those complete strangers
an investigation of the rectangle

anna forsman
forsman.anna@gmail.com

ba fashion design 2011
degreereport number 2011.3.4
contents

abstract 03

starting point 04
  my references 05
  other design I 06
  other design II 07

attacking my references 08

design idea 09

sketching and developing the garments 10
  on a fullscale dummie
  earlier pencilscetches an process 11
  3 first outfits 12
  pencilscetches 13
  on a halfscale dummie 14

a tryout in public 15

hands of theirs 16

choice of fabrics and colors 19

color and material chart 22

how to cover and seethrough 23

developing lineup alternatives 24

changes 27

the use of traditional garments - lengths etc. 29

results 30

reflections 38

5 times 3, my designs in relation to other 42
-those complete strangers- deals with vulnerability, discomfort and an ounce of fear. The starting-point is an experience of an hospitalization.

SHAPE investigated is focusing on the 2 dimensional perspective of the room. The perspectivepoint, the rectangle, placed in relation to the body through drapings and/or prints.

DRAPINGS balancing between the soft/fragile/transperent and the stiff/solid/saturated.
STILL dizzy from the painkillers, I was over and over again asking what was wrong, but those people, who's hands was the only thing I could see above, they refused to give me an answer. Lights, walls and ceilings was passing in high speed in the periphery. With nobody answering my questions there was suddenly a plastic mask placed to my face and everything went black. I woke up alone with the fluorescent lamps dazzling my eyes.

THE starting point to my degreework was an hospitalization which had an strong impact on me. It was representing the complete opposite to my “natural” image of the world, that far.

MY background with a great interest in different cultures and personalities was contrasted to the clinical, impersonal. My earlier designs have always had a touch of cultures and I've worked with color, pattern and shape at the same time. The hospital experience is something unlike everything I've ever been through and with that as a background together with the fact that I've always felt attracted to the minimalistic design and designs focused on shape, it feels natural to try it myself in my degreework. See following pages for examples of other design and art that attracts me.

IN my experience from the hospital I had plenty of shifting emotions and to have something to work with I had to choose and focus on something. The two emotions I picked out is discomfort and vulnerability. These emotions put the “mood” to my work.

ALL keywords of importance, based on the experience, is: discomfort, vulnerability, stiff, soft, solid, fragile, saturated, transparent, spotless, shaded, sleek, easy wrinkled, cold light, warm light, fear.

TO build a further background to my work I started searching for images to visualise my experience. Page number 7 show some references of importance.
MY REFERENCES

http://www.calgary-drywall.ca/ (2010-12-03)


Photo Anna Forsman 2010.
I brought in these pictures of other designs to show a few of the rolemodels I have and the aspects I mention about them is things I also see as important while doing my design.

BELOW is designs that I like, the sculpture by Rene Muhl is playing with the relation between the two opposites, the hard/straight and the soft/round, opposites which I always seem to return to in my works. The sculpture also have a minimalistic colorpalette.

THE two outfits from Helmut Lang I like because of it´s rather simple drapings and almost straight silhouette, I´m also attracted to the designs cause of the classical garment types and because of the subtle discomfort I somehow see in the outfits.
FROM left, the outfit from Nakkna I like because of the dusty look (might be from the smoke on the catwalk but still) and the simplicity in the construction of the dress.

THE Damir Doma outfit is attractive cause of the rather uniform look (thanks to the straight silhouette), the classic garments and the transparency.

THE third from left, the Alexander Wang outfit is working with hard rectangular shapes in flowing soft materials which is nice as opposites, he also use a minimalistic colorpalette. I do not like the bare arms and almost bare shoulders in this outfit.

IN Junya Watanabes collection he’s focusing on shape and keep a minimalistic colorpalette aswell. What’s also interesting with the design of Junyo Watanabe is how he dress the full body, not leaving any bare skin, to me that is an important ingredient.
WHILE developing my work I tried different ways of approaching my references but nothing led me forward until I had the word clinical in mind, then I started questioning what clinical was to me and came up to the conclusion that the room is what is clinical to me. The room, because of it’s straight lines and hardness in angles and shapes. I made a few pencil scetches of shaded rooms which then inspired me to keep on working. I tried different ways of using my scetches and then found the perspectivepoint of the room, the rectangle, to be interesting.

THE rectangle is where the creation of the garment start, the fabrics comes in rectangular shapes, it’s a shape that due to it’s simplicity has been used for ages and I believe it will keep on being used for ages, it’s an shape which exists everywhere and therefore is interesting for all of us. I’m now trying to use it in a different way.

I decided to interpret my own scetches into fabrics - which became a “room-perspective-patchwork” which I found very interesting to make drapes with.
My idea is to investigate the rectangle in the relationship between the stiff/saturated/solid and the soft/transparent/fragile.
MY method has been to first of all decide which kind of room and perspective I wanted to use for the drappings, the proportions I was most attracted to was where the inner rectangle is placed closer to one side of the outer rectangle, see example below. The second step has been to choose the fabrics, cut and sew my “patch” and start draping it in relation to the body.

I found it very interesting to place a more stiff fabric in the “perspective-point-rectangle” and more thin/soft fabric surrounding it. The drapes have several different angles thanks to the relationship between the opposite materials. The shapes I’ve been aiming for has been quite “hard” and in some ways straight though with a bit of discomfort/disturbance in the flow coming from the drape. I encountered some problems with organic/flowing shapes which easily appeared when I was draping with larger pieces of stiff fabrics. I don’t consider organic shapes to fit my theme why I have been struggling against this whilst draping.

From my first drapes together with the inspiration from my earlier scetches based on my theme/background I made three outfits which worked well together. See page 11 and 12.
EARLIER STAGES PENCIL SCETCHES AND PROCESS
3 FIRST OUTFITS
WHEN the work reached a certain point in drapings on fullscale I had to go back to the pencil and sketch based on what I had came up with from the different drapings this gave me a few alternatives about how to develop my first drapes further.
TO more rapidly come up with more alternative outfits/drapings I started working on a halfscale dummie. I made several different "room-fabrics" to drape from. I also tried to have some parts in grey - like one or two walls was shaded - but this didn't attract my eyes why I chose to not use that combination.

WHEN I had picked out some favourites from the halyscale drappings and wanted to take them further in fullscale I encountered some difficulties since the scale first of all wasn't perfectly correct - the double size wasn't enough - it had to be about 15% larger than just the double to be perceived in the same proportion. Another problem was that the stiff versus soft fabrics behaved quite different in larger pieces which made it more difficult to translate halyscale into fullscale garments.
TO reflect about our designs we took 3 outfits out in public to both see them together and to see what happened to the garments in a different environment than the school. To me the “public trial” was successful, my outfits made a strong impression in contrast to “the ordinary” and they created a special atmosphere – almost ghostlike, a fragile mood.

A woman approached the girl who videorecorded the happening and she was quite upset and experienced a strong discomfort while looking at my outfits. The woman talked to the cameragirl about how scary the hands was and that the outfits made her think about a hospital and the manipulating hands of the mental healthcare. It was not an exact interpretation but very close – which was quite stunning and cool.
THE hands as a bit creepy element and as a symbol of all the strangers who I had to trust with my life was an important ingredient for my work and I sketched on these in an early stage.

What they were to do with the garments was also a question. I wanted them to be creepy “helping hands”, holding up the garments or too big necklines like in the picture but the hands shouldn’t really be pleasant since they in the meaning of saving lifes don’t really care how they grab. My first thought about the hands was to make them fullscale like in the picture below but during the process of finding materials to make them by I made what I called “a successful mistake”.

MY aim had been to make thin tinn-”shells” where the outer part of the hand was the only thing important to show but when I gave it a try the melted tinn wasn’t possible to shape into a thin layer like I wanted to and because of the weight of the tinn it wasn’t possible to make the whole hand, instead it became fragments of a hand which I thought looked more creepy than a whole hand and I took the decision that the hands was better that way.

LATER when I saw the full lineup and had some other opinions about the fragments of the hands and what they were doing it seemed like they were too hard to understand in their current formation. I changed the grip from a pinch to a grab and the sort of hand, from a rather fine hand into one with bony knuckles. I made new silicone matrix and found a new plastic material for casting instead of the tinn. This material was not shiny even though I mixed it with silver pigments so to make it stand out more I also got a white silver spray paint. See page number 16 for images.
CHOICE OF FABRICS AND COLORS

To choose my fabrics I used my keywords:

- discomfort, vulnerability, stiff, soft, solid, fragile, saturated, transparent, spotless, shaded, sleek, easy wrinkled, cold light, warm light, fear

I easily found a wide range of the soft, vulnerable, fragile, transparent easy wrinkled fabrics in cotton, polyester and viscose, for example cotton moll, muslin, woven “sheet”-cotton, polyester voialle.

WHAT is also of interest is how the material around the dékolletage could change the impression of the whole garment, like how my choice of mostly placing viscose in focus makes the garment fit a younger bearer in a way that if it had been the cottonmuslin in focus around the dékolletage it would have fitted an elder more “cultural-woman”.

MY first choice of more solid, stiff materials was a thick cotton satin and also a cotton twill but when I was draping the “room-patch” on a bigscale dummie it disturbed me how there were still wrinkles on the stiff and solid part, in my vision I saw that part as something sleek, clinical, spotless.
TO solve this problem I searched for a non wrinkle fabric, something more sleek that could be fixed to stay sleek. I was looking at different polyesters but the one I found which matched my requirements perfectly was a polyesterduchesse, “bridegown-fabric”, which also was a bit disturbing/itching since it play a game with who the bearer is. It was quite stiff and to make it even more stiff I doubled it to a liningfabric. An other material I chose was a white leather imitation on which I also put a layer of acrylat to make it shiny in contrast to the dull fabrics.

THE try of other more fragile and loose woven fabrics wasn’t successful since they “died” in relation to the stiff and solid ones in the way I used them together. The same thing happened while trying more stiff and hard materials like plastic, the material completely took over the garment and there were no longer a relation between the opposites - the relation lost the balance. The “balance” as I express it, is how the more fragile fabrics still could affect the more stiff in drapes aswell as how the body underneath the garment still could affect the more stiff parts. See examples of two more stiff plastics below.
COLORS I chose at first was different shades of white, to bring out each other since the white exists at the hospital in many shades. But to use the white and combine it with the duchesse was too much associated with wedding why I instead choose to color the garments in spacedye-technique into pale shades of green, blue and gray, while still keeping some of the “yellowish” and “blueish” white, all colors according to my reference picture of the room.
My colors shift in different pale shades of grey and green. The dyes depend on material and level of mix between my two colorsrecipes. The white comes in 3 different shades, one white-white, one blueish and one yellowish white.
AN other aspect of my work is about how to show vulnerability on a level where it’s not the main focus but still there.

UNLIKELY from others I don’t think showing the breast of the models is to show vulnerability, I consider it’s more provoking and sexy to put a model in an fully transparent top. I also believe that the models who are sent out on a catwalk in only a transparent top is more likely interpreted/seen as a strong independent and brave women than a vulnerable one.

MY choice about how to bring in the vulnerability is to make prints and foldings/drapings that covers the breast even though the materials are transparent and the nakedness is still there. I also believe that my way of doing it brings in a “nerve” into the nakedness both for the bearer and the crowd. Why I believe this is because there is a discomfort and a nervousness in something that should cover but only almost covers.

THE examples on the side strengthen my discussion above.

TO the right is one of Damir Domas outfits and the one on the far right is one of my early outfits for this project. I no longer have this outfit in the collection but I’ve kept on working with prints in the same theory.
DEVELOPING LINEUP ALTERNATIVES

TO have a lineup of 7 outfits (or more) which complete each other was also supposed to be developed during the sketch period of the process, since my sketch method has been to drape on both fullscale and halfscale my lineup alternatives was made by photos of the drappings.

WHAT I didn’t think about in that stage was that in discussions in group about these drappings and lineup alternatives the “sketches” was open to a lot of different interpretations which became a bit of a problem later when I translated it to fullscale garments since the image I got from the drappings didn’t always fully match what my tutor had seen in the sketch. With other words, my draping sketches should have been completed with pencil sketches to make them clear enough to discuss.

BELOW is a few of my alternatives at that stage shown.
TO further develop the lineup was to first make pencil sketches and then starting to realize the fullscale garments.

WHAT I was aiming for when developing my lineup was a variety between the 7 outfits and a “melody” whilst looking at them. Now I can look back and see that I should also have been looking more at making “friends” for the different outfits, maybe looking at them in groups inside of my theme and looking at the angles of the rectangles in the already made whilst building the next one.

FROM the sketches below a few choices made a difference along the way, one draping, number 4 from the left above was chosen away since it didn’t look good in motion. The last outfit didn’t feel important cause it was just another long skirt.

LATER at an toile-fitting I chose one draping (number 4 from the left) away and replaced it with a “friend” to the dress number 1 from the left below.
BELOW is a picture from the toialle seminar, where the first outfit from the left and the friends of it’s – top number 2 and bra number 6 – didn’t really fit in because of it’s format and the scale of the rectangle, the jacket, number 5 from the left, wasn’t ok, since it didn’t have the 3d effect as the other drapings and the toialle skirt on number 6 needed more changes to be perfect aswell as the last dress needed somthing more underneath the draped dress. The hands were also too small and my teachers didn’t really buy my arguments about the duchesse parts why alot of changes were needed.
Almost at the far end I was still not clear about my 7th outfit, and to do it right this time, according to my experiences of how I should have worked with making friends for the outfits before. I now put all of the other outfits up on a line discussing and thinking about how to design the last one (far left in this picture).

I made a few different alternatives, well aware of the need of the rectangle of the larger scale in my range. I ended up choosing between two alternatives which I show below, a subtle difference but still a difference. I chose to go forward with the draping to the right after discussing with a couple of other design students and I was also simply looking at which one was more aesthetically appealing to me.

At this stage I also started to question and consider a change in my plan about how to do the finish of the collection, when I did this lineup I had still not done any of the insides or the foldings. It actually looked quite good.
THE raw edges matched my dyeing-technique and my prints very well. I looked at some hems where I had already prepared by ironing to do the finish. In comparison between the hem and the raw edge the hem made the garment look dull and made for an elder woman while the raw edges gave the garment a vivid and younger more interesting expression. To me it’s hard to just leave the edges raw cause I feel like I didn’t finish the garments and to make it feel like I’ve still worked it I’ll place supportive stitchings to stop the raw edges from fraying too much.

IN the lineup on the last page I had not dyed all the garments and when I saw them together I thought that the lighter garments gave a subtle variety which also made the collection more vivid so again I made a lighter shade of green and yellow when space-dying these garments. But again changed my mind when I saw the lineup on a person because it became too calm and nice in comparison to the others. It’s very important to take decisions about color in relation to the body and skin.
THE USE OF TRADITIONAL GARMENTS - LENGHTS ETC.

TO match my keypieces I needed more simple garments which let my keypieces take place, my choice became jerseygarments in an transparent and fragile viscose. In the early stages of the collection I tried the draped dress below in many different constellations, with different pieces underneath, I found it hard to find a balance to really bring out the dress in the way I wanted it.

FROM start my choice was to have a type of tall tanktop underneath, but I wasn’t satisfied with the expression of the outfit, then I tryed a long sleeved jersey top with a different cut in the back, I inmmedeatley liked the dress better with long sleeves underneath but the model of the top wasn’t good. I made a new top where I tried to have an “above the waist” lenght because I’ve always heard people in the business say “it’s good to show a little skin” but this became a disaster so my last choice is a lonssleeved, full-lenght jerseydress and now the expression of the outfit is what I was aiming for.

I also looked at designs I think is good to further build my argu- ment about lenght and sleeve lenght. With that in mind I’ve kept on to almost completely dress the body and arms in all my outfits.
RESULTS

THE collection is a complete mass of complete strangers. It’s uniform, a bit creepy but still fragile and beautiful, some pieces are more simple but they are really needed to bring out the others. The styling with hands, nylons covering the shoes and face is successful to make the expression more uncomfortable and impersonal.

-those complete strangers- is triggering because the viewer will start wondering and thinking about what the hands are doing there and why, as well as try to understand the drapings and maybe succeed in understanding since it’s quite simple. I enjoy how it can trigger peoples mind to become curious.

SHAPES are made by hand on a dummy and not done with a pencil sketch which makes some people curious about how it’s made. It’s also beautiful and harmonic for the eye to watch at the same time as it’s a bit creepy.

MANY of the garments are quite commercial in their shape and therefore interesting also in a business matter.

THE collection has it’s starting point and discussion in how the human meets the impersonal” not human” and therefore I believe it’s an collection interesting in an art context as well.
OUTFIT 1

Photo: Henrik Bengtsson, model: Julia Lindberg, hair & makeup: Fazli Krasniqi

All outfits spacedyed with the same grey and green shade.

An assymetric tunic made from cotton moll, viscose, cotton muslin and duschesse, round neck and one button in the back together with a pair of wide viscosejersey pants with elastic in the waist.
OUTFIT 2

A tall, short-sleeved jersey dress with a acrylic paint print in the front, round neckline.
OUTFIT 3

A draped top made from cottonmoll, polyesterviscose, duschesse, viscose, with one button in the back with a tall viscosejersey skirt with elastics in the waist.
A jersey t-shirt with acrylic paint print in the front together with a pair of draped trousers in woven cotton, cotton muslin, viscose and duschesse, closed with a zipper on the side. One hand accessorie “grabbing” the trousers.
A draped jacket in duschesse, cotton muslin, viscose and back and arms in cotton/polyester/elastane, held to wrinkle by a hand accessorie on the side, middle back seam pulled up by the hand in front, sideseam straight when pulled up. A jerseydress with long sleeves underneath.
A tall, short-sleeved jersey dress with a acrylic paint print in the front, a folding on the side and a pinched folding on the back neckline.
A draped dress in cotton muslin, viscose, cotton moll and duchesse, held up by two hand accessories, underneath a longsleeved tall jerseydress.
THE result is successful in many ways, it’s minimalistic in the colorpalette, it’s focusing on the shape, dressing most of the body and it has a strong expression pointing towards discomfort and vulnerability. I’m happy that the work have taken a few different turns and I’m very pleased with the outcome.

THERE is a difference in what happens in the drapings and there could have been less difference in how I treated the drapings, it would have been even more uniform that way but I still belive the outfits fullfill their purpose in the existing lineup since the unity between them is so obviously there.

IN comparison to other designs that I’ve referred to my work is not as tailored and clean in cut as the more minimalistic designs but it’s minimalistic in the colorpalette - even though it’s not one color but a few - which was my aim.

IF I look at how a few(of probably thousands) others have been working with the rectangle in an appealing way(to me), I consider my work to be versatile investigating and adding dimensions but still with a clear focus.

BELOW is designs of Lily Heine who’s been placing the rectangle in layers relating to the body, but still with the rectangle pretty “untouched” and viewed in it’s beautiful basic shape. But again I belive her garments are more tailored than my collection and it suits very well when working with the rectangle in that way.
THE work of Rei Kawakubo is pretty much based on whole big rectangles creating garments, which I’ve earlier been working with a little bit. It’s also very much like the basics of clothes which also attracts me, simplifying garments and shapes, reducing unnecessary complications. This kind of method could have been an alternative and interesting way of working to reach my aim with a more minimalistic collection.
TO the right is a picture of Comme des Garçons, from 1998 where rectangular pieces is placed to build up the skirt, but I believe this method - which I was sketching a bit similar to in a stage of my process - had become more stiff and two dimensional.

BELOW is another Comme des Garçons collection, this examples show how they were working with hands integrating the garments, I think these hands is very much touching the bearer and they are in focus.

THE way I wanted to work with the hands in my work is like an kind of accessory that do something - they affect the garment in some way.
IF my collection would be produced it would have to be in a small-scale since the foldings and drapings are difficult to make exact.

I have developed my understanding for how to build a collection, how I should be focusing on building friends in small groups instead of trying to widen my range, at least if I work with shape in this way, when the starting point and aim is different also other methods suit better. I’ve also learned that even though the result seem to be good in the beginning I should still try more alternatives and give my first ideas a try even though I meet “successful mistakes” along the way.

DEVELOPING and learning as a designer will go on forever, happily. If I would know everything already I’d be bored with the work as a designer. Therefore — of course I do not know everything after this degree work but I’ve developed a lot when it comes to understanding and building up a lineup and making an expressful collection. I still have to learn more about how to communicate in pencil sketch interpretations of my drapings both for myself and others during the process. And to make something a bit scary should always be a bit more scary than what one’s imagination says.

WHAT I therefor would like to discuss for the future is if I should bring out the outfits in hoods with eyes and mouth in embroidery, or as my choice in the result lineup, with nylon stockings covering the face or completely without hoods. See pictures below.
TO try my keypeices with other designed garments was interesting since it showed how wearable my designs was and also how it easily could adjust to what was worn together with it.

THE first piece below is my draped dress which I from the left have with:

3. An “washed-black” tanktop for girls from JC – a more sensual outfit.
MY draped jacket together with:

2. Tight black jeans, Crocker from JC, shoes from DIN SKO – an rock outfit.
3. A skirt from Zoul, MQ – an outfit probably worn by an extrovert woman.
MY skirt together with:

1. Kamouflagetanktop from Zoul, MQ – an outfit for the extrovert woman.
2. Tanktop with print from Levi’s, MQ – an rock outfit probably worn by a teenage girl.
MY printed dress together with:

1. An mens denim shirt, JC - a relaxed everyday look.
2. An mens vest, Bläck, MQ - a cool, relaxed office look.
3. A knitted ladies t-shirt from Zoul, MQ - an everyday cozy look.
MY draped top together with:

References: