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COLOURFUL AND EXPRESSIVE KNITTING FOR GARMENT

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PREFACE

This Report, also being presented as a “Manual” in the present case, is the final work of my Master study at the Swedish school of Textiles, at the Department of Textiles. It’s role is to summarise my process as a designer and regroup my thoughts. It has been constructed mostly from results achieved in the last period of my studies, of spring 2010.

The journey to write this manual is still ongoing, the present document represent where I am now and will surely be rearranged in the near future. But it is also the foundation of that Future.

This document should be seen as a first edition, written in the current context, with what I have gained so far in knowledge and what I will take onboard with me.

I have taken the decision of writing a manual, having for objective to present my design process.

To me a manual has the following properties and these are the points that I hope to solve in the present document.

- It is giving a base for my future as a textile designer
- Helps me to understand
- Helps to be understood
- Improves my skills in communicating
- Aids me in going further within my work
- Permits me to regroups my thoughts
- Summarize my process
- Allows me to develop as a designer
- Informs
- Educates
- it is a “notebook”.

The present manual is to be considered as a guide; it is a technical document that gives assistance; also giving the ability to lead, direct and advise.

I will use this manual as the foundation for my future as a textile designer, and it should also be used as a reference tool.

This manual gives a frame to my work, it is the reason behind What, Why and How I do what I do.

I will also consider the present manual as a reference tool for the assessment or review of future design solutions.
Personal note:
As I noticed and learned in the past few years, putting order in my work, such as: tidying up my working space, making lists and respecting them, gave more space to creativity and freed my thinking.
This method leads me into managing both creativity and quality in my work.
This manual is exactly an example of the above reflection; it is the equivalent of a list. More accurately it’s the index of all the lists I have made until now.

In order to establish the following manual I retraced the steps of my last project.
This last project now called solution 001, (in reference to A solution of one working space), the aim of which is to present me as a Textile designer.
I felt it was my last opportunity to show and share who I am as a designer and where my interests are in textile designs.
This subject led me into reflecting upon my role as a designer and discovers which qualities I could add to design and work with by being a designer.
This is why my work took the direction of illustrating my views on textiles.

I now have solution 001 as an example.
BACKGROUND

I work as a textile designer specialised in knitted textiles. In my designs Colours take an essential role. Where Knitting and colours are working as a team in order to reach my aesthetics. My aim is to provide new expressions and possibilities in knitting to the market, having for objective to show a different dimension to knitwear. The result of solution 001 will be the construction of a library answering my aim.

*Personal note:* I already know from experience that I develop my designs from colours, it always has been my starting point and it is the reasons behind my decisions. I also know that as I work from colours in collaboration with knitting, it means that I am aware from the start my work will result into creating structures.

METHOD

During my process, I followed two parallel tracks. The design method track: motivating how it should work and the artistic method track: answering how it should feels. My way to combine them on the same level was to create a story: (Imaginary world) where they would meet and stand as one result. The story is a method for me to strive further in my technical abilities; it is a solution for me to be able to apply my concept.

PROCESS:
I first will analyse what are the essential elements constructing the “imaginary world” also to be called working space. This stage is to define the elements or ingredients constructing that space and understanding why. It is my research period, where I will take the time to understand who I am as a designer, what my strength are and what direction I wish to go.

In putting time into visualising “my imaginary world” with words, colours, images and references. I will be able to communicate what direction I am to take, and will be able to motivate the future decision I will make in my design process. In this period the focus will be the artistic development.
OUTLINE

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STAGE 1

Stage 1 is constructed out of research. It is the background of the project, it is where and how I define the design space.
Stage 1 form the frame of my designs.
It is where objectives are clarified, function established and requirements set.
WORKING SPACE

The subsequent elements construct the “working space” of my project. They also create the base to my work.
To me, the working space is an element that can grow or retract, it constantly evolves.
The space gets affected by my new interest, the knowledge I accumulate, my goals, a brief….
It’s the source of design solutions, and has different branches that can become the key of a solution.
Everything depends on the space, it is the skeleton of the design.

The working space is constructed out of variables (the branches). Those define the content of the working space. It is out of these elements, the focus of the research is being built.
The variables are the key to the development of the possible design solutions.
Structures

imaginary world

unique

fun

no black

no identity

naivety

children against

* Niki de St Phalle Grown up
* AGATHA Ruiz de la Prada
* FINDING NEVERLAND

my tool

my knowledge

my interest

knitting

colours

pleasantville

pompon vertrek

= Structures

OILILY

GUDRUN SJODEN

= party = colours
= carnaval = colours
= sxx = colours
= hajiner = colours
VARIABLES

Here follows the definition of the variables, where I tried to define one at a time in order to understand why they stand here, why and how they became a key in my designs. But it is important to understand that they all cross over each other and do not stand on their own.

Please note: the visual references will be found in the appendix placed at the end of the manual.

No Black:

To me black is the equivalent of saying no to ones own identity, it is impersonal. Black represents sadness and uniformity.

Here follows references explaining what black means to me.

Ref:

• Vermer, Panton, 1997, Notes on colour =: Ligt om farver. Danish Design Centre.
• Pitel, Stephanie, 200: Why do they all wear black.


Children:

Comes from Naive, fun and colours. I tried in the past focusing on adults and realized I felt restricted. This is why I know children are the target of my work. It is also children that regroup most of my variables by having a stronger personality (no Black – Doesn’t occur in this situation). They are free to think what they want; they are not yet formed or framed to think: “logically / “realistically”.

In the present case I choose to analyse children symbols such as heroes in order to reach an understanding of children’s references. Obviously the below selection of references I made are the one that also meant something to me.

Ref:

• Unique children’s characters, heroes,
• Lindgren; Astrid, 1945-2000, Pippi Långstrump.: 
• St Exupery (de); Antoine; 1943; Le petit prince. New York.

I feel they are each representing common values in their own way.

Colours:

I already know from experience that I develop my designs from colours, it always has been my starting point and it is the reasons behind my decisions. This is why I thought it would be interesting for me to look into colour theory in order to grasp why I work in this direction, what place it takes in my final designs and how it affects my designs. From my research, I manage to understand my intuitive choices. I can now go a step further in the development of my designs as I now gain the understanding of my intuitive choices.
Ref: Colour theory:
- Matisse, Henry, 1869-1954. I mostly consider his latest works – cutting directly in the colour in order to create motifs
- Vermer, Panton, 1997, Notes on colour =: Lidt om farver. Danish Design Centre. I feel I share his point of view on colours, and I thought it was a very different and interesting approach to colour.
- Pleasantville, 1998, Gary Ross, Etats Unis. IT has an unusual statement of colours: Colour is life (at least it is my interpretation of the film.)

Textiles:

To me textiles are strongly connected with the body, and the body does not always literally mean “the human shape”.
I use textiles everyday, mostly when I dress myself. And when I wear textiles I do not wear anything: it has a meaning to me.
The way anyone dresses reflect an image an opinion, whether its conscientiously made or not there is still a point of view that comes out when we are dressed, same as disguise and costumes.
A textile has an action, giving an identity to things. But I also feel it gives life to things for example when it covers a sofa, it is giving function to a structure, skeleton, making the metal frame into a sofa.
I also wanted to add, that I work as a textile designer for fashion and it is what my work should visualize.
Ref:

- St Phalle (de), Niki, 1930-2002. Her whole work with the NANA, which are a representation of textiles working with the body

Industrial:

It is a look I am trying to get away from: it is flat and easy to repeat. It then automatically makes Unique being a variable in being 3D, playing with structures and repeats. The aesthetic concept I have been developing through previous project, I now name Handustrial.

WHAT IS HANDUSTRIAL?

It is industrially produced material that has the qualities of a handmade material.

WHY HANDUSTRIAL:

In order to give the following properties to the material: unique, individual and personal.

HOW HANDUSTRIAL:

The aim is to interfere with the clear line given by the machine process. I played a lot on combining different yarn qualities, played with different tension, played with colour combination and after hand work. Also when washed a new dimension will be added to the material.
Example:
By mostly using wool and working with felting I would achieve each time a unique piece by only interacting with one of the following variable:
Washing temperature, length of washing, amount of washing powder, amount of material in the machine, stitch length, quantity of threads, and quality of yarn….
I like the fact the result is arbitrary and not 100% controlled.

Unique:
I would define this word by saying. Having one strong identity.
This also why the below references are strongly related to those of the Children variable.

Ref:
- Lindgren; Astrid, 1945-2000, Pipi Långstrump.: Where the subject is taking form a grown up but still a child direction. This leads the character interfering in a parrallel environment.
- St Exupery (de); Antoine; 1943; Le petit prince. New York. The issues of the adult’s way of life.
- McKee, David, 1989 , Elmer. United Kingdom: Andersen Press Proud to be different and colourful
**Naivety/fantasy:**

If I analyze my work, it has a naive feel to it; this is why naivety became one of the variables. I thought exploring its meaning would help me in understanding my work. It actually leads me to imaginary, parallel universe giving me a link with my Aesthetic variable. After analysing different artist corresponding to my variable, I understood that creating an imaginary world or a story would be for me a solution to use as a design method.

**Ref:**
- St Phalle (de), Niki, 1930-2002. *In her last work, she had a focus on an imaginary world with creatures; she even finished by creating a theme park.*
- Ruiz de la Prada, Agatha, 1960... *Her way to have a unique universe with a story of colour.*
- Finding Neverland, 2004, Marc Forster,Etats Unis.. *The film is based on the play: The Man Who Was Peter Pan by Allan Knee. A statement on individuality, own fantasy world, but also real. (it is how I see my own surroundings, how I live my life).*
- Alebrijes,(fantastique Mexican creatures).
Knitting:

Is my focus point in textiles, it is the technique I most express myself with.
Knitting techniques (Fair Isle – Aran – Scandinavian patterns – Africans –…) represent my education, what I really enjoy working with and wanted to gain even more knowledge about.
I know it is the tool I want to explore and get control over. It seems there is always a new dimension to it.
I see knitting as a very traditional textile tool to which I push the limits in order to see the today’s potential. My approach is to bring the traditional values of knitting along the industrial possibilities. This is why I used the opportunity to look upon traditional techniques.

Fun:

Is another word which describes my aesthetic aim or more accurately the approach I have when I design. It also has the ability to complete with: Unique – Children variables.

Ref:
Lindgren; Astrid, 1945-2000, Pipi Långstrump. PiPi : Why make things complicated when they can be amusing to do.
Aesthetic:

“Stéphanie” wears glasses because she has myopia. “Stéphanie” also wear them very occasionally, and started to wear them when she was 14-18.
This means that most of the times, when she sees, she only see shapes, forms and colours, and has to use her imagination in guessing what those things could actually be- and often can actually get disappointed or surprised when she finds out what the truth really is.
This feature made me understood how much it affects me and how much it is a part of me. (If we look for example at my work, we can really see the connection: big bold patterns, sharp colours, having a meaning to me but not necessarily to others.)

My aesthetic concept is “HANDUSTRIAL”:
HANDUSTRIAL is the meeting between industrial and handmade. The role of HANDUSTRIAL is to give the unique look and feel of handmade material to industrial made material. Those references also permit me t confirm my choice of having an imaginary world as a design method.
It was for me the perfect way to illustrate my Aesthetics.

Ref:
• Monet, Claude; 1840-1926. In his last paintings- when he was half blind and painting what others would not have painted in the same colours as they wouldn’t have seen them in the same way.
• A children book about colours written by a blind person, also there shows how from a different point of view, someone else would paint the same thing as me or anyone else but very differently.
• Cottin Manena –Faria Rosana, 2006, Le livre noir des couleurs. Rue du monde.
RESULT OF STAGE 1

OBJECTIVES: Creating a library of material expressing my views of textiles conform to my aesthetical concept. Showing what are my abilities as a textile designer.

FUNCTION: The material created should successfully work as a garment, or as a part of a garment. It should also be communicating textiles and not fashion.

REQUIREMENTS: Children are set up as target group. Colours and structure is being the core to the development of the work.

Personal note:

I decided to use the term: “Imaginary world”, to identify my working space. And that switch in words became the origin of the evolution of Solution 001. Using the term of “imaginary world” was like finding the exact word to express my design process.
STAGE 2

In stage 2, I transform the variables. In other words, I determine the characteristics of the design and generate possibilities.
In this project I apply the imaginary world as a design method.
SYNTHESIS

At this particular stage, came the creation of the “Imaginary world” or story; used as a design method in order to develop the material.

The first thing I was eager to do was to visualise what that imaginary world looked like. The direction I decided to adopt was to take out elements from that environment, with the aim to personify my views on textiles. (See variables).

I needed to represent this environment, and my solution was to show what kind of characters you would find living there.

I choose to work with characters as I realized it is the ideal approach to represent a parallel world. Creating characters was also giving me a solution when addressing myself to children; in using their aptitude of referring themselves to a hero.

    → The Sims, 2000, is a strategic life-simulation computer game developed by Maxis and published by Electronic Arts. It was created by game designer Will Wright,
The process was has followed.
Identify the extracted elements:

- The King
- The Queen
- The Princess
- The Harlequin
- The Prince
- The Frog
  and
- The Witch

Express the picture I had in my head of those characters, using different media:

- Collecting images,
- Drawings,
- Describing using words,
- Collecting material, colours,
- Assemble reference.
Personal note:
Through this method, my point was to get visible elements representing my thoughts, so I could communicate. This was valid to others as much as to me, it also has been used as a reference to the development of the work. It was in some ways used like a “manual” in the work process progression.

The characters aim, is to visualize a world of fun and colours. To me the characters are like a projection of who I am.

In the following representation of the characters I defined each identity and the frame in which they had to stand. Those mood board were also setting the aesthetic, leading to the development of the material, the connection between garment and structure and the look of each silhouette.
COMMUNICATING

My next phase was to search a solution in how to communicate the characters so they would reflect the image I have of them and reverberate the imaginary world. And also fulfilled the requirements set in stage 1.
My focus point in this representation is to show the qualities of textiles as a form to express an identity. In this case I have decided to exclusively employ knitted textiles.

I am a textile designer, having an interest in fashion. I have personal issues with how to present my work: should it be displayed on the human body or not. What meaning would take my work, what dimension would it give to my work and whom it would talk to depending on how I choose to show it?

I believe if I show my work on models, it will be looked at as a garment, which would move the focus away from the actual textile. The work I did is to give a different way of looking at textile for fashion but still having textile as a focal point. I do not know what is the right solution is but I made a decision regarding those issues and this is why I went forward with an object for support in order to refer to the body without being a body.

As mentioned in the variables, children are representing my audience. My idea is to create a character, a Hero, such as Pipi Långstrump. I am looking for a character to which they can refer the way children of today do with Spiderman.

I wanted to express life and function, coming from the use of textiles; this is why I end up looking for a human object.
Therefore I created jumper chair, it is an implement used to link imagination and reality. Using: “Jumper Chair” as a caricature, an autobiography, an incarnation of a hero from the imaginary world. I decided to work as a textile designer for fashion, showing how a textile gives an identity within a garment.

**What is Jumper Chair?**

Is a character, almost human, (almost human is what is the key in the choice of jumper chair as a media). He is a hero. He has feelings, emotions….
He is like us the only difference is that he is a chair.
WHY I DECIDED TO USE JUMPER CHAIR:

- He is incarnating a Hero and what better than a Hero to talk to children.
- Incorporates humour in using an object being treated as a human being.
- Creates a focus on textiles not garment but imply garment.
- and by constantly being in between: Real and Imagination – Human and Object - Garment and Furniture.
This makes it up to the viewer to decide what he is looking at.

HOW I USE JUMPER CHAIR:

I use him as a support, with the role of visualizing my environment. I also use him as a media to project who I am.

WHY DO I USE “HIM” TO TALK ABOUT JUMPER CHAIR AND NOT “IT”?

First I am French and everything is a he or a she.
I additionally like the ambiguity and the fact it emphasizes the human side of Jumper chair.

To be clear I do not want to cover the chair, I want to dress it.
I am not talking about camouflage or covering properties in textiles.
I want to show how textiles can be used to give identity when applied as garment.

Jumper Chair is more than just a character, and is a fake human. He has the power to talk about dressing up, identity. He is a media that talks to children and the naïve side left in adults.
WHAT IS A CHAIR?

Ref:
- Färg, Frederik (appendix)
GARMENT DEVELOPMENT

From the mood boards, I started silhouette sketches. I was sketching both on paper and with paper as well as real size sketches. Those sketches were giving me shapes and forms.

Parallel I was sketching with the material, in the knitting lab. This stage was for me to find a structure that would give me an identical feel to the mood boards. This stage resulted in me having a library of option for each character.

The step forward was to look at what similarities the library of silhouette sketches and the library of structures were giving me. My method of working as a textile designer is having the structures acquired in the material creating the silhouette shapes.

To be more explicit it is the material that decides and creates the silhouettes. But I do need the silhouette sketches in order to create a map, guiding my material research.
GARMENT DVPT IN PICTURE
RESULT OF STAGE 2

CARACTERISTIQUES OF DESIGN: to express fun and humour, through the aid of colour; Also, having the material structure as focus point.
STAGE 3

The aim (the why), The What, The How are defined. It is time to create the solution by manipulating all those elements together.

It is convergence.
CONVERGENCE

Putting the elements together was considering all the variables at the same time and working along by association, combination or elimination.
I was sort of grading, putting order and scaling the variables.

Finding out the actual possibilities and understanding the limitations was as well important.
- How far I can within a knitting technique?
- What can I find as a chair?
- What are the different reactions of the material?

It is a constant relation between the knitted technique chosen, the look wanted and the individual expression.
Those points lead me in taking the decision for:
- What chair
- What knitted techniques
- What yarn?
- What quality...
- Where to place the material
- What combination

All those decisions have been made hand in hand with the choice of chair. And they were allways following each individual character mood board.
Knitting technique

- Yarn quality
- Machine size
- Yarn size
- Colour

Variety in collection

Load it as a library of my knowledge (project)

= different size
different machine
jumper chair

imaginary world

knitting technique

= solution 001
**Guideline followed:**

I want to create a family; I want to have a clear connection within the characters, as they are all descendents of my imaginary world.

The form of the chair has to correspond to the image of the character; they both have to lead towards the same expression.

There needs to be variety in the family.
As using different techniques, they could be emphasized in different ways depending on how they are applied on the body/form.

Here follows in picture a representation of the different stages I went through in my design process.
ARTISTIC DEVELOPMENT

As mention in my background, I knew the way I interact with colours results in 3D structures. Below, I will demonstrate how I developed my artistic method, the way I made decisions and what motivates the final results.

Starting point:
I had as visual support the “mood boards” created in the synthesis stage. They are representing each a character, an identity.
- From each mood board, I achieved sketches having for aim to answer those questions:
  - Form.
  - Pattern placement.
  - Overview.
  - Connection within the elements.

I also was assembling silhouette sketches.
- At the same time I was developing samples of material in order to fill the following requirements:
  - What technique would give me the feeling I am looking for.
  - Test what is actually possible with the machines.
  - I also was experimenting in order to reach my Handustrial aesthetic.

Then within the process I reach a visual satisfaction in my drawings representing:
- Colours.
- Forms.
- and giving a visual overview.
I was searching for the right result in materials and investigating:
- Tensions.
- Gage.
- Amount of yarn.
- Quality of yarn.
- Repeats.

All of those stages were being solved in agreement with the silhouette sketches; as the aim was to create garments.

**COLOUR**

It is the element pulling everything together; it is how the character becomes alive.
It is how they assemble the right identity.
Colour was the parameter that makes the work able to stand up.
There as been very serious work done with colour. Where the wrong shade can make the design to fall apart.

Colour changes its role depending on:
Personal note:

I really enjoy working with colours; it is a very challenging tool.
It is very exciting when the same character can take on different identity by changing colour.
It is also a very satisfying stage, when you see the character becoming alive when you make the right colour combination.
It is like emerging from a shell.

I always looked back at the drawings trying to stay as true as possible to them.
If it works on paper it will work with other material.
The issue was when working the other way round, trying to see how a colour would actually affect another one when put together.
The scale of working can make a difference as well as the surface of the material which is not always easy to transpose on paper.
OBSERVATIONS

Evaluation of solution and communication of the solution are to be discussed in the following chapter.
RESULT:

I came up with a library of solutions that are represented, and selected using the help of 7 characters.
They are the one motivating my design decisions regarding the knitted techniques, the colour, the structure, the overall effect and the look wanted to express.

What I think is interesting in the present work, is how I developed my material solutions and how the result relates to the design process. I also think I am presenting what a textile designer can give to fashion, and how different my design process as much as how I look upon fashion is compared to fashion designers.

At the end I wish to show what I am able to give to fashion with a textile background. And with that as an aim, I think I succeed in the quality of my work but maybe not in the way I decided to visualise the result. Maybe it is also something that needs to be discussed further…

I also find interesting the dimension I opened within children garments: “Fun to wear” and it is definitely something I wish to work further on.
DISCUSSION

What could be interesting to discuss, would be the issues of a textile designer working towards fashion, and trying to present its work by keeping the focus on the textiles, as this as been a big struggle along my journey and I still do not know the way out.

Did I fail in choosing jumper chair as a media?
 Does it misplace the focus of my work?

I believe if my aim was to talk to children and to create heroes as well as showing a fun environment, there jumper chair is a great solution.

Design process:

Having an imaginary world as a frame in order to develop my design was a very interesting method.
I actually think I found my own method of working and will in the future keep that method but maybe having a story as a frame as I resulted in creating a story to understand my characters.
I can now compare my method of working to other artist, such as: Agatha Ruiz de la Prada.
Where a fantasy world become source of unique intriguing solutions. Also having the pawer to talk to a wide public, as somehow many people can refer to an abstarct story.
When looking back at the result I can see that I might have got lost in my own imaginary world. I feel at some point, I couldn’t see the boundaries and made me loose the red thread. I got mislead between: what was my own personal feeling and what was my actual working space. This issue has played a role on the actual outcome making me create a multi solution work not really having one aim. Such as:
A garment collection,
A theatre,
Staging a performance,
Dress up garment…

I could have as well answered my aim by dressing the chair and not by creating wearable garments for the chair.

**Where I place myself:**

I believe that I can give to textile design a HANDUSTRIAL approach, where structure is the key of the design. I also have my design expression created through colour.

As well I am considering the environment as a variable in my design with a different approach than through the use of organic material. I think by creating unique handmade feel garment you will achieve a different use of the garment and the one time throw away garment will not occur in this context.
Next step:

I am presenting a vision of textiles, my aesthetics visualised by those 7 characters, but I am also presenting a knitted textile library filled up with material made out of colour combination creating structures and responding to my HANDUSTRIAL concept. My next stage would be to pick out elements in order to create a wearable textile garment collection.

I would really like to develop solution 001 into becoming “real/wearable” children garments. The collection will have for focus: “everyday costumes.” Everyday garments giving the same experience as costumes. If you want to be a frog then you can be a frog.

Where the character is expresses in structure and material.

Context of the design:

Solution 001 works and talks about children’s freedom, comfort and behaviour. Referring to:

- Today’s children’s garments
- Today children’s activities
- Today’s use of black.
- How we dress children and what we think when we design children’s garments.
What purpose:

It gives back to children a childhood, the right to dream and think differently.
Being creative and stubborn.
Solution 001; is aiming to show a different approach in designing children’s wear. Showing that, it’s possible to “dress up” for everyday tasks, and showing it’s possible to design such garments and produce them.
It is the opposite of Comptoir des Cotoniers’s concept (appendix) and other companies which aim to dress mini adults.

What issues:

Children are not aloud to behave as children anymore. They are expected to act and react like an adult;
Not allowing:
- Silliness
- Naivety
- Be oneself
- Making your own choices
- Taking the time to learn
- Be surprise
- Asking questions.
It seems to me people look at things like an evidence and expect the same from others as well as from children.
They are forced to be adults, to be appreciated by adults and finish by looking like adults.
Making the world looking sad and uniformed.


Presentation:

What do I want to emphasize, how can I do it?
I wish to emphasize on the fantastique dimension by:
  - Creating a story
  - Staging like a theatre
  - Playing with spots and light
  - Incorporating music...

But so far I think:
A black background, will work in combination with people imagination, with its attribute to theather.
And choosing black will also accentuate the colourfull world I want to visualised.

Solution 002:

It is still about structure and colour combination in order to express identity.
But the next version would be characters being created from a story.
From those I would construct another library of material that would be then leading to a children wear collection.