Finding Home-
Understanding the relationship between home and body

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Abstract

This work is based on the results of my research regarding the human relationship to a home. It started with me thinking about that I have to move away from my home soon. Living here has been a slow gathering of things and furniture. As a result I have a home I feel completely safe in. This made me wonder what it is that I need to give me that feeling, the feeling of home.

The aim of this work is to understand the relationship between home and body

To gain knowledge of the subject I have studied literature on the phenomenon of a home, how different from each other homes can be and how some people manage without having a home. Reading about these things made me realise how big the subject was. I found so much material that I could work with, but I felt as if I had gotten lost in my search for answers. Therefore I went back to the starting point- the feeling of home. To get some answers it made sense to me to try and portray that feeling of home on a body. This work is the result of me finding a home in clothing.

Keywords
Design, fashion, art, home, home textiles, draping, body
Line up
Introduction

'A home is a place of residence or refuge. When it refers to a building, it is usually a place in which an individual or a family can rest and where they can store personal property. Most modern-day households contain sanitary facilities and a means of preparing food. Animals have their own homes as well, either living in the wild or shared with humans in a domesticated environment. "Home" is also used to refer to the geographical area (whether it be a suburb, town, city or country) in which a person grew up or feels they belong, or it can refer to the native habitat of a wild animal. Sometimes, as an alternative to the definition of "home" as a physical locale ("Home is where you hang your hat"), home may be perceived to have no physical location—instead, home may relate instead to a mental or emotional state of refuge or comfort. Popular sayings along these lines are "Home is where the heart is" or "You can never go home again". There are cultures in which members lack permanent homes, such as with nomadic people.' (Wikipedia, 2011)

Wikipedia’s definition of a home is very broad. A home can be so many different things that it’s hard to grasp, but this is also very telling. A home is something very individual that varies from person to person. There are also people who are considered homeless. To get an idea on what a home is I started by studying what it means to not have a physical home. In a short article by Martin Karlsson on Faktum’s webpage (2011) he tries to get people to understand the meaning of a home and the perspective of not having a home. ‘Close your eyes for a moment and see your own life before you. Now, take your home out of the picture and see what happens. Where did your family go? Your things? Your comfy bed? The possibility to lock the door behind you when you don’t feel well?’
In a different issue of Faktum magazine from 2009 I read about a woman named Linda who hadn’t had a home for a very long time. She said that it’s important to be organized, and to have it hygienic. You have to live of what nature brings you. ‘I think that anyone can live like this, if you think positive. But in today’s society people think they deserve more, or that they have to live in a certain way.’ Linda said. ‘Order and organisation, everything in it’s place, otherwise everything soon turns to shit. It’s called tent-discipline. I’ve read about it in an outdoor guide that I bought a summer when I was hiking. There they describe the three most important factors of survival outdoors: Health, knowledge and the will to survive.’ Linda’s words say a lot about the different relationship to a home that humans have. We have set standards, created by our history and society, to what a home is. Fulfilling these traditional views of what a home should be doesn’t necessary mean that you will feel at home. In an article by Joy Levy called “Bad habbits” (2007) she describes the everyday addictions we have. She uses the term “Soft addiction” to describe ‘…activities, moods or ways of being, avoidances, and things - edible and consumable but which do not pose a grave health disease risk - rather, they have the most effect on personal time and productivity.’(Levy 2007) This kind of addiction seems to be a worldwide condition, although a lot more obvious in the western part of the world. This world of consumerism has gotten us more addicted to our things, things we don’t really need but have gotten used to.

‘We consume a variety of resources and products today having moved beyond basic needs to include luxury items and technological innovations to try to improve efficiency. Such consumption beyond minimal and basic needs is not necessarily a bad thing in and of itself, as throughout history we have always sought to find ways to make our lives a bit easier to live. However, increasingly, there are important issues around consumerism that need to be understood.’ (Shah, 2011)
So a human is not only the body of a human, it’s also the furniture, clothes, the things you’ve collected during your lifetime, and your relationships with others. Like a new Barbie doll in her package with all her clothes and things surrounding her. As an experiment I typed in “belongings” on Google and found a picture on Flickr where a photographer called Sannah Kvist had put all of her belongings in one corner of her room and taken a picture when sitting beside it. She called the project “all I own” (Kvist, 2011)

A home seems to be more of a baggage than a freedom when thinking of all of this stuff we “need”. On the Swedish radio channel P4, there was a discussion about being attached to your belongings. One man called Claes Svedberg said that he’s planning to sell everything he owns except for a backpack, a guitar and a sleeping bag. Then he’ll leave his old life behind and head out to the unknown. When he was a child his father told him ‘imagine having everything you own in a pack on your back and walk where life takes you.’(p4 dok, 2011) This inspires, and at the same time frightens me. Because of our “soft-addictions” we crave a lifestyle that can be more of an obstacle than a help along the way. Our inborn behaviour of nesting has made us crippled and
is in no way a guarantee of being fulfilled. I tried to imagine myself without a traditional home, going on a long trip or a lifelong hike. Much like being a nomad. Which is, in modern-day contexts, communities of people who move from one place to another, rather than settling permanently in one location. I dug deeper into how a modern living situation could be combined with a nomad’s travelling lifestyle. In our society today we have a lot of technical advantages. Travelling and living gets easier for the western world. In an article by Yasmine Abbas (2006) he writes about the “neo-nomad”, ‘a person who is constantly travelling but uses today’s technique to do so.’ He writes:

‘…nowadays you don’t even have to leave your home to travel, just log onto Google earth and start pan across the globe and zoom in and out, like time travel and space collapse onto a flat screen. Which introduces another way to think, digital mobility annihilates dimensions.’ ‘…these individuals who are roaming physically, digitally and mentally are “neo-nomads”. Neo-nomads are the figures of “supermodernity”. If a place can be defined as relational, historical and concerns with identity, then a space which cannot be defined as relational, or historical, or concerned with identity will be a non-place.’(Abbas 2006)

His hypothesis is that “supermodernity” produces non-places, such as airports and railways. Hence, neo-nomads move in a succession of temporarily inhabited places. Which is a favour of consumerism, and a detachment from objects – I don’t need to carry a toothbrush everywhere I go; I can buy one. He writes that neo-nomads don’t like the traditional nomads since they do not have mailing addresses. It is impossible to send them a bill or a tax form. They are uncontrollable. Mobility implies the blurring of identity because in people’s minds, someone who is mobile is disconnected from a specific “geography”, a home if you say. (Abbas 2006) This triggered my mind. A nomad seemed to be considered as a person without a home because they don’t belong to only one place. But I wondered if they feel at home somewhere. Even if they don’t physically bring their homes with them they probably bring the things that matter the most, the memories of their past and family.
Development

When I first started sketching ideas in my mind I had a different point of view than now when the project is coming to an end. Nomads have become a big part of my work, their lifestyle inspires me and the silhouette of a travelling person has been an important picture in my head during this work. When reading about all different kinds of people without homes I pictured how someone in my life situation would look like if they didn’t have a home. It was from this image and the feelings that homelessness evokes in me that my creative work started. To me it’s important to have an idea of how you want your clothes to both look and feel when starting to develop a collection. Therefore I started by creating a moodboard of collected images to get a feel for the colours and expressions of the collection. I wanted to portray the feeling of home on a body. Your body is your home. I thought about my homeless characters memories of once having a home. Maybe they still have inherited homemade covers and blankets or a knit made by a grandma that can be used as clothing. Instead of having a home you wear it, much like a national costume. The folk costumes have a certain link to a place, a home where you come from, and you wear it because you belong at that geographical place. These costumes have a very specific way of looking which makes it really clear that you’re wearing a costume, both because of the time when these costumes where designed but also because the fabrics and patterns reminds you of their background and where they belong. If I where to use fabrics from another country/culture this project would get a completely different appearance, but it would probably be draped the same way and still remind you of a folk costume. This is why the materials are so important to this project and why it was the first thing I had to do to get to the next phase in my work.
Upper left: Klara Lidén, 2010  Upper right: Piotr Sikora
Lower: Mikael Johansson ‘Ghost V’, 2011
Materials
The historical Swedish home contains so many beautiful patterns and prints in home textiles. One of my favourite textile artist is a woman named Karin Larsson. She designed her and her husbands home in the most beautiful textiles, which she made herself. Her husband is Carl Larsson, one of my favourite painters. He painted the home she had created from every angle. These paintings are some of my favourite pieces of art, and they have been a big inspiration for envisioning the urban home in my collection. I wanted to mix the patterns in those paintings with other typical home textile patterns in my materials. This mix is very easy to find if you go to certain second hand shops. In these stores you can find beautiful material in different qualities, prints and colour. You end up with a random blend of tablecloths, blankets, covers, curtains or whatever you might find. These fabrics have previously been used in someone’s home, giving them both the character and the feeling that I wanted for my collection. When collecting material I’ve tried to not think about what it will be used for. Instead I have focused on getting a large variety of materials and colours. As a result I had big piles of different fabrics to use when I then started draping for the collection.

Methods
Since I’ve been working with materials that have been used as curtains, blankets or other home textiles I’ve had a limited amount of each fabric. The fabrics have also often been in odd lengths and widths because of their prior use. I saw this as a challenge and a way for me to develop my own construction style based on how much fabric I got and how the fabric piece was shaped. If I used a full-length curtain to make a shirt I wanted to use all the fabric I had and not throw any pieces away. I also didn’t want to cut pieces out of the fabric by following patterns. Therefore I have not been using original style patterns but instead I’ve been working by finding the right shape of the fabric from the beginning of making the piece of clothing on a mannequin. It has been a good way for me to work since I get a very raw and true feeling in
the clothing. During my draping and sketching there’s been an ongoing process with the choosing of forms and fabrics. I didn’t want to decide on a design before trying it so my method in draping has been to try and see. For each outfit I’ve probably tried ten different fabrics and ten different shapes before deciding on one. I’ve draped the fabric on a doll and taken a picture, then compared the pictures to each other and chosen one that I think fits with the others and that I like. It’s been important for me to both sketch and drape at the same time to not get stuck in one media. Sometimes your taste and your eyes get in your way of making and this has been a way for me to avoid that.

Sustainability

Since I’ve only used second hand fabrics it has been no consumerism in this project. This has been very important for me both because of my general opinion about sustainability but also because I wanted the collection to speak in support of using second hand clothing and fabrics. My method of construction has also been affected by my opinion on this issue. I don’t want to throw any fabric away, so I’ve done as little toiles and as little cutting in fabric as possible. People generally tend to not think about the waste that is created when you cut pattern pieces out of fabric. They seem to think that they used as much of the fabric as they could. In my method of construction I got to use the whole fabric and nothing was left to throw away. No waste. This project has really opened my eyes for second hand textile, I usually only buy clothes second hand, but the source of home textiles is endless and there are lots of beautiful fabrics that will probably last longer than the new fabrics you can buy in fabric stores.
Examples of sketching in different stages.
Example of my method in draping
Outfit 1

Shirt gathered with belt around waist and a blanket tied together at the back.
Outfit 2

Blanket cut open in the middle and placed above waist with a turtle neck sweater on top.
Outfit 3

Squares of fabric and a jacket gathered with a belt in the waste
Outfit 4

Curtain stitched at back and gathered at the top with a string. On top a blanket with holes for arms.
Fabric cut and folded with blouse tied around upper body and a skirt with buttons in the front.
Outfit 6

Shirt with collar and belt in waist. Squares with a seem in back to form a skirt.
Outfit 7

Fabric squares put together with belt in the waist.
Fabric Scans
Discussion and reflection

How do the result relate to the idea and aim?
I feel that I achieved my goal of making a well-composed and attractive collection. It is definitely a product of my inspiration and idea but the project has taken a lot of turns along the way. In the middle of the project it stood between either being very clear with my idea or to make a collection that is less technical and more the essence of the concept, which has been very important to me. The aim was for me to understand the phenomenon of a home and to express that on a body. I definitely did that, but when doing my research about homes I found so much material and so many different aspects of it. The subject was too big from the start which made it difficult to find focus in the process. That is something that I need to think more carefully about the next time.

What is the potential of your method of construction?
I’m really glad that I got to use this method and finding new ways to use it. During my last three years I’ve been using similar techniques, working with squares and draping with simple cutting. But this got me to really explore the construction and it gave me new rules to construct by. I feel secure enough in the basics of pattern making and stitching so that I can figure out what the piece of clothing is going to look like without making a pattern. That knowledge and security has been a big help working with this method. I can see myself using this way of constructing for a long time and expanding it.

How and when did you make choices that are important to the result?
During the long period of research I had many ideas in my mind. When starting sketching it looked completely different from what it is now. I’ve found so much inspiration in this research, but it took me a while to realise what I wanted to do, and I’m happy
with the final result. I guess when you choose to work with more of an ethical ques-
tion you can go anywhere you like ecstasyly. If you’re inspired by other designs it
is often easier to predict what the result will look like. That’s also why I almost always
work with ethical questions. And when I finally started knowing how I wanted the result
to develop, it was a long process for the result to take form. Every drape I’ve done
has been an aware choice, and choosing has always been the hardest part for me.
But draping also gives the result something unexpected that I couldn’t have achieved
only by sketching.

How can your collection be commercialised?
I don’t think that this collection isn’t commercial; a lot of the garments have very tra-
ditional and wearable features, although some might have a bigger volume than you
would want to wear daily. The prints and colours is definitely something I can see be-
ing used in a commercial version. Some of the fabrics however are a little bit rough
and could be replaced with more comfortable fabrics. When it comes to the shape
of the clothes some of them might be a little excessive and could easily be simplified
without loosing their original shape.
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Opposition

Designer: Madelene Ericsson
Opponent: Josefin Mellander

Concept
When reading Madelenes report I find it intriguing. The subject of this exploration is very focused and relevant in todays society. The mixture of sports protection with normal everyday wear is also relevant and a good way to integrate protection.

Craftmanship
As mentioned about the materials in the report padding has been used as the main technique of protection. It’s also mentioned that some technical materials has been used, not clear where though and which qualities they have. If these men are protecting themselves from violence maybe harder materials or materials with strength and shield could be used more. It can be very limiting with padding on your body, the movement changes and the silhouette, maybe that could be an obstacle for a victim. But the padding makes it very convincing and personally I like the look of it. The technique with divided padding in fabric is very appealing.
The sports protections have a specific look and is also used in certain situations. When protecting from violence you might want to get away fast or hide easily, this might be something to integrate even more. It’s also mentioned that the most critical parts of the body to protect is the head and the torso, but in this work there’s no protection for the head. Covering the head and face not only gives you more protection it’s also a very effective way of making the person anonymous. In my re-styling I’ve added headpieces that could fit.

Composition
The aim of this work is very clear and precise. The process in methods is also clear but a bit limiting, new methods could be used and give more insight in the subject. The protection vest is an apparent inspiration for the padding, maybe there’s other ways to protect yourself. But since this method is used multiple times in the project it gives a nice unity in the collection. Overall the project is exploring this subject in a good and relevant way, it brings up a crucial discussion about every day street violence increasing and mentions a number of ways this could be solved. In the discussion at the end of the report it says that “In order to feel safe, we need to take the necessary steps and this might be to integrate protection for the everyday life and casual living. So by integrate the protection into our clothing and make it available for the masses, just like the brand Vexed Generation have done, people would be able to feel more safe, and don’t restrict their life and choices because of fear.” This is important for the work because it mentions the mental protection. And maybe these clothes isn’t the ultimate protection but it can bring you the feeling of being safe and that could be equally as important.
As mentioned in Madelenes dissertation, the most critical areas that is exposed to violence is the head and torso. In this work she has focused on the torso in most cases. Why is this?

In my re-styling I’ve focused on adding pieces for the head to make the line up stronger
In outfit...
2 the legs is only covered in thin leggings, so I added a bulky pair of pants, maybe padded or made in a strong material to make it look less vulnerable.
3 the cape looks stronger with a cover on the head
4 i added volume in the hoodie so that you can hide your face
5 i added a fencing mask to cover the face and a second cover for the other leg
6 a mask to cover the face and padding for the chest
7 a higher collar to pull up to cover up