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MAKING NEW PERIPHERIES IN FASHION OR WHEN YOU DON'T SEE, WHAT REMAINS TO BE FELT?

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A series of garments. On the image, 5 small wooden chests, each containing a garment and their audio description as audio logs of wearing experiences are showcased in the Dialogical Bodies conference.

General understanding on fashion and clothing in Western tradition persists on emphasizing its visual dimension (cf. Ruggerone 2017). In such perspectives, clothing and fashion are investigated mainly as things devoid of agency onto which humans 'imprint' culture(s). This emphasis on what lies at the surface of things – or on how they look – is akin to industrialized societies, not exclusive to fashion, and promotes a duality and a distancing between things and people (Anusas and Ingold 2013). While not entirely negative (think sense of belonging and empowerment through visual identification), this distancing may also promote harmful outcomes, such as excluding parts of society, supporting superficial relations, and early discard. Seeking to challenge this emphasis on visibility and begin to open paths towards other ways of making and thinking clothing, this project proposes that garments be explored from the lens of experience. It asks 'What remains relevant when the visual dimension of clothing becomes peripheral?' To do so, a revised phenomenological approach (Verbeek 2005) is taken as a methodology. The work, as a research project, comprises of a series of wearing experience logs, part of a wearing experience diary (Valle-Noronha 2019). These logs are understood as

exercises that look at clothing as affective—able to shape us as active matter in the same way that we, as humans, shape clothing. In this presentation, the main data used is a narration of these experiences as audios. In the exhibition that accompanies this brief reflection, a series of 5 ‘garments’ are exposed in three forms, inviting public engagement: 1. Audio logs recorded by the author describing the garments from an experiential viewpoint, 2. The garments themselves enclosed in drawers, and thus not immediately visually available and 3. Sketched (textual or visual) interpretations participants’ may have of the narrated pieces, a collaborative dimension of the work leading to further explorations. The analysis of the collected experiential descriptions points out to dimensions that remain relevant when we move beyond the usual emphasis on visual aesthetics. On the one hand, some of the findings confirm previous studies that discuss the relevance of tactile aesthetics and social response. On the other, it points out to others points of interest, such as longitudinally constructed notions of fashion and emotionally affecting dimensions of experience. By reflecting and diffracting (with the collaboration of conference participants) on these findings, the project can support discussions towards a shift in design practices to concentrate on clothing dimensions that allow for different relationships with garments.



Autoethnographic study, where garments worn during the period of a month were investigated in regards to comfort, visuality, versatility, frequency of use and overall experience through a wearing experience diary.

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