deconstruction was seen as a 'disruptive force' wherein renouncing to clothing finishings in the fashion of the 1990's and 'working through subtractions or displacements' fashion designers were above all 'rethinking the

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Figures 21 and 22 *Implosion* **collection, 2006, Photo by Rafael Esteves**

function and the meaning of the garment itself' (Loscialpo, 2011:16) the force of this fashion deconstruction resided not only in 'the undoing of a specific garment' but also in its rethinking (Loscialpo, 2011:16).

As a practitioner, I began using 'deconstruction' (or what I thought deconstruction was at the time) as a method for displacement in my garments to convey a certain idea of fashion as a memory device. Far from any theoretical analysis, deconstruction was for me just a way of understanding garments, an excuse to 'dismantle, disaggregate or pull apart' form in order to analyse their making, as is visible in the two images below of 2005-06 Autumn/Winter Collection *Implosion* (figure 21 and figure 22). These represent two of the garments produced as part of the fashion collection where I explored deconstruction as a method of tearing apart and reconstructing garments: a hem made of the back of a dress. My fashion practice

freely appropriated notions of what was designated as fashion deconstruction, as an attempt to understand the fashion practice, but not in a philosophical Derridean manner.

My research methods as a practitioner, since I have started this PhD, have been dedicated to a further understanding of these notions, and what was an intuitive leap into fashion deconstruction in 2005-06 became a systematic study of my own practices and the theories that may allow further understanding of them. In the 2016 article 'Fashion under erasure' (Gill in Rocamora & Smelik, 2016), Gill revisited her 1993 article of fashion deconstruction, equating deconstruction in fashion to 'destruction becoming a process of creation' as did theorists Martin and Koda (Martin and Koda, 1993:94).

The problematic of these positions is that Derrida himself sees deconstruction not as a method to be applied, but more as coming from within (from the text itself in his case). When we look into fashion deconstruction, the destruction is structural to the garments because it is embedded in the making of the garment itself. The term 'deconstruction' was borrowed from Derrida around the 1990s; the first use of the term usually mentioned is Amy M. Spindler's newspaper article 'Coming Apart' (July 25, 1993) in the New York Times, where she referred to the Belgian group 'Antwerp six' and the fashion designer Martin Margiela. The fashion theorist Barbara Vinken, has contextualized Martin Margiela's fashion practices within deconstruction in the following way:

> Step by step, it has masterfully and systematically deconstructed the procedures of fashion, while fundamentally altering our understanding of what fashion is in the process (2008, Vinken:111).

Deconstruction, which Derrida himself was extremely reluctant to define, is an activity, it is not a method or an analysis, nor even a critique. Derrida explains how 'all sentences of the type "deconstruction is x" OR "deconstruction is not x" a priori miss the point' – because deconstruction is not reducible to an essential feature or task or style. Gayatri Spivak, who translated Derrida's book *On Grammatology* into

English, says the following:

> If I understand deconstruction is not an exposure of error, certainly not other people's error. The critique in deconstruction, the most serious critique in deconstruction, is the critique of something that is extremely useful, something without which we cannot do anything.
> — Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, 'In a Word,' interview with Ellen Rooney in Letter to a Japanese friend (1991: 270-275) in Kamuf, P. (1998)

It is important to say, that deconstruction is specific to its own field. So I believe that fashion deconstruction is reversing hierarchies within knowledge particular to fashion practices, and it is embedded within the nature of the discipline of fashion itself. Judith Butler clarifies Derrida's approach:

> He wrote against philosophical positions that uncritically subscribed to 'totality' or 'systematicity' as values, without first considering the alternatives that were ruled out by that pre-emptive valorisation. He insisted that the act of reading extends from literary texts to films, to works of art, to popular culture, to political scenarios, and to philosophy itself. This notion of 'reading' insists that our ability to understand relies on our capacity to interpret signs. It also presuppose that signs come to signify in ways that no particular author or speaker can constrain in advance through intention. This does not mean that language always confounds our intentions but that our intentions do not fully govern everything we end up meaning by what we say and write (Butler, 2004 [Online] url: https://www.lrb.co.uk/v26/n21/judith-butler/jacques-derrida).

When I brought in the practice of destruction to my practice, this, had the intent of acting as tools for the disappearance or dematerialization of the practice; this is not a philosophy of deconstruction implying that the hierarchies of fashion thought are subverted by going against binary, logo-centric ways of thinking. What I do when I destroy a garment by dissolving it, having created that garment with that purpose, is a reversal of a system or systems of fashion as the system where a fashion garment is produced with the purpose of being commercialized is disrupted. Mechanisms of destruction, disruption, and subversion are part of my fashion practices.

> Although deconstruction has roots in Martin Heidegger's concept of Destruktion, to deconstruct is not to destroy. Deconstruction is always a double movement of simultaneous affirmation and undoing. It started out as a way of reading the history of metaphysics in Heidegger and Jacques Derrida, but was soon applied to the interpretation of literary, religious, and legal texts as well as philosophical ones, and was adopted by several French feminist theorists as a way of making clearer the deep male bias embedded in the European intellectual tradition (Holland, J. N. IEP [Online]url: https://www.iep.utm.edu/deconst/).

This notion is extremely relevant to the way I have addressed 'unmaking' in my es-

say film, since I present deconstruction as thought in the process of being formed. This intellectualized understanding of fashion led me to an overt conceptualization of fashion or, as Alison Gill puts it: 'dress becomes theoretical'. While engaging with theory within the journey of this thesis, I used deconstruction as a process

Figure 23 Editing process, 2016

for developing a strategy that allows a multiplicity of perspectives on the critical concerns about fashion through self-reflexivity – essentially as a bridge between theory and my creative practice. My method of film-making itself has been an implementation of philosophical deconstruction. I edit new sequences of the film by introducing new scenes to the previous cut and re-editing the entire film around it, introducing a reflexive process into the making (to be discussed in chapter 4), combining images that I believe discuss what fashion is. This has been a way for me of 'thinking in' film, finding ideas not illustrated by but actualized in film (see figure 23). Below the images depict a simulation of the process of editing, adding sequences to previous ones for suggestion of new meaning in the process of bringing images together – montage as a process of critical thinking.

The unmaking of fashion here is a philosophical unmaking, raising questions about meaning, and discussing the ontological questions that fashion raises. A careful reconstruction of the concept and praxis of deconstruction in relation to fashion can be found in an article by the philosopher and fashion theorist Flavia Loscialpo, where she explores the implications of 'philosophical deconstruction' in contemporary fashion (Loscialpo, 2011:13-122). With deconstruction, structures are to be undone, decomposed, desedimented (all types of structures, linguistic, 'logo-centric, phonocentric' – structuralism being especially at that time dominated by linguistic models and by a so-called structural linguistics that was also called Saussurian-socio-institutional, political, cultural, and above all and from the start philosophical). Derrida in Papadakis explains is understanding of deconstruction as plural:

> Sometimes I prefer to say deconstructions in the plural, just to be careful about the heterogeneity and the multiplicity, the necessary multiplicity of gestures, of fields, of styles. Since it is not a system, not a method, it cannot be homogenised. Since it takes the singularity of every context into account, deconstruction is different from one context to another (Derrida in Papadakis, 1999:11).

As deconstruction represented a way to relate to the several readings a text could have, 'has been quite self-consciously embraced as a form of criticism by philosophers and literature specialists across the world' (Gill, 1998:26). In film-making I sought to develop a strategy by which a practitioner might be capable of constituting a critique of the fashion system by means of the practice of fashion itself, from within the system itself and as such, I have been drawn to Gill's notion of deconstruction in fashion as an auto-critique of the fashion system:

> At one level, the word "deconstruction" suggests a simple reversal of construction and therefore, at this common-sense level, a reading of clothes that look unfinished, undone, destroyed as "de-constructed" fits. With this view, the many who know the work of the garment-maker—cutting, constructing, altering—that is, a uni-directional making toward a goal of a "finished" garment, will not find deconstruction fashion startlingly original or more than a reversal of this practice of the garment-maker. Yet, what is marked about the practices of these designers and represents a "new thinking" in fashion is an explicit care for the 'structuring ontology' of the garment. By "structuring ontology" I mean that visibility is given to the simultaneous bi directionality of the labour that the garment-maker and clothes perform – i.e. the garment maker is simultaneously forming and deforming, constructing and destroying, making and undoing clothes (…) these garments suspend in paradox the formation/wear/decay of clothing, a paradox imbued in Jacques Derrida's inserted and privative 'de-' of deconstruction (Gill, 1998:28).

As I became interested in raising questions regarding the fashion system through my practice, and taking an anti-capitalistic stance on fashion, I became interested in fashion deconstructive approaches, in particular approach of Martin Margiela's questioning of fashion's ontology through practice.

In Martin Margiela's work, fashion's meanings and symbols are reversed and undone as he works through fashion's intertextuality; his iconoclastic gesture of reversing comes from fashion's own lexicon and destabilizes it from within (further development in Chapter 3, section 3.2.3). This notion implies that, as Derrida defends not a negative operation, destruction is necessary 'in order to understand how an 'ensemble' is constituted" and to 'reconstruct it to this end' (Geczy & Karaminas, 2017:31).

2.6. Re-defining the role of the fashion designer today: the fashion practice in the Anthropocene

The relationship between fashion and sustainability has been the subject of extensive debates in recent years, and it is clearly complex and multifaceted. I would argue that the main problem confronting the fashion practitioner today is one of awareness and critical thought about the industry processes within production. Since the Industrial Revolution, the industry's impact has grown increasingly as fashion became a faster and global market. There now exist serious social, environmental, and economic consequences, which are widely recognized (Black, 2008; Fletcher et al. 2015, 2012; Ehrenfeld, 2013; Margolin, 1998; McDonough, 2008 and Shedroff, 2009). Since the start of Design as a discipline, during the Industrial Revolution, when it was conceived as an art to give form to products for mass production, it has been firmly embedded in the consumer culture. Taking a critical stance in regard to the 'fashion system' is becoming increasingly relevant for designers, design students, curators, academics, and the public. In his article 'Design for a Sustainable World'(1998), design theorist Victor Margolin declared that, by the time of *Agenda 21: The Earth Summit Strategy to Save Our Planet*

(Sitarz, 1993) held in Rio de Janeiro in June 1992, global environmental problems were already critical enough that designers needed to begin solving them immediately. Although much has been done to impact the planet positively in a larger scale regarding the sustainability of our environment, environmental issues are still one of the biggest threats to the natural world. There is a diversity of physical markers of the Anthropocene, the geological epoch marked by human activity, but while there is some consensus around the signals of the Anthropocene, the start date is still disputed; there is no formal agreement on when the Anthropocene began, 'with proposed dates ranging from before the end of the last glaciation to the 1960s' (Lewis and Maslin, 2015:170-178). The recognition of human-induced transformations has been a complicated matter, 'raising awareness and contextualizing the extent of environmental change, which is unavoidable' (2014)[2]; knowledge helps us understand it and improve our impact upon nature. From the late nineteenth century, scientists were becoming aware of the extent of human influence on planet Earth. George Perkins Marsh's influential 'Man and nature: or, physical geography as modified by human action' (Marsh, 1864) is perhaps the first major work to focus on anthropogenic global change (Zalasiewicz at al. 2011). In 2002, the Nobel Prize-winning atmospheric chemist Paul Crutzen brought the concept of the Anthropocene to denote the current interval of time on Earth in which many key processes are dominated by human influence:

> The word quickly entered the scientific literature as a vivid expression of the degree of environmental change on Earth caused by humans, and is currently under discussion as a potential formal unit of the geological time scale (Zalasiewicz et al., 2011)

Consolidated evidence was presented supporting the argument for the Anthropocene as a true geological epoch in August 2016, being characterized by how human activities started to have a significant global impact on Earth's geology and ecosystems (Rockstrom et al., 2009). In the ultimate demonstration that 'humans are now the dominant driver of change to the Earth's system, the current era is referred to as the Anthropocene' (Fletcher and Tham, 2015:35). Some of the

2   Intergovernmental Panel Climate Change, Climate Change 2014: Impacts, Adaptation, and Vulnerability (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014).

seminal works of the early 1970s criticized the production model, articulating it as a problem of scale. In the book, *Small is Beautiful* (1973), author E F Schumacher described that:

> 'The 'logic of production' is neither the logic of life nor that of society. It is a small and subservient part of both, the destructive forces unleashed by it cannot be brought under control, unless the 'logic of production' itself is brought under control - so that destructive forces cease to be unleashed (Schumacher, 1973:208).

Professor Sandy Black, in her book *Eco-Chic: The Fashion Paradox* in 2008, had started mapping the changes happening in the fashion system:

> Clothing sales have increased by about sixty per cent in the last ten years. We now consume one third more clothing than even four years ago, according to a Cambridge University report, and discard it after wearing just a few times or indeed, even once (Black, 2008:14)

Black continues and describes how there has been a shift in the way clothing is sold by stores; they now sell based on 'low prices rather than longevity' (Black, 2008:14), increasing clothing obsolescence and production speed. This change into 'cheap fashion also means disposable fashion, and encourages more consumption' (Black, 2008:14). Black states:

> Fast-fashion puts pressure on the clothing manufacturers and their suppliers to squeeze more output into less time, impacting those who actually make the clothes' (Black, 2008:14).

The criminal event of the collapse of a factory building in Bangladesh on 24 April 2013 – four months after I began my PhD research – showed very clearly the cost of the fast fashion system, and who is really paying the price for cheap clothing. Unions called it a 'mass industrial homicide'(Safi and Rush in The Guardian [Online], 2018). A court in Bangladesh has formally charged thirty eight people with murder in connection with the 2013 collapse of the Rana Plaza building which killed 1134 people in the country's worst industrial disaster (Reuters in Dhaka, in The Guardian [Online], 2016). This event reinforced my certainty about the need for resistance from within the fashion system regarding the way fashion was

'evolving'. Some of the workers who survived the incident in Bangladesh stated in interviews that they were 'living on 38 Euros a month'(Al-Mahmood et al., 2013 in The Guardian [Online]). Black, defines the 'fashion paradox' settled in the problem found in reconciling the transience and obsolescence of fashion with the imperatives of sustainability and social justice, questioning how can we consume clothing now with a clear conscience and adds:

> Consumers are demanding to know more about the how and the where, and in what conditions their clothes are made. In a dramatic turnaround for corporate social responsibility in textile, dyeing and manufacturing businesses, companies that were seen as a major part of the environmental problem are now part of the solution'(Black, 2008:17).

And here is where we disagree. My perspective on this is that we can not is part of the problem and the solution simultaneously, has do approaches by major corporations have (H&M '*conscious collection*'). While the change of H&M's in corporate transparency about its steps toward sustainability are certainly laudable. However, it's undeniable that H&M's fast fashion model is in itself wildly unsustainable, with its focus on producing cheap disposable clothing. My practice-based thesis is not a solution of any of the presented problems which are deemed too complex for one solution, but I have developed this thesis looking towards a dematerialized fashion practice and mostly, a thinking fashion with an stance on post-productive fashion practices, looking for alternative ways of making fashion which do not necessarily engage in fashion's overproduction system.

In November 2012, the French designer and creative director Nicolas Ghesquière announced that he was leaving Balenciaga and revealed in an exclusive interview to *System magazine* (Spring/Summer 2013, Issue 1) that his departure from the brand was primarily caused by creative differences between himself and the label's management: 'It all became so dehumanised', Ghesquière said, 'everything became an asset for the brand, trying to make it ever more corporate – it was all about branding' (Wingfield, J., 2013:34). In the second interview given after his departure, to *032c* magazine (2013), Ghesquière said that one of the reasons why he wanted to stop was as follows:

As long as the production schedule kept sight of the creative side, it felt human. Then it accelerated to such a degree that at a certain point I was totally miserable (…) 'it's true that for everyone it's accelerated to a frantic speed over the last few years. When I started, there were only two seasons, we had the runway show and a few extra commercial pieces, but by the end, there were 15 collections per season, which is more than 30 collections per year (...) it's unhealthy. (032C Magazine Issue #24 , Summer 2013: 60)

The production and consumption process in the fashion system has become unsustainable for all those involved: designers, producers, and consumers. Our destructive capacity, mentioned early on by Victor Papanek in the 1970s book *Design for the real world* (1971), in the fourth chapter 'Do it yourself murder: Social and Moral Responsibilities of design'(1971), were Papanek describes how murder has entered into everyday life:

Today, industrial design has put murder on a mass-production basis. By designing criminally unsafe automobiles that kill or maim nearly one million people around the world each year, by creating whole new species of permanent garbage to clutter up the landscape, and by choosing materials and processes that pollute the air we breathe, designers have become a dangerous breed (Papanek, 1985:ix-xi).

Papanek considers the deeply embedded social and political implications of design:

(...) All this raises the question of value. If we have seen that the designer is powerful enough (by affecting all of man's tools and environment) to put murder on a mass-production basis, we have also seen that this imposes great moral and societal responsibilities (Papanek, 1985:72)

What Papanek's early reflection shows, is how a design practice which can be so vulnerable to co-option can also be also so valuable as a form of dissent. At a time when fashion has become faster and faster, the high-street model of production and consumption has been replaced by the 'Zara model' and copied by the luxury brands, entirely changing their way of functioning by moving from two shows a year to six shows a year. Looking at the difficult agenda of fashion for sustainability, my question as a practitioner has been how to redefine the fashion designer's role. Although we are aware of the irresponsible accumulation generated by overconsumption of fashion and the 'using up' culture which promotes discarding clothing, we seem to be reluctant to accept that this destruction passes by acknowledging our relationship of dependency with what we make. Our productivist

cast to making, has taken making from the key agency of our mediation with the world and displaced it with the mediation of the natural by the artificial, as Clive Dilnot states in his name three 'meta' conditions that describe the 'metaphysics of this new epoch':

> • The first is the absolute dependence (even in our relations with nature) on how we relate to [or in my language 'contend with'] the artificial.

> • The second is the equally absolute dependence for our futures on the quality (and I stress this) of our mediation with the artificial – and on the quality of the mediation of the artificial with all other living and non-living systems on the planet.

> • The third point, in certain ways the most interesting, or at least that which is yet least understood, is the fact that things no longer 'are' as facts. To put it another way, at least in the realm of all that we make, certainty is dead. Today, there is, in a certain sense no Law, and we have to learn to live with this fact. (In the artificial there are only possibilities, which are without definite end. All artificial things are therefore propositions concerning the artificial)(Dilnot, 2015: 115–23).

My research processes, situated in an intersection between art and design, derive from my experience as a fashion designer and researcher, using the creation of clothing to question my own field of practice. There is an absolute need for a critical practice, due to the emergency of the present environmental issues and the incompatibility between the project of sustainability and that of capitalism. Design, as the theorist Donald Schön suggests, should be a 'reflective conversation with the situation' – but what does it mean in the current situation? In the current moment in the capacity for resistance is eroded, 'there is a split in consciousness that denies thought and the ability to reflect on the consequences of agency confined to the role directed by economic interest' (Dilnot, 2011). Our collective failure to deal with the unsustainable is as over-determined as the unsustainable itself. The ''greening' of products or the slightly less destructive approach are prone to the delusion that 'sustainability can be achieved in the perpetuation of what already is'(Dilnot, 2011). Margolin diagnosed a 'movement towards a 'post-product' society, supporting his idea on Clive Dilnot's earlier idea, already discussed here, of design as plan, in the context of how:

> As the design theorist Clive Dilnot has noted: Movement towards a 'post-product' society, i.e., to one distinguished by a more explicit social management of man-environment relations, is likely to bring back this historic sense of design's significance [as planning]. Design becomes once again a means of ordering the world rather than merely of shaping commodities (Margolin, 1998:86, Dilnot, 1982:144).

In my film, production, consumption, and dress are placed side in order to create

resonance between them, and communicate these relations through the film. My position of negation is done to achieve a position that is not destructive and also not in denial of the consequences of production in today's world.

2.7. Towards a practice of unmaking: 'not making' as form of protest and resistance

Since my fashion practice appropriates methods and discourses usually characteristic of fine arts and similar to those of conceptual art practices, it is easily seen as 'not fashion', implying a negation of fashion itself. Elizabeth Wilson wrote in her seminal work *Adorned in dreams* how 'oppositional fashions aim to express the dissent or distinctive ideas of a group, or views hostile to the conformist majority' (Wilson, 2003:184). The presentation of my projects in the gallery and museum spaces has underlined this assumption, often subjecting it to art discourses and being further apart from fashion–related media and discourses. But the mechanism of fashion itself depends on operating in a basis of its own denial that is, in fashion's nature as a concept to signify a denial of itself. The sociologist Julia Emberley, in her article 'The fashion apparatus and the deconstruction of postmodern subjectivity' refers to fashion:

> (...) Strategies for producing consumption depend on this 'negative' reaction to the products it makes available; the fashion apparatus operates on this basis of its own denial, producing its own lack so as to (re)produce desire(s) for the image(s) that will fill the w/hole of the self and its experience of being. Fashion produces non-being or the anti-fashion subject (Emberley, 1988:47).

This idea is very relevant to my approach for there is a denial, in the same way as in Krauss's analysis of sculpture in the expanded field diagnosis (See section 2.4.1). This negation of fashion is not negative, as in deconstruction; this negation is what allows for the *unstructuring* of the idea of what fashion is, and through my explorations of the meaning of fashion in film, I am unsettling concepts or existing preconceptions and creating new ones, or as Derrida puts it:

> (...) The undoing, decomposing, and desedimenting of structures, in a certain sense more historical than the structuralist movement it called into question, was not a negative operation.

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> Rather than destroying, it was also necessary to understand how an "ensemble" was constituted and to reconstruct it to this end (Derrida in Kamuf, 1998:272).

I argue that my assertion of the work being fashion is very important, because the power of critical fashion lies in its object being seen as fashion itself, which is both a virtue and a problem of the expanded field. The displacement of the fashion practice allows for a criticality to be constructed, moving away from commercial outputs and further into a questioning of both medium and purposes of what I am doing. On the other hand, moving away from the recognizable field of action of the fashion practice, I am making it harder to recognize as fashion, and also removing the fashion practice's agency from its potential action field (dress) into an intellectualized artistic reflection, removing all its known practicality and functional aspects that usually move human beings in their relation to fashion. The refusal to abandon the fashion framework through the application of language, methods, and fashion principles offers a contribution to the discipline of fashion and an understanding of what fashion knowledge can be. The critique of fashion through the subversion of its limits and traditions reveals new perspectives and adds a new practice value to the discipline. In an attempt to move the discussion away from the design versus art question, the understanding of function is challenged here and the discussion departs from traditional notions of 'practical functionality' towards re-conceptualization of 'function'; critical fashion operates through a system of 'rhetorical use', a term created by Matt Malpass in his PhD thesis regarding a taxonomy of critical design, a form of symbolic and intellectual use (Malpass, 2012).

I reason why I relate the notion of critical design with the definition of critical fashion practices is because, although they are different in many aspects, there is a common ground between approaches by fashion designer/artists and product designer/artists in the 1990s that seems to have passed unnoticed within academic writing, and which I believe plays a part in what has become a pathway in the way critical fashion takes shape. The critical approach taken by Maison Martin Margiela, Viktor & Rolf, Hussein Chalayan and Bless between the 1990s and 2000s is not

acknowledged as a 'critical practice' and it is mostly referred to as conceptual fashion or fashion deconstruction, but there is importance in recognizing the dimension of criticality that is hardly ever discussed in relation to these practices. Although I believe that the use of the term 'conceptual fashion' is useful to describe these practices, the term 'critical' would have been useful to understand certain lines of thought, allowing other pathways within fashion practices. Criticality in fashion plays a part of a larger and older tradition, of a politicized practice. Design practice and design research are moving between what is taken for granted and what must be questioned, what is accepted and what is challenged, and what is identified as real and what is seen as a future possibility, and follows on to present design fictions and critical design as research strategies for future possibilities.

My film practice moved beyond productivity and materiality to a thought through moving image. I had concerns about producing a work that allowed a criticality, and was politically engaged without being propaganda. Fashion is often viewed as a symbolic system of production and consumption. Being a fashion practitioner, choosing not to exercise an absence of practice itself, but producing instead a practice that avoids the productivist nature of fashion design, exercises a denial of the nature of the fashion design discipline in itself. By exercising my fashion practice through the negation or denial of fashion production and by working through film as a self-reflective medium, I can communicate and critically present an understanding of what fashion is or what it can be when set outside of the commercial arena.

In contemporary art, figures of 'resistance and escape', as Mick Wilson referred to them in a lecture at the ICA (2016), have been transversal to artistic practices since at least the 1950s, and are thereby a precedent to my own refusal, and contextualize my denial of making in a broader and historical bounded category. The famous American experimental composer John Cage, composed in 1952 the famous *4'33"*, a composition for three movements for any instrument or combina-

tion of instruments the score instructs the performers not to play their instruments during the entire duration of the piece throughout the three movements – perhaps one of the most well-known artistic 'refusal' pieces. Refusal can be a very powerful weapon from the artist, since a practitioner's practice is the medium through which they communicate and disseminate their ideas. When John Cage did his 4'33" he was not only making a gesture that challenged the role of the musician but also challenged the audience to a different role (Gann, 2010:19). The artist Lee Lozano made an art piece in the 1960s that was based on her own disappearance from the art world; Lozano began to pursue conceptual art projects starting in the mid-1960s. In February 1969 she commenced her *General Strike Piece*, in which she withdrew from the New York art world. Her instructions to herself were as follows:

> GRADUALLY BUT DETERMINEDLY AVOID BEING PRESENT AT OFFICIAL OR PUBLIC "UPTOWN" FUNCTIONS OR GATHERINGS RELATED TO THE "ART WORLD" IN ORDER TO PURSUE INVESTIGATIONS OF TOTAL PERSONAL AND PUBLIC REVOLUTION. EXHIBIT IN PUBLIC ONLY PIECES WHICH FURTHER SHARING OF IDEAS & INFORMATION RELATED TO TOTAL PERSONAL AND PUBLIC REVOLUTION (Lee Lozano In Lehrer-Graiwer, 2014).

Another example from fashion is Viktor & Rolf's performed strike piece, where the duo went on strike and presented no collection at the fashion week, entitled *Viktor & Rolf On Strike 1996-97*. Evans described how 'while struggling to realise and stage each collection as the fashion industry dictates, and equally frustrated by a lack of exposure in the press'; Viktor & Rolf sent posters announcing that they were on strike; even if the posters did not get much attention at the time, it helped in adopting strategies that allowed to establish them as cutting edge designers (Evans et al., 2008). Communicating criticality has often been settled in the exploration of these 'figures of resistance' used in fine arts – withdrawal from the practising fashion designer role; negation of productivity; refusal to take part in the fashion system in the traditional market-driven activities (examples); infinite task – never ending film; very little almost nothing - reduction of materiality. Such tactics of 'withdrawal', 'refusal' and 'escape' are figured in contemporary culture; Wilson discusses what he called 'figures of resistance and escape'(2016) in contemporary art, naming:

- Negation
- Withdrawal
- Refusal
- Very little, almost nothing
- Infinite task (Wilson, 2016).

In my research practice, although I am still producing a film (which involves a certain materiality by depending on a camera, projector, and other apparatus that are physical), there is an intention to dematerialize the practice and to challenge fashion's commercial value and the material-centred practices of fashion production and productivity focus. My refusal to produce fashion as a product for commercialization is here a critical stance. In producing a fashion practice that is a film to illustrate thought, my practice reveals a sort of 'meta-fashion' and invites the consumer to the position of the viewer and to critically engage with fashion. The film's 'very little almost nothing' approach is present in the 'factory' sequences where you see the body of the performer construction of a frame of thread around the body; here the factory is reduced to 'very little almost nothing', in the sense that the factory is the body and the product a simple thread with tied knots; this states that if we rethink production to very the minimum, maybe we could have a minimal factory of hands putting together frames – this resonates with weavers that I referred to in my mood boards where there is a frame and their hands, and not much else involved in production (see chapter 4, section 4.6.).

2.8. Discussion: the absent critical discourse

In the conversation between the Austrian art historian, theorist, and curator, Helmut Draxler, and designer and design theorist Katja Gretzinger, published in the book *In the blind spot, the manner of Reading design* (2012), design is understood as 'an example for the political dimension of a missing discourse' (Gretzinger, 2012:53); like Dilnot, Draxler believes that design, 'because of its impurity, allows us to understand better the relations between contemporary society and cultural production' (Gretzinger, 2012:53). Draxler points out that the problem he finds is 'not quite the disappearance of experimental' (Draxler, 2012:55), but rather the fact that the market has been taking ownership of experimental design:

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> The economy increasingly appropriates experimental design and thereby erodes the subculture from within. Because of this, it is difficult to relate to the notion of the subcultural, since it has become an economic strategy (Draxler, 2012:55).

It becomes extremely difficult for practitioners to relate to cultures of resistance and act with criticism, while these are constantly appropriated as business strategies.

We can see an example of this form of appropriation in the green washing marketing strategies that fashion brands have been utilising in recent years (Fernandez, 2016 [Online] url: https://fashionista.com/2016/08/greenwashing-fashion-marketing). A brand that can offer another example is the recently created brand Vêtements (2014), described as a 'collective' by its designer Demna Gvasalia, similar to Maison Martin Margiela (1989). The brand's working methods are an important part of the brand's appeal. Settled on a discourse of a 'no-concept concept' is another element of their allure. The fashion journalist Sarah Mower describes in her review of the brand's catwalk show that,

> ...Rather than just being subversive for the sake of the gestural politics, Vetêments means business (Mower, S.,'Vetêments Fall 2016,' Vogue, March 3 2016, www.vogue.com/fashion-shows/fall-2016-ready-to-wear/vetêments)

Curiously, Demna Gvasalia is also quick to point out that his collections are 'not trying to push the boundaries of fashion'(Socha, 2015 [online]), as if in this moment in time being associated with any conceptual or political agenda would have a negative impact on the brand. This pragmatic approach perhaps is in tune with the Zeitgeist. The writer and editor Anja Cronberg refers to Vêtements:

> The disillusion that many feel with the contemporary fashion system is here being enlisted to keep the wheels of luxury consumption in motion. What might otherwise be described as sales strategy is here elevated to revolution, and the growing discontent with corporate fashion and ever-accelerating consumption is cleverly channelled straight back into the luxury fashion system.

> We are encouraged to covet the brand's unconventional ugly-beautiful aesthetic in order to feel closer to their collective of social rebels and outsiders, presently coded as cool and desirable (Cronberg in Vestoj, 2016).

With this kind of approach, companies like LVMH and Kering acquire a perceived

status as 'avant-garde' or 'rule-breaking' to their brand. In my own practice I have been trying to avoid a market-oriented fashion as a form of resistance, approaches like that of Vêtements are that they have put at the service of Capitalism tools that were used in practices of resistance; as a result, they make impossible the recognition of real practice of resistance and they weaken dissonant critical voices. It is hard within the current context of the fashion system to find a space for resistance and criticality.

Chapter 3. A brief map of fashion practices in the expanded field in the twenty-first century

3.1. Introduction: Situating fashion in the 21st century

This chapter documents the development of strongly interdisciplinary fashion practices in the early 2000s, acknowledging and underlining the relevance of earlier precedents in the relation between art and fashion since the 1960s, as has been pointed out by fashion curator and theorist José Teunissen (2009:9). Most importantly I present a review of critical fashion practices and explain the relevance of conceptual fashion practices and fashion deconstruction of the late 1980s and 1990s for the development of such interdisciplinary practices. Mapping strategies that have led to the development of critical fashion practices in an expanded field of fashion in the twenty-first century is a useful way of making this activity more visible and subject to discussion and debate. The examples described appropriate strategies commonly associated with the field of arts to challenge assumptions, preconceptions and givens about the fashion system itself.

3.2. The historical context of fashion in the expanded field

Most of the literature connecting fashion and art focuses on defining this relationship; for example Geczy and Karaminas discuss the evolution of fashion image-makers throughout the twentieth century as having moved from depicting perfection and elegance to articulating fashion's ephemerality via digital media formats (Geczy and Karaminas, 2012). With the advent of the digital age amidst growing concerns regarding sustainability and the fast fashion system, could this mean the end of a certain form of fashion related to production and consumption? Indeed, a postmodern understanding of fashion might suggest open-ended explorations of a possible new role for the fashion designer. According to the fashion curator and theorist José Teunissen, 'ever since the 1960s there seems to have been a steady blurring of the borders between art and fashion' (Teunissen 2009:9). However, others might argue that this is earlier, for example in Sonia Delaunay's

constant movement between painting, textile and dress (Montfort and Godefroy, 2014) or Elsa Schiaparelli's engagement with Surrealism. Hazel Clark, Professor of Design and Fashion Studies, suggests that although Elsa Schiaparelli's work in the early twentieth century had a conceptual approach, 'it was not until the 1980s that conceptual fashion design actually emerged'(Clark, 2012: 67-75). The relevance that Teunissen gives to the 1960s at the start of this dialogue between fashion and art is perhaps better exemplified by her use of Yves Saint Laurent's 'Mondrian' Autumn/Winter 1965 collection as an example (Teunissen, 2010:308). Teunissen refers to this change within fashion practice and how it moved beyond its traditional role:

> Ever since the 1960s, avant-garde designers have radically changed the essential components of fashion, and therefore also something of what fashion, and its ideal environment, represents. Rather than simply presenting a new feminine ideal, they started using fashion as a discipline within which they can comment on the fashion system itself, bringing fashion to a more conceptual plane (Teunissen, 2013:197)

The conversation between Farid Chenoune and Bernard Blistene in the catalogue of the 2010's 'YSL exhibition' refers to how Mondrian as an artist was not very well known until his 1969 retrospective, and Yves Saint Laurent's appropriation was a bold gesture at the time, asserting his position with the Modernist artists of the time, sharing the same spirit and ideas (Saint Laurent et al., 2010:310). YSL was the first living designer to have a major exhibition dedicated to his work at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York (Clark, 2016). His 'Mondrian' dress (see figure 24), made in 1965, fuelled the debate around the place of fashion in the museum, raising issues regarding how the exhibition could be 'advertising' a commercial concern – prompting a debate around the idea of originality and value – an ongoing discussion that still takes place today regarding fashion's value inside and outside the museum (author interview to Clark on 16-05-2016, see appendix 5).

José Teunissen refers to the fact that, since the 1960s, fashion has been centred more on the concept and the idea and less about an ideal (woman or aesthetic). In part of the interview Teunissen gave in the context of this thesis, the positioning of fashion within the museum space, was about the importance of the narrative, polit-

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Figure 24 Yves Saint Laurent, Autumn/Winter 1965-66, Photo: The Metropolitan Museum of Art (url: https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/83442)

ical commentary, or fashion's performative power becoming much more central to fashion practices in recent years. Teunissen reflects upon the audience's reaction to 'The art of fashion, installing allusions' (2009) by describing how that museum context had changed in relation to fashion, where fashion exhibition becoming used to be mainly focused on the women that wore the garments. She refers to how museums have become interested in fashion and how that is addressed by critics as being the sole interest of museum directors when they bring fashion into the museum space. Teunissen sees this as not entirely true, and sees fashion as an art form that is closer to the public, due to the close relation that all people have with what they wear, making it a subject that is easily related to. Teunissen sees changes to fashion having a huge impact on people, fashion has the power to address issues as identity, gender, and the body, which are appealing to people because they see themselves in them. Fashion is in that sense a very powerful medium. Teunissen refers to the museum space being taken by fashion practition-

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ers who used fashion as an instrument to bring forward certain ideas about fashion (author interview to Teunissen on 07-06-2016, see appendix 5). The contamination of fashion by art and vice versa is not surprising, since they have long shared a common interest: the subject of the self and identity (Teunissen, 2014). Artists like Bruce Nauman explore art as 'an investigation of the self' (Morgan, 2002:1) and for fashion 'the importance of clothing relates also to establishing physical appearance as a revealing sign of social identity'(Finkelstein, 1991:108). The relationship between the individual and the body was one of the issues explored by a generation of emerging artists in the 1960s and 1970s, that diversified the range of media used. Hindering classifications and borders, many artists explored this dialectic between the individual and society, rejecting formalist guidelines and displaying an interest centred on the human body itself as an object of work and artistic examination. In addition, as a result of the increasing mass production and consumption of industrially produced clothing, fashion came to be understood as a completely distinct cultural form that was solely seen as capitalist merchandise, in a mercantile sense and as a commodity, thereby losing its artistic value. Clothing was trivialized, losing its economic value once purchased, while the artwork was valued as a future investment, a condition that would also be argued by artists of the 1960s and 1970s. With mass fashion in the 1960s, there began a 'democratization' of fashion but also a trivialization of clothing, which subsequently lost some of its ability or power for social and political intervention.

In recent years, fashion's field of action, facing constant pressure from a global market increasingly fast and uneven, has become an uncritical place completely dominated by market logic, without room for resistance, not even from subcultures that previously had been able to create a source of opposition. With the notion of the expanded field, fashion practices became more elastic, the making and doing becoming less tangible, and in turn design has subsequently become a notion more or less without limits. Contemporary design has transformed into an interdisciplinary practice that can provide a critique and develop an activity that challeng-

es industrial agendas. Fashion in the expanded field is building a new strategy of thinking about fashion practice and making. Fashion designers need to constantly define and redefine fashion is a symptom of a similar condition, where design comes into focus as process, similar to conceptual art in the 1970s. As we can notice the transition of sculpture from materiality to immateriality in the 1960s and 1970s:

> (...) We notice a transition in sculpture from materiality to immateriality, from solid matter such as bronze and stone to landscape markings, hollows, and choreographed spaces, which is similar to contemporary design's embrace of services, strategies and even organizations (Buchanan, 2008; Leerberg, 2009:6).

We note a similar behaviour in fashion: contemporary designers embrace of the use of installation, film, and sculpture as media to communicate their ideas. From the early 1950s to the early 1960s, there was a central focus on abstraction and reduction of Modernist art, and by the1970s Minimalism had led to a focus on processes beyond the traditional boundaries of the medium and concept – based art processes: from object to idea. Such an approach to physical materials refers to validating the importance of the concept or the idea rather than the visual result a focus on the process. Alongside the dissolution of categories, the aspect of impermanence or a movement towards dematerialized practice is also becoming a key element within the work of several fashion practitioners in the twenty-first century including Anne-Sophie Berger, Ruby Hoette, Elisa Van Joolen, Lucia Cuba, Bart Hess & Lucy McDean, and myself (See section 3.2.8. of this chapter).

3.2.1. A parallel between conceptual fashion practices of 1980s and 1990s and conceptual artistic practices of the 1960s and 1970s

> "Idea" comes from the Greek verb "to see," and is frequently linked with the notion of the "eidolon," the "visible image" that is fundamental to ancient optics and theories of perception. A sensible way to avoid the temptation of thinking about images in terms of images would be to replace the word "idea" in discussions of imagery with some other term like "concept" or "notion," or to stipulate at the outset that the term "idea" is to be understood as something quite different from imagery or pictures (Mitchell, 1986:22).

The above citation, by Professor of English and Art History at the University of Chicago, W.J.T. Mitchell, brings forward the ancient understanding of idea as image. In her foreword defining fashion, Wilson brought forward the notion that fashion in a way resembles photography, in the sense that they are both 'liminal forms on the threshold between art and non-art' (Wilson, 2003: ix). Her metaphor talks also about the transient nature of fashion, how fashion can freeze a moment in time like photography congealing the essence of the now moment:

> Clothes are amongst the most fraught object in the material of things since they are so closely involved with the human body and the human life cycle. They are objects but they are also images (Wilson, 2003: ix)

Many conceptual artists used language and image in place of brush and canvas, and words played a primary role in their emphasis on ideas over visual forms. Though text had been used in art long before this, artists like Joseph Kosuth were among the first to give words such a central role. The way the words look plays a role in conceptual art, but it is language itself that has the ultimate significance. In

Figure 25 Joseph Kosuth, *One and Three Chairs*, 1965

One and Three Chairs, the conceptual artist Joseph Kosuth represents one chair three ways: as a manufactured chair, as a photograph, and as a copy of a dictionary entry for the word "chair." The installation is thus composed of an object, an image, and words (see figure 25, Moma online). Kosuth's work is perhaps the most explicit example of how artists in the 1960s were discussing systems of meaning and semiology through their artistic practices. Kosuth did not make the chair, take the photograph, or write the definition; he selected and assembled them. Kosuth wanted us to think about what he said: "art is making meaning." In her 2011 book *Sartorial Deconstruction: The Nature of Conceptualism in Postmodernist Japanese Fashion Design* (2011)*,* Bonnie English brings together the notion of Conceptual fashion with the deconstructionist approaches taken during the 1980s and 1990s by avant-garde fashion designers. Figure 26 represents Ann Demeulemeester

Figure 26 Ann Demeulemeester, Spring/Summer 1998, in Demeulemeester, 2014:239

Spring/Summer 1998 collection, in this garment, names of body parts, were print-ed into garments items in a process that would resemble conceptual art practices. The fashion theorist Nathalie Khan argues that conceptual fashion is 'not about forms and materials but ideas and meanings' (Khan, 2000:122). The fashion theorist Hazel Clark suggests that 'any reference to conceptual fashion imme-diately draws us toward the conceptual in art' (Clark, 2012:67) and we can say that conceptual fashion practices and conceptual art practices share a common ground. By the 1970s conceptual art was fully established and privileged 'ideas over appearance, self-reflection over resolution, innovation and experimentation, and statements that posed questions but that rarely provided clear answers' (Clark 2012: 67, Bruggeman and Van de Peer, 2016:). In the text *Analytical apparel (1993),* Richard Martin and Harold Koda state that 'destruction becomes a process of analytical creation'(1993) for fashion in the 1980s and 1990s. I have already addressed *deconstruction fashion* in chapter 2 (see section 2.5), the connection between conceptual fashion practices is important here in relation to define criti-cal fashion practices. There is common ground in Yohji Yamamoto's and Rei Ka-wakubo's impoverished aesthetic or 'aesthetic of poverty' (as coined by Martin and Koda in 1993) and the influence of Zen in early conceptual art practices. English explains how Yamamoto and Kawakubo's aesthetics were influenced by their background:

> For the Japanese, the literal dismantling of a material, a construction technique, or an idea as closely linked to concepts of Zen Buddhist beliefs where Beauty is found in objects which are aged with time and use and where individuality and difference appealed to the humanistic spirit. (...) The Japanese concept of imperfect beauty could be interpreted as dignity masked in the garb of implied poverty, or a fragile perishability'(English, 2011:81-85)

Both Yamamoto and Kawakubo's aesthetics, with the repetitive use of black, mul-ti-layering, and loose-fitting garments and their shared interest in experimenting with one single idea, the aesthetic of poverty, developed over a long period of time and re-interpreted again and again were the opposite of what 1980s fashion had been all about. Japanese designers were answering to consumers who began to look for something more than what was being offered by the superficial styling of prestigious labels. As Lipovetsky argues 'they were looking for clothing that said

something more about themselves' (Lipovetsky, 1994). The Portuguese curator and theorist Anabela Becho notes:

> In fact, this 'new aesthetic - an anti-aesthetic, according to many commentators - had it's roots in the secular legacy of Japanese culture. The concept of wabi-sabi (...) an ode to the patina and imperfection of used objects, as the old bowls display their scars with pride. Furthermore, they resonate in the avant-garde minds of Japanese designers such as Miyake, Kawakubo and Yamamoto, and their disciples, Junya Watanabe and Dai Fujiwara.
> (...)
> Where they found place for themes of perishability, absence (always accompanied by the immense power of suggestion, as in Haiku poetry for example, where omission of words creates a possibility of meanings), irregularity, both simplicity and complexity, deconstructed to reconstruct, and the importance of meaning have permeated Japanese and Japanese culture for thousands of years (Becho, 2016:135-137).

There is common ground between conceptual art's influence of Zen and the Japanese fashion designers of the 1980s bringing the Japanese influences into the way they developed what was being understood as conceptual fashion. There is a profound intersection between the rise of what we label conceptual and process art, the origins of Fluxus, and the growing popularity of Zen Buddhist riddles and the philosophical reflection they stimulated in New York's intellectual and bohemian circles, as we can note in Ellen Pearlman's 2012 book *Nothing and Everything: The Influence of Buddhism on the American Avant-Garde.* Artists like John Cage, that were highly influential for their peers and brought notions from Asian culture into the art practices repertoire:

> In truth(...)the most elemental facet of Cage's contact with Asian Culture is the way in which he studied, absorbed, and sifted through a variety of texts during the 1940s and 1950s, extracting with single-minded discrimination only those malleable ideas that could be used metaphorically to illuminate the artistic themes that were always on the focus of his writings or reshaped to reinforce the tenets of his own modernist agenda (Patterson, 2011:69)

Based upon the ideological affinities Zen and Taoism, Cage gave influential lectures, coming from his own declared interest in an appropriation of terms from Asian philosophy and ethics (Patterson, 2011:69). Cage's influential *4'33"*, mentioned in Chapter 2 (Section 2.7), initiated a model by:

> Replacing 'conventional notation with a condensed set of typewritten numbers and words 4'3" effectively inaugurates the model of the score as an independent graphic/textual object, inseparably words to be read and actions to be performed'(Kotz, 2011:103)

This is influential on my practice in the way I developed the storyboards for film and performance. John Cage's approach left to others clues on how to develop a series of projects working with an implicit tripartite structure, that allows them to be realized as language, object and performance, anticipating projects by artists like Robert Morris and Joseph Kosuth. Conceptual fashion has been interpreted by fashion theorists in the same way that conceptual art has been interpreted by art theorists, giving primacy to the idea, image, and concept over the product or end result.

In order to understand the relationship between materiality and the conceptual in contemporary fashion, it is important to understand the immaterial aspect of fashion: 'it is necessary to address, the textual, semiotic, discursive and representational facets of fashion' (Bruggeman and Van de Peer, 2016:10). To understand the relationship between fashion and art, Geczy and Karaminas looked at both fashion and art, and how:

> In the Twentieth Century, fashion became a central concern of many artists who understood the provocative power of clothing in creating an identity and establishing their work as a global brand (Geczy and Karaminas, 2012:2).

The fashion theorist Patrizia Calefato, in the text *Fashion as a sign system*, discusses the notion of fashion as a system of meaning, inherited from French literary theorist, philosopher and semiotician Roland Barthes's 1967 'The fashion system', where Barthes analyses the semiotics of fashion, focusing on the descriptions within specialized fashion magazines (Calefato, 2006:127). In an early preface to *The Fashion System published in The Language of Fashion* (2005), Barthes compares fashion to a language:

> Fashion clothing, and thereby reconstitute the formal system of meaning which humans elaborate using this object; in short, if a little approximate, to establish a 'grammar' of Fashion. In other words, this work can be defined as an attempt at applied semiology (Barthes, 2005:70).

What fashion signifies though is hard to determine. Since fashion is transient, its meaning is constantly changing. Only very rarely do garments possess a perma-

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nent symbolic meaning, like the case of the Japanese Kimono (Hoeks and Post, 2006:405). This was the reason why Barthes analyses fashion magazines instead of street fashions, because these were frozen images, not constantly changing. To Barthes the tautological aspect of fashion is very important:

> Linguistics derives the underlying abstract language system from the mass of concrete facts of everyday language. Similarly, said Barthes, the system of fashion can be derived from the garments worn in a certain culture (Hoeks and Post, 2006:392).

> Time after time, photo after photo and caption after caption, the message is repeated that is the fashion and this is in fashion. (...) In other words: fashion does not sell objects but meanings, and that is how it fulfils the consumer's desire to own something that is 'in fashion'(Hoeks and Post, 2006:405).

In the 1970s, artists used clothing for its symbolic content. Clothes were used by artists in the way in which they are able to translate someone's presence/absence or memory. The artwork *All the clothes of a woman* (1973) by the artist Hans Peter Feldman is a good example. It refers to seventy items of a woman's wardrobe photographed one by one and framed as one archival image as a reminder of her existence in her absence. Hans Peter Feldman's work, seen in the image displayed in figure 27, displays something that seems to represent a specific woman whose identity is not revealed to the audience, but who is recreated in their minds by her clothing items. In 1972, Christian Boltanski made the artwork *Les habits de François C.* (The Clothes of François C., 1970) that surveys Boltanski's main motifs of place, memory, and loss through clothing that represents someone's identity.

> *Les Habits de François C* (*The clothes of François C*), in which the viewers were confronted with black-and-white, tin-framed photographs of children's clothing. Shot From above, each item isolated in a crude cardboard box, these images of crumpled, well-worn clothes were oddly moving. As with the actual or photographed objects of the inventories, questions naturally arose as to the identity and whereabouts of the missing owners (Gumpert, L., 1994:99).

In visual arts the use of found objects intends to represent certain moment in time, according to English 'a trace of both presence and absence of the human existence', and English continues by paralleling Yamamoto's interest in old clothes and

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Figure 27 Hans-Peter Feldmann, *All the Clothes of a Woman***, 1970**

Figure 28 Christian Boltanski, *The clothes of François C***, 1972**

capturing their timeless quality with Boltanski's representation of memory:

> The artist Christian Boltanski has spent most of his life working on ethereal materi-
> al: - photographs, light bulbs and candles - to evoke memory, loss and death. Bol-
> tanski used actual lost property from railway stations to memorialise the unknown
> owners. There personal effects relate to the memories that have been buried. They
> Are meant to remind us of the experience of remembering. Like Yamamoto, Boltan-
> ski is challenging the basic assumption that constitute an artwork - using old cloth-
> ing or seemingly mundane elements to address some of the most fundamental and
> disturbing contradictions of twentieth century life (English, 2011:50).

The symbolic nature of clothing is essential for the understanding of fashion; this
notion is currently explored by fashion practitioners like Anna Sophie Berger, using
clothing's symbolical notion to expand on fashion practices (see section 3.2.7. of
this chapter for further development)

3.2.2. Unmaking art: a historical review of destructive practices in art

In the following section, I will start by approaching examples of destructive and
auto-destructive art, establishing them as precedents, in the field of fine arts, on

Figure 29 Gustav Metzger, *Auto-Destructive Art*, 1961

how to establish 'unmaking' as a strategy for critical practices in the fashion field. Artists in 1960s and 1970s like Gustav Metzger and Yoko Ono had a destructive take on art. What is currently known as 'destruction art' originated in the artistic practices of avant-garde art groups during the 1960s (Frank, 2009:562). Many artists involved in destruction art at this time were concerned with destroying not just physical objects, but also with performing destruction with various media
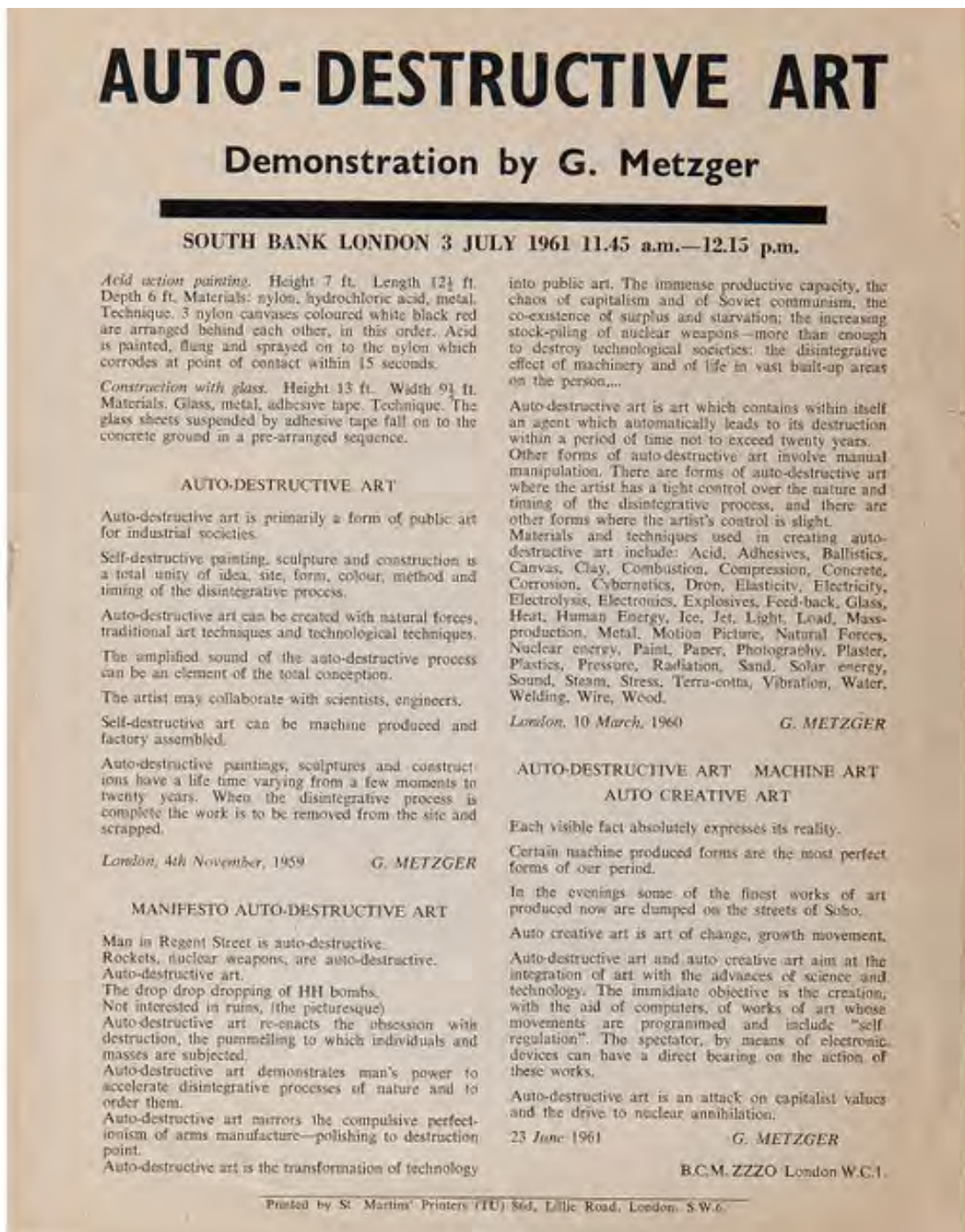
Figure 30 Gustav Metzger, *Auto-Destructive Art, Third Manifesto*, 1961

(Frank, 2009:562). By integrating the body into conceptual works rather than literal narratives of violence, artists contested and redefined mainstream definitions of art, social relationships, hierarchies, and consciousness (Frank, 2009:562). The first public demonstration by the artist Gustav Metzger of his concept of 'auto-destructive art' took place at the Temple Gallery in London on the afternoon of 22 June 1960 (see figures 29 and 30). Using a modified paintbrush, Metzger then applied a hydrochloric acid solution to the fabric. As the Nylon came into contact with the acid it immediately dissolved, creating a swirling glue-like coating on the glass through which Metzger slowly became visible. This piece has obvious parallels with *An impossible wardrobe for the invisible* (see figure 29 and figure 13 on page 42), where as I described in chapter 1, I produced a wardrobe with the aim of being destroyed. I was not aware of Gustav Metzger's artistic practice but the parallels are clear: both our practices work towards de-materializations that reveal a criticism of the capitalist system. Gustav Metzger recognises that the aim of auto-destructive art is to abolish the capitalist system: 'That is the central idea' he says in his interview to the art curator Hans-Ulrich Obrist, 'but there are different definitions of this system at different times'(Obrist, 2008:17). He explains how capitalism has changed, being currently understood as 'global economy', and refers to how his opposition was always against the main common denominators of the different 'capitalisms': 'power and domination' (Obrist, 2008:17). The commonalities between my project, where dissolution and fragmentation are key, comes from this same concern regarding opposition (see chapter 1, section 1.5.1). In my own practice, I centre the discussion in the fashion system; Metzger dematerialized art to communicate a violence of the system. The reason why I refer to Metzger's practice is because of the commonalities between the two practices: the ephemerality of the medium, potentiating a critical anti-capitalistic position, and the apparently nihilistic gesture that has the potential for engaging the audience with an extreme positioning. In my own practice, situated within fashion as a discipline, it becomes a position of resistance against over-production. I am looking at these works as precedents in the approach and trying to understand also where

my practices situate themselves. Yoko Ono's *Cut piece* was recently shown in an exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art entitled 'Yoko Ono: One Woman Show', 1960–1971 (May 17–September 7, 2015). This can give us a sense of how we are looking back at these works and reflecting on how to act, in relation to our current condition of destruction of natural resources, climate change, and over-production. In the mid-1960s, the artist Yoko Ono addressed destruction through 'conceptual performances, instructions, and by presenting and modifying objects' (Frank, 2009:563). By repositioning violence into performance work, Yoko Ono's art promotes creative thinking, ultimately 'drawing out the reality of destruction that remains hidden within the physical and social body' (Frank, 2009:562). In the well known performance *Cut Piece* (1965), as we can see in the frames of the video

Figure 31 Yoko Ono, *Cut Piece* performance, 1965, by Albert Maysles + David Maysles, Film stills of performance at Carnegie Recital Hall, New York.

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(see figure 31, url for video: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lYJ3dPwa2tI), the audience is invited to cut her clothes. The seemingly impassive Yoko Ono sits on a stage as an audience undressed her with a pair of scissors. This action is aimed at the participant's experience of the self via relations with others. In these first performances by Yoko Ono, she sits kneeling on the concert hall stage, wearing her best suit of clothing, with a pair of scissors placed on the floor in front of her. Members of the audience are invited to approach the stage, one at a time, and cut a bit of her clothes off – which they are allowed to keep. Through the action of having her clothes cut off, Ono aesthetically represents the unveiling of her true essence of being, a place not accessible by language or the creation of a tangible object but through a tearing away of outside layers symbolized by her nicest clothes; 'the act of cutting is intrusive and even violent and seems especially so in the case of cutting off someone's clothes' (Frank, 2009:602). Along these lines of feminist theory, *Cut Piece* can be further understood to reveal how feminists unpacked and analysed societal influence in order to get at more authentic information about women and their experiences. A person is inevitably shaped by contact with other people and culture, and Ono's comments regarding *Cut Piece* emphasize that

Figure 32 Film Still, *Fragment*, 2008

Figure 33 Photo documentation *An impossible wardrobe for the invisible,* 2011

women, in particular, 'are objects scrutinised, formed, and controlled by sexualised violence' (Frank, 2009:602), and as described in the text *Art in Time*, groups like 'Fluxus transformed art from an object of aesthetic contemplation to a gesture of political action' (2014). The way in which clothes are performed in *Cut Piece* as part of identity is interestingly evoked by fashion practitioners in the 1980s and 1990s, moving towards a de-materialized practice in the 2000s as I will address in the chapter remainder.

In my current practice, there is a de-emphasis of the materiality and the documentation of the action of unmaking. This de-emphasis started in 2008, with the project *Mimesis* where the material*s* explored where fragile and transitory and explored further in *An impossible Wardrobe for the invisible* (2011) where clothes were produced to be destroyed. In the image shown in figure 32, the film-still from my film *Fragment* (2008) exemplifies through my own practice this notion of transience and decay, as I describe in chapter 1 (section 1.5.1) *Fragment* was about documenting the moment of 'breaking' the garment; this piece is dressed and whenever worn, the garment would disintegrate and decay visibly. In the practice explored

in this thesis the focus in transferred from the material to the idea, the materials used were selected to have the least environmental impact as possible, hence the choice of vintage wardrobes belonging to the performers or the knitwear that could be re-used. There is an interest in destruction in all the works mentioned, my first collection *Implicit memory* (2005), that was settled in destroyed, worn and damaged garments (see chapter 1, section 1.5.1. for further discussion on this collection). There is a commonality between Metzger 1961 performance piece and Chalayan's *The Tangent Flows* (1993), and my own recent film *An impossible wardrobe for the invisible* in that they are works made through destruction but in doing so they stand as political actions in defiance of 'value'. The exhibition 'Be-hind, Be-fore & Be-yond' (26 October – 13 November 1999 at the Judith Clark Costume gallery), Naomi Filmer's first solo show, exhibited pieces made of glass, ceramic, ice, silver, and soap. The materials explore the interaction between the intrinsic preciousness of objects and their attributed value (see figure 34 page

Figure 34 Naomi Filmer, *Be-hind, Be-fore & Be-yond*, 1999

119). Some of the pieces were solely for exhibition while others were to be bought and worn. The collection explicitly alluded to the intimacy of the body and its adornment: locating pieces behind the ear, under the chin, under the arm and on the inside of the forearm. All these examples are co-related, they evoke destruction as a form of creation and they all seem to share a common vocabulary, even if their artistic materialization is different and each artist approached destruction through their own specific means which are part of their own artistic language.

3.2.3. Unmaking fashion: a historical review of destructive practices in fashion

The impoverished aesthetic that the two Japanese fashion designers, Yohji Yamamoto and Rei Kawakubo presented to the world became fashion's response to conceptual art. Fashion has worked more analytically to offer a prolonged interest in apparel: 'destruction becomes a process of creation' (Martin Koda, 1993:94) in a similar way that destruction anti-art movements articulate a discontent with the artistic sphere and a political positioning regarding the Capitalist system.

The fashion designer Yohji Yamamoto explains his ideas in Wim Wenders film *Notebook on cities and clothes* (1989). He says, 'I used to wish I could draw time. I liked used clothes, things that are old and worn'(1989, see figure 36). The fashion theorist Bonnie English describes how he states his work as being 'contradictory' to the commercialism of western fashion. As both English and Koda express, one might also argue that the economic recession of the early eighties, with the subsequent growth in unemployment, created a consumerist environment which embraced this aesthetic of poverty (Koda, 1993; English, 2011:82).

The thesis that fashion has tended to examine and expose its elements and armature flows into other corpora of knowledge and body awareness in the twentieth century, most specially in the late twentieth century. The fashion designer Rei Kawakubo's 'poor look' of 1982-83 was named in relation to *arte povera*, with

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Figure 35 Comme des Garçons, 1982, Photo: Peter Lindbergh

Figure 36 Yohji Yamamoto, Spring/Summer 1983, Collection of the Kyoto Costume Institute, photo by Takashi Hatakeyama http://www.kci.or.jp/en/archives/digital_archives/1980s/KCI_260

Figure 37 Comme des Garçons, Autumn/Winter 1992-93; Autumn/Winter 1983-84; Spring/Summer 1984

Figure 38 Maison Martin Margiela, *9/4/1615*, **1999**

Figure 39 Hussein Chalayan, *The Tangent Flows*, **1993**

which it shared an interest in decaying materials and a "retrieval of obsolescence'
(Foster et al, 2011:553). Similarly, in the 1960s the Italian art movement *arte po-
vera* attempted to make manifest their refusal to be seduced by shiny surfaces
in favour of more humble materials, using clothes and rags among their chosen
materials in their linking art with everyday life. Fashion designer Rei Kawakubo's
clothing remains as resolutely philosophical and meditative, more like thinking
(Martin & Koda, 1993). Deconstruction in clothing is an idea that is made evident in
clothing's proclivity to manifest itself, and is burnished in today's intellectual under-
standing of clothing, topical in its large and engaging cultural issues (see chapter
2 for further discussion on fashion deconstruction, section 2.5). Kawakubo's brand
Comme Des Garçons collections of 1992 and 1993, are less referential to poverty
and abandonment, and instead more analytical and rigorously reasoned as cloth-
ing construction (see images in figures 35 and 37). As Martin and Koda note, fash-
ion in the 1990s was looking to models of 'decomposition and decay as sources of
creativity'(1993:97). At the time, the worldwide recession had a profound cultural

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impact which also affected fashion (Martin & Koda, 1993:97). Sustained econom-
ic decline, a new expectation of diminished standards of living, and 'substantive
white-collar unemployment compel compassion and promote proximity, the fragility
of the economic status tends to avoid flamboyance'(Martin & Koda, 1993:98).

Gustav Metzger's auto-destructive art resonates in a similar interest in decompo-
sition and decay in Maison Martin Margiela's 1997 installation project *9/4/1615* at
the Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen (Rotterdam, 6 June to 17 August 1997),
where Margiela worked with a microbiologist to grow mould on garments from
previous collections, erecting these literally living dresses at the Museum Boi-
jmans in Rotterdam (see image in figure 38). As the mould flourished, the texture
and colour of the garments changed. Ultimately, the garments disintegrated. For
fashion theorist and historian Caroline Evans, Margiela's images are 'the reverse
of capitalist excess, they refer to melancholy and dereliction' (Evans, 2003:37). In
Hussein Chalayan's famous graduate collection *The Tangent Flows* (1993), the
designer tried to capture fashion's transient nature (see figure 39). The collection
that was composed of six silk dresses was buried with iron filings in a garden and
unearthed six months later; this gesture was symbolic but also reflected an interest
in the imperfect, unfinished, and destroyed surfaces and finishings. The results
of this process were decomposed, rotten dresses in earthy, rusty, red colours.
The designer brought the buried garments to Browns in London, where they were
sold as any other fashion item. This gesture is now famous and influenced many
designers to move into a more experimental arena, bringing criticality, thought,
and experimentation into the fashion design field. Chalayan's gesture was aligned
with 'conceptual fashion' and 'deconstruction fashion' movements of the time.
The transient nature of our bodies and the transient nature of fashion were linked
together in this aspect of deathliness posited by Caroline Evans in *Fashion at the
Edge* (2003). As in the 2004 recreation of the first public demonstration of Gustav
Metzger's auto-destructive art that took place at the Tate Britain's exhibition 'Art in
the Sixties: this was tomorrow', the performance had been done at Temple Gal-

lery in London in 22 June 1960, as described previously in this chapter. Metzger painted by using a modified paintbrush that destroyed the nylon fabric, and similar to Margiela's and Chalayan's gesture, brought a certain idea of destruction and 'unmaking', while questioning fashion itself. For the artist Janine Antoni the use of highly specific materials is part of an intense and often extended 'encounter between her own body' and 'a particular set of circumstances':

> The creation of her 1992 Gnaw was based on Antoni's decision to transform the everyday activity of biting into a tenaciously repeated gesture that changed the appearance of the 600-pound cubes of chocolate and lard as well as removing material that she then reprocessed to create other objects. Obviously the cube was no neutral abstract geometrical form by the early 1990s. (...) Her use of chocolate and soap further shares a reliance on the potential for transformation from liquid to solid with the process of casting used for any of the traditional metals.(...)The aging of the material is conceptually part of the work (Buskirk, 2003: 137-143).

In Antoni's work as in Hesse's (chapter 1, section 1.5.1, page 34), there was an interest in seeing the aging of the art piece and having the audience taking part in that disintegration. In my own practice, this material destruction is still present in the choice of materials in the film's unmaking (unravelling knitwear), but also takes form in the way meaning is destabilized in the film editing, which changes subject and direction due to the juxtaposition of the images (see chapter 4 for further development).

3.2.4. Fashion after Duchamp: Maison Martin Margiela's replicas and the Duchampian ready-made

The term deconstruction, in its relation to fashion, is already explained in chapter 2 (section 2.5). The practice of Maison Martin Margiela is perhaps where the term fashion deconstruction makes the most sense. The term is intended here in its philosophical sense, as in Barbara Vinken's clarification of the term's usage, where the theorist describes how often the term has been misused to characterize a technical procedure in clothes making, and it ensuing ambiguity led to a host of misunderstandings (Vinken, 2008). Thus, in contrast to constructed clothes that use folds and padding to achieve a certain three-dimensionality, there are constructed clothes that simply lie flat when unworn. Armani's famous suit-jacket was

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not deconstructed, it was *unconstructed* (Vinken, 2008). Philosophically speaking, 'deconstruction' entails the demonstration of constructedness. This demonstrative gesture affects the condition for erasure of the moment of construction (Vinken, 2008).

When discussing Maison Martin Margiela's fashion practices (est.1988), we must inevitably refer to the Duchampian *object trouvé* (found object) that he explored via the famous ready-made. Although Marcel Duchamp never gave a single definition of what constituted the ready-made (giving various contradictory statements instead), he considered that the ready-made was possibly the most important idea that came out of his work (Girst, 2014:154). The real point of the ready-made was to deny the possibility of defining art.

In Margiela's work, appropriation constantly redefines fashion's symbolical value; as Vinken points out, Margiela systematically deconstructs the procedures of fashion, altering our understanding of what fashion is in the process (see chapter 2, section 2.5). In October 2008, the Antwerp Fashion Museum Momu presented the exhibition '20' (which I visited when it travelled to London in 2009), the exhibi-
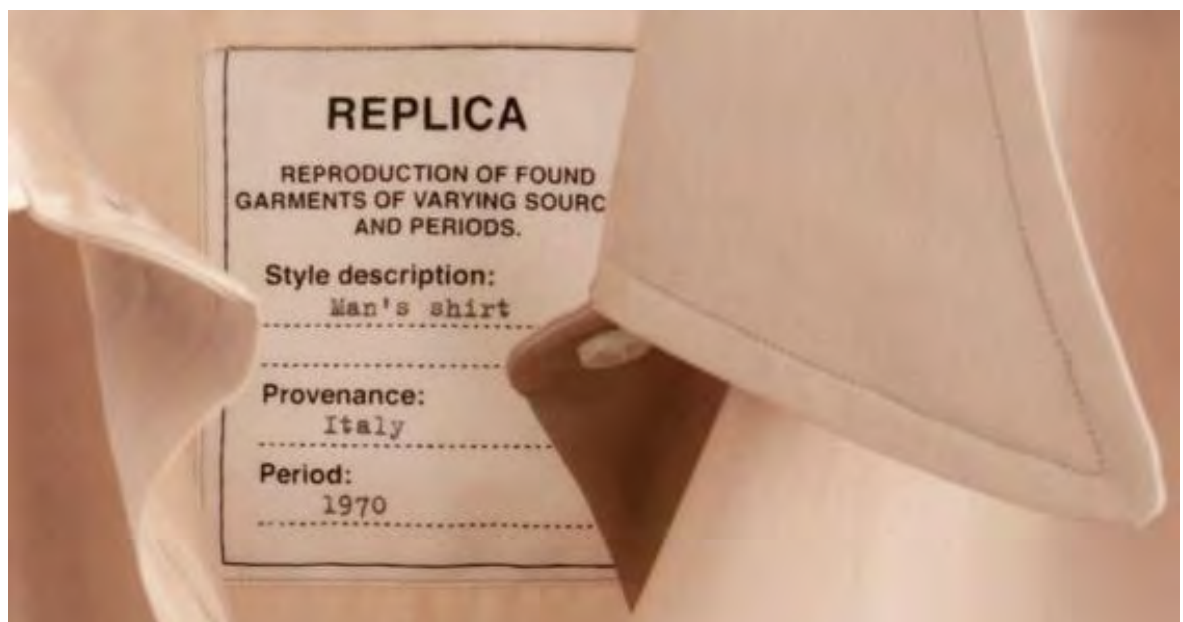
Figure 40 Maison Martin Margiela Autumn/Winter 2005-2006

Figure 41 Maison Martin Margiela, Artisanal collection Spring/Summer 2006

tion to mark the twentieth birthday of the Maison Martin Margiela, where we could see Margiela's design process in replicating clothes and reassembling clothing and fabrics from past times:

> Margiela's whole oeuvre challenges conventional perception of authenticity, the body, fashion's illusion that it can create a standardised 'body' fitted for the mass production of clothes, the opposition between 'high' and 'low' fashion, and the role of the designer (Debo, 2008:3)

Perhaps the closest to Duchamp's notion is the line of Margiela's garments named *Replica* (introduced into fashion lines 4 and 14); these are reproductions of archetypal second-hand garments from different style periods (Margiela, Debo et al., 2008:12) illustrated in the images above (see figure 40). These garments are reproductions of archetypal second-hand garments of different periods. The *Replica* concept derives from the notion of timelessness, and relies on the principle that these pieces have already proven the test of time. The *Replicas* are meticulously reproduced and each piece features a special label inside describing the source

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and period of the original item. The 'Replicas' are meticulously reproduced and each piece features a special label inside describing the source and period of the original item. On the catalogue for the *Maison Margiela '20' The Exhibition* there is a quote from the Maison explaining the process:

> These are clothes that the Maison Martin Margiela has found and lived yet felt that their strength and allure are such that they should remain exactly as they are. The role of the Maison Martin Margiela as designers of these pieces is therefore reserved to ensuring that choice of fabric and their construction resemble the original as closely as possible. What were 'one of' vintage garments therefore become available to many in their exact size and new (2008).[1]

Duchamp collected manufactured objects in his studio in Paris; it was not until he went to New York that he identified them as a category of art, giving the English name *ready-made* to any object purchased 'as a sculpture already made'. When he modified these objects, for example by mounting a bicycle wheel on a kitchen stool, he would call them *assisted ready-made*. Mimicking the procedures of the assisted ready-made, Maison Martin Margiela *Artisanal* (est. 1988) reconstructed new garments by using other garments or accessories, used or new. It was about giving new life to old abandoned pieces, so that they could be worn again in a different way (Margiela, 2009). Garments are each given an 'explanation card' which lists Collection, Reference (with reference number and brief title), Description, Colours, Number Created (amount), Sizes, and Hours Spent Over Its Realisation (2009, Margiela) *Artisanal* pieces exemplify the legacy of deconstruction of Maison Martin Margiela, referencing fashion history, and documenting the passage of time. This finds its most significant expression in the *Artisanal Collection* (see figure 41), for which existing clothes or humble materials, such as plastic or paper, were re-worked in order to create new garments and accessories. The collection could be interpreted as Margiela's answer to the haute-couture of the classic fashion system. The unique items of the *Artisanal* line were fabricated in the same labour-intensive way as in haute-couture couture. Recycling, nevertheless, is not the ultimate scope of Margiela's fashion, which has even been compared, appro-

1   Maison Martin Margiela in *Cream, special issue Maison Martin Margiela N.9 (2008)*

priately, to Italian Arte povera, or considered as a forerunner of eco-fashion (Margiela, 2009:27).The particular ethic driving the work of such designers is clearly motivated by the refusal to accept the idea that fashion has to change and reinvent itself continuously. Black points out that Martin Margiela was an 'early exponent of recycling used clothing, which has remained a consistent theme throughout his work'(Black, 2012:262). With Margiela's project replicating clothes and reassembling clothing and fabrics from past times, also especially from his own past collections, for instance, these reproductions are performed in a way that shows that there is no objective standpoint outside history from which ideas of 'old concepts, as well as their manifestations can be dismantled, repeated, or reinterpreted' (Margiela, 2009:22). The constant dialogue with the past is precisely what allows Yamamoto, Kawakubo, and Margiela, among others, to point to new landscapes (Loscialpo, 2011). Borrowing, altering, recollecting, and manipulating become for Margiela a cultural and critical practice that deconstructs couture techniques and gives life to new formations by reassembling old clothing and raw materials. Fashion theorist Caroline Evans draws a parallel between Margiela's practice of fashion and the activity of bricoleurs in the early nineteenth century:

> Margiela's transformations of abject materials in the world of high fashion mark him out as kind of golden dustman or rag-picker, recalling Baudelaire's analogy between the Parisian rag-picker (Evans, 2003).

Like Baudelaire's nineteenth-century poet rag-picker who, although 'marginal to the industrial process recovered cultural refuse for exchange value', Margiela scavenged and revitalized moribund material and turned rubbish back into the commodity form (Margiela, 2009:28). Margiela's practice of recollecting and reconstructing, rather than being an explicit critique of the consumer culture and the fashion system, is an index of the awareness that any critical fashion is always anchored in a specific moment of capitalistic production, consumption, and technological change. It performs a critical reflection on fashion, unmasking its myths. The uncanny re-creations that finally emerge are characterized by a respectful attitude and by the belief that individuality and contingency cannot be replicated, or better, that any replication would bear a significant difference. By declaring

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the precise amount of hours required for the production of each piece, Margiela overcomes 'the alienation that for Karl Marx defines the relationship between the consumer and the product' (Margiela, 2009:30). Through the declaration of the labour–intensive production, Maison Martin Margiela seems to temporarily reconcile the consumer with the process of production. In doing so, it reveals its debt to the tradition and history of fashion, while at the same time deconstructing the mechanisms of fascination and re-discussing our assumptions regarding fashion. During Maison Martin Margiela's first show, models were asked to bathe their shoes in red paint before entering the catwalk; the white catwalk 'carpet' was then marked when the models stepped across the stage. The famous tabi boots left behind striking red prints on the white cotton catwalk. The 1989–1990 collection was then a display of coats made with the paint–stained cotton of the previous catwalk show (Kaat Debo, 2009:??); we can speculate a connection with Yves Klein's famous *Anthropometries*(1960), blue imprints of women's bodies upon white canvas, bringing Margiela closer to conceptual art practices.

3.2.5. Viktor & Rolf's performative fashion projects and their parallels to conceptual artistic practices

The Viktor & Rolf collection/installation *L'aparence du vide* (1995–1996) at Galerie Patricia Dorfman in Paris seems to make a reference to Klein's *Saut dans le vide* (*Leap into the void,* 1960), being entirely produced in golden fabrics (like Klein's blue or golden monochromes), especially the paintings made with gold leaf. Viktor & Rolf's installation piece was 'composed of six mannequins dressed in entirely golden outfits and their 'shadows' laid on the floor and walls, a copy laid out on the floor of the same outfit in plain black' (Evans, 2003:105). The artist Yves Klein (1928–1962) carefully prepared all the details of the event inaugurated on the evening of 28 April 1958 at the gallery Iris Clert in Paris, for his first solo exhibition the artist chose to present an empty room that he had simply painted white: a sense of nothingness, or absence, pervaded Yves Klein's famous exhibition in 1958 in Paris entitled 'The Void' (Chevrier et al., 2009:37-44). It consisted of noth-

ing but the whitewashed rooms of an empty gallery to which a select audience was invited. Those who entered had nothing to confront but themselves, making self-definition the metaphor embedded in the experience of being in a setting marked by the very absence of anything at all (Goldberg R., 1998). In 1996 Viktor & Rolf presented at Torch Gallery in Amsterdam (1996) a campaign for a fictional perfume: a reference to Marcel Duchamp *L' air de Paris* and Piero Manzoni's ninety tins of artist shit (Evans et al., 2008:12). As Evans commented:

> Viktor and Rolf were aware of this generation of artists is suggested by other references to the immaterial (the 'long live the immaterial' or 'Blue screen collection, Autumn/Winter 2002-03) and already mentioned 'L'aparence du vide' (Evans et al., 2008:12)

The empty rooms painted white in 'Zones of Immaterial Pictorial Sensibility' (the original name of the show) created 'an ambiance, a genuine pictorial climate, and, therefore, an invisible one (Chevrier et al., 2009:37-44), beginning his investigations into the void, and 'immaterial for the immaterial', Klein began a series of gestures that would become a hallmark of empty spaces in art, achieving a mythic status.

The *dematerialization* of the art object (using Lucy Lippard's term) had begun in the 1970s, where artists looked for new forms of expression that reflected the urgency of their revolutionary ideas and the new direct relationship they were seeking with their audiences. This brings us to Viktor & Rolf, perhaps the duo is the most worthy of the title fashion conceptualists. The staging of the exhibition created a new form of experiencing fashion, perhaps closer to the artistic experience. They explored installation and performance art as media for fashion which could help free the fashion practice from its commercial imperatives into more critical ventures:

> From the beginning , Viktor & Rolf have sought to comment on the world of fashion as commodity and excess, while at the same time aspiring to be successful, highly successful - within it (Evans et al., 2008:53)

Viktor & Rolf graduated from the Netherlands' Arnhem Academy of Art and Design in 1992. In the Festival International de Mode et de Photographie in Hyères, France, they won the Prix de la Presse, Prix du Jury, and Grand Prix de la Ville de Hyères with a collection that bridged the 1980s approach to conceptual fashion with the 1990s deconstruction entitled *Detachment* (1993). Most importantly, Viktor & Rolf *On strike* campaign (1998, Paris), where the duo put on an unauthorized fashion show, during Paris Fashion Week, to attract members of the press, is the type of action that relates to the ones referred to in chapter 2 (see section 2.7).The duo went on strike and presented no collection at the Paris Fashion Week (Evans at al., 2008:51). With their refusal to take part in the fashion system in the traditional market-driven way, the designers were, in their performance, taking an act of rebellion and resistance towards a certain traditional way of making things in the fashion system, although simultaneously they were making an advertisement coup by sending the press a controversial form of advertisement. Viktor & Rolf work has always been very closely linked to performance, resembling the artistic duo Gilbert & George, working with their own image. In their seminal show *Russian Doll* Autumn/Winter 1999/2000, Viktor & Rolf dressed the model Maggie Rizer in layer upon layer of couture dresses, piled on top of one another (discussed further in chapter 4) was an important reference for my essay film's sequence *Overdressed* (see section 4.7.1) and the image represented in figure 78. The show, staged in a small space with only 125 invited guests (Evans at al., 2008:88), commented on the unavailability of fashion, expanding the field of fashion media to performance and critical commentary.

3.2.6. Hussein Chalayan: a conceptual approach to fashion

Fashion historian Caroline Evans notes how 'uncanny images' created by fashion designers Martin Margiela and Hussein Chalayan in the 1990s and early 2000s invoked "contemporary 'images of alienation' in fashion can be seen to evoke the alienated body of early industrial production described by Marx" (Evans, 2003:183). This criticality was invoked through their fashion practice as the fash-

ion disciplinary boundaries are becoming more difficult to map. In order to fully understand the recent fashion phenomenon, it is necessary to determine why this shift in approach has happened, where fashion sits now, and how it is understood within this new interdisciplinary framework. The retrospective exhibition 'Hussein Chalayan: fashion narratives' at the Musée des Arts Decoratifs in Paris in 2011, articulated Chalayan's work through experimental and conceptual investigations. There was a transition beyond the limits of the fashion discipline by collaborating with other artists at first, and later by experimenting within the discipline with tools from other fields, like performance, installation, and film, and through an experimental nature of practice to find new paths. By performing a negative condition of dress (see chapter 2, section 2.7), in recent decades contemporary fashion artists have presented fashion projects that refer to fashion without necessarily proposing a collection or a fashion product, removing the usual utilitarian aspect of dress and proposing more than clothing to wear. As a practitioner, I was interested in this liminality, in the space in between the disciplines of art and fashion, because it offers the possibility of an outside perspective on the fashion discipline itself. This interest came from my practice, as the experiences I have had through collaborations with other artists have taught me that, within that space of the in-betweeness, I would find other possible answers to my questions regarding what fashion is and what it can be. From the border of the discipline, it was possible to see its own limitations much more clearly. Krauss's definition of an expanded field has been very useful to the identification of a post-modern condition of fashion creation, in the same way that it was useful to cinema and textiles along with other disciplines. The context of liminal practices, or practices placed within the border of two or more disciplines, allows for an extended framework where the understanding of a fashion practice becomes broader and more difficult to define, but simultaneously it offers an understanding of the fashion practice beyond the logic of the market. In February 2000, Chalayan produced one of his most spectacular fashion week presentations, his Autumn/Winter 2000 collection *Afterwords* (see image 42 and 43). According to certain criteria, *Afterwords* conforms absolutely to the con-

ventions of a fashion show. Between a quarter and half an hour long, displaying roughly one outfit every thirty seconds, its span and rate were probably of the bulk of the collections that season (Chalayan and Evans, 2005:??). Yet, in other ways,

Figures 42 and 43 Hussein Chalayan, Autumn/Winter Collection, 2000 Photos by Chris Moore

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Afterwords is much closer to a performance piece. It follows a narrative path, albeit an indirect one, and plays with audience expectation, in particular employing suspense to brilliant effect (Chalayan, 2011: 9). The theme of *Afterwords* is the plight of the refugee, in particular inspired by members of his own family, Turkish Cypriots, who were forced to leave their homes in Cyprus in the 1960s before the pro-Greek coup in 1974. Chalayan imagined scenarios in which people are required to flee carrying only what they are able to. Chalayan suggests the possibility of new rituals, ones of dismantling or displacement. The narrative content of this and other Chalayan collections raises questions about the relationship between what something is and what it represents. A fashion show is in itself a highly ritualized affair. According to the official website of the artist, Chalayan was inspired by 'the forced internal migration of the Turkish Cypriot families in Cyprus after the 1974 events'(see url:http://store.chalayan.com/about). Chalayan's family is said also to have been among those who had to leave their homes in order to escape from the ethnic cleansing. The project does not only reflect the wretched atmosphere of the unwanted displacement, but also addresses to how the immigrants try to adjust to the situation by not leaving behind the personal possessions. Hussein Chalayan *Afterwords* presents furniture covered in grey clothes, which are worn later by fashion models who strip the clothes from the furniture to dress themselves. These fashion models, who represent the immigrants in dull clothing, fold the chairs later in order to make them into suitcases. One of the models transforms a mahogany coffee table into a geometrical and telescopic skirt, so that it becomes displaceable on the human body. Chalayan focus on the involuntary and dramatic aspect of mobility, and illustrated the sentimental impacts of the forced migration. The performance presents Chalayan's Autumn/Winter Collection of 2000, transformed possessions into detachable objects; such as chairs made into suitcases or tables into skirts. By bringing elements such as family onto the catwalk, a grouping raises the spectre of aging and death, that allows Chalayan to speculate about and question issues that are usually beyond the sphere of the fashion practice, while simultaneously questioning fashion itself (Chalayan et al., 2011:9-10), examining its limits

and stretching beyond them by exploring their political agency.

3.2.7. Bless-Service: appropriation and critical thinking through the fashion practice

Bless is the result of an encounter between a German and a French student. Desiree Heiss was studying in Vienna and Ines Kaag was studying in Hamburg; they met in Paris at a fashion students competition in 1993, and together they created the label Bless in 1995 (Black, 2012). Ines moved to Berlin, where Bless was registered as a company and Desiree relocated to Paris (Zahm, 2005), and since then they have been collaborating in their project. The 'Purple magazine' fashion editor Olivier Zahm wrote that they started their label with one initial refusal: 'never become fashion designers' (Heiss, Kaag and Raeder, 2006), which denotes a negation to devote their work to predictable fashion (Black, 2012).

Desiree Heiss and Ines Kaag continue to live in different cities, Heiss in Paris and Kaag in Berlin, and they maintain offices and shops in both locations (Black, 2012). They are not attracted to the model of success, the professionalization of the trade, and the image associated with the star-driven fashion system. They ignore prescriptive marketing constraints and they reject the idea of having to produce a new collection every six months. Black also underlines the relevance of the experimental approach in their working practices:

> Throughout the years, Heiss and Kaag have built up a vocabulary of elements that form a language of their own, such as mismatched or incongruous fabrics, unusual forms, extreme plays on scale, everyday objects, and extraordinary accessories and jewellery.'We work with things that already exist, trying to collect them or put them in a different background to make them unusual' (Black, 2012:116).

Bless want to discover their own method, a way of working autonomously that is based on an analysis of their context and the fashion system, while remaining faithful to their sensibilities (Zahm, 2005). Such fashion practitioners as Bless seem to embody the new role of fashion, where they might explore the relationship between production and consumption, but as a primarily critical or reflective po-

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Figure 44 Bless, film still *Alexanderplatz*, 1998

sition, not as a marketing tool or a sales strategy; when they do use it as a marketing tool, they do so by perverting its use ironically. Following in the footsteps of the conceptual designers from the 1980s and 1990s (see section 3.2.1), during the early 2000s and 2010s, Bless-Service prioritized thought over product, offering alternatives to the current production model within the fashion system and using fashion practice as a tool for criticality. Even if they commercialized their products, they were certainly giving priority to exploring the space beyond the limits of fashion. In order to establish a brief history of these critical fashion practices, it is important to underline the relevance of Bless-Service. Bless's projects *Scarf* (2000) and *Found Objects* (1999) are very directly informed by the artistic *object trouvé*. The American art critic Douglas Crimp, speaking about the beginnings of appropriation art, pointed out that such artistic techniques as 'quoting, excerpting, framing and performing' expose the cultural strategies of art (see also section 3.4. on Maison Martin Margiela). The idea of strategic appropriation did not become popular in art until the late 1970s, but it made an earlier appearance in fashions that reference the history of clothing. Bless gives appropriation a radical twist through the gravity with which they test how well the technique fares in everyday use (Heiss,

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Kaag and Raeder, 2006:09).

Introducing the use of film brings to Bless's interdisciplinary approach a way to explore their universe through the use of moving images; lending itself to further criticality, video allowed them to communicate radical ideas about fashion and clothing. Their video *Alexanderplatz* (1998), represented above (see figure 44) was done in collaboration with the director Nicolas Trembley, produced by bdv (bureau des videos) for the Berlin Biennale (30 September 1998 – 3 January 1999). Bless's first invitation to participate in a fine arts context was for the Berlin Biennale, curated by Klaus Biesenbach, Nancy Spector, and Hans Ulrich Obrist. In the film, passers-by walk in front of a camera at Alexanderplatz, one of Berlin's main squares. They walk as if melted into the background; the video image looks like CCTV footage, a black and white image of low quality where we can occasionally see a glimpse of a Bless accessory that is deliberately announced via a subtitle in a black bar across the screen (see figure 44). In this early account we can perceive Bless's strategies for criticality, with their everyday subject matter, an interest in banality, and an apparent undermining of the product for the idea (as in conceptual art). We can also see that networking was perhaps one of Bless's forte since these curators later became important and influential figures within the contemporary art scene. In the summer of 1996, they launched their first exclusive product. 'Bless No.00' was a limited edition wig made of real fur accompanied by a magazine advert in 'Purple' magazine declaring: 'Fits every style! Cut & try'(1996). Through direct contact with the public, Bless's advertising not only promoted a product, but also formed an image to support their vision, a visual manifestation of their taste. Ines and Desiree expected many calls, but there were only two responses: one from Sarah of Colette, the Parisian concept shop that had yet to open its doors, and the other while presenting an edition of fur wigs in Paris, meeting Patrick Scallon, who turned out to be from Maison Martin Margiela (Zahm, 2005). This meeting resulted in an order of forty pieces for Margiela's Autumn/Winter 97/98 collection, *No00 Fur-wigs* (1996) by Bless (see figures 45 and 46).

The brand collaborative project with Maison Martin Margiela would be the first of a series of collaborative projects of the brand with other brands and paired with his coats made of recycled furs. The Bless strategy of permanent experimentation, that can be seen also as a strategy for critical fashion practices (as discussed in chapters 1 and 2), was initially not centred in the production of collections, just a rhythm of four new designs per year produced as limited editions, in order to better control the creative process, but that has since changed:

> Although Bless situates itself outside the mainstream fashion system, for several years now it has produced a collection of clothes each season. 'In terms of commercial aspects, we understand that for the shops it is difficult for them to maintain their customers if you miss a season (Black, 2012:117).

With a refusal to focus only on one discipline, from product to product, Bless works to extend the fashion domain by coupling it with design, decoration, and the general sense of the everyday, and by limiting it with functionality and abstraction (Zahm, 2005). The strategies pursued by fine artists in the course of the twentieth
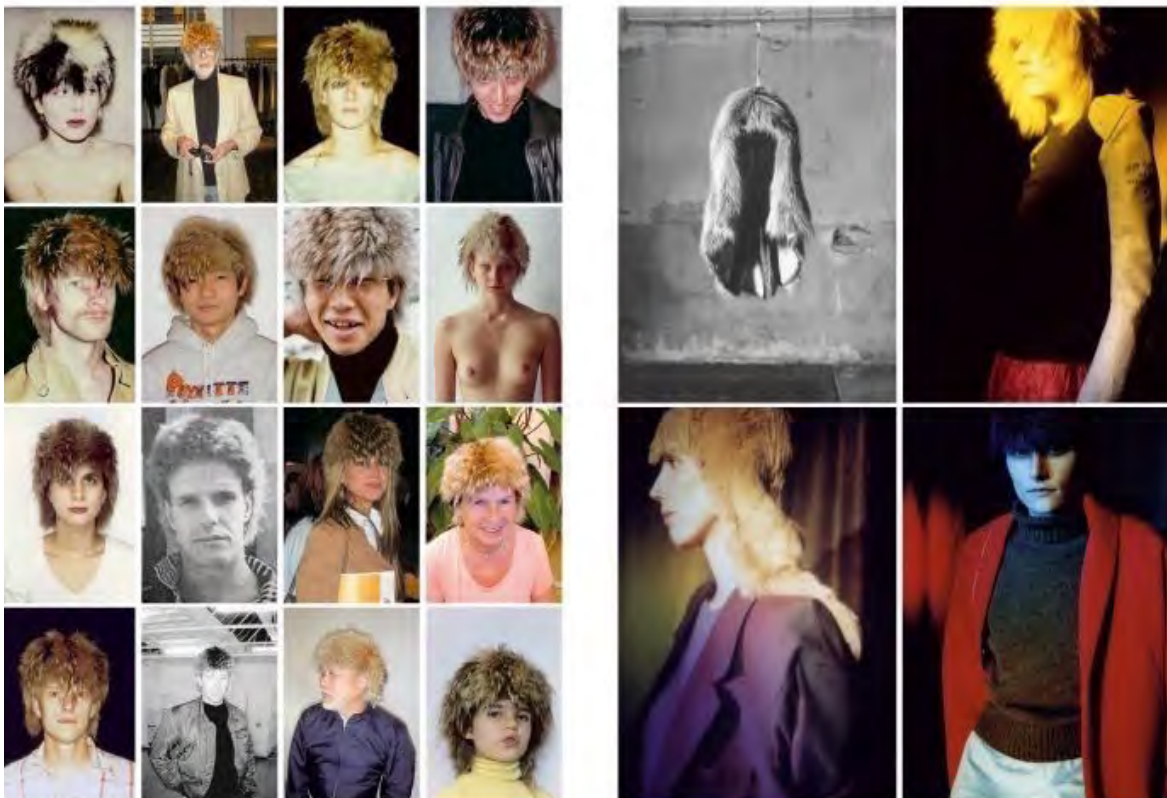
Figures 45 and 46 Bless for Maison Martin Margiela Autumn/Winter 1996

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century often resonated in the world of fashion - from Duchamp's ready-made or Guy Debord's 'situationist detournement', to the deliberate misunderstanding of objects as in the surrealism of Man Ray, the glorification of commodities practiced by Andy Warhol, Joseph Beuys' multiples, and Daniel Buren's striped jackets for museum attendants. They have all influenced Bless, in terms of their approach to fashion. When the two designers draw on the grammar of the fine arts, they do not inquire into its history, but rather consistently focus on the material culture of everyday life; although they have an artistic approach, most of their focus is non-artistic in nature. Their investigations into the challenges of everyday life could, of course, yield artistic solutions, but that has never been their objective. Bless's poetry has consistently followed an independent path. Their distribution channels are unusual: for example, you can subscribe to Bless. Building on foundations laid by the likes of Maison Martin Margiela and Comme des Garçons, Bless has reinvented the profession of the fashion designer. They refuse to adhere to the traditional rules of the fashion industry. When other fashion brands created fragrances, Bless instead launched a collection of vacuum cleaners. They are not interested in self-promotion. They refuse to be pictured in the press. They are impossible to pin down or define, as their repertoire stretches from shoes to interiors, products and art installations.

3.2.8. The de-territorialization of fashion in the 21st century

During the 1980s, fashion expanded the dialogue between art and fashion through the work of Japanese fashion designers Yohji Yamamoto, Comme des Garçons and Issey Miyake. They inspired a generation of Belgian designers, in particular Martin Margiela, who developed a particularly conceptual approach to fashion, later also explored by British designers Hussein Chalayan and Alexander McQueen.

In the late twentieth century and early twenty-first century, the field of fashion studies has increasingly scrutinized the relationship between fine art and fashion within an art museum context. Much has been written on the relation between fashion

Figure 47 Anna-Sophie Berger, *Four seasons,* **2014, photo by Markus Krottendorfer**

and art (Hollander, 1975, 1993; Bradley et al. 1998, Wilcox, 2001; Arts, J., et al., 2009; Geczy and Karaminas, 2012) but what is currently happening, which is new, is an opening up of fashion practice and an expansion of what counts as fashion.

Fashion today seems to consist of a vast array of complex and elusive phenomena where the boundaries of contemporary fashion have become harder to map (Marchetti & Quinz, 2007). Anne-Sophie Berger, Ruby Hoette, Elisa Van Joolen, Lucia Cuba, and Bart Hess & Lucy McDean are part of a new non-organized movement of fashion practitioners from different parts of the world, regarding whom it is already difficult to address as being fashion designers. While the works of these artists are related to traditional fashion practices and they seem to have inherited the inherent criticality of their predecessors such as the Maison Martin Margiela, Hussein Chalayan, Viktor & Rolf and Bless, but taken it slightly further by escaping the market–centred fashion framework and focusing beyond the marketability of their products, and prioritizing concepts and experimentation over the product. Brands like Chalayan, Maison Margiela, or Bless are still running commercial

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businesses in parallel to their artist practice, while in most cases of the new fashion artists/practitioners, approach to fashion, sales are either of the artistic project itself, as in an art business, or they undertake other sources of income protecting their practice from commercial imperatives (consultancy or teaching, in most cases). I am supporting the separation of critical practice from commercial activity as a form of creating a critical space for fashion to be discussed beyond market centred production.

The image in the previous page (see figure 47) is representative of the work by Viennese artist Anna-Sophie Berger. This view of the installation piece *Four seasons* (2014), at the exhibition 'Wow! Woven? Entering the (sub)Textiles' (2015), Ausstellungsansicht, Künstlerhaus, Halle für Kunst & Medien, represents Berger's use of clothing as sculptural pieces. The represented work is composed of clothes hanging on the wall, but they are not treated as such. In the setting of the gallery space, where Berger usually presents her work, these pieces are given the place of a sculpture and as such, when they are looked at by the public. It is as an installation piece. The sculptural characteristics of her pieces gain relevance while the border between the fashion product and the art piece is dissolved or at least shifted. It is this threshold that Berger pervades, frequently subverting the rules of both the fashion and the art worlds. Berger initially gained attention in 2013 with an ongoing series of cheaply produced black T-shirts with the words 'Fashion is fast' (2013) in white sans-serif font above the year the shirts were produced. The printed year will be updated annually, nullifying the previous cycle and announcing the project's continued timeliness (Gross, 2014 [Online]). Anna-Sophie Berger conceived scarves for her 'Fashion is fast' collection with the faces of Condoleezza Rice and Angela Merkel. In an interview about that project, Berger stated:

> Researching on the Internet 24/7, I got interested in well-known figures, which led me to a fashion conversation about Angela Merkel, who's considered horribly unfashionable. I was very attracted to and interested in her politics. So I created a suit that mirrored details of her wardrobe. Then I needed another female politician to counteract her. I started with Hillary Clinton, who was too similar, Yulia Tymoshenko, who wasn't enough contrast, and ended up with Condoleezza Rice, because there was a lot about her: getting up at 5am, lean, working out, strict. I juxtaposed the two in suits that had very different patterns. I made the fan scarfs. I thought it

would be nice to caricature politicians who weren't media heroes. Some reactions from the US involved a question of race. To me, Condoleezza was simply an African-American politician. I was interested in images of female power in the public domain (Berger to Fernandes, 2014 [Online]).

Berger is an artist who primarily exhibits works of fashion. Although her pivot from fashion to art contains a certain indifference towards distinctions between the two, Berger uses both to question differing modes of production, distribution, and value-attribution, all of which are threads she carries throughout her artworks. Her works lend themselves to transposition not least because her garments are the result of a stripping down of things to their elemental units: works such as *Square Window Tunic* (2011) comprise hard edges and grid patterns. The works' aesthetic finds a relative in Minimalist sculpture – Berger's scarf (2014) recalls Robert Morris' series of heavy felt sculptures (Gross, 2014 [Online]).

Critical fashion practices ask carefully crafted questions and makes us think, just as importantly as fashion design that solves problems or finds answers. They differ from conceptual and deconstruction fashion by seeking to extend the medium to a post-product logic, extending beyond a role of fashion as seen exclusively in relation to the manufacture of products for the market, responding to a need to

Figure 48 Anna-Sophie Berger, *She vanished I, 2015,* **photo by Lisa Edi**

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create for mass production and mass consumption. Fashion practitioners working with dress as a symbolical element (see section 3.2 in this chapter), through which they can construct they criticality and address current concerns regarding production, consumption and representation. Its purpose is to stimulate discussion and debate amongst designers, industry, and public about fashion as mediation of existence.

The examples selected to illustrate this section were selected based on their critical agency. Critical fashion practice is now synonymous with a movement that utilizes fashion as a form of critical investigation. Critical fashion uses artistic methods to challenge narrow assumptions, preconceptions, and givens about the role fashion plays in society. There are many people who work within fashion as a form of critique who have never heard of the term 'critical fashion practices' and who have their own way of describing what they do. Naming it 'critical fashion practice' is a useful way of making this activity more visible and subject to discussion and debate, which is one of my own aims with this study.

The Viennese artist Anna-Sophie Berger studied Fashion Design and interdisciplinary art at the University of Applied Arts Vienna. Berger creates objects that connect individual perception and intimate use with questions of material reality as part of a socio-economic circulation and consumption (see figure 48). Populating body as much as space, these objects freely traverse sites and systems of value physically as much as through image (Kealy and Berger, Online). While preserving this mobility, they complicate a reading as discrete objects encompassing elements of material transience such as decay, malleability, or modularity. Berger's works address the ambiguity of a sensual need to yield and a conscious effort to resist.

Elisa van Joolen's project *11'x 17"* is an ongoing series (since 2013), made from clothes and shoes provided by several fashion labels (Teunissen, 2014). Joolen

found a way to hack into the fashion system by up-cycling fashion brand production surpluses together with other high street fashion items in a combination of low–priced items with high–priced ones; by placing them together the artist was questioning their commercial value and social status. What differs between van Joolen's practice and other up-cycling techniques is that van Joolen's practice is centred in opening up a dialogue about value. For van Joolen, the entire point of the project is the interaction with the fashion industry. She engaged in conversations mainly maintained by e-mail where she asked PR people working for the companies she approached about who designed them or where they were they produced and so on (Teunissen, 2014). Discussing these issues with the fashion companies was a provocative gesture, helping to raise awareness about the po-

Figure 49 Elisa Van Joolen, *Sweaters Series 2,* **2013**

litical agency of clothing (involved in the creation, production, and consumption of fashion.

Van Joolen's approach is not only about up–cycling clothing; it is about fashion deconstruction, questioning fashion hierarchies and power relations through the product itself. As van Joolen states in an interview to Beata Wilczek in 2016, her work is driven by 'the critique as a proposition' (Wilczek, 2016). In another conversation with the fashion practitioner and theorist Ruby Hoette, van Joolen describes to Hoette how her work is editing (describing herself as an editor), putting together:

> A navy Tultex shirt (1995) combined with a navy sweatshirt from Monique Van Heist (AW 2012/13). The lining of the sweater consists of strips of a red G-Star t-shirt and a white Union Made t-shirt (Joolen, E. V., 2013).

We can see this in the image below (see figure 49) documenting van Joolen's project, the puzzle-like aesthetics of combining components coming from several fashion brands in the *Sweaters Series 2* by fashion designer/artist Elisa van Joolen, a piece made of the combination of sweaters donated by the brands Monique Van Heist, G-Star Raw, Tultex, Union made first Edition. Elisa van Joolen's *11" x 17"* is documented in *11" x 17" Reader*. The project began in 2013 with a series of conversations with representatives of various fashion brands including G-Star, O'Neill, gsus sindustries, Rockwell by Parra, Converse, Moniquevanheist and Nike. These companies then contributed by donating clothing and footwear, which van Joolen has then complemented with pieces of second-hand and no-brand clothing, applying a process of cutting out and reconstructing to become *11"x17"* Sweaters and Invert Footwear. *11"x17"* creates a network, uniting different categories of clothing and different values within fashion – an eclectic mixture of mid-market, second-hand, and high-end items.

The fashion practitioner Ruby Hoette works through a collage of different parts of outfits reworked, in a practice reminiscent of Rauschenberg's *combines* and practices of 'appropriation art'*,* she generally works with found clothing items by repositioning them and sewing them back together in new forms, giving them a second life. While from a design perspective these projects are not very innovative, they

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Figure 50 Christien Meinderstma, *Fiber Market*, 2016

represent a change in the designer's role by predominantly focusing on process
and conceptual development, and giving less relevance to commercial impera-
tives. In the designer Christien Meinderstma's installations (see image figure 50),
design is used as a critical tool. In *Fiber Market,* the installation piece presented at
the exhibition 'Fear and Love, Reactions to a Complex World' at the Design Muse-
um in London (24 November 2016 < 23 April 2017) the designer explores through
design 'the life of products and raw materials aiming to regain an understand-
ing of processes rendered invisible by industrialization' (McGuirk and Delicado,
2016:139).This resonates with the way I have represented the invisible bodies of
the workers in my essay-film. Meinderstma's installation raises awareness of the
massive scale of society's fashion consumption. The objects are chosen for this
exhibition for their symbolic value to communicate a critical position regarding pro-
duction. In the same exhibition at the Design Museum was Chinese designer Ma
Ke, whose handmade products encourage harmony with nature (McGuirk and Del-
icado, 2016:151), presenting an ongoing research project starting from handwoven
cloth, plant-based dyes, and hand sewing (McGuirk and Delicado, 2016:157-159).

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Ma ke considers that, as a designer, she has ecological and ethical responsibilities and also a responsibility to pass on her cultural heritage.

To conclude, most of the works discussed in this section were recently presented fashion works, presented as fashion/design projects, and mostly perceived in an art context. The commonality between them is a shared criticality towards the fashion system/production system itself and a prioritizing of ideas – the most important for these fashion artists – which seems to be more fitting in the art context (that of the gallery and museum space) than in the fashion context. This comes at a higher price range with less accessibility. By moving the pieces from their practical and useful aspects into a conceptual framework, what they gain in criticality towards their own system, they seem to lose in terms of what fashion's agency allows in its relation to the world, which is being worn. The fashion space for these works has been mostly developed within the recent decades.

3.3. Fashion in the museum space: the evolution of fashion exhibition as a site of fashion in the expanded field

The discourses surrounding the relationship between art and fashion have been increasingly addressed, and in recent years fashion has been given a platform in spaces that originally showcased art. There is a broadening set of exhibitions emerging worldwide that have been exploring the boundaries between art and fashion. Among the key exhibitions that have explored this subject recently are: 'Addressing the century' (1999), Hayward Gallery, London; 'Radical Fashion' (2001), London; 'Rapture: Art's seduction by fashion' (2002) London; , 'Fashination' (2004-2005) Moderna Museet Stockholm; 'Dysfashional' (2007) MUDAM, Luxembourg; 'The Art of Fashion, installing allusions' (2009-2010) at Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen, Rotterdam.

Judith Clark's exhibition 'Spectres: when fashion turns back' looked at recent fashion's haunting by history. It used quotes from Caroline Evans' seminal *Fashion at the Edge* and 'translated' these into three-dimensional sets, illustrating the patterns

that different kinds of quotation form. Shadows, cyclical cogs, and a labyrinth were among the motifs constructed.

The exhibition was commissioned by ModeMuseum, Antwerp as 'Malign Muses: When Fashion Turns Back' and was presented 24 February – 8 May 2005 at the Victoria & Albert Museum, London). *Spectres* set out to reveal the shadows and experiences that form a 'fashion memory' in contemporary dress. In showing the hidden, yet haunting, connections between recent fashion and its past, it used pieces drawn from avant-garde designers, from the V&A fashion collection, and from the archive at ModeMuseum in Antwerp. Set up as a series of seven fair-ground attractions, 'Spectres' invited the visitors into a labyrinth of associations: a shadow lantern throws silhouettes, enlarged maquettes look like games for grown-ups, and rotating cogs make and break patterns (Clark [Online]). The exhibition was extremely important for my own practice's development, for it represented an understanding of fashion that went beyond common approaches to fashion, and instead it engaged in an in-depth discussion about fashion and memory. Both Caroline Evans book and Judith Clark's approach led to my fashion research project (see chapter 1). The exhibition, which I attended in 2005, affected the way I thought about fashion by exploring the relationship between fashion and its histo-ry, and the problematic of repetition in fashion, its concept having been developed from a long series of conversations between curator Clark and fashion theorist Caroline Evans (Loscialpo, 2010:136).

Professor Judith Clark's and Professor José Teunissen's approach to fashion cu-ration and commissioning of fashion pieces influenced my practices because they opened up possibilities in terms of work development for fashion designers, that moved them away from the shop and into the museum space, moving between commercial/non commercial imperatives. This change allowed me, as a fashion designer, to rethink my role, not so directly in relation to the market, but by chang-ing the form in which fashion designers might think about their work and their audience. The exhibition 'The art of fashion, installing allusions' that was previous-

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ly developed by José Teunissen in collaboration with the British curator and Professor of Fashion and Museology Judith Clark in 2009, was an example of such development. The Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen already had a tradition of experimental and interdisciplinary exhibitions, including the exhibition 'A-Historical soundings' curated by Harald Szeemann (1988) in the same Museum, influenced Clark in her approach to the 'Art of Fashion' exhibition's curation. Clark's original title *Installing Allusions* had been conceived as an homage to Harald Szeeman's seminal exhibition *A-historical Sounds*, where Szeemann showed his selection from the Boijmans collection in the form of a-historical representation, where it would be possible, for example, to see a Rembrandt alongside a Beuys (Szeemann, 2007:509-513). In the interview I conducted with Clark for this thesis, she mentioned the co-relation between the constellation form of the exhibition design and Szeemann's seminal approach to exhibition making (Clark to me, 2016; see appendix 5 for full interview).

The philosopher and fashion theorist Flavia Loscialpo states in her article *Traces and Constellations: the Invisible Genealogies of Fashion* how Clark's exhibition eloquently referred to 'A-Historical Sounds' curated by Harald Szeemann at the Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen, Rotterdam (1988), which reinterpreted the collection of the museum experimenting with proximities and distances, correspondences and resonances, between the single pieces, 'and underlined the importance of resonances that are thematic associations between the garments and the artworks displayed, thus creating a texture of allusions' (Loscialpo, 2010 :136).

Judith Clark was a pioneer in this field, since she had already taken a similar approach as early as 1998 in the 'Judith Clark Costume Gallery' with the project *Pampilion* (21 February – 29 March 1998), where she commissioned a collection of couture millinery from the fashion artist Dai Rees for its inaugural exhibition. She placed it as an alternative platform from which to present collections and draw attention to the sculptural qualities of the headdresses against the white walls of the

new space and, as mentioned in Chapter 3 (section 3.2.2.) the exhibition 'Be-hind, Be-fore & Be-yond' (26 October –13 November 1999 at the Judith Clark Costume gallery), Naomi Filmer's first solo exhibition with melting jewellery pieces. Filmer often describes Clark as being her mentor, and it is certainly due to the openness of this space for expanded notions of fashion that Clark created, that I was influenced to proceed in the exploration of less conventional materials in 2005.

The specific domain of fashion exhibitions and interpretation of a-historical references, as well as a reflection on curating itself, was previously offered in another of Judith Clark's pioneer exhibitions, 'Malign Muses: When Fashion Turns Back' at ModeMuseum of Antwerp, Belgium (2004), and at the Victoria and Albert Museum, London (2005), with the title 'Spectres: When Fashion Turns Back'. The exploration of Szeeman's intertextuality was also a strong influence, bringing an a-historical perspective, that so strongly agreed with fashion's mechanisms of remembrance and connected me to the ideas of Evans and Clark about the Benjaminian constellations and dialectical images that I will explore in depth in chapter 4. Heiss and Kaag from the label Bless (see this chapter, section 3.2.8) mounted an exhibition that challenged the borders of the fashion discipline: a retrospective exhibition at Rotterdam's prestigious Museum Boijimans Van Beuningen in 2005, 'Wallscapes' to mark ten years of the company. Sandy Black, Professor of Fashion and Textile Design and Technology at the London College of Fashion, interviewed Desiree Heiss and Ines Kaag and discussed their project for the exhibition:

> We said to the curator that we didn't like showing our products in a museum. On the other hand, of course, we didn't want to lose the opportunity. So we came up with the idea of life-sized pictures, which we later called *Wallscapes*. Our idea was to picture our products in atmospheres or surroundings - private places - the way we could imagine people would have been collecting and using them. We wanted a more natural setting for our pieces (Black, 2012:116).

Looking to explore the museum as a space for research, 'Wallscapes' explored the threshold between art and fashion, underlining the way it surpassed the borders of both disciplines, merging the two of them together. Summing up Bless's resistance to singular definitions of their practice has offered the possibility of opening a

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debate beyond the confines of the fashion industry, as Bless explains:

> Their work is a 'never ending process of research to find the best possible ways to present the newest work' (Ryan, 2012:44)

By presenting their work in the museum space, their project became performance art, inviting visitors to participate and interpret the work for themselves (Ryan, 2012), claiming of the museum space as 'home':

> Inspired by and developed for the exhibition *BLESS fits every style* at the Boijmans van Beuningen, Rotterdam. The BLESS Wallscapes are documents of interiors where BLESS products live or used to live. The format of the posters are in general 3X4 m, delivered in nine stripes with a width of 44,5 cm.
>
> BLESS also offer the Wallscapes on a paravent consisting of four wooden pannels. There are three-dimensional shelves included with the paravent. This enhance the feeling of confusion when approaching it. Real objects virtually melt into the two-dimensional space. The observer will feel like walking into a domestic collage (Bless [online] url: http://www.bless-service.de/BLESS_new/N/Entries/2006/10/28_N29_Wallscapes.html)

This discusses the matter of accessibility (raised in this study at the end of section 3.3 in this chapter) since Bless, instead of moving the pieces from their practical and useful aspects into a conceptual framework, tried to regain fashion's agency by re-establishing the objects in their common relation to the world, that is, by returning them to their common usage within the museum space, even if only fictionally, since this is done through a *trompe l'oeil*, a visual illusion, used to trick the eye into perceiving an image as a three-dimensional object.

3.3.1. The exhibition 'The Future of Fashion is Now' as a context for fashion in the expanded field

One of the most recent fashion exhibitions in Rotterdam, 'The Future of Fashion is Now' (11th October 2014 –18th January 2015) curated by José Teunissen, sought to examine the critical stance that fashion designers from various parts of the world were taking regarding the fashion system, as well as the questioning of the roles of the designer and clothing in contemporary society. My project *An impossible wardrobe for the invisible (2011)* was selected to take part in the exhibition, a piece that delineates the context within which my work exists, and gives a framework for a comparative analysis of the works within the exhibition and the

processes involved. The exhibition was approached by its curator, José Teunissen, as a sequel to the exhibition The Art of Fashion - Installing allusions (2009). Its relevance for my thesis comes from the need to contextualize my practice in order to understand changes happening in current fashion practices, and also to investigate how this might affect the constructing of a criticality through fashion practice. The exhibition and museum context have proven to be an interesting stage for an increasingly interdisciplinary fashion landscape. I have been developing a practice exploring the liminal spaces between fashion and art, and the exhibition format was an interesting opportunity for testing and questioning my assumptions. The exhibition was composed of fifty-seven fashion pieces, and in between them, installation pieces, video projections, sculptures, and more traditional exhibiting fashion approaches (clothing items displayed on mannequins). The criteria of selection was first of all one of geography, trying to present a global vision of fashion design today, instead of a vision centred in the fashion capitals (Paris, London, Milan and New York). Teunissen invited scouts from all over the world to select cutting-edge fashion projects. In the exhibition catalogue, Teunissen describes

Figure 51 View of the exhibition *The future of fashion is now, An impossible Wardrobe for the invisible*, 2014

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how the effect of globalization had produced a new aesthetic and a new design language, but also that at that moment, a photo or an outfit no longer seemed to suffice for more process-based works; and so video, installation, and other media were employed in order to reveal these new fashion stories, expanding the notion of fashion and defining what I have previously tried to illustrate earlier in this chapter, the notion of fashion in the expanded field. This expanded field refers to the creation of a new language and new forms, asking questions about the future, not only questioning the identity of the designer but, because of the overproduction of objects, images and information that have become accessible to everyone via the internet; homogenization of cultures and languages has taken place in relation to movements of disengagement that have developed. I will not proceed with an in-depth case by case analysis of 'The Future of Fashion is Now' (2014), but instead I will focus on two extremes that I believe could be found in the exhibition's works. The exhibition was divided into four sections: 'Materiality and Experience', 'The (Re)Definition of the Human Figure', 'New Values and New stories', and 'Fashion Activism: Community and Politics'.

Situating my own practice in an existing context for fashion as an expanded practice (see figure 51 for the film installation at the exhibition 'The Future of Fashion is now') is relevant to this thesis, because I am trying to establish a territory where these practices take place and how they can happen; this exhibition offered an opportunity to locate and map practices that attempt to generate a critical positioning of fashion.

Not all fashion practices in the expanded field are critical. Much of the expanded practice presented in this exhibition was preoccupied with finding technical solutions to problems related to environmental impact or ethical production.
There were, in the exhibition, examples of strategies of allegory, juxtaposition, assemblage and appropriation resonate within fashion practices since the 1990s, that shift started happening in the 1980s and 1990s today critique in fashion is

used to define new systems of production, to find new ways to collaborate. These are all approaches are not innovative within art practices but they are new to fashion and they bring the ability to discuss subjects that have been avoided within fashion's commercial route.

These strategies usually give preference to the exhibition format instead of cat-walk fashion show and privilege process over commercial product. These tactics subvert the traditional role of fashion designers, as they present methodologies in which hypotheses and ideas are explored through fashion, presenting the notion of an artist-designer they discuss the role of artist designer operating in a conceptual fashion context. Critical fashion practice regards fashion as a mirror of our times in which important social and cultural developments can be recognised. Its approach is to place fashion in a theoretical and social context, thereby exposing the under-lying layers of meaning and opening them up to debate. As we experience world economic and environmental crises, these are challenging times for all of us and not least for those who are concerned with the design and production of fashion.

To summarize, in this chapter I have emphasised the relevance of previous con-ceptual fashion and practices of deconstructivism in fashion. Fashion works by Issey Miyake, Yohji Yamamoto, Rei Kawakubo from Comme des Garçons, Martin Margiela, Hussein Chalayan, Viktor and Rolf and Bless were discussed above as being relevant to the development of current expanded fashion practices. I em-phasise the changes in the current fashion projects (initiated between 2000-2017) and focus on the approach taken by fashion practitioners like Anne-Sophie Berger, Ruby Hoette, Elisa Van Joolen, Lucia Cuba, Bart Hess & Lucy McDean among others, as these are usually neglected by current academic texts. They are also more significant at demonstrating a radical change towards a post-product and dematerialized understanding of fashion, suggesting that an expanded field allows fashion practitioners to engage in a critical discussion of the fashion system. As a fashion practitioner across multiple media (fashion film, sculpture, installation, and

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performance), I test this notion by discussing my own practices, and by developing a parallel between contemporary fashion practices, Krauss's 1979 diagnosis, and my own practice.

3.4. Exploring the relation between film and fashion: towards the development of fashion film

> The cinematic/video apparatus has given fashion designers a medium where clothes are presented as part of a larger work signifying the fashion idea and facilitated interdisciplinary practices (Healy, 2013:332).

The fashion film fits into the category of new media, but it should be acknowledged that it is not entirely new. In the beginning of the twentieth century, fashion newsreels were being produced in order to popularize Parisian styles to the American audience. The use of fashion film in fashion communication was possibly started by the couturier Paul Poiret, who used film to present his collections in 1913 to the American fashion market, filming mannequins parading in his garden during one of his famous parties. Although it has been explored since the beginning of the Twentieth century, it was not before the age of high-speed Internet and digital equipment that 'promotional fashion films', a term introduced by Nikola Mijovic from the London College of Fashion, 'became a ubiquitous presence and an essential aspect of the symbolic production of fashion' (Mijovic, 2013:176). It is important to establish the influence, even if not directly, of the aesthetics and structure of the American experimental cinema upon the unstructured and sometimes surreal non-narrative fashion films. According to Mijovic associational forms, loops, and other non-narrative techniques are utilized by directors of promotional fashion film to draw the audience's attention to the clothes; also, according to Vito Campanelli (2010), cited by Mijovic in the same article:

> Web aesthetics are incorporated into the general flow of new media, which is all about different forms of imitation – appropriation, sampling, remix, reinterpretation. Modern avant-garde techniques are part of our global digital memory bank (Mijovic, 2013:178).

The director Kenneth Anger's work is seen as being part of what is called the 'experimental American film' happening before and after World War II; his relation to clothing was always crucial to the development of his films:

> Kenneth Anger has always been concerned with clothing and couture, with draping and covering, rather than uncovering, the body (Uhlirova, 2013:278)

His experimental film *Puce moment* (1949), a short six minute film, is relevant to define the historical framework of the fashion film, both for its content and narrative structure. Anger's film is based on his grandmother's costume collection from when she was a costume designer during the silent film era of Hollywood. It is a surrealist short-film, where a long-lashed woman, Yvonne Marquis (Anger's friend), dresses in a purple puce gown and walks to her vanity table to apply perfume. She lies on a chaise longue, which then begins to move around on its own across the room and eventually out to a patio. Anger attempts to recreate silent film era style acting with a combination of alternating camera speeds and overacting by the actress. This sequence of actions and relations to clothing is common within fashion films produced in the early 2000s for the attention it centred on the clothing worn in the films, the lack of structured narrative, and the randomness of occurring events. The director Maya Deren is credited as being the first filmmaker since the end of World War II to inject a fresh note into experimental-film production (Jacobs, 1948). Experimental films were strongly influenced by Deren's film *Meshes of the Afternoon* (1943), directed by Deren and Alexander Hammid, which is considered to be one of the first important American experimental films (Jacobs, 1948). Just as importantly, it established an aesthetic model of what experimental cinema could do. *Meshes* had a dream-like feel that hearkened to Jean Cocteau and the Surrealists but seemed equally personal. Early works by Kenneth Anger, Stan Brakhage, Shirley Clarke, Gregory Markopoulos, Jonas Mekas, Willard Maas, Marie Menken, Curtis Harrington, Sidney Peterson, and Lionel Rogosin followed in a similar vein (Nichols, 2002). In the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s, fashion image-makers such as Erwin Blumenfeld, William Klein, and Guy Bourdin also made short films as an extension of their photographic work (Mijovic, 2013:176).

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In November 2000, the online platform Showstudio was launched, 'the home of the fashion film', changing the way fashion was perceived via the world wide web. This platform has been a pioneer in presenting the new medium of fashion film and paved the way for several new online platforms for fashion communication. Both Lev Manovich (2001) and Anne Friedberg (2006) have commented on the role and nature of the digital revolution and the fact that the Internet has offered new ways in which images are channelled. Platforms such as Showstudio, Message is the Medium, Nowness, and ASVOFF (A Shaded View on Fashion Film) have become curatorial spaces through which fashion is staged: within them fashion film circulates and media platforms have challenged the immediate experience of fashion as live event, as well as fashion as material object (Khan, 2012). Influential for fashion communication, their development symbolized a shift from the representation of a product to the depiction of a lifestyle and the 'product-image' (Khan, 2012). There are two distinct directions observed in fashion film, as discussed at the London College of Fashion's screening and panel discussion *The Fashion Film: Art or Commerce?* (2011). One is the promotional fashion film, that is, short films commissioned by fashion companies, while the other is the artistic fashion film, where authorship and personal aesthetic tend to become more relevant than the products presented. The promotional fashion film is not used as a means of questioning the cinema format (Le Grice 2001: 22) or 'expanding consciousness' (Youngblood, 1970: 41) but I argue that, in the case of the 'artistic fashion film', the term that I am using to designate fashion films that are produced as artistic reflection, individual work development or work commissioned by museums or art galleries that are not being used as branding or marketing for fashion, the contents tend to question matters related to clothing and to the role that clothes play in society.

Fashion film produced in this context between the 2000s up to the present, by fashion designers and artists like Hussein Chalayan, Anna Nicole Ziesche, Bart Hess, and Lucy McRae, are used to reflect on the fashion system itself, or to explore themes developed within the artist's practice through the means of film.

My own research presents this approach as a means to develop a criticality towards the fashion system and underlines the importance of these individual artistic developments. Hussein Chalayan's film work allows him to take his design practice further by exploring movement, narrative, and sound. He describes his film *Anaesthetics* as a 'film sketch book'. The films Chalayan has developed since 2003 are politically engaged and develop a critical perspective about subjects beyond fashion design. His 2006 film *Compassion Fatigue* explores the ways in which society has transformed nature into an increasingly utilitarian function or object. *Compassion Fatigue* (2006) alludes to secondary traumatic stress, which is a condition characterized by a gradual lessening of compassion over time. The film proposes an alternative form of taming reality: the characters are dressed in garments echoing the space, casting a spell over the central figure. The central figure becomes monumentalized as a marble statue, further integrating itself into the environment. A voice subtly issuing instructions to the viewers about how they are to read the images accompanies the film, perhaps as a further means of social control. Chalayan's films can be categorized as spiritual and intellectual rituals in which his designs set themselves adrift in their own time, space, and stories. These narratives of differing themes were initially done in collaboration like the films *Aeroplane Dress* (1999) and *Afterwords* (2000) done with Marcus Tomlinson as a director, and later written and directed by Hussein Chalayan himself in the case of: *Ambimorphous* (2002), *Place to Passage* (2003), *Temporal Meditations* (2004), *Anaesthetics* (2004), *Absent Presence* (2005), *Compassion Fatigue* (2006) and finally *I am Sad Leyla* (2010) which was an installation piece with film as one of its components. Similarly, the filmmaker Anna Nicole Ziesche, who studied fashion design earlier in her career, produces films like *Childhood Storage* (2009), *Following a line* (2006), *Non-bifurcated diary* (2006), *Unihorn/uniform* (2003), *Box project* (2003), *States of mind and dress* (2002), *Changing lines* (2001), *Shadow doubles* (2001), *Growing young* (2000), *White sheet* (2000), *Enfant terrible* (2000) and *Infinite repetition* (2000) that explore how clothing affects the wearer. Her early films were formal investigations of dress and composition using film's freedom to

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manipulate, magnify, and repeat not only decorative details but also the body that they enfolded. Her film *Non-Bifurcated Diary* was a departure from these as it was able to convey her core interests more adequately than her past work: the relationship between states of mind and dress, and the performativity of the body conditioned by dress and space (physically and psychologically). It included a spoken, personal text, which was woven onto performed physical expressions of emotions as well as garment and body. The fashion films that have I have listed are part of the beginning of a longer list of films that are now being explored and embraced by the fashion system through its advertising potential for fashion brands, but also in a non-commercial experimental framework as a form of critique. As I will describe and analyse in chapter 4, the artistic approach to fashion film provides the opportunity to dismantle and deconstructs the fashion system, carrying an inherent political potentiality, offering viewers the opportunity to discuss matters that are not often debated, and providing tools for dialectical thinking regarding fashion as a construction of identity and a 'product' of human nature. These are films that come from fashion as discipline but end up being reflections and critiques of multiple aspects of life and existence.

3.4.1. A Fashion Film practice

Traditionally, the catwalk show was used to mark the beginning of a fashion season, and is linked to the rhythmical flow of the fashion cycle. As such, it introduces new trends to fashion buyers, consumers, and the media. Since runway shows began, they have formed the basis of the fashion season. The ritual of the catwalk show is firmly placed at the heart of new trends and innovation. One might argue that the arrival of digital representation of the catwalk show marks an end to the idea that fashion or fashion trends relate to a moment in time. The simultaneous online flow of the catwalk show does not only offer instant access, but it creates what can be described as 'permanent presence' (Khan, 2012:10). The web-streamed catwalk show changed the fashion world's relationship with time and space, but this change is also happening within online social media platforms

like Tumblr and Pinterest, suspending time by displaying simultaneous images of past and present fashion collections randomly, the random nature of their image displays disregarding time or space, collected according to taste, mood, and network connections between people. The medium of the fashion film appears within this context of image layering when the materiality of the clothes is replaced by an image or a concept of the clothes. The fashion film, when streamed instead of a catwalk show, gives brands and designers control over the way images are viewed and perceived: in 1993 the Belgian fashion brand Maison Martin Margiela adopted film as a way of presenting their collection for their Winter 1993–1994 collection rather than presenting a fashion show, to mark the tenth season of their brand. Their film showed women of different nationalities and professions filmed in black and white 'super 8' at their homes or in a setting corresponding to their life. Press and buyers were invited to the showroom and Martin provided a commentary on the film, showing the clothes themselves while explaining their cut, inspiration and fabrics, in a manner reminiscent of the early fashion presentations. Recently, in 2009, fashion designer Gareth Pugh collaborated with filmmaker Ruth Hogben in developing a fashion film that would accompany the catwalk show in Paris, showing the pieces as silhouettes in movement, exploring a theatrical aspect of the clothes presented. For Spring/Summer 2012, Pugh and Hogben collaborated again to create a fashion film, fusing the piece with a live catwalk presentation to create a unique viewer experience that was unveiled exclusively online at Showstudio at the same time as Pugh's show in Paris. The film challenged not only traditional notions of space and time but also played with ideas about embodiment and disembodiment, presence and absence. In 2011, they created the fashion film *Imagine 79*, not just to be streamed online but to be an independent fashion piece screened in lieu of a live fashion show during the Pitti Italian menswear shows in Florence. The film was conceived to be projected on the ceiling of a fourteenth century Renaissance church, like a fresco, allowing the fashion film to become a medium in its own right and not a by-product of fashion. The film projection created a sort of virtual space in which bodies float, questioning the borders of what is

real and what is virtual, using a symbolic rhetoric of fashion. In Nathalie Khan's, article 'Stealing the moment: The non-narrative fashion films of Ruth Hogben and Gareth Pugh' (2012), she underlines that, in non-narrative fashion films, fashion is the embodiment of an image and 'no longer a reflection of an object' (Khan, 2012:260). The fashion film 'does not replace the catwalk or fashion photography', but it instead develops into a 'new hybrid form of fashion, no longer dependent on time, space, or materiality' (Khan, 2012:260).

The contemporary fashion context today consists of a vast range of new codes and processes. The configurations of recent changes and the mapping of the fashion film context inform both my research and the practice I have undertaken within this research. The complexity of the postmodern condition, in which the fashion industry operates, led to a fragmented and complex method of fashion production and creation. Fashion practices in the expanded field builds a new strategy of thinking about the practice and making of fashion. The catwalk show has become less and less the centre of contemporary fashion communication as we have seen a diversification of fashion presentations, from installation pieces to performance and fashion film. Fashion brands and magazines now communicate through online platforms using videos to construct and communicate their ideas and products. Fashion appropriating film as a new medium is a natural evolution, since they are both 'in-between' forms on the threshold of the discipline. Cinema, like photography, Wilson states:

> Fashion resembles photography. Both are liminal forms,(...) between art and non-art. Both are industrially produced, yet deeply individual. Both ambiguously poised between the present and the past: the photograph congeals the essence of the now and fashion freezes the moment in an eternal gesture of the-only-right-way-to-be (Wilson, 1985:ix).

When we speak of fashion as image, we do not refer only to photography any more. The fashion image is not bound to conventions of beauty and commodity. The fashion film 'represents both the still and moving image connected to a new virtual culture of commodification' (Khan, 2012:257). Driven by recent technological developments, the fashion film format has been shaped by a growth of online

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fashion communication, the use of social media, the democratization of video (with the widespread availability of mobile phone cameras), and a tendency for the de-materialization of fashion, changing the way fashion relates with time and space.

3.5. Discussion

The expanded field of fashion consists of works that are not presented in the traditional way, but instead using fashion currency of symbolical and traditional understanding to convey a message. Several exhibitions where I have shown my practice during the course of this thesis have helped in situating my practice in this post-disciplinary context. The exhibition 'Transfashional Lab' (from 10 February to 4 April 2017) at the Austrian Cultural Forum London, curated by Dobrila Denegri, emerged from collaborations between artists and designers engaged in practices situated between fashion and art. In the image below, my essay film, the practice component of this thesis was shown to the public and in the context of the group exhibition. The relation established between the film and the pieces from the other artists present at the show allowed for new readings and enhanced certain aspects of the film itself. Denegri writes in the leaflet of the exhibition:

> As these emerging artists reflect on the world around them they highlight the need for a profound revision of the processes of production and the social relations which derive from them. (...) Indeed more than wearable and functional, many of these works are critical, engaged and conceptual, and can be seen as symbols and symptoms of the present Zeitgeist (Denegri, 2017).

This chapter focus on providing an understanding of the process of 'liquefaction' happening to fashion practices and testing the notion of an expanded field of fash-ion. Fashion, being so strongly connected to the Zeitgeist, the spirit of the times, is inherently fluid and has been taking other forms while fluidly travelling between disciplines: installations, sculptures, video, and fashion film. Fashion has been expanding the media of the discipline and therefore the boundaries of fashion are becoming harder to map. The postmodern condition of the fashion practice is translated by the complexity of the contemporary fashion system.

In the catalogue of the 2007 exhibition 'Dysfashional', Emanuele Quinz, describes the current condition of fashion as one of 'decline of a certain monolithic model

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that dealt in freeze-frame images' moving towards a 'more layered, more fluid and complex dimension of fashion' the choice of words could not have been more fit to establish a relation with Bauman's words about a 'Liquid Modernity'. Luca Marchetti, co-curator of the exhibition, describes the exhibition's concept of 'in progress display' as a form of relating to fashion's role as a 'system of identity migration' in which fashion has the 'ability to follow this fluidity, the perpetual movement'(Quinz & Marchetti, 2007:6-9).

Chapter 4. A Reflective methodology: The Production of a critical fashion discourse through the essay film

4.1. Introduction

This chapter presents an in-depth discussion of my practice-as-research. My essay film is contextualized within destruction-led artistic methods specific to their own context (fashion) exploring film theory frameworks. As Mieke Bal stated: 'Visual Art thinks visually; films, videos, and video installations think in audio-visual movement' (Bal, 2013:7). By 'thinking in' film, we find ideas not illustrated by but actualized in film. This chapter aims to illustrate the activities that sustain my strategy for critical fashion tested as a plan of action, designed to achieve critical fashion practices. My practice, presented in this study in the form of the essay film, approaches a philosophical deconstruction not with an intent to de-construct filmic conventions, but explored as a strategy to challenge the notions of fashion that are embedded within the fashion system – what does it mean to take as a task to expose constellations of power, as a fashion practitioner? This unmaking as an activity inherits from fashion deconstruction the idea of subtraction and displacement. This also contextualizes my own previous relevant artistic projects which used the same destruction-led artistic methods, because they all seem to have within them deconstructions relating to their own specific contexts of activity. As I moved towards a 'dematerialized' practice (to use, once again, Lucy Lippard's term – see chapter 1, section 1.5.2), film itself began to, as my previous practice, decompose – becoming a fragmentary form which, alludes to the process of thought in the process of being thought. There is in this strategy a negation of one of the main aspects of fashion: by not producing garments I represent a position of resistance (see chapter 2, section 2.7) towards a practice of unmaking: 'not making' as form of protest and resistance towards over-production and commercialization of the fashion product. By working with film my intention has been to replace the product by the idea/image.

4.2. The rhetoric of the fashion image

> Clothes are among the fraught objects in the material world of things, since they are so closely involved with the human body and human life cycle. They are objects, but they are also images (Wilson, 2003: ix).
>
> Fashion exists only in representation (Lehmann, 2002: T12).
>
> Clothes make, not the man but the image of man - and they make it in a steady, reciprocal accord with the way artists make, not lifeless effigies bur vital representations (Hollander, 1975: xv).

The citations mentioned above show how fashion theorists like Lehmann, Wilson and Hollander all refer to fashion as being image. The sociologist Roland Barthes discusses the idea of fashion as a language in his ambitious *Systeme de la mode* (*The fashion system,*1983) where Barthes distinguishes three aspects of clothing: the real garment, the represented garment, and the used garment (Svendsen, 2006:66). In his book, Barthes dedicated his attention to the 'represented garment' or as he puts it 'image-clothing' and 'written clothing', because it is what we are presented with as consumers, he said only 'the meaning is left when the function is removed' (Barthes, 1983:8). In his essay 'The Rhetoric of the image' (1964), Barthes, a classical semiotic text, analyses an advertising image and uses it as a means of explore how different messages are conveyed by a system of signs. Barthes commences by remarking that the word 'image' stems from a Latin term meaning 'imitation' and then poses the central question of his essay – can images truly function as conveners of meaning, given that they are essentially imitations (or direct analogical representations) of something else? Do they really constitute a language, and if they do, how does meaning work within this language? He uses an advertising image to analyse these questions, as advertising images clearly have intended meanings. The overall composition of the image is reminiscent of, and therefore signifies, the notion of a still life. The rhetoric of the fashion image has developed into action behaviours that have been highly criticized those of food disorders, excessive shopping, idealized unreal beauty standards, and so on. My approach to fashion came from a critical position that I have embodied within the processes of making that formed my practice. I felt the need to articulate a discon-

tent with fashion through the vocabulary with which I have constructed my practice. Understanding fashion itself has always been an essential part of my practice. If fashion is a language, how does this language construct meanings? How does it sustain the dialogue between participants that enables them to build up a culture of shared understandings, and in so doing interpret the world in roughly the same ways? Language is able to do this because it operates as a representational system. In language, we use signs and symbols – whether they are sounds, written words, electronically produced images, musical notes, or even objects – to stand for or represent to other people our concepts, ideas, and feelings. Language is one of the 'media' through which thoughts, ideas and feelings are represented in a culture. The professor of Sociology, Stuart Hall' book about representation explains that 'language is therefore central to the process by which meaning is produced'(Hall, 1997:1-5). Hall discerns three different approaches to representation:

- The reflective deals with representing what already exists.
- The intentional focuses on the intention of the producer of the representation.
- The constructionist addresses construction of meanings in language/images, which is a focus in semiotics discourse (Hall, 1997:15-17).

Representing dress and fashion reflexively I approached film from these three perspectives. As Barthes underlines in the seminal essay 'The Rhetoric of the Image' (1964), 'All images are polysemous' (Barnard, 2014:185) – meaning that within images, many meanings coexist, as Barthes states 'the meaning of an image is never certain' (Barnard, 2014:185). The viewer can come up with a number of possible interpretations of an image. My desire is to clarify what fashion is by capturing the very process of thinking about fashion in its unfolding through the use of film. In developing a method of making the film as a composition or a thought model, I intend the viewer to be active, not just a passive spectator. What I am aiming at within my creative practice is the development of a certain criticality from the audience. It seems to me not only the way to best respect the audience by not telling the audience what to do or what to think, but also to maintain the audience's

criticality, since this is meant to be an artistically reflective piece.

4.3. Film as a way of registering thought

The film *Workers leaving the Lumière factory in Lyon* (*La Sortie de l'Usine Lumière à Lyon*), is often referred to as the first real motion picture ever made, an 1895 French short black-and-white silent documentary film directed and produced by Louis Lumière. The film consists of a single scene in which workers leave the Lumière factory; we watch people hurrying away from the factory. The director Harun Farocki's essay film *Arbeiter verlassen die Fabrik* (*Workers leaving the factory,*1995) uses the Lumière film as a starting point to discuss a series of ideas on production, labour, and an analysis of the masses to understand, reflectively, our society's relation with productivity and how such massified productivity, in the words of the narrator, it is as if with film the world has been rendered visible for the first time, as Farocki states in his film commentary 'the first camera in the history of film was pointed at a factory'(1995). Coincidentally, it is industry that brought me to this research in the first place, the inability to accept that fashion's means of production had to work in a certain way, as I described in the first chapter of this thesis. The use of film is a means of recording movement, sound, and ideas. The French director Jean-Luc Godard said in 1995 on the French programme 'Bon plaisir' that, 'Cinema is made to register thought' ('Le cinéma est fait pour enregistrer de la pensée', in France culture, on 17 January 2017). The use of film in this research practice is exercising exactly this function of attempting to register thought, to critically engage with the perennial question of 'What is fashion?', by documenting the answer in the process of being given. Part of the argument for the relevance of establishing theories of interdisciplinary fashion practices is that, the discipline of cinema could help resolve some the problems found by fashion that have become invisible to the fashion practice itself. In this context, the essay-film explores fashion as a self-referential process of creation and reflection. Therefore, I use film as a tool for thought, as a philosophical tool that allows me to register thought, although trying to accomplish registering thought in process of

being formed is an impossible task in itself; it is in the process of attempting it that I critically engage with the fashion discipline. This chapter is a reflection on how film and fashion relate in this thesis. It starts by giving an account of the historical relations between both disciplines (see chapter 3, section 3.4. and 3.4.1) and moves on to describe how the essay-film is developed within this thesis as thought, concluding with the understanding of the images developed as thought images and an exploration of the metaphor as a tool for criticality.

4.4. The creation of meaning through film images: critical discourse

My approach to visual images as a means to create meaning in the essay film is used not to illustrate ideas but to embody them in its very form – my intention is that ideas are not illustrated by the film, but that they are actualized in the film itself. This is a very relevant principle in it for it explains why, although the medium is the essay film, in which usually there is a narrator's voice, I opted, after several experiments, to replace that external voice (that was somewhat paternalistic) for a silent voice communicated by the use of subtitles through which, engaging in the act of reading, the audience reads in the first person.

Discourse, as developed in Foucault's *The Archaeology of Knowledge and History of sexuality, Vol.1*(2004), refers to the creation and organization of knowledge, which determines how and what we know, both as individuals and as a society (Foucault, 2004). In 2009 the sociologist and fashion theorist Agnès Rocamora, drawing on both Bourdieu and Foucault, developed the notion of a 'fashion discourse'. In her thesis Rocamora explores the complex formation of texts, statements, and ideas articulated in the French fashion media, to demonstrate how and where fashion discourses proliferate, and the social and material practices that give them life and meaning (Rocamora, 2009). It is clear that fashion discourse is critical to the maintenance of the fashion system, through which fashion also 'constructs dominant narratives about health, gender, sexuality, class and race,

or at least, fashion colludes with dominant narratives in any given social frame-work' (2016, Tynan:186). Foucault is interested in how power is enacted through bodies; thus, his theories are particularly useful in an analysis of the practices and rituals around regulation clothing and everyday dress. Whatever private mean-ings clothes hold, they also have a profoundly social role. Without mentioning fashion or dress, Foucault 'provided a conceptual tool-kit to consider how cloth-ing is implicated in power structures' (Finkelstein, 2007:186). I believe that for the understanding of the complexity of fashion it is imperative to, as described in the seminal book *The Fashioned Body* by Entwistle (2000), understand first that fashion 'is about bodies: it is produced, promoted and worn by bodies' (Entwistle, 2000:1). Addressing the body in my essay film, the relevance of the body in fash-ion – both as site of performance and production – is one of the central themes I chose to depict. The choreographic aspect of activities that constitute fashion at different levels: dressing, producing, or consuming. As Entwistle writes in relation to Turner: 'there is an obvious fact about human beings, they have bodies and they are bodies' (Turner, 1985:1; Entwistle, 2000:6). These bodies are the bod-ies that produce, promote, and wear fashion, composing a system of bodies that together constitute the fashion system. For Foucault, the body is critical to how power works: its visible construction shapes social and political discourses (Tynan, 2016:186). For Finkelstein, 'fashion is collective, systematised and prescriptive' (Finkelstein, 2007:211). Such perspective is a Foucauldian one; it is critical to note that manufacturing also bears down on the bodies of garment workers, 'whose employment conditions are often made hazardous and precarious by a globalised fashion industry' (Tynan, 2016:190-191). Finding parallels across 'discursive fields' prompts Foucault to consider social life in terms of systems of representation and their reproduction through the operation of institutional power. Thus, in her analysis of fast–fashion,Tynan points to a major theme in Foucault's work: the concern with accountability. For me, within this film, the matter of accountability is central and defines a political positioning of my fashion practice. The represented bodies are the one same body that dresses and produces. The meaning of the film lies in de-

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constructing the 'sign of fashion' and the principle of signification itself, just as the alternative to political economy can only lie in the deconstruction of the commodity and production itself.

4.5. The Essay film: a thinking media

'Can movies think?' asks cinema theorist and critic Kent Jones, in the title of his essay for *Cahiers du Cinéma*[1], questioning film's ability to go beyond the author's own intentions and 'engender within the reader an ever expanding-consciousness' (Jones, 2008 [Online]). The question is answered by the understanding of the essay film being consisting of 'thinking images'. The essay, literary, and philosophical form from which the genre of the essay film takes its name (see chapter 1, section 1.3.4), is described in the 1958 article by the German philosopher of the Frankfurt School of Critical Theory, Theodor Adorno, as being mistrusted by German academia for being 'a hybrid with no tradition' (Adorno, 1958). Adorno followed on to state that theorists like Simmel and the young Luckács, Kasher and Benjamin 'entrusted to the essay as speculation on specific, culturally pre-formed objects', defending that the reason why Germany distrusted the essay was by 'invoking intellectual freedom' (Adorno,1991:3-4). The essay film shared the same speculative nature and intellectual freedom of its written counterpart. Montero writes about two of the main film-makers that have influenced my approach to the making of this essay-film: director, editor, and writer Chris Marker (1921–2012) and director, editor, and writer Harun Farocki (1944–2014). I have watched their filmography in detail and concentrated mostly on the analysis of Chris Marker's *La Jetée* (1962) and *Sans Soleil* (1983) and the artist and director Harun Farocki's *Nicht löschbares Feuer* (Inextinguishable Fire, 1969). My film is not inspired by these films but I have looked at them in detail to understand how to approach film-making as thought and reflection, feeding into my decision to work with essay-film as a genre. Although difficult to define as a specific genre, the term essay-film usually refers to

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1   *Cahiers du cinéma* is a French film magazine founded in 1951 by André Bazin and two other writers, Jacques

Doniol-Valcroze and Lo Duca.

a fragmentary composition of thoughts that takes form through the basic structural elements of cinema: image, sound, and editing usually giving relevance to text, which sometimes can be in the form of narration. Montero analysed the essay film as a dialogic thinking form consisting of 'thinking images' and he describes the form of the essay by addressing Adorno's text 'Essay as Form'(1958) and the etymological root of the term 'essay' to better understand that, more than a genre, the essay is an attitude formed by experience and self-questioning. The essay film is considered a hybrid between documentary and personal reflection. In this respect, the essay film is a type of film in which I, the film essayist, try to figure out what I think about fashion based on my personal experience of it. If constructing a criticality in fashion research practices in the field of fashion studies demands a tool that allows reflection, and has in 'critical design' practices (see chapter 1, section 1.3.3.) 'speculative proposals to challenge narrow assumptions and givens' about the role that fashion can have, then the essay film seemed the appropriate apparatus by which to start investigating a strategy for critical fashion practices. What the process of montage allows here is not a singular or irreducible truth, which the post-modern condition has moved away from (see chapter 2.4), but a method for posing questions visually, through the use of cinematic means.

4.6. A Reflective methodology: generating a critical discourse through the essay film

In order to understand what criticality could be in fashion, in my previous practice, I worked through deconstruction in an intuitive way – tearing garments apart and putting together again. – but also knew that it helped me understand garments better. Could I apply that to more complex ideas about fashion ideas? Tearing ideas apart, and going through the process of putting them back together is the method I have generated – analysing Derrida's idea of deconstruction – as Derrida would tear apart words in a text, and look at them out of the text to understand the extent of their meaning and how unstable meaning is. I visually deconstructed fashion, not from a philosopher's viewpoint, but from that of a fashion practitioner, think-

ing via the practice itself. Could that be way of developing a strategy of criticality in fashion? I approached theory from practical viewpoint. The use of cards (see images in figures 53 to 60 for research images - complete archive in appendix 6) as both film stills and theoretical ideas – useful methodological tools – functioned in my thought process as both creative (generating ideas) and thinking tools (facilitating analysis); the storyboards – images and words – were worked into a 'temporary collage' that would find its way into my film. Between images and text quotes, I searched for ways to connect them, oppose them and allude to certain ideas about fashion production, consumption and dress. The film was shaped from initial references placed together, then a short script generated, and then filmed in a process as simple as possible. A person doing a certain action would depict a factory for example; this short sequence would be added to the original film structure reconfiguring meanings. By adding short sequences and moving them around each time, I would create a dialogic movement creating new content for the film.

My essay film proposes and demonstrates that its principle and applicable qualities in abstract form are the results of more or less complex experiments. My research methodology seeks to establish a framework for analysis and development of critical fashion practices, informed by my experience as a practitioner. The working process for me has always started with a mood board: at first I used mood boards to influence my fashion collections and this tool developed into a storyboarding tool when I started working with film. Creating a mood board 'is a fundamental tool used in design industries and education' (Cassidy, 2011:225). Using a mood-board as a way to facilitate creative processes, 'Mood boards are tools used by designers to bring together apparently incongruous visual data to promote inspirations to develop suitable end-products'(Cassidy, 2011:225). The creation of mood boards involves a recognizable process coupled with creativity:

> Mood boards are primarily used by designers to bring together sets of visual data, usually in the form of imagery, but can also include small objects, such as shells or gemstones etc., that link to a theme derived from the design brief. Mood boards provide a "space" to arrange the collected visuals in a meaningful manner to the designer that enables the flow of thoughts, inspirations, and creativity for design outcomes—products (Cassidy, 2011:225).

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Figure 52 Early Moodboard Wall, exhibition view *Fac-simile,* 2008

The mood-board activity has been central to my fashion practices as a way of 'meaning making' since my early practices(see figure 52 from project *Mimesis*, exhibition *Fac-Simile,* 2008). The process of developing a mood board is in part subjective and part objective, using a selection of soft and hard tools. The soft tools include awareness, observation, intuition, and inspiration. Because soft tools are, in essence, sensations within the mind, it is difficult to measure, analyse, and evaluate them, thus making them subjective in nature. The 'hard tools include all data available via the vast pool of diverse resources from which inspiration can be drawn' (Cassidy, 2011:238). On the mood-board images are displayed side by side and that is where I start to see interesting relations, taken from books, magazines, newspapers, and everyday sources; visual materials are arranged in categories and sequences. As mentioned in chapter 2 (see section 2.2.3) in 1924 Aby War-burg, began compiling and continuously reorganising a vast array of images into a kind of image map the *Mnemosyne Atlas*:

Warburg arranged and rearranged, in a lengthy combinatory process of addition and subtraction, black and white photographs of art-historical and cosmographical images. Here and there he also included photographs of maps, manuscript pages, and contemporary images drawn from newspapers and magazines. The individual panels, in turn, were then numbered and ordered to create still larger thematic sequences (Johnson, 2012: url:https://warburg.library.cornell.edu/about).

The idea for the project, which remained unfinished when Warburg died in 1929, was developed from the method of using images mounted on large boards for lectures and exhibitions. The panels suggested new relations between the images, proposing what Warburg called 'the iconology of the interval'(Rampley, 2012:303-324). What fascinated Warburg was 'the reappearance of forms, gestures and thought throughout history' (Johnson, 2015:215). As seen in the image (see figure 52) a view from the exhibition *Fac-Simile* (2008), the method creating mood boards has been very relevant in the process of creating but also in making sense of what I am doing. Meaning-making has often been very closely connected to my mood-board development and as such, I have made used of this tool when developing ways of understanding my own practice within this thesis and generating content for my essay film. Like Warburg I often develop an understanding of rela-

Figure 53 Early PhD Moodboard, 2013

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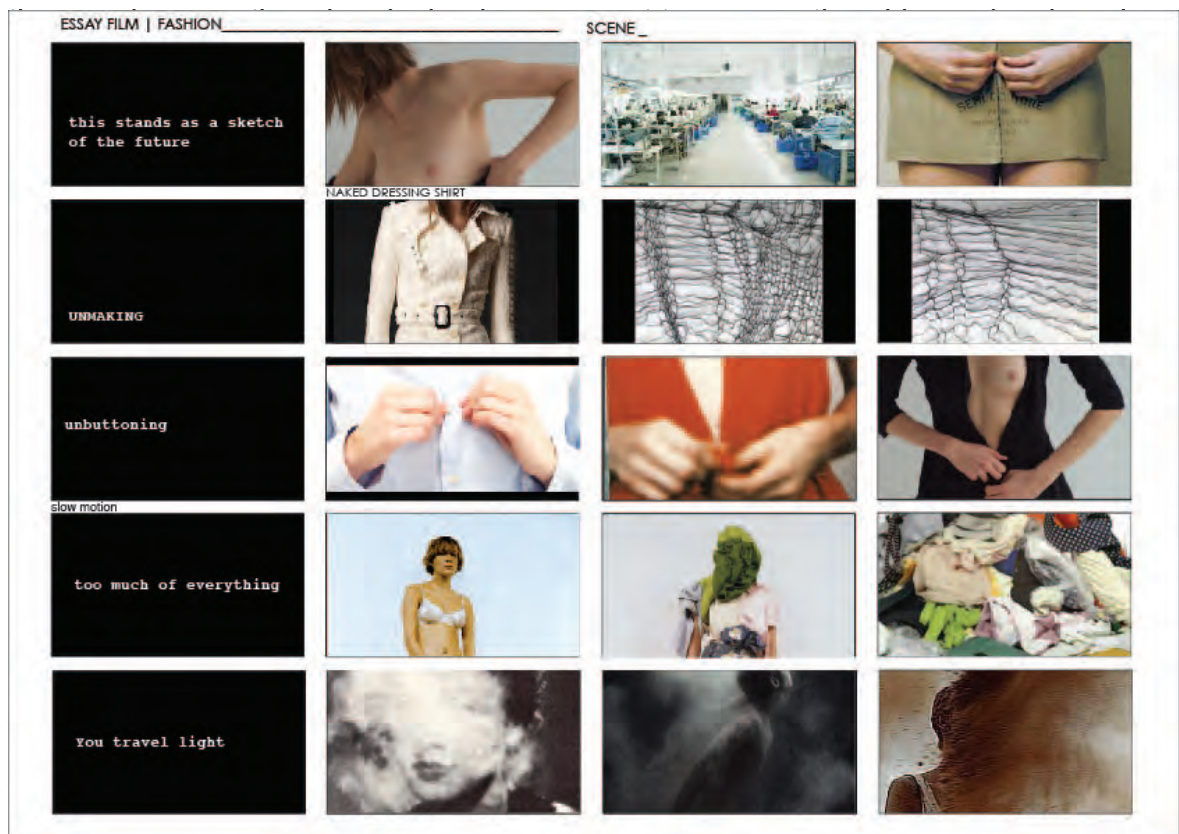
Figure 54 Early Phd Storyboard for film, 2013

every initial chapter of any fashion studies book or article, so was I trying to understand fashion through film - through the practice, using the practice as a form of understanding as well as a form of communicating. The process was self-reflexive, the medium as itself a form of self-interrogating: interrogating how the fashion system operates under the demand of the fashion practitioner, is the fashion practitioner still operating within the limits of the discipline? I film short video sequences, visual poems, [translating worries and thoughts about production, consumption, and dress] and each time a sequence was filmed and inserted into the video, the narrative changed and reflected on its impact upon the other images and let it reverberate in the meanings produced. I wanted the film to be about the relationship between bodies at first. I then related these bodies with the invisibility of productive bodies in a capitalist system. As it is possible to see in both the mood-board, body–related images are collected, and developed into storyboards and film sequences, the documentation archival cards developed an interrelation between

Figures 55, 56 and 57 Archival cards for Mood-boards, 2013–2016 (see apendix 6)

Figure 58 Archival cards for storyboards, 2016

body (hands) and production (making) – see the images below (figures 58 to 63 for the connection between cards and gestures, positions translated into film).

The character bodies we see in the film are either making something or dressing, so that by the end of the film, a text that refers to bodies in a much more dramatic way shifts the tone of the narrative from fashion to the victims of war, something much deeper in meaning than the viewer may initially believe, this is what the film

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"I am not what I am. I am what I do with my hands."
Louise Bourgeois

As a factory might be

Figures 59 and 60 Archival cards for Moodboards, 2013-2016

is concerned with.

This shift was intentional, in the sense that I wanted to provoke certain feelings in the spectator, contextualising the narrative in a different sphere of meanings but never explicitly telling the audience how to feel about it. Everything that leads to

the ending is broad enough for each spectator to understand it in any form they relate to it. Among the many parallel lines of narration, the film contains an essential aspect that relates back to us, to being human, and dress seems to be a layer of meaning inseparable from being human. To propose alternative practices outside a commercial arena and expose the emergence of a fashion design critique in a research and fashion design context, the essay film (see p.189) articulate a discontent about fashion itself. The essay film is the perfect tool for producing thought, producing a critical fashion discourse through the juxtaposition of images, text, and sound.

In the figure 60, an image of William Morris's studio, depicts someone working on a vertical loom, this card is juxtaposed with Louise Bourgeois quote: 'I am not what I am. I am what I do with my hands', this juxtaposition generates ideas for shots of hands. In William Morris's pamphlet 'As a factory might be' (In *Justice*, published in 17th May 1884 [Online]) he depicted an ideal factory, and we can relate this metaphor to speculative design processes. Workers share the 'same productive body' that is also the body of the consumer body (or dressed body). What I was trying to achieve at the time was an image of a body that was one all-consuming, all-producing, dressed body. This body shows the invisible body of the producer as being the same as the consumer. The editing of the overdressing and woman unravelling were important to illustrate these parallel movements of making and unmaking in fashion that are constantly running fashion:

> Fashion lies in the contrast between its extensive, all-embracing distribution and its rapid and complete disintegration (Simmel, 1957:558).

German Sociologist Georg Simmel's article 'Fashion' (1957) refers to an 'all-embracing distribution' and 'complete disintegration' (Simmel, 1957:558). I have worked a lot with ideas of dissolution/disappearance/unravelling as I did in projects *Fragment, An impossible wardrobe for the invisible* (see chapter 1, section 1.5.1). I was interested in the illustration of cyclical movement of production and destruction, so familiar to fashion in its transient nature (see section 2.7), this is my way of

answering the question 'What is fashion?'.

4.7. A strategy for a practice of unmaking: reflective methods

In this thesis, the presented body of work is a sequence of fourteeen short al-legorical film sequences edited and re-edited (several times) into a short essay film. The essay-film produced during the duration of this PhD was developed by constituting a method of self-reflective editing, writing reflectively every time a sequence was filmed and added to the film. The version of the film was re-edited and the message reformulated, adding complexity to the narrative but also simul-taneously trying to simplify the sequences illustrated. To me the editing of the film was put together as a form of research. As I have stated in the previous section of this chapter, I started by working on the essay-film in the same way I have always worked with a fashion collection, by mapping visual ideas on the wall through a mind map that would collect my thoughts about the current fashion condition. There is a very direct parallel between the fashion and the filmmakers sketchbook - Derek Jarman's sketchbooks (Jarman, Farthing et al. 2013) and the Portuguese director Pedro Costa's (Costa, 1994). During the course of the production prepa-ration for his film *Casa de Lava* (1994), the Portuguese filmmaker Pedro Costa compiled what he saw, what he read, his many ideas and images into a scrapbook instead of a screenplay. Paintings, movie stills, letters, newspaper articles, scrib-bles, quotes from novels, postcards, lines of dialogue and snapshots, guiding him through the shooting of the film that he continued – and finished – after returning to Lisbon. This green–covered notebook became an autonomous object, a visual record of Costa's way of thinking. The record was published under the title Casa de Lava Caderno, by Pierre von Kleist editions. These examples are similar to my own sketchbooks in the way that they combine images and text, and in the visual way of putting together images for guidance, replacing the script. This time in my practice, however, the map would not be translated into a collection of garments but into a film. The wall-based mind map, made of individual cards as in a story-board, helped to map ideas, concerns, and images that I translated into a series

of short video poems (for images documenting these processes see figures 61 and 62). What this means is that for an understanding of a fashion practice that is critical and can be considered as moving towards a socially engaged and environmentally sustainable praxis, the artistic fashion practice has to develop a criticality that engages the theory with the practice. Instead of removing it from the public sphere, it becomes part of its criticality and comprises the combination of reflection and action. Previously in this section, the reader can find images depicting the process of 'thinking' editing physically (see figures 64 and 66), in sketchbooks. This physical procedure should be emphasized here. There is a relationship between thought and the physical act of cutting and pasting; it was my form of thinking visually and also the process of working with Joana Linda, as editor of the digital version – communicating my editing through the sketchbooks and cards.

Praxis can be seen as a progression of cognitive and physical actions:

•Taking the action;
•Considering the impacts of the action;
•Analysing the results of the action by reflecting upon it;
•Altering and revising conceptions and planning following reflection;
•Implementing these plans in further actions;
(Loosely based on Donald Schön's notion of reflective practitioner).

My 'video poems' worked as a sort of Japanese haiku. Initially I was unsure of the outcome, but as I moved along, it started to form a process in itself:

1. Define the problem;
2. Create a card with a conceptual situation, illustrating it with images;
3. Compose that situation visually;
4. Film the situation with a performer and a co-director and assistant;
5. Select part of the video filmed;
6. Edit that section together with the rest of the video;
7. Every time I would edit a section and add it to the previous video, I would re-edit the version of the film and re-formulate the message, adding complexity to the narrative and simultaneously trying to simplify the sequences illustrated. Loosely based on Film scriptwriting: a practical manual (Swain and Swain, 1988).

The progress of this method throughout the development of the research allowed for the reflection that came from the conflict that images generated when put together, the resonance of images when edited together. We can find a similar methodology in Donald Schön's notion of reflective practices, as the practice by

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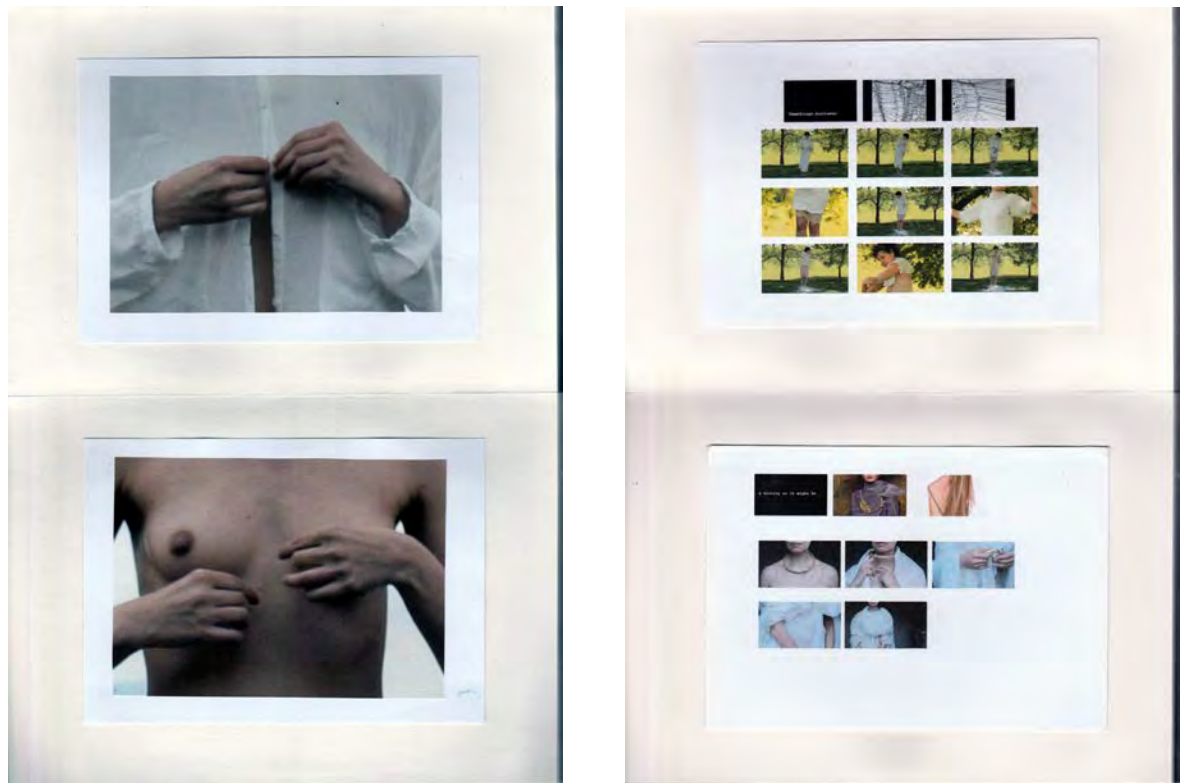
Figures 61 and 62 archival cards for storyboards, 2016

which professionals become aware of their implicit knowledge base and learn from

their experience; Schön introduces the following three notions:

> • Reflection in action: reflect on behaviour as it happens, so as to optimize the im-
> mediately following action.

> •Reflection on action: reflecting after the event, to review, analyse, and evaluate
> the situation, so as to gain insight for improved practice in future.

> •Ladders of reflections: action, and reflection on action make a ladder. Every action
> is followed by reflection and every reflection is followed by action in a recursive
> manner. In this ladder, the products of reflections also become the objects for fur-
> ther reflections. (Schön, 1983)

Further, Schön posits that the mental habit of reflection and ability to move across

the ladders of reflections is central to professionals' approach to their work. He

sees 'design' as 'reflection in action' in which changing a given situation takes

precedence over the interest of understanding it. He also observes that, for a

designer, the phenomenon/situation continues to change during their work. Some

key observation of Schön in this regard are as follows: if designers begin with

situations at least partially uncertain, ill-defined, complex, and incoherent they

construct and impose a coherence of their own. Subsequently they discover con-

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sequences and implications of their constructions – some unintended – which they appreciate and evaluate, sometimes leading to reconstruction of initial coherence – a reflective conversation with material of a situation. They spin out a web of moves, consequences, implications, appreciations, and further moves. Each move is a local experiment that contributes to the global experiment of re-framing the problem. Moves create new problems to be described and solved. In the process of making my film, there were several layers of 'unmaking'. There was an initial 'unmaking' that comes from the will to dismantle the notion of 'fashion' itself to understand if there is a way to not to fixate its concept, but instead have a fluid concept unravelling of fashion's complexity, that translates the film's complexity and in the impossibility of ever giving it only one meaning. The film itself translates fashion's obscurity and complexity: it is many things and it is composed of many layers, fashion, it is about an intimate moment of dressing. It is about making, about the 'hands that produce' and engage in the mechanical process of making, which is precise and resembles strange dance choreographies: the hands move quickly up and down with the needle and the needle disappears within; this movement evokes a primitive notion of making. The gesture of making, when mimicked, becomes just a repetition of movements; when de-constructed, it seems to be as much a part of us as walking is. The sequences of the 'invisible' needle and the 'invisible' shirt evoke familiarity and intimacy with these gestures and simultaneously a sort of collective memory.

4.7.1. Deconstruction and montage in Warburg and Benjamin: the production of fashion critical discourse

My practice uses film to build layers of images and meaning, and focuses on their juxtaposition; in the case of the proposed practice-based research method, the video's narrative is used to discuss what fashion is, an ontology of fashion using of images as thoughts, memories, and representations. My method used is similar to that of a poet working with images and words trying to capture thought in the process of being formed. Each sequence constitutes an archive of observations, often
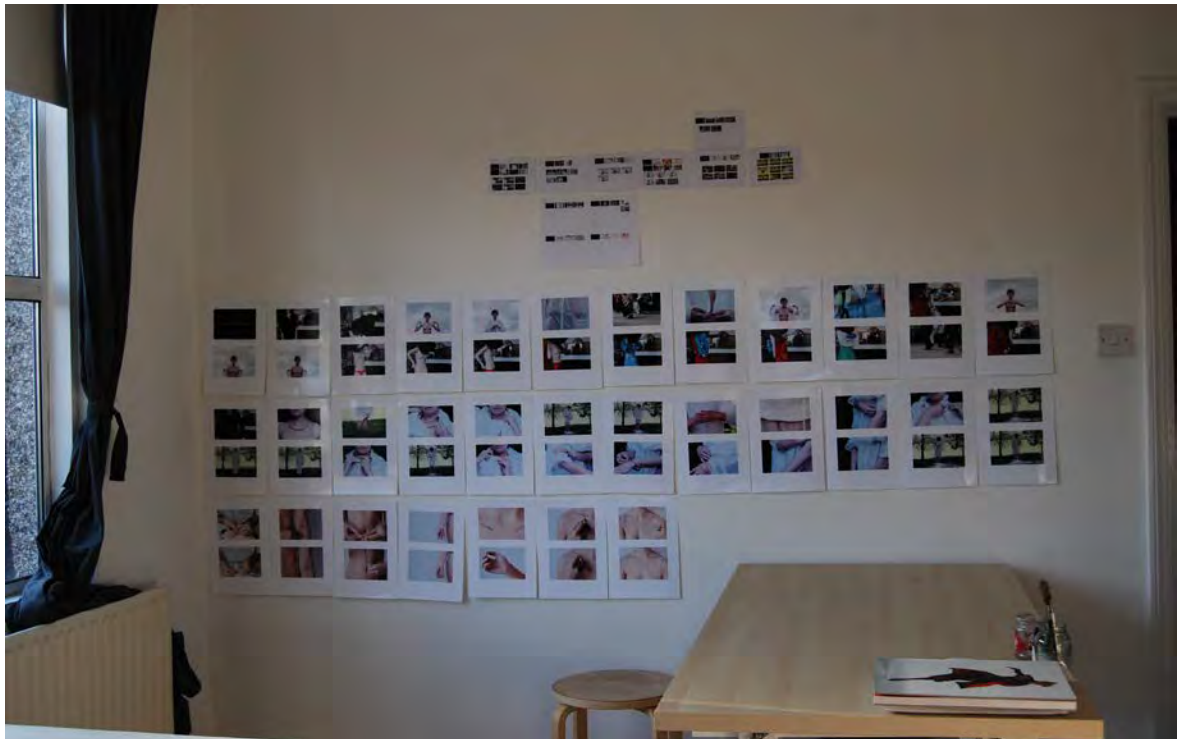
Figure 63 Storyboard, 2016

in dialogue with the fashion discipline itself. Through the rhythmic editing of image and sound, film generates the audience's reflection and criticality; this criticality is, in my film, an 'unmaking' of certain pre-formed ideas; an allegorical representation of fashion to allow its understanding. The image above (see figure 63) was done during the editing process and displays a wall panel depicting the thought process through film stills during the film making process. As the theorist Susan Buck-Morss clarifies in her book about Walter Benjamin *The dialectics of seeing* (1997) where she offers a reconstruction of Benjamin's unfinished *The Arcades Project* (*Das Passagen-Werk*), where he defines allegory as the 'activity of the ponderer' whose reflexive attitude is one of recollection, Benjamin says that:

> The memory of the ponderer holds way of the disordered mass of dead knowledge. Human knowledge is piece worked to it in a particularly pregnant sense: namely as the heaping up of arbitrarily cut up pieces, out of which one puts together a puzzle (Benjamin, 1999:M368-369 [J80, 2]).

Benjamin discusses Marx's commodity and the object's allegorical existence through the:

(...) Disorderly fund which is knowledge (...) the allegorist rummages here and there for a particular piece, holds it next to some other piece, and tests to see if they fit together that meaning with this image or this image with that meaning (Benjamin,1999:368)

I see Benjamin's description in a strong parallel with my methods of editing film. I film a sequence, juxtapose that sequence and when they are put together, they create another meaning, a third meaning from the juxtaposition of the two. It is through this medium, film, that I am trying to find an understanding. Buck-Morss proceeds to explain: 'the allegorist reaches now here, now there, into the chaotic depths that his knowledge places at his disposal, grabs them out, holds it next to another, and sees whether they fit (Buck-Morss, 1997:241). I identify my practice

Figure 64 Storyboard activity documentation, 2016

with this seemingly chaotic puzzling of ideas (see figure 64), for in my creative process, which is also a process of gaining knowledge, I am seldom lost and have no idea what I will find when I put everything together. The word 'unmaking', both a method and the title of my essay film, brings with it a certain notion of destruction, like in Walter Benjamin's *Arcades Project*, where nineteenth-century objects were to be made visible as the origin of the present; at the same time, every assumption of progress was to be scrupulously rejected: 'in order for a piece of the past to be touched by present actuality, there must exist no continuity between them', Benjamin suggests that 'construction' presupposes 'destruction' (Buck-Morss, 1997:23)

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as is similarly mentioned, in the first chapter of this thesis, by the conceptual artist Hanne Darboven (see section 1.2).

There are many parallel narrative lines, the film contains an essential aspect that relates back to us, to being human, and dress seems to be a layer of meaning inseparable from being human, as observed by audiences that watched my film.

To propose alternative practices outside a commercial arena and expose the emergence of a fashion design critique in a research and fashion design context, the essay film can help to develop a strategy for critical fashion practice in an expanded field of fashion and articulate a discontent about fashion itself. The essay film is a tool for thought, producing a critical fashion discourse through reflection. I filmed short video sequences, visual poems, (translating worries and thoughts about production, consumption, and dress) and each time a sequence was filmed and inserted into the video, the narrative change and I reflected on its impact upon the other images and let it reverberate with the meanings produced. I wanted the film to be about the relationship between bodies at first. I then related these bodies to the invisibility of 'productive bodies' in a capitalist system. The character bodies we see in the film are either 'making' or 'dressing', so that by the end of the video a text that refers to bodies in a much more dramatic way shifts the tone of the narrative from fashion to the victims of war, something much deeper in meaning than the viewer may initially believe. This shift was intentional.

I was interested in the production of a critical discourse building a self-questioning strategy in film. My research into deconstruction made me develop a deconstruction method that was embedded within the making process (a deconstruction from within). Reproducing my research methods within the film, I have let the juxtaposition of images take the lead and define the form (in the belief that form and content should share the same process). The fragmentary aspects of the work – the juxtaposition of the short clips, text, and sound – create a certain tension between the

Figure 65 Storyboard documentation, 2015-16

various parallel elements. I am looking to maintain a certain openness to the work, since I believe that the audience should consider the message accordingly to their

own frameworks, so I prefer to offer a form of guidance instead of authoritarian authorship or offering only one path (I had many inner arguments and struggles about how propagandistic approaches to sustainability were a major approach to avoid). I eventually opened up the end result, where the meaning is constructed from several narratives woven together, which brings the viewer a sense of being lost, but also encourages the responsibility and the freedom of the spectator. The juxtapositions of body images and the overlaid captions in the film bring to it another voice that induces much more dramatic reading of the images presented. The use of the essay film as a media brings an aspect of reflection to the research practice, opening dialogue between writing and making, or in this case, 'unmaking'. The motivation behind each sequence is related to concerns with production, dressing, and consumption, but the form in which they ended up edited together resonates with many possible readings from the audience. This film is an open-ended research document in the sense that it induces reflection but gives not only one single answer but a myriad of possibilities. The ending as such is forcefully left open but even though I intended there to be the presence of a narrator at the start, the narrator ended up being a silent reflection because, once again, I was interested in inducing an inner voice, a self-reflective thought instead of a narrator voice that seems to be commenting on what is seen from a knowledgeable position, almost godlike. Once again, I want the audience to take that role, not an external voice but more of an inner voice, so that reading the captions they would get into that mind-frame. The self-reflective position that I have had during this thesis translates onto the film itself and transmits to the audience of the film. Everything that leads to the ending is broad enough for each spectator to understand it in any form they relate to it. Among the many parallel lines of narration, the film contains an essential aspect that relates back to us, to being human, and dress seems to be a layer of meaning inseparable from being human.

Although I have started by looking at a Derridean deconstruction, by the end of this research I have leant also on Benjaminian and Warburgian methods because

I believe that there are, in the constellations this research has designed, points of connection between the two. Derrida makes clear in his book on Walter Benjamin, *The Force of Law* (1994), that justice is a concept that is yet to come. This does not mean that we cannot expect instances of justice in this life, and it does not mean that justice will arrive for us only in another life. He was clear that there was no other life. It means only that, as an ideal, it is that towards which we strive, without end. Not to strive for justice because it cannot be fully realized would be as mistaken as believing that one has already arrived at justice, and the only task is to arm oneself adequately to fortify its regime. The first is a form of nihilism (which he opposed) and the second is dogmatism (which he opposes). Derrida keeps us alive to the practice of criticism, understanding that social and political transformation is 'an incessant project', one that can not be relinquished, one that is coextensive with the becoming of life and the encounter with the 'Other, one that requires a reading of the rules by means of which a policy constitutes itself through exclusion or effacement' (Butler, 2004:32). In finding a strategy for a practice of unmaking, I moved further away from my initial environmental concerns about ethical practices of fashion to articulate a critical discussion of 'what fashion is'. The method of juxtaposing images and text for moving between theory and practice, in relation to making essay films critiquing fashion was a physical mechanism to transfer the complexity of the problems encountered by a fashion practitioner today when faced with the responsibility of making. Butler describes Derrida as having 'taken himself as the other', modelling a form of reflexivity, taking 'the Other as one to whom an incalculable responsibility is owed' (Butler, 2004:32). It is in this responsibility towards the other that I find my practice settled. The fashion practitioner's responsibility towards the other, incessant transformation; the strategies to continuously keep a practice of criticism towards what we do, how we do it and how this affect the other are a matter of 'how to live'; thus, they are universal. This research is a transversal strategy for criticality and is also reinforced by the fact that fashion itself is an essential part of the creation of our external identities, that is common to us all (at least in the modern world). Research is, as Professor of Design Tech-

niques Pieter Jan Stappers writes: 'perceived as seeking to understand of the past or present state of the world, and to establish explanations of why it must be so' (Stappers, 2007:82-83).

Derrida's engagement with Benjamin in his text *Force of Law: The Mystical Foundation of Authority* (2002) not only brings together the two authors, but was also important in my understanding of the relation between the practices of destruction in art in the 1960s and 1970s and fashion practices in the 1980s and 1990s, leading to current fragmented and expanded practices of critical fashion. Derrida saw a transversal theme of destruction between Heidegger, Benjamin and perhaps himself in text that referred to destruction:

> Benjamin's text and some texts by Carl Schmitt, even by Heidegger, began to intrigue me. Not only because of the hostility 'to-parlia-mentary democracy, even to democracy as such, (...) not only because of a certain interpretation of war, violence and language, but also because of a thematic of "destruction" that was very widespread at the time.
>
> Although Heideggerian Destruktion cannot be confused with the concept of destruction that was also at the centre of Benjaminian thought, one may well ask oneself what such an obsessive thematic might signify and what it is preparing or anticipating between the two wars, all the more so in that, in every case, this destruction also sought to be the condition of an authentic tradition and memory, and of the reference to an originary [sic] language (Derrida, 1997:66-67).

The first version of my essay-film, was entitled *This stands here as a sketch for the future* (17th July 2014, see url in page 257). I changed the title later to a simpler and more direct title *Unmaking,* but it was still a speculative exercise of imagination, implying not making or undoing, destructed preconceptions of fashion. Being an open reflection on the present condition of fashion it reflects on how fashion could not be just about production anymore and how it could be a tool for critical thinking. In *Thought-Images, Frankfurt School Writers' Reflections from Damaged Life* (2007) the philosopher Gerhard Richter re-interprets the genre of the *Denkbild* – the thinking image, image of reflection or simply 'thought-image' – that he understands as being a 'poetic form of condensed, epigrammatic snapshots' deeply connected to the project of critical theory (Richter, 2007:2). In my thesis, I am looking at the dialectical nature of 'fashion', through its representation in a fragmentary, interchanging form. Evans explains how the Benjaminian 'dialectical image' is a

paradigm of fashion in the following words:

> Fashion is a paradigm in the way that it can carry a contradiction - this is very modern - the whole thing is a kind of 'dialectical image' or 'critical constellation, not just of past and present but of differing modernities, and its 'now time' can hold them together in suspension (Evans, 2003:306)

The French philosopher and sociologist Georges Didi-huberman refers to the historian Aby Warburg's *Atlas Mnemosyne* (See figure 93), mentioning that Warburg's atlas analysis is on one hand finite, dedicated to a limited number of images (approximately a little more than thousand) but also infinite, because it always allows for new relationships and correspondences between each of the photographs. In the images displayed below we can see *Nouvelles histoires de fantômes* (*New Ghosts Stories,* 2014) at the Palais de Tokyo, an installation conceived by Georges Didi-huberman and Arno Gisinger after *Atlas Mnemosyne* by the art historian and iconographer Aby Warburg. The result is hybrid in its nature, not artwork in the traditional sense, but a meditation on the way in which photography and cinema have deepened our psychical and ethical relationship to images (see figure 92) it was very important to travel to Paris to experience the exhibition, where the audience was surrounded by images, moving and still images in huge projections, of not only history in the traditional sense of the larger narratives, but more of a history of the human experience. The exhibition certainly has had an impact on the way I treat image in my film and helped to formulate my method of montage/critical reflection that I have pursued. Georges Didi-huberman states that 'form is the temptation of discourse'. It is always tempting to arrest a form. It is in taking form that it develops, is fixed, and makes itself recognized (Didi-huberman In Bonnet and Mackay, 2016:122). In this thesis it was necessary to fixate form both in film and text to communicate the ideas explored. In his process of archiving, Warburg understood that thought 'is not a matter of forms found, but of transforming forms' (Didi-Huberman, 2013:19-21 translated by me from the Portuguese edition to English). My collection of images is already available, it is in the world, their disposition (via montage) is were meaning can be transformed. The study of Aby Warburg, like the study of Benjamin, has become a self-sustaining academic industry in

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itself, even though it came from relative obscurity (Rampley, 1997:41-55). Ernst H. Gombrich wrote extensively on Warburg in *Aby Warburg: An Intellectual Biography* (Gombrich, 1970). Aby Warburg like Erwin Panofsky is relevant for visual cultures for his study of 'Iconology', a method of interpretation in cultural history and the history of art. The critical historian regards the work of art not as a passive document but as an agent within the history of effects, the aim is not to know the work of art once and for all' but to 'gain access to the historical conditioning of its past and future'(Warburg, 1999:54). Warburg's project (see figure 93) turned to Warburg into a theatre of memory for human experience. The Warburgian *Atlas* was in its way 'a visual instrument of invocation'(Warburg, 1999:52), which is how I see my essay film. In it, my meticulously arranged sequences of film, are experimental arrays assembled to create and convey with the aid of specific individual images' powerful dynamic connections.

To return to my fashion analysis from a filmic perspective, in the book *The Dialectics of seeing (1997)*, Buck-Morris underlines Walter Benjamin's interest in fashion perhaps because 'fashion expresses the essence of metaphysics of transiency' (Buck-Morris, 1997:23). According to Lehmann, 'fashion does not just reflect social change but is a social force in its own right'(2000). In creating the perfect expression of the contemporary spirit – by drawing on the past – fashion excels at anticipating things to come. As I underlined previously, Benjamin was convinced of one thing, that what was needed was visual, and not a linear logic: concepts were to be imagistically constructed, according to the cognitive principles of montage. As a dialectical image, fashion itself is a tool that offers a meta-narrative of the operations of contemporary world; it is self-interrogating and self-analytical, and it exists in permanent dialogical tension. This tension is translated into the montage apparatus, I work with the tension established between images, exploring a criticality recorded in between images. Benjamin's perception of the effect of technologies shattering experience into fragments interrogating 'montage' as the 'formal principle of the new technology be used to reconstruct an experiential world so

Figure 66 Georges Didi-Huberman and Arno Gisinger, *New Stories of Ghosts*, 2014

that it provided a coherence of vision necessary for a philosophical reflection - these were the questions that the *Arcades Project* tried to answer (Buck-Morris, 1997:23). Miriam Hansen's essay 'Benjamin, Cinema and Experience' perceives an ambivalence in Benjamin's notion of the objects 'looking back at you' and his declaration about 'images are juxtaposed like film' (Buck-Morris, 1997:250). The questions posed when building a practice of fashion through the use of video as medium refers to the use of montage as a way to interrogate fashion. The movement between thought, image, and text is brought forward by the representational forms. The intellectual or emotional context provided by the viewer can equally be absorbed or conversely determine a work's impact. Movement between these realms mirrors the movement between, for example, an intellectual context provided by research and the lateral spaces of the image or artwork that resist being pinned down to an argument. Likewise, the latter can suggest a different shape or direction for research. The pace of the video and its fragmentary aspect was defined by the method used to construct the narrative of the film, which is in itself a

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deconstruction of thought. The linearity of the narrative deconstructed from within – in the montage – was embedded in the making process of the film and is inherent in the materialization of the work. The fragmentary nature of the collage refers back to both Warburg and Benjaminian fragmentary methods and it structured the process of making: I defined a set of rules to work within, and these rules (see section 4.5 and 4.6 in this chapter) constrained the form and content of the film while also finally constrain its pace.

4.8. Fashion film meaning-making: contents for critical practice

The film practice uses film to build on layers of images and meaning, and focuses on the juxtaposition of image sequences; in the case of the proposed practice-based research method, the film narrative is used to discuss what fashion is, using images as thoughts, memories, and representations. The principle of montage is that a third meaning is created by the juxtaposition of two images (as shown in chapter 2, section 2.5, figure 24 represents the editing process), rather than any immutable meaning inherent in each separate image. The sequences filmed were not all used in the final version of the film. Some gained relevance and others lost through the process of making – that was based in re-thinking the form each time a new sequence was added. The audience is allowed to form its own parallel narrative or narratives while being lost, and at the same time I feel I always hold hands with the spectator, guiding them to where I intended to take them, which is to the intense finale, where the story in the written text creates a dramatic tone. The text in the narration was re-written several times. The text in the essay film leaves the narrative in a much darker place than originally expected at the beginning of the film. The text that finally appears as subtitles in the film is the following:

> (Slide 1)
> Thought: noun
> A thought came to me as to how we should proceed: idea, notion, line of thinking, belief, concept, conception, conviction, opinion, view, impression, image, perception, mental picture; assumption, presumption, hypothesis, theory, supposition, postulation, abstraction, apprehension, understanding, conceptualisation; feeling, funny feeling, suspicion, sneaking suspicion, hunch.

00:25"
If I had to conduct an experiment
that could give you an insight into my thoughts

00:42"
I would create an image.

The text starts by situating us in the realm of thought, and I am offering an insight into my thoughts through the use of images. It may seem a little too literal, but I wanted to make sure the audience is aware that we are now in the realm of though in the process of being formed. The structure of ever-changing images with the fast editing is intended as a way to convey the thought process, where there is a juxtaposition of thoughts that is not necessarily subject to a logical order but it is more of an unstructured association of images. The second part of the text is based on an article that I encountered in 2003 (the article is reproduced entirely in appendix 2), that had (at the time) a huge impact on my fashion practice by juxtaposing death, identity, and clothing. Going back to my previous practice (see chapter 1), a relation between fashion and memory was at the centre. The small excerpt that I am referring to, an article in *Tank magazine* 'Post-war' (Gafic, 2003), featuring the Bosnia-Herzegovina post-war period with photographed objects and clothes belonging to the unidentified dead. The relation between clothing and death in part of the description of the photographer's first-hand experience becomes my own in this appropriation of the first–person account in the film bringing in the density of meaning that I wanted to construct since the start of the film. See below my appropriation of the text as used in the film:

07:32"
I have just returned from the commemorative centre of Tuzla in Bosnia.
The commission for missing persons
Organised the identification of dozens of bodies of the people kill by the Serbian army during the occupation.
The human remains were displayed simply, behind the mosque.
I photographed their personal belongings, that were kept in small transparent bags marked with numbers
to connect them to the white plastic bags containing the remains of the dead.
Often, these items are crucial to identification.
When the remains of the bodies
are excavated from the mass graves,
their clothes are washed and dried in the sun in the same way
that we, the survivors dry our clothes.
But when you look closely at the clothes, you can see the bullet holes
and the roots of the plants that grew on the surface of the mass graves.
Now, those clothes are drying in front of the city morgue where the visitors come to try and identify

the remains of the missing.
Someone's identity is reduced to these small ordinary items yet the context makes them extraordinary.
These clothes become a last resort of identity.
(*Unmaking*, 2016)

Finding such a deep subject within a fashion magazine rippled across my own fashion practice: the strong connection to my own concerns about fashion's relevance and the exploration of the relation between memory and fashion was somehow confirmed by that article and it gave structure to my questions. As this study developed, the text found its way into the narration (which ended up being a silent narration) in the essay film. That tonal shift is the only moment where I feel I might be telling the audience where to go and it is to a place of loss and sadness.

Built on layers of images and meaning, the intervals between the images, the gaps through which the images can appear, point to a deep interest in the notion of the image as such: image as memory, imprint, representation, which was present my my previous practice (see chapter 1, section 1.5, page 26). The sound design was created in collaboration with John Kannenberg in a collaborative practice and of letting others 'interfere'. The idea was for the sound designer to create a mood that would be in dialogue with the images in a non-hierarchical manner, sometimes enhancing them while at other times creating some friction with them. The bass rumbles heard are intended to speak to the subject matter; they refer to elements of the film by using similar references although never being completely literal. The parallel lines of the layered narrations lead to the 'reveal', working like a mirror, pointing back at us. We are all bodies, we are all human, and the film seems, in the end, to talk about all of us, even if it seems to be talking about something and someone else. Coming from a fashion background, I have a very clear notion that the image is never a given. The fictitious reality of fashion only reveals its relationship to humanity, the body, and work in a crisis situation, like the present one in which human conditions and relationships with climate change and environmental damage and probable extinction become clearer. The fragmentary and abstract narratives on display from the beginning of the film make it clear that no obvious answer will be given, but at the same time they try to bring the audience members

closer to their own answers and evoke emotions within them. No uniform meaning is intended to be given to the film's audience. The form would be defined by the relationship between the images. My intention when making it was that this would better translate 'thought' as the process that I intended to portray in the film. This simple process also contributed to the politics of reduction that I tried to keep in the making, with the use of minimum resources possible and dematerialized practices. The fashion apparatus deployed by fashion practitioners in recent decades has become mostly centred upon visual strategies, due to the world-wide web and online communications. In appendix 1 documents the original plan with all the film sequences produced by the time of confirmation (17th July 2014). Although I have been very reticent about providing an explanation of each sequence I believe that I can provide a declaration of my intentions with each sequence and, perhaps inevitably, a speculative exercise where I interpret my own ideas in the film. I do not believe that as an artist I have privileged access to the content of the film, but I do have access to its making process and to my own intentions while making it and I can give access to my reflective processes of thinking. In appendix 6 we can find all the cards that have been used in the thinking process of the research and they contain elements that bring together theory and practice into the thesis text and essay-film.

In sequence 1 *Dressing shirt* (see figure 67) the performer, a woman, stands in front of the camera with the sky as back scenery for a seemingly banal gesture of dressing a shirt. Slowly, the performer buttons the shirt until it is entirely buttoned. While the banality of the common gesture seems empty of meaning, my intention was to bring the audience close to the performer through a gesture that is familiar and something that we can all relate to. By making the plan so clean and technical I wanted to avoid the so-called 'male gaze'. I planned the frame carefully and I believe it is reminiscent of feminist video works like the famous Martha Rosler's 1975 video art work *Semiotics of the kitchen* (see figure 68). Where the camera technically documents the action, placing the performer in the centre of the frame and
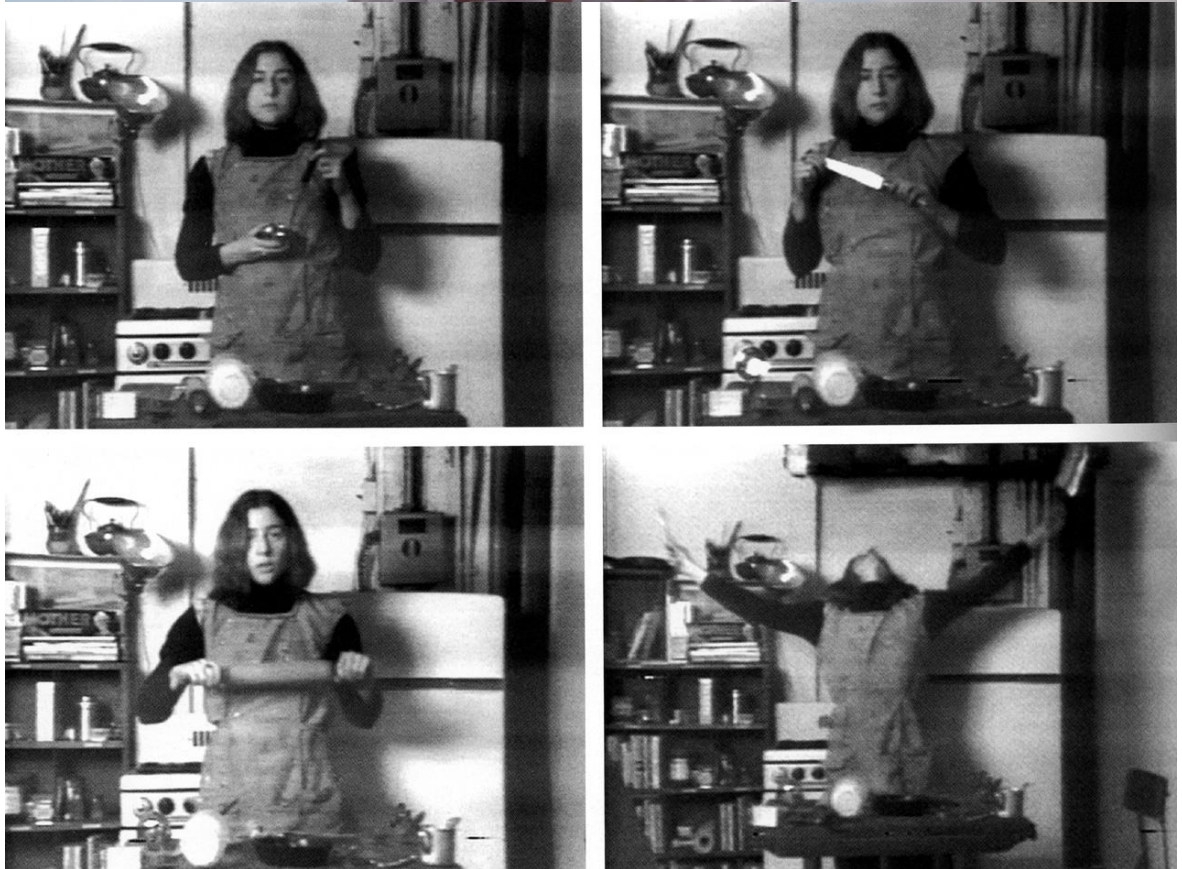
Figure 67 Film still, *Unmaking*, **sequence 1, 2016**

Figure 68 Martha Rosler, *Semiotics of the Kitchen*, **1975**

using an extremely objective still camera. Rosler's Semiotics of the Kitchen (1975) is a feminist parody video and performance piece considered a critique of the commodified versions of traditional women's roles in modern society. The images

Figure 69 Film still, *Unmaking*, sequence 2, 2016

of getting dressed are juxtaposed with images of sewing and a spectral sequence of 'imagined sewing' and 'imagined getting dressing' that refer to bringing together productive bodies (Guery and Deleule, 2014) and dressed bodies. Foucault is cited in Guéry and Deleule (2014) in order to link Marx's diagnosis of capitalism with his own critique of power/knowledge. What the authors designate as 'The Productive Body' brings together Marxism and theories of the body-machine, which I refer to via the images created.

In sequence 2, *Dressing shirt* (see figure 69), by mimicking gestures the performer repeats the position of sequence 1; she stands in front of the camera with the sky as set, mimicking the gesture of dressing a shirt. Slowly, the performer pretends to button the shirt until is entirely buttoned. My intention with this sequence is to enhance the familiarity of the gesture because it has been repeated so many times we would be able to reproduce it by heart, mimicking the gestures done when buttoning up a shirt. In sequence 9, which is quickly juxtaposed to sequence 1 and 2 *Sewing* and *Mimicking Sewing* are displayed In the same way as sequence 2. I intended to move between real sewing and mimicking sewing this purpose. The performer I chose was himself a maker, familiar with the actions he had to repro-

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Figure 70 Film still, *Unmaking*, sequence 4, 2016

duce and also he was a male; I was interested in having a male figure doing the sewing and knitting performances because somehow these are activities usually related to traditional women's roles which I did not want to perpetuate as such.

In the film sequence 4 *Overdressed* (see figure 70), featuring the performer Liz Vahia, with whom I had previously worked, the still camera observes as she dresses in a vast array of clothing items. It uses a largely static camera and a plain set. Vahia navigates a dress lexicon, adding a new layer of clothing at each step along the way. She begins with a skirt, which she puts on quickly, as if trying to be quick to leave, and at the end of the entire work the performer can barely move with the number of garments she has put on, inducing laughter, giving the sequence a tone of parody (which is purposely very distinct from the rest of the film). The focus on the different garments is important, since I intend the film to challenge the viewer into how diverse this wardrobe is (multiple identities). Vahia's wardrobe is used in this sequence; initially we intended to film her putting on her entire wardrobe but we had to give up that idea since Liz is a collector of vintage items and she had an entire room as wardrobe. She randomly selected the pieces used and she also did not exactly determine an order although she would have selected tighter cloth-

Figure 71 Viktor & Rolf, *Russian Doll***, 2008**

ing for the start and larger outerwear for the ending. This sequence is also related to Christian Boltanski's *The Clothes of François C* (1972) and Hans-Peter Feldmann *All the Clothes of a Woman* (1970) both mentioned in chapter 3 (see section 3.2.1). Also important to mention is Viktor & Rolf's project *Russian Doll* (see figure 71), already mentioned in chapter 3 (see section 3.2.6).

The sequence 6 *Unravelling Dress* (see figure 72) was recorded in Hilly Fields in

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Figures 72 and 73 Film still, *Unmaking*, sequence 6 and 12, 2016

south London and was also done with the intent of being a literal representation of unmaking. The sequence makes a connection with the idea that is present in my project *An impossible wardrobe for the invisible*, where clothes are also destroyed, except this time it is within a cycle of destruction and reconstruction (the woollen thread is reused later in another filmed sequence, see figures 72 and 73). The dress was knitted with the intent of being destroyed so the construction was planned as such; the movement of the performer was only dictated by the unravelling gestures. After making this film and within the making this study, I found

Figure 74 Francis Alÿs, *Fairy Tales*, 1995

that photographer Donald Christie had also worked in a sequence of unravelling

for Hussein Chalayan photographs and a video for the Venice Biennale in 1998.

Coincidentally, both the knitted dressed are made of a similar off-white colour and

filmed in an exterior location. The sequence was done originally has an independ-

ent idea but when put together within the film, it generated the creation of a making

sequence with thread, illustrated in this chapter in sequence 12 (in *What a factory*

might be). The film as a parallel with Francis Alÿs art project of 1995 *Fairy Tales*

(see figure 74), where the artist documents the action of walking around the city in

his unravelling sweater, leaving a trace of his blue sweater everywhere he passes,

like a trail of colour, a drawing in the city landscape. This is a fable of loss. The

thread becomes an urban drawing of his journey.

The procedure that I have developed is different from former artists and fashion

practitioners insofar as I have used montage to juxtapose these different sequenc-

es in order to assert a fashion criticality. In my attempt to depict 'thought in the pro-

cess of being formed', I have used montage itself as a form of thinking in images. Although my film deals with recurrent themes, and unoriginal themes (represented throughout artistic and fashion practices), my original contribution that goes beyond the work of other artists is in the dialogue that is established between the juxtaposed images via editing. The montage of these leitmotifs is what generates a critical understanding and stimulates questioning from the audience. Although I did not aim to get formal feedback from the audiences during this thesis, the audience has responded to my film during screenings and exhibitions where the film was shown, some of the insights I have received from viewers have been related to the way in which the film reminds them of something they have experienced, and how it makes them question fashion's role and how they think about it.

The reception to my film in Wellington, Lisbon, Vienna, London, Warsaw and Arnhem led up to discussions settled on diverse understandings of 'fashion' discussed with the audience. The viewers tend to access the film aesthetically, but also considering the implications that the film raises, which they related to their own

Figure 75 Film still, *Unmaking*, sequence 7, 2016

Figure 76 Film still, *Unmaking*, sequence 8, 2016

memories and personal experiences; for example, a woman that had related the final sequence of the film with text, to a couple of garments she brought from Chile when she moved to Europe ten years ago, saying that she can't throw them away because they keep the memory of her former self, her 'Chilean self'.
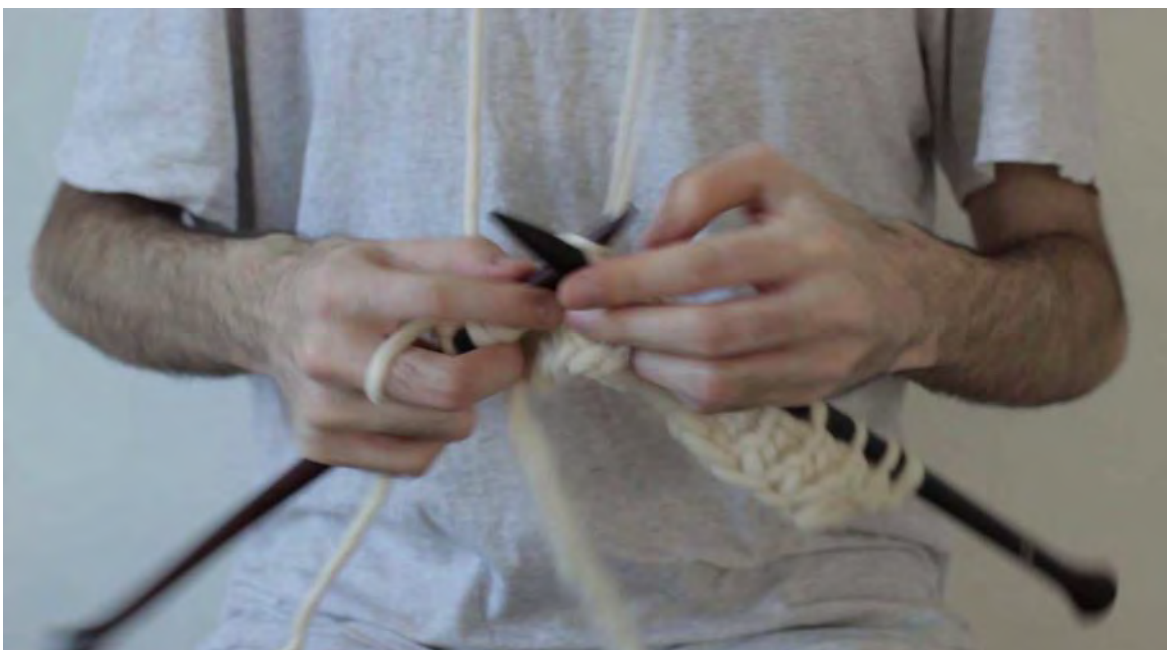
Figure 77 Film still, *Unmaking*, sequence 10, 2016

In Sequence 12 *What a factory might be: thread* (see figure 73), the thread being wrapped around the body as if mimicking the places where seams could be, the structure becomes a very narrow almost non-existent garment. Once again the body is seen here as a tool, a factory for making but it also the same body that is dressed. I was interested in the gestures of making the structure and representing the body as being both the producer and the consumer, in a reference to the invisibility of the bodies of producers in capitalist systems. The gestures were filmed so that all the actions were recorded and in the end we filmed a shot of the body with the structure of thread 'dressed' on the body. The intention of the film is to give the film the presence of makers. The repetition of gestures and the implements and the body itself becomes a signal system themselves.

In sequence 7 *What a factory might be: fabric*, an idea originated in William Morris text from 1886, I have presented in image below (see figure 75), the performer is using embroidery hoops as a 'jewellery piece' that is used here as an idea for 'what a factory might be' reducing the notion of 'factory' to an extreme – as part of a simple mechanism where the fabric is wrapped around the body reminding

Figure 78 Film still*, Unmaking*, sequence 11, 2016

Figure 79 Sanja Iveković, *Instructions No.1*, 1976.

the ancient Greek *Chiton* or *Himation* or *Peplos* shapes, where a cloth is draped around the body and can afterwards be undone, suggesting that for fashionability purposes, we could put things together only if temporarily and undo them when

Figure 80 Film still, *Unmaking*, sequence 9, 2016

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Figure 81 Film still, *Unmaking*, sequence 9, 2016

necessary.

In the sequence 8 *Consumption* (see figure 76), perhaps the most literal of the sequences I have filmed, the camerawoman and I took the camera to Oxford Street on a Saturday morning and just walked up and down the street getting images of the people shopping and carrying bags. The intention of this sequence was to record the movement of people in an area dedicated to consumption and also to have documentary images, bringing the film into reality and familiarity.

The Sequence 10 *Hand Knitting (male hands)*, (see figure 77) in the same way as sequence 9, real knitting and mimicking knitting. In this sequence, I intend to relate the thread from the unravelling sequence 6 and bring it back to making again, introducing the notion of a cycle of destruction and reconstruction.

In sequence 11 *Pattern drawn on the body* (see figure 78), the sequence of pattern self-drawn on a female body could be said to be reminiscent of Croatian artist Sanja Iveković, video *Instructions No.1*, 1976, (see figure 79) where a close-up shot shows the artist as a young woman painting black arrows over the contours

Figures 82 and 83, Film still, *Unmaking,* sequence 14, 2016

of her face, as a surgeon might when preparing her for cosmetic surgery. She then massages her face along the arrows, erasing them and leaving a smudged residue across her skin. As in Iveković's video, the performer draws on her own body with a dark pencil. Although in the sequence that I have created, the performer is drawing patterns that refer to the patterns for clothing, the reading is open and it could be interpreted as marks for cosmetic surgery or to open up the body. It is somewhat a violent gesture to mark the body in this way even if done by oneself.

In sequence 9, *Sewing and Mimicking Sewing* (see figure 82 and 83), in the same way that sequence 2, I intended to move between real sewing and mimicking sewing. For this purpose the performer I chose was himself a maker, as familiar with the actions he had to reproduce, and also he was a male; I was interested in having a male figure doing the sewing and knitting performances because these are activities usually related to traditional women's roles which I did not want to perpetuate as such.

In the Sequence 13, *Dressing shirt* (see figures 84 and 85) the performer stands in front of the camera with the sky as scenery for a banal gesture of dressing a shirt. Slowly, The performer buttons the shirt until is entirely buttoned. While the banality of the common gesture seems empty of meaning, my intention was to bring the audience close to the performer through a gesture that makes dressing somewhat familiar and something that we can all relate to.

In the last sequence, Sequence 14 *Mimicking putting on imaginary shirt* (see figure 85) the performer stands in front of the camera with the sky as scenery reproducing the gesture of dressing a shirt. Slowly, the performer pretends to button the shirt until is entirely buttoned. While the banality of the common gesture seems empty of meaning, my intention was to bring the audience to relate to the familiarity of the gesture because it has been repeated so many times; we would be able to reproduce it by heart, mimicking the gestures done buttoning up a shirt.

My film has a 'very little almost nothing' (see section 2.7, p.97) approach in some of its 'factories sequences', where you see the body of the performer working with a frame of thread around the body; the performer's body becomes the factory and hands and the product a simple thread with tied knots, being 'very little almost nothing'; that if we rethink production to the very minimum, maybe we could have a minimal factory of hands putting together frames. The sequence of unravelling the woollen dress also refers to a reduction returning to almost nothing. I am interest-

ed in the illustration of cyclical movement of production and destruction, so familiar to fashion in its transient nature.

The scenes in my film of the girl wearing 'infinite outfits' and the woman unravelling a dress are included to illustrate these parallel movements of making and unmaking in fashion that are constantly running: juxtaposing the images of unravelling the knitted dress, with the making of a thread structure over a body, and hands knitting, connecting these three images in that idea of circular movement – where the thread becomes dress > is unravelled > becomes thread again > becomes structure and can be re-knitted. I believe that we can think about that movement of production (body as factory is how I see it – productive bodies) and explore how we could perform it and document it. I am interested in the idea of production–destruction, as I explored previously – always a quiet gesture – but trying to understand how to reveal this 'circular' movement within the action itself. I am concerned with exploring the making, the 'bringing forth', with the 'death' and 'rebirth' of the production.

The sequence moves on to a parallel with today's excess of production, referring to someone's wardrobe, in this case a sort of archetypal wardrobe because it is made of vintage and contemporary outfits that translate a certain lack of temporality. This wardrobe (that is originally the performer's wardrobe) is made of garments of different decades, and she puts the clothing items on, one over the other, until she can barely move and it is physically impossible for her to wear any more.

This sequence, originally juxtaposed with images of making, now acts as a huge contrast when juxtaposed with documentary footage of Oxford Street in London, where people walk around with their shopping bags, resonating with Benjamin's or Baudelaire's notion of the urban *flaneur*. Both sequences illustrate a sort of excess of shopping and an exaggeration that gains a comedic tone in this desperate attempt of wearing multiple layers. It is a reminder of all the skins we put on, how

they play with the construction of our identity. That moves towards a sequence of literal making and unmaking: a woman in a park unravels a knitted dress while another sequence constructs a structure of thread around her body. A 'factory' made by her own hands that makes and unmakes, her body is displayed with numbered sections that evoke, in the minds of fashion designers and workers, the patterns that are used to make clothing. Finally, a white shirt being put on by a male body seems to close the cycle but also connects the drawing of the body with the shapes of the shirt and the gesture of drawing with the gesture of dressing (drawing over the body), resonating with the making-unmaking aspect. This final section is layered with a text that connects bodies-identities-dress (see section 4.8).

4.9. Discussion

The use of film as a medium in the development of my fashion practice allows for reflexivity, using film editing as a language of thought: video-thought, proposing a conceptual framework for cinematic modes that acknowledge 'film as thought experiment'. At once speculative and self-reflexive, film when understood as a thought experiment invites a variety of hermeneutic approaches, relating to the meaning of texts and the ways in which they are understood and permitted to 'think the unthinkable', while generating rules that may redefine what we understand by 'narrative'. This strategy allows describing the relationships within the fashion system through metaphor and allegories that would allow a juxtaposition of meanings and content, using the minimum means possible, simplifying it, dismantling its parts. The matter of the linearity of the narrative became secondary as I became interested in the density of associations that an image allows, the idea of Benjamin's 'dialectical image' (Penksy, 2004). The questions posed when building a practice of fashion through the use of film as medium used montage as a way to self-interrogate fashion, to ask the question of 'What is fashion?'. Understanding that 'montage is conflict', as Eisenstein famously proclaimed (1929):

> Just as cells in their division form a phenomenon of another order, the organism or embryo, so, on the other side of the dialectical leap from the shot there is montage. By what, then is montage characterised and, consequently, its cell - the shot? By collision. By the conflict of two pieces in opposition to each other. By conflict. By

collision (Eisenstein,1929:37-70).

Fashion theorists like Hollander, Barnard, Entwistle, Finkelstein, Roach-Higgins, and Eicher attempted to define the words fashion, dress, and clothing, words that are entangled in the 'complicated network of similarities and criss-crossing' that the terms bring (Barnard, 2002:11). To me, this entanglement of ideas that form fashion could be represented through the conflict between images, through montage. The question 'What is fashion?' has been posed endlessly by fashion theorists. According to Simmel, fashion is 'a process that consists of balancing destruction and up building' and 'its content acquires characteristics by destruction of an earlier form' (Simmel, 1957:549). This notion is reflected in the process used in the making of my film - developed between the making of a series of scenes and then editing them together, every time unmaking this sequence and re-editing the whole video. This continuous deconstruction of the filmic sequence is in a way a form of reproducing the mechanisms of fashion in the same way I did previously with clothing items within my fashion design practice. In Deleuze and Guattari's What is Philosophy? 'The concept is a whole because it totalises its components, but it is a fragmentary whole'; every concept has a history and there are no simple concepts, every concept has components and is defined by them. 'There is no concept with only one component; they all have a multiplicity to them' (Deleuze and Guattari, 2014:15-17). Fashion is a concept: it has a multiplicity and also has a becoming that involves its relationship with other concepts on the same plane, what Ludwig Wittgenstein calls a 'family resemblance' (Barnard 2002:10-11; Wittgenstein 1958:66-7). While there is no single meaning or sense that is common with all of them, each of the terms will have something in common to all of them and draws together the family terms: clothing, adornments, dress and fashion. Barnard explains why this would give an idea of the 'difficulty involved in, if not the impossibility of, trying to provide a rigid definition of the meanings of any of these words' (Barnard, 2002:11). There is no stand–alone definition and, as Wilson has pointed out, fashion is like all cultural phenomena ' especially of the symbolic or mythic kind, [which] are curiously resistant to being imprisoned in one 'meaning'

(Wilson 1985:10-11).

The pacing of the narrative of the essay-film is established by the fragmentary methods used in the construction of the film. At the start of the film-making process, the experimental nature of the research practice was clearly defined; during the making process, form and content develop simultaneously, as Simmel emphasised 'on fashion one can't say that it 'is'. It is always becoming (Simmel with Bauman's emphasis,1992:56) In his article 'Perpetuum Mobile', Bauman refers to fashion 'in the deregulated privatised society of consumers' as being a self-feeding contraption in continuous uninterrupted movement. The 'becoming' of fashion is not only unstoppable, he says, but it even acquires more impetus and ability to accelerate as its impact rises. Various sequences are joined together to create a system of meanings into which viewers may descend. We can find similar 'becoming' in the film, and also 'unmaking', where I have tried to avoid the conventional approaches to linear narrative through the editing process, shaping the discontinuity of the discourse throughout the film, preventing the viewer from drawing on their conventional film habits to comprehend the film.

Chapter 5. Conclusion

5.1. Introduction

To conclude implies finalization. However, the main theory that supports this thesis, deconstruction, implies an open-ended process of thinking between viewers of the film and readers of the thesis. Saying that it has been the ethos of my practice-as-research to pose questions rather than provide answers, as the main aim of the thesis is to provide criticality, the film is intentionally open-ended to stimulate the dialogue with the viewer.

I have argued in the first chapter of this thesis (section 1.4.1) that fashion studies have remained undertheorized from the perspective of the practitioner and although the site for publishing articles 'about' and 'through' practice has been created in academic journals as the journal *Fashion Practice, The Journal of Design, Creative Process & the Fashion Industry* (2009), this space was barely claimed by practitioners writing critically about their own practice. I am determined to work on further exploration, developing the proposed ideas and methodology. What follows here is a summary of my findings, proof of my original contribution to knowledge, and a setting out of plans for future research.

This thesis was started having in mind the current crisis within the fashion system, mentioned in this thesis as 'the crucial moment' (see chapter 2, section 2.1) and the dissolution of the borders between fashion, design and arts. Chapters 2 and 3 lay the groundwork for 'other' practices of fashion. An investigation of their origin, influences, and background, settled both in fashion and artistic practices, was helpful to create a map of current expanded fashion practices. Practitioners who have, as stated chapter 2, expanded their fashion practice beyond the making of clothes, communicating their ideas through films, sculpture, performance, and installation in the 1990s and early 2000s are analysed in chapter 3. Formal, conceptual and ethical considerations provided a framework for the criticality that is being

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developed in today's fashion practice.

If initially my questions were centred only around fashion production and sustainability, the study of the practice itself evolved towards generating a discourse of critical fashion practices. The topic of research aims to identify new ways of approaching fashion practice, through the exploration of an artistic research methodology at the intersection of fashion, fine art, and film disciplines, seeking to extend the potential for fashion practitioners to work and communicate critically. The theoretical apparatus undertaken, through which I have engaged with a fashion studies readership, indicates how this aim of developing a strategy for critical fashion practice has been achieved and I will elucidate the implication of the research outcomes for the field of art practice and practice-based research.

5.2. Reflections

The present work not only is a self-explanatory theoretical critique, but also proposes its principle qualities in the abstracted form of an essay film, a piece of work that is the result of experiments I developed over the course of three years. When I began this research, I looked into fashion and sustainability literature, mostly because the problem I was trying to solve was initially the one related to the ethics of fashion production, believing that fashion production was not possible any more due to overproduction that has led to devastating environmental issues. In the course of my research journey, the foreground question of 'What is fashion?' became more and more central and the methodologies became more about what would happen if fashion as practiced via film became relevant in a political domain, the theoretical framework of visual cultures became more and more relevant, the more the practice became led by the idea of filming an 'unthought-thought'. I primarily discuss my essay film practice as a fashion artwork, and I contend that the sequences filmed have political force – specifically in their form as deconstruction.

Deconstruction, first and foremost, asserts that there is not one single intrinsic

meaning to be found in a work, but rather many, and often these can be conflicting. A field that is in constant change cannot be crystallized in one conclusion, I will therefore propose reflections upon my practice and writing in this conclusion chapter. Deconstruction is always a double movement of simultaneous affirmation and undoing. There were therefore, instants of making, unmaking, and re-making within this practice via the method of editing and re-editing of the film – via montage. To deconstruct, as stated in chapter 2, is to take something apart along the structural 'fault lines' created by the ambiguities inherent in one or more of its key concepts, in order to reveal the equivocations or contradictions that make the work possible.

In this thesis, the research question proposed is: How can my artistic fashion practice, which is here conducted through the essay film, create a critical discourse within fashion in the expanded field? The practice presented with this thesis is an essay-film that attempts to answer the question 'What is fashion?', an aporetic question, that presents film as a thinking method to reflect upon fashion itself. Indebted to Conceptual Art, this practice-based PhD proposes a strategy for critical fashion practices in a research context at the intersection of fashion, fine arts, and film methodologies. I am determined to work on further exploration, developing the proposed ideas and methodology. There is in this strategy a negation of one of the main aspects of fashion: making clothes. By not producing garments, I take a position of resistance against over-production of the fashion product. By working with film, I have replaced the product with the idea/image. What this investigation proposes is a change in the role of fashion designers, who are invited here to critically question their own role within production, to take up a post-productivist role within design. Through *Unmaking* I removed fashion practice not only from its commercial sphere but also from its original purpose of dressing. From a genealogical point of view, design is fundamentally a practice; in removing myself from the fashion practice, I dissociate the practitioner from the practice. However despite the fact that I have chosen to work with film, I believe that the strategies

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explored within this thesis can be used by any practitioner who wants to develop a critical mode of practice-based research and writing that explores and evokes the altered ways of seeing, thinking, and feeling provoked by certain kinds of film for the viewer/reader. I will consider how these techniques could contribute to the development of a practice-based critical thought within the context of this research project.

As described in chapter 4, my practice evolved towards what I have designated as a 'practice of unmaking', using the developed notion of 'critical' through a filmic deconstruction of the concept of 'fashion', based in fashions' own complexity and interchangeability. The film was constantly re-edited and re-analysed throughout its several stages of making (see chapter 4). Its reflectiveness was enabled by engagement with the theory, which has been here reflected in the literature review and contextual review of practices, locating my praxis in a historical lineage of similar practices of 'unmaking' (see chapter 3). I demonstrate, in chapter 4, how film became a method by which to facilitate the transition back and forth between practice and theory – thought and making; film as a medium is a form of recording, and as such it became my way of documenting the formation of thought. The deconstructive structure of my film is intended to disrupt the usual attempts to illustrate an idea with practice. My research's resulting contribution to knowledge is a strategy for critical practice in fashion. The essay film format allows me to articulate a discontent with the fashion system itself. My film becomes fragmentary, to decompose. It translates the transient nature of fashion into images. Narrative revolves around images as thoughts, memories, and representations, to question and discuss what fashion is. At once speculative and self-reflexive, thought experiments in film invite a variety of hermeneutic approaches, relating to the meaning of texts and the ways they are understood and permitted to 'think the unthinkable', while generating rules that may redefine what we understand by 'narrative'. This strategy allows me to describe the relationships within the fashion system (production, dress and bodies) through metaphor and allegories that juxtapose meanings and content, using the minimum means possible, simplifying it, dismantling its

parts. The questions I pose when building a practice of fashion through film become a way for fashion to interrogate itself, to ask the question 'What is fashion?'. The procedure that I have developed is different from former artists and fashion practitioners insofar as I have recorded performative actions in a similar way to former artists but I use cinematic montage as means to juxtapose meanings –different recorded sequences – in order to assert a fashion criticality by creating conflict and dissonance between sequences. Although the film deals with recurrent themes that have been depicted by other artists, like destruction, transience, and the use of clothing as presence/absence of the human body, my original contribution that goes beyond the work of other artists is how I use these leitmotifs allowing an understanding and/or conflict between images and stimulating questioning.

As stated in chapter 3, my conceptual configuration share commonalities with the works of Gustav Metzger and Yoko Ono's early 1960s destructive arts practices started in the 1970's; instead of working within the fine-arts context, the artistic practice is settled in the fashion discipline. Although deconstruction has roots in Martin Heidegger's concept of *Destruktion*, to deconstruct is not to destroy; in my practice there is a movement that goes through destruction processes and reconstruction processes that can be seen in the film methods.

What the literature review in chapter 2 provides is a framework for the desired break from prevailing narratives regarding fashion itself, by allowing an understanding of knowledge not as a 'secure neutral basis but to consider that it is incumbent to any discipline to offer a reflexive account of their own methodologies' (Nelson, 2013:55-56).

I construct this paradigm simply in terms of a distinctive practice as a research methodology that mobilizes particular modes of knowing (those of fashion and film), embodied in my practice. Thus, the making of the film draws on my research aims through montage as a process where by juxtaposing images I proposed

meanings for 'fashion'. Through the rhythmic editing of image and sound, my essay-film generates a critical positioning, making intuitive leaps between associations. In proposing a representation of thought in the process of being thought I create a process that should be arranged and re-arranged according to the current train of thought, interchangeable, unstable and in flux, constituting an archive of observations, in dialogue with the discipline of fashion itself. I have translated, in images, the transient nature of fashion.

Whether we conceive fashion as narrative with grammar and syntax (as Roland Barthes proposes) or as a site for knowledge production as I am proposing with this thesis, the fact is that our understanding of fashion is changing. Perceiving fashion as a process instead of a static medium, not only embodied in its material form of dress/fashion/ornament but also as a belief, allows for practice–based research considering fashion as having its own discursive agency. Thinking through fashion, like thinking through any other cultural process, allows fashion to be understood further, and furthermore to be understood as site for knowledge production in opposition to being seen mostly as product for commerce:

Firstly, I argue that an expanded fashion form has an intrinsic aspect in a formal sense, containing elements that allow going beyond the confined area of fashion to discuss ideas and problems, like the current environmental concerns and the bodies that take part in the fashion system itself (productive and dressed bodies). These techniques can also be used in expanded fashion practices. By combining and consistently applying the described forms, concepts, and methods, a step towards the expression of the criticality can be made.

Secondly, I argue that expanded fashion practitioners may have not only taken inspiration from the fine-arts practices but have now appropriated some of its methods to obtain some of the criticality that is inherent to the fine-arts approaches from the 1970's and was absent in production and market–centred practices.

Thirdly, I argue that expanded fashion practitioners have displayed an interest in criticality and questioning fashion and have incorporated this into their work in a variety of ways. Most exemplary in this regard is that of the *Transfashional* (2016-17) project and *The future of fashion is now* (2014-2015) and the works of the fashion artists I have already mentioned, Joolen, Hoette, and Berger.

Fourthly, I argue that there are a growing number of fashion makers who are looking for the development of critical methods for fashion (see chapter 3). These developments require their own vocabulary and methodologies that can be built upon my own practice-research, building on my strategies for criticality: juxtaposition, reflection, and deconstruction.

5.3. Unfinalizability

My research has been rooted in what I initially believed to be a tension between theory's desire for fixity and practice's desire for flexibility and transience. What deconstruction as a theoretical framework for this thesis offers is exactly an escape from conclusiveness and fixed understandings, because Derrida's deconstruction assumes an openness of the act of writing itself, in this case in a direct relation with fashion practice's own nature of perpetual change. The potential of the essay-film as a medium is the ability to translate this perpetual change via montage and continuous re-editing of the film. Through the film practice, I have encountered the possibility of an *unfinalizability* of my practice. The goal of a complete description of 'a practice' is never truly attainable; the assumption that such a description exists, or that it is at least theoretically possible, allows for much of the developed theoretical work in the field of fashion studies but that is unattainable. I believe that although the reconciliation of fashion practice and fashion theory in favour of an inter-threading of the theoretical and the practical proves to be quite difficult, it is attainable in the openness and instability of deconstructive thought and filmic practice.

5.4. Contextualizing critical fashion in fashion studies

This investigation evaluates how fashion practices have changed within the fashion system over the last twenty years. Through an analysis of critical fashion practice and a mapping of the projects of my peers who also work in an expanded field of fashion, I believe that this thesis could further act as a valuable record of the evolution of practice-based critical fashion practices. This thesis, in terms of subject, method, context, and outcome provides new knowledge to the field of fashion by fostering the possibility for fashion to understand itself via its own practice, and create a space for practitioners, thought within the existing corpus of fashion studies. It contributes to what we know about fashion and understand by it, both artistically and academically speaking. There is an intention for the research to express a shift to the frontiers of the discipline, by expanding the field of fashion into art and film methodologies, shedding new light on the relation between fashion and film. In expanding the frontiers of the discipline both theoretically and through the essay-film this research helps to generate an understanding of what is the potential of the new roles of a fashion practitioner working in the twenty-first Century. Within this study, I have found my way within the different roles I had to assume, from the practitioner (as artist, fashion designer, and teacher) to the researcher/ practitioner role (as fashion artist, researcher and teacher). Through writing, my main goal for understanding (as researcher) is to explore what kind of knowledge I am producing to contribute to a further understanding of fashion academic studies.

This conclusion reflects on the findings of the research and considers its usefulness in furthering knowledge of the fashion discipline. A strong indicator that the knowledge produced in this thesis through research has value for a community beyond the individual researcher is the lack of a critical discourse from fashion practitioners, yet an increase in the expanded fashion practices, as documented in chapter 3, that calls for tools of reflection and understanding due to their critical nature (as we can see in the practices of Elisa Van Joolen, Ruby Hoette, and Anne-Sophie Berger), creates a need for fashion to be understood as a site for

knowledge production and critical thinking.

To summarize, Anna Sophie Berger deploys a fragmentation of fashion practices by using an approach that is settled in fine-arts practices, working with dress as a symbolical element, through which she constructs criticality and addresses current concerns regarding production and consumption. Elisa Van Joolen uses an approach that can be seen as up-cycling clothing, but it is about questioning fashion hierarchies and their power relations. Ruby Hoette's fragments of clothing are reassembled in new meanings. But what is lacking in these works is still a self-reflective critique and a first–person account voicing their concerns and positioning. What I have tried to show with this practice-based thesis is that fashion practice has potential to move beyond its commercial boundaries and be explored in its ontological potential. Having taken into consideration an ontological understanding of fashion, and having placed the term in its politicized function and agency, this research deals with fashion as cultural expression and 'developed new propositional knowledge in the field of fashion as field of art'(as proposed in Thornquist's article mentioned in chapter 1, section 1.6.2).

The choice of medium itself derives from the need to bring together theory and practice; choosing film facilitates the recording, display, and revision of the content and allows working with images as thoughts. Re-editing becomes a method in itself; this flexibility allows for a constant movement between practice and writing. What montage permits is understanding 'through' practice the role of the essay film as an integral part of the research process and the generation of new knowledge. The artistic research here developed entails contributions that are original, not having been previously carried out by other types of research in other expanded fashion practices. Fashion practice philosophically and poetically explored through film is new to fashion practices and as such allows for a change in paradigm in relation to what fashion practices can be; this thesis's relation between practice and theory is connecting practitioners with emerging schools of the theory

and practice of fashion as an area of scholarly inquiry. There are, as heavily documented in the chapter 3, precedents in the fields of fine arts and fashion settled on their critical agency, utilizing fashion as a form of critical investigation, but from the fashion practitioners there is no self-theorizing of our own practices as there has been in fine-arts practices (Harrison et al., 2002). By accepting that the knowledge generated through practice can be shared with other practitioner researchers, communicating reflection, critical ideas and disseminating research findings within and beyond the academic community becomes crucial.

The focus of this study is critical fashion practice, and its origins lie within my own practice. It has been my practice of filming, reflecting, and writing combined that allowed me to engage in the development of the ideas presented within this thesis. Although this research was carried out from a practical perspective, a theoretical perspective is relevant here because, as this has been research conducted as part of the emerging field of artistic research, it aims to develop the theoretical discourse within fashion studies, but from the perspective of the fashion practitioner, intersecting the categories of praxis and epistemology, and this intersection has to be theorized in order to be communicated as an understanding of what praxis can offer. Even if the film is an essential part of the discussion, it is from the dialogue between film and writing that the new ideas have emerged. It is positioned at this intersection because to understand the practice, there is a need to understand how the fashion practitioner thinks and the values that may inform the practice.

Regarding my own practice, I demonstrate the potential for expanded practices to be critical, using classical film methods, like montage, to look into notions of fashion, disrupting traditional understandings of what fashion might be and challenging product–centred fashion practices with a anti-capitalist stance. My claim to new knowledge encompasses the articulation and expression of critical fashion by the means of expanded fashion practices where film, in specific filmic montage, is used to juxtapose visual representations of the meaning of fashion. This questions

the roles that bodies have in the production, consumption, and dress of fashion. In the previous chapters, I have demonstrated that aspects of critical fashion practices appear, and so do commonalities between my themes and similar approaches to the same themes by fine-artists in previous works.

Within my own work, I combine multiple elements, aiming at a more comprehensive critical approach to an expanded fashion practice, as I describe in chapter 4. To summarize, I have created images that communicate. Moreover, I have developed and used environmentally–friendly techniques and materials, by filming sequence where the actors either used their own garments, or I produced a temporary piece that can be reused or remade.

The reception of my film in its screenings has supported the main aim of this thesis, that is to understand how my fashion artistic research can produce a critical discourse in an expanded field of fashion, seeking to extend the potential for fashion practitioners to work and communicate critically. Even though I did not have formal feedback, in the course of this thesis, as I mentioned in section 4.7 of the former chapter, there were often conversation that confirmed the audiences response by questioning their own opinion in relation to fashion or analysing fashion from their own experience in relation to the film images seen (see section 4.7, page 202).

Conceptually, the work answers to an expanded fashion practice, inviting audiences to partake in the completion of the film's meaning. My contribution to knowledge in building a theoretical framework for a practice-based method of inquiry in critical fashion; my essay film itself and the methodology developed to produce it are an essential part of this contribution. The idea behind the use of film is that of using a method that would facilitate the transition back and forth between practice and theory – thought and making; film as thought or film-thought is my way of trying to document thought in the process of being formed (as discussed in chapter 4);

if the practice in the making is being documented but also the thought in development which is always metaphorical but not illustrative, the deconstructive structure was meant to be disruptive of the usual attempts to illustrate an idea with practice, or illustrate an idea through the writing. The resulting contribution to knowledge of this research is a strategy for critical practice in fashion design, therefore I assert that others can follow this strategy and replicate the critical practice (using different content).

I have explored deconstruction as a form of breaking down definitions about fashion through visual representation in a fragmentary method of constituting a film. Based on an apparatus to model the field of critical fashion, it provides a set of definitions, and maps a framework to discuss examples of critical practices alongside each other. In creating a framework of strategies for critical fashion (that is self-criticality of fashion combined with a creative practice that explores fashion as subject matter), this can lead to projects by other designers and artists that explore in-depth other topics that I have only begun to touch on, such as the changing role of the fashion presentation from being a commercial device to being a self-reflective device.

A contribution to knowledge in the field of fashion through artistic reflection depends on the ability to transfer that knowledge. My practice's relation to previous art works suggests that, to some degree, knowledge and insight can be transferred between practices and as such, practitioners currently looking into developing critical fashion practices can learn from my practice as research. Although in an artistic practice, originality tends to make the transferability of knowledge a seemingly complex issue, learning with one's practice does not mean necessarily to learn by literally reproducing one's methods, the knowledge generated is not only material but also ideas, analysis and self-reflection that can be shared.

The secondary findings of this research illustrate the diversity in current critical fashion practices, and offers a diagnosis of fashion in the expanded field, where

critical fashion has been placed in a larger context of artistic practices. It has a history in critical design, conceptual artistic practices, and conceptual fashion practices. Through examples of other practices and their analysis, the research has shown where critical fashion happens and in what contexts; relating it to my own practice-based research, as a practitioner looking for strategies for critical fashion thought, I discovered possibilities that may be developed further in the use of film as a device for thought in the creation of fashion images. The research shows the methods used. It outlines the instrumental use of film to establish a criticality through fashion practice. The critical works through ambiguity of information and challenges the viewer/reader into questioning their own views and it also suggests questioning the operating context in which the practice uses traditional notions, taken to an extreme to establish a narrative of critical thinking, by discussing key concepts that make fashion what it is. The intention of this research is to create a framework that allows more people to engage with the practice and critical fashion is possible. By discussing key theoretical concepts that inform critical fashion practices, this thesis offers methods for a theoretical apparatus by which to engage in the field of fashion studies. It provides fashion practitioners with a territory to operate from and observers of the practice a territory to analyse and critique. The intention of this research is that such a framework allows more people to engage with the practice.

5.5. Limitations

As I mention in chapter 1 (see section 1.6.1), the separation between theory and practice has been structural to institutions, academics, and research practices, having its roots in Ancient Greece. Since post-structuralism has broken with the logo-centric understanding of knowledge itself, it is possible for academic outputs to take different forms, as film and other practice generated outcomes. It is still very embedded into the structure of academia both in terms of dissemination and disciplinary division. I have pointed out there was initially a difficulty in managing the relation between the nature of practice and theory. I believe that my project's

initial limitation was driven by the resistance to fixing the practice in a 'completed' state. Deconstruction presents the possibly of looking at text, or any other artworks for that matter, as unfinished, that can not be analysed as a whole but it is most useful from a didactic and educational standpoint to look at them in separate parts – deconstructing them. The fashion practitioners' perspective, still largely ignored in the academic field of fashion studies, is still finding its way because there are few precedents to it. By exploring synergies with the industry or their technical knowledge, practitioners have seldom removed themselves from a philosophical understanding of what fashion thought could be. In the rare events within the field of fashion studies where the practice has met the theory and developed thought that is informed by both, fashion is deeply embedded in the commercial imperatives of the fashion profession lacking the space for political action or a critical positioning. This thesis's contribution is to create a bridge between practice and theory, extending our knowledge of how art's self-criticality and the use of film as a medium for fashion practice can generate fashion critical thinking, and how writing could, in turn,can impact and alter our way of 'writing fashion practice'.

5.6. Future research

The thesis's pedagogic potential will be further explored in the development of a new postgraduate programme for expanded fashion practices within the context of my own teaching practice. Several elements of the work have been in presented in public dissemination, and some of the work has already been publicly exhibited in exhibitions such as 'The Future of Fashion is Now' and international projects like Transfashional. There is potential for publishing articles based on the thesis, I have already published an article[1] about the space I describe as an expanded field of fashion, drawing upon Krauss's *Sculpture in the expanded field* where fashion, being a combination of non-fashion and non-art, allowed its category to start stretching beyond its own limits to answer the need for an idealist and political space of action. My practice, as I described in chapter 2, appropriates methods and discourses usually characteristic of fine arts, and therefore offers a contribu-

1   Mendonca Guterres Torres, L 2017, 'Fashion in the expanded field: strategies for critical fashion practices' Journal of Asia-Pacific Pop Culture, vol. 2, no. 2, pp. 167-183. DOI: 10.5325/jasiapacipopcult.2.2.0167

tion to the discipline of fashion in understanding what a fashion practice episte-mology is, when observed from the limits of the discipline itself. The interviews to the fashion curators José Teunissen and Judith Clark will also be developed within future articles, due to the lack of written accounts on the way this space for expanded fashion have been heavily supported by the exhibitions curated by both the curators interviewed for this thesis.

In relation to the practice itself, there is the potential for an ongoing project that will evolve every time it is presented, I am interested in having the film con-tinued (unfinalized) and explored as ongoing practice, responding to the venues where it is presented and current fashion critical issues. Derridean deconstruction and the instability of meaning that philosophical deconstruction has brought with it certainly facilitated the flux of ideas between practice and theory; this is cen-tral to my thesis argument. Film demonstrates ideas in a non-linear way by using montage as a way of thinking, but is still a struggle to have that fragmentary form in which thought develops into such linear outputs. Film is time–based and there-fore subject to a linear structure and the thesis writing as a form of communication depends also on a linear form (that is a book) a continuous, orderly, sequential development that can be followed by others. In translating some of my research processes of mood-boarding and juxtaposing visual elements, some of the intui-tive, spontaneous nature of how the work methods is lost in this process of trans-lation into a structured form. Perhaps other means of dissemination can conduct to effective dissemination of practice-as-research findings. An installation with several projections and juxtaposition of media will be an apparatus to represent thought, which never unfolds in one straight line, I will be looking forward to experimenting with means that communicate in a non-linear form.

5.7. Facilitating Discussion

My artistic fashion practices started in this research project will be a starting point for an ongoing project focused on criticality and understanding how fashion criti-cality might evolve and explore other forms of fashion meaning-making. The notion

of fashion in the expanded field has offered me, and I hope other practitioners too, is the thought that beyond fashion's limitations as a discipline, there is a space to be explored. In doing this film and finalizing the outcome, I have learned that there are potentialities to be explored when expanding film itself beyond its filmic restriction, by resonating projections against one another and juxtaposing performative practices and immaterial practices. The argument made in chapter 2 outlines the need for an apparatus to bring discussion into critical fashion practice, a model of the practice that illustrates its flexible position in relation to other forms of fashion practice and places it in an interdisciplinary context. A practice-based research perspective might engage a broader fashion studies community in a discussion of the practice and by extension, advance the theoretical foundation of the practice. The original contribution presented in this thesis indicates that knowledge produced through the practice-as-research of fashion, as research has a value for a community beyond the individual researcher, for there is a need for strategies that allow reflection from the practitioner's perspective, a dissenting voice among the voices of theorists.

Since the late 1960s, fashion research has grown from a state of relative obscurity – having evolved as a secondary area of investigation in fields such as art, history, psychology, and the social sciences – and continues to develop as an area of serious inquiry, through critical discourse and the publication of dedicated academic journals. When disseminating knowledge within conferences, exhibitions, and talks, there is a certain level of resistance towards the acceptance of a fashion practice engaged in interrogating and theorizing fashion. Communication and dissemination of theory and practice as a unified whole in fashion studies is restricted, due to the traditional formats through which knowledge is communicated in fashion academia: either a conference where participants choose to focus exclusively on theory, or an exhibition where practice is displayed. This dichotomy suggests that the separation between theory and practice can no longer be extended to these essential spaces where knowledge is debated, if fashion is to have

a future. The medium that I have chosen for my research project, the essay-film, is conducive to a conference and exhibition context intertwined; film has been thoughtfully engaged with by viewers, and it has served to communicate the aims of the practice to diverse audiences.

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