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**Willem de Kooning Academy**  
**Minor Digital Craft**  
**Written Statement**

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**Fantastic Forgeries & Tools of the Trade**

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**'Simplicity is the ultimate sophistication', Leonardo da Vinci.**

As a fashion designer I am not so much into trends. I am mainly interested in 'simplicity' and 'clarity' while communicating. I am inspired by art and people. As a student, and as a resident of a dynamic and modern multi cultural city i am socially engaged and witty.

**my craft**

In the next fragment out of 2012 I am sharing my preoccupation(s) and approach, while introducing one of my HEAD (Haute Ecole d'Art et de design, Geneva) projects (*Experimental Jacket and Urban Jeans*).

'During landing with the airplane I am always admiring the top view of the landscapes below. In the view of these landscapes I see in different field divisions. They interest me, especially their geometricity. These field divisions reminded me of paintings of the Dutch abstract painter Theo van Doesburg, a member of the movement 'de Stijl'.

The paintings of Van Doesburg are flat (2D), abstract, minimalistic and geometric. The top view is reminding me of that. But in fact the field divisions seem flat, (2D) from the top view in the air, but we know that, putting all the fields together it is in fact 3D: the earth. I wanted to combine this contrast between 2D and 3D in one outfit but also I work with their similarity the geometric forms.'

More specifically concerning my minor project: I selected 'Mon Premier Amour' (1953) by Man Ray. At first hand, I selected this bright painting because of its aesthetics, and because I got curious by the multi interpretable title.

But after researching the painting and Man Ray – surprisingly – I started to notice quite some resemblance(s) with my own practice.

Probably my selection, was not really intuitive after all, and was triggered by some kind of recognition – as if we are 'sharing' the same concepts. Like Man Ray in 'Mon Premier Amour', I am working with collaging, 'layering' geometrical shapes, and color as well.

Traditionally the tools and media of Fashion seem somehow restricted, because in the end it is always some kind of fabric which has to cover the body. Like they say: 'The fashionable woman wears clothes. The clothes don't wear her.' Mary Quant (1934).

Anyhow, the tools of fashion seem fairly analog, a pattern made out of fabric sewed together with by sewing machine, although obviously now and in the near future some digital tools should be added.

### **new tools**

Since the introduction of some emerging new technologies (<http://waag.org/nl/event/smart-textiles-deaf-2012>) the traditional fairly analog designers toolkit (a pattern made out of fabric sewed together with by sewing machine) needs to be updated (<http://www.clicknl.nl/nextfashion/2014/03/31/van-mode-tot-technologie-de-creatie-van-een-nieuw-materiaal/>). Of course not only the Macbook, including Adobe Illustrator, Photoshop, and Indesign should be added. But which tools the standard future toolkit will contain, is rather hard to predict at this very moment. I'd like to mention: special fibers (that light up when you make a picture), arduino (handling chips and relay's, movement, sound, led light etc), spray and glue's (that replace fabrics), or melting fabrics together to eliminate the sewing machine.

Compare the next quotes: 'I don't do fashion. I am fashion.' Coco Chanel (1883-1971),

'I don't design clothes. I design dreams.' Ralph Lauren (1939), and 'Clothes mean nothing until someone lives in them.' Marc Jacobs (1963). Inevitable fashion is moving away from plain *sjamanism*, while some forward marketing thinking is introduced, although we all know the profession nowadays sometimes equals a form of entertainment or glamour. For instance recently The New York Times informed its readers under the heading 'An invitation or a provocation?' about (again) John Giallano who has been named by Renzo Rosso to be the creative director of Maison Martin Margiela . . .

Anyhow, in the recent past some 'old' industrial techniques, like weaving and knitting, did digitalize and entered the industry. Meanwhile some emerging technologies, like for instance 'smart textiles' ([http://www.newscenter.philips.com/nl\\_nl/standard/about/news/press/2014/20140214-philips-ontwerpt-hedendaagse-versie-17de-eeuwse-halskragen-voor-rijksmuseum.wpd#.VD0hEvweCo](http://www.newscenter.philips.com/nl_nl/standard/about/news/press/2014/20140214-philips-ontwerpt-hedendaagse-versie-17de-eeuwse-halskragen-voor-rijksmuseum.wpd#.VD0hEvweCo)) and '3D printing' (<http://motherboard.vice.com/nl/read/this-knitting-machine-is-like-a-3d-printer-for-clothes>) are stretching the domain (please read the next paragraph). Meanwhile 'sustainability' (*cradle to cradle*), 'customizing' ([http://store.nike.com/us/en\\_us/pw/mens-nikeid-running/1k9Z7puZ8yz](http://store.nike.com/us/en_us/pw/mens-nikeid-running/1k9Z7puZ8yz)) and 'co-creation' are other influential concepts changing design elsewhere. 'Globalism' and 'cross cultural collaborations' will probably broaden' the profession even further (<http://www.icr.ro/bucharest/eunic-projects/fashion-road-dialogue-across-borders.html>).

### **my position**

Fashion is rather resilient and seems to re-new itself constantly. It has to; the principle seems to be embedded in our designer genes.

Although Fashion seems to be an area that has remained relatively untouched by technology, recently the potential is high lightened by the work of designers like Hussein Chalayan (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ae81FcczsI8>) who is 'creating a micro geography with the body, and two dresses like tv sceens with led's', and Iris van Herpen (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9vZktNvLCaI>) 'Most of my concepts are fairly abstract. I don't like creating a new image based on an old one'. Both designer are crossing borders and are focused on looking into the future of Fashion.

Still, in this context it is, in my opinion, it is important to mention the craft itself – no matter which tools or media are used – is, in essence, something concerning 3D, since the 'main object of study' is the human body. (Both Chalayan's and Van Herpen's designs represent a shaping of the body.) So, no change in this retrospect. To conclude: Fashion is presumably somehow related to architecture and sculpture as well . . .

I am an open and curious designer. I am aware of the importance 'to digitalize'. That is the main reason to select the minor Digital Craft anyhow. Still in the recent past we did not really have the chance nor the time to study 'new technologies'. Enough other challenges anyhow. The minor Digital Craft enables me to focus, widen my horizon and discover new grounds.

### **implications**

Thinking about . . . , re-thinking my role as a fashion designer – you know, in the near future I will be working on my graduation project . . . there is a fashionable segment which, at least at WDKA, seems to be omitted. I am wondering why children wear is neglected?

I love children! I am fascinated by them, and especially interested in children's perception . . . Children seem to observe the world differently. Their perception of a child is pure, honest and not already influenced by norms, values and knowledge.

They think out of the box and are not afraid to tell so. They are willing to try without being afraid to fail. I know I can not draw, so I don't but as a child you just don't care.

All kids are artists!

Bor told me a story what is a good example what I mean to say. His uncle lives anti squat in a gymnasium because he is too poor to rent a nice apartment. His nephew came to visit him and was so excited his uncle was living in a gymnasium, for him this had a whole other value than it in reality is. He told all his friends his uncle was very rich and lived in a gymnasium all for him self.

The magical thinking of children – the blurring boundary between fantasy and reality – is inspiring! I'd like to study this subject, if possible within 'Digital Craft', because research concerning children's 'Theory of Mind' and 'Fantasy Orientation' gained some new insights:

Theory of mind refers to our tendency to construe other people and their behaviors in terms of mind-related constructs, like desires, personality traits, and intentions (Premack & Woodruff, 1978; Wellman, 1990). Perhaps the most important aspect of a theory of mind is the understanding that minds represent the world. People act based on their personal construal of a situation, regardless of what the situation actually is. (Angeline Lillard, Pretend Play as Twin Earth: A Social-Cognitive Analysis.)

Engaging in fantastical worlds might advance children's theory of mind skills because in fantasy children must imagine alternative realities (e.g. imagining a world where people can fly), a skill that might be helpful in understanding others' minds (e.g. imagining that a person could have a false belief about the world). In a short-term longitudinal study, we found that preschoolers' fantasy orientation predicted improvement in theory of mind over the time period examined (Dore & Lillard, Theory of mind and children's engagement in fantasy worlds, University of Virginia).

The distinction between fantasy and reality is basic to human cognition . . . Children have traditionally been thought to confuse the boundary between fantasy and reality.

However, the view that children confuse fantasy and reality is at odds with a large body of research showing that children as young as three years are able to make various other non-reality/reality distinctions. (Tanya Sharon and Jacqueline D. Woolley, *Do monsters dream? Young children's understanding of the fantasy/reality distinction*. Emory University, The University of Texas, USA)

Adult thinking about children tends always to the grimly instrumental. But there is a deeper and more interesting question to ask. Why are children and fantasy linked at all? Why does the marvelous, the wonderful, the fantastic seem to be the natural territory of childhood? And why do children spontaneously choose the unreal over the real? From an evolutionary perspective children are, literally, designed to learn. Childhood is a special period of protected immaturity.

What we call play, allows the young to learn in this protected, safe way. These everyday theories are much like the formal, explicit theories of science. Theorising lets children understand the world and other people more accurately. (Alison Gopnik, The Real Reason Children Love Fantasy: [http://www.slate.com/articles/arts/culturebox/2005/12the\\_real\\_reason\\_children\\_love\\_fantasy.html](http://www.slate.com/articles/arts/culturebox/2005/12the_real_reason_children_love_fantasy.html))

### **the link**

To connect children's 'Magical Thinking' with the minor Digital Craft; in an attempt to trigger children's fantasy like any UC designer would do ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/User-centered\\_design](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/User-centered_design)), I discussed, and 'decomposed' a digital device, with ten children in the age between 4-7 years, and interviewed them each individually during an hour at a number of addresses in Rotterdam. As digital device I choose an iPad, this object is very popular with children from this age and I was sure they could tell me a lot about this device. To my surprise the knowledge of children concerning The Digital is actually quite amazing:

Céline (7 years) predicted a lot of wires, inside the i-pad, connected with a lightning switch, which transferred all data to a satellite and back . . . Céline told me – in confidence – she had been thinking a lot about the touchscreen of the i-pad lately . . . to conclude there must be a some kind of magnet inside which moved around in sync while your finger swept . . .

Lior (6 years) explained the i-pad's mechanism was in fact supported by a *family* – a mother, a daddy and a child – who *internally*, by turn, supported all movements of the user(s) outside. He suggested the family was in fact at sleep, when the i-pad's battery was empty and needed a re-load . . .

Anyhow, all children were convinced of the usage of some kind of complex ingenious wiring, and at least a set of powerful batteries supporting the performance of the i-pad.

Youri (6 years) – who by the way is planning, like his father, a career as engineer – not only succeeded in drawing a memory chip quite precisely, but also in presenting a ‘printed circuit’ while discussing the i-pad ([http://opensource.wdka.nl/wiki/File:Scan1a\\_16.jpeg](http://opensource.wdka.nl/wiki/File:Scan1a_16.jpeg)) . . .

Once positioned in the role of engineer, constructor, or designer the kids imagination’ really started to flow.

Hein (5 years) suggested to visit and explore the i-pad in an astronaut suit to prevent short circuit and/or electrocution at all times . . .

Céline would store and secure all her secrets in the i-pad for ever, if she could produce her own . . .

Frauke (7 years) would favour a voluminous *girafant* living in her i-pad very much . . . (The beast is a combination of two Dutch words: giraffe and elephant.)

I realized that I have had a wrong impression how children would fantasize about a digital device. I expected it to be more a live and free but they were mostly very realistic. I started wondering if I could still reach my goal: create a tool to trigger fantasy?

In co-creation (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Co-creation>) the children and I produced a number of interesting collage and outfits. As it seems my intention to decide upon ‘design moves’ together, seems really valuable in the end . . .

At this very moment I am preparing a wired *prototype* – A first Tool of the Trade – loaded with touch sensors and LED's to explore the children’s MAGICAL THINKING.

Meanwhile I am planning two group sessions with children at BSO in Amsterdam (<http://www.ateliercreart.nl>), and at a primary Rudolf Steiner school: Wonnebald in The Hague ([http://www.wonnebald.nl/over-de-school/organisatie/ fit](http://www.wonnebald.nl/over-de-school/organisatie/fit)).

In this context its interesting MIT developed StoryMat: a soft intelligent play mat that records and recalls children's storytelling activities.

'Storytelling plays an essential role in children's daily activities. Listening to others' stories and sharing their stories with others are activities through which children make sense of their inner world [2] and the world around them [1]. While computers are emerging in children's world by means of educational tools or games, there is a considerable lack of computer mediated systems that simply support children's everyday storytelling activities. (Kimiko Ryokai and Justine Cassell, StoryMat: A Play Space with Narrative Memories, MIT Media Laboratory, link: <http://www.media.mit.edu/gnl/projects/storymat/>)