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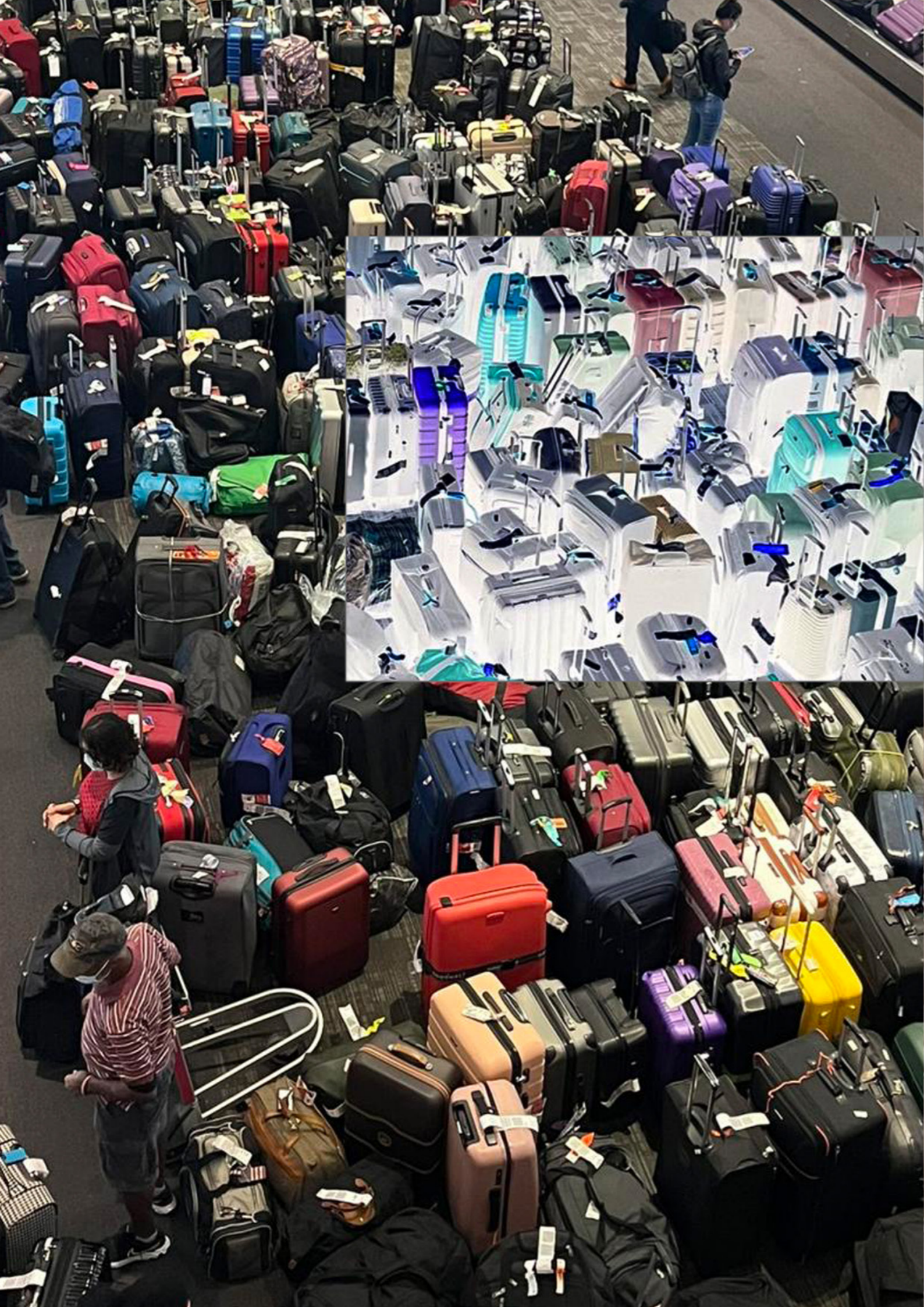
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HOW IT IS

A poem by Maxine Kumin to his friend Anne Sexton, 1974 (Kumin).

Shall I say how it is in your clothes?
A month after your death I wear your blue jacket.
The dog at the center of my life recognizes
you've come to visit, he's ecstatic.
In the left pocket, a hole.
In the right, a parking ticket
delivered up last August on Bay State Road.
In my heart, a scatter like milkweed,
a flinging from the pods of the soul.
My skin presses your old outline.
It is hot and dry inside.

I think of the last day of your life,
old friend, how I would unwind it, paste
it together in a different collage,
back from the death car idling in the garage,
back up the stairs, your praying hands unlaced,
reassembling the bits of bread and tuna fish
into a ceremony of sandwich,
running the home movie backward to a space
we could be easy in, a kitchen place
with vodka and ice, our words like living meat.

Dear friend, you have excited crowds
with your example. They swell
like wine bags, straining at your seams.
I will be years gathering up our words,
fishing out letters, snapshots, stains,
leaning my ribs against this durable cloth
to put on the dumb blue blazer of your death.

prologue

introduction

The aim of this thesis is to explore how setting up interaction between personal memories and the materiality of ordinary used objects contribute in new perspectives within the fashion context.

The relevance of ordinary objects from the past in conveying stories and producing new ones in the present is depicted in Kumin's words, which represent in his poem the 'material memory' of his shared moments with his friend Anne. Drawing from this notion, I think back to my childhood, when I frequently collected objects that were connected to memories, as I relocated every three years. Everyday objects included discarded tissues and shells, the scraps of fabrics left over from the clothes that my grandmother sewed in her atelier as well as used airline tickets, luggage labels and damaged suitcases. I never wondered how I would use all these little fragments. I was fascinated by the smell that emerged when the scrap was cut from the garment, the image of the worn suitcase, the ticket information as it faded with time, the touch of the deconstructed tissue, the sound of the seashells in my pockets. For me, I have always been a 'nomad' who moves from place to place while dragging her past experiences with her and trying to adjust to a nonetheless familiar yet never the same condition.

A few years later, I followed the same path by collecting all the scraps of fabric resulting from the pattern cutting in the studio where I did my internship. However, this time I asked myself:

Why? Why am I collecting all these 'rags'? How will I use them? Why do I keep not taking the tag out of the suitcase? How am I going to use all these picked seashells?

I then realized that this brief uncertainty could not be extended to the case of the ticket, because the physical record I had once kept after a flight had been replaced by a digital one, which made me wonder about the new emotional value of memory in light of contemporary digital reality.

This thesis consists of two parts. The first chapter Part 1 will focus on the connection between memory and senses as I remember my grandmother in her atelier in vivid details, with additional references to Proust's mother's dress as he recalled the memory of the sound that the blue muslin echoed while she bid him farewell. In the current dominant role of memory, the study of cultural memory has centered on objects, such as memorials, pictures, souvenirs and books (Munteán, Plate and Smilek, 2017 : 5). The souvenirs that many people collect as a 'memento' of their trips serve as an example of how memory is interwoven with materiality.

As the individual's memory is triggered by the souvenir, nostalgia fulfills any gap between the 'sign' and the 'signified' - terms introduced by philosopher Ferdinand de Saussure to define the idea of the object as a material substance and a spiritual concept (Pearce, 2003), which will be the content of the second chapter.

Moving beyond the layers of meaning and emotional value accumulated through the souvenirs, the third chapter of Part 1 will try to answer to the question of how deconstructed and emotionally charged objects can contribute to the reconstruction of a new hierarchy in the context of fashion and art expression. It will thus be discussed how the collecting habit can be transformed into an aesthetic mood by applying it in fashion and art fields that suggest an alternative way of seeing the collected objects. In order to exemplify the interrelation between myself and my cherished items, I will consider my keepsakes as souvenirs related to the nostalgic feeling of the experience of constant movement. The shell souvenir as will be presented in the first chapter of Part 2 is the object that according to poet and professor Susan Stewart functions as an idealized world of nature that shifts from its initial roots into the private and internal sphere of the individual (1984: 5). The growing body of this research will end in the last chapter which will evaluate how the sentimentally charged souvenirs described in the previous chapter are integrated with other components related to travel memories and translated into the graduation collection design language.

The two parts of the structure of the thesis move from a contextual, theoretical and philosophical understanding of the research topic, through to the practices of fashion design and making.

The research will emerge out of the rich view of the relationship between memory and senses provided by philosopher Marcel Proust talking about his childhood memories at his house in Combray. Complementary to this, the work of Louise Bourgeois will illuminate a better understanding of the interaction of the individual with the object in light of the senses awakening associated with specific memories of the past.

For the development of material culture writer Susan Pearce's reference on the Waterloo battle jacket in 1815, discussing the accretion of historical meaning in semiotic terms as described by Saussure, will enlighten the engagement with objects that helps to create a diversity of meanings and narratives. With regard to collecting habit, the reference to the theory of Susan Stewart upon souvenirs

will help to understand how the characteristics of this specific keepsakes can relate to collecting behavior and the embodiment of memory.

The subject of 'reused' memory will be explored through an analysis of the work of 'Tenant of Culture'; an artistic practice of Hendrickje Schimmel whose work focuses on the ways in which ideological frameworks materialise in methods of production, circulation and marketing of apparel by disassembling and rebuilding manufactured garments. A further research on reconstructing memory by using existing materials will be held according to the work of contemporary artist Maria Kley as well as of this of Damien Hirst and Mark Dion.

Finally, the theoretical and philosophical frameworks stated above will be used to explain the symbolism carried by the souvenirs as well as how they perceived and visualized throughout the execution of the final collection.

PART 1

EMOTIONAL TEXTILES VALUE

sensory memories

Memory plays a crucial role in stimulating the senses and creating emotions. When we experience a moment, our brains process and store the information as memories. These memories can be triggered by various sensory stimuli such as smells, sounds or images, which in turn can create emotional responses. For example, the smell of freshly baked cookies may trigger a pleasant memory of childhood baking with a loved one, which can subsequently create feelings of warmth or happiness. Similarly, listening to a particular song may remind us of a significant event or person, triggering emotions such as nostalgia or sadness. In this chapter, practices of memory will be analyzed as centered on the concept of materiality of objects as acts of remembrance and emotional value.

From a scientific point of view, human senses are linked to specific parts of the brain, which, when stimulated, activate different sensory parts of the memory, thus creating various emotions. The brain structure that directly intervenes in the process of memory activation is the 'hippocampus', a mass of brain tissue located within the temporal lobe and so named because it resembles the homonym sea horse (Yassa, 2023). The type of memory that holds information through the five senses is called 'Sensory Memory'. This specific type of memory allows individuals to retain impressions of sensory information after the original stimulus has ceased (Coltheart, 1980). The following example of Marcel Proust's mother's dress can help us better understand how auditory memory as part of sensory memory functions.

Writing about his childhood memories at his house in Combray in the novel 'In Search of Lost Time', Marcel Proust relates the feeling of the fabric of his mother's dress to his own melancholic feelings. He describes the sadness that the sound of his mother's dress made him feel as it announced the moment that would follow; his mother would leave his bedside after kissing him goodnight and return to the awaiting guests downstairs (2003).

My sole consolation when I went upstairs for the night was that Mama would come and kiss me once I was in bed. But this goodnight lasted so short a time, she went back down so soon, that the moment when I heard her coming up, then passing along the hallway with its double doors, the soft sound of her garden dress of blue muslin, hung with little cords of plaited straw, was for me a painful moment. It announced the moment that would follow it, in which she had left me, in which she had gone back down.

Proust's words convey the possibility of sound that textile memories can evoke. The soft sound of his mother's blue muslin dress is

evidence of the sound quality of textiles and their associations in representations of memory. His insight into the importance of objects, and especially their sensation, proves that the material, sensual, and sensory dimensions of memory in culture have long been known. As he makes clear, it is the feel, smell, and touch of things that trigger memory; it is the encounter between the embodied human being and the inanimate thing that occasions the act of remembrance, not some 'exercise of the will' (Proust, 1956: 53) Like Proust's mother memory, the following personal lived experience confirms the importance of an object as a means of time travel and memory revival.

This is a photograph of my grandmother in her atelier (Fig. 1). The silver nail polish, the wavy blonde curls of the lady who always bent over the garment she was sewing; the smell of the thread as it spun which I always loved, the sound of the garment as it fell softly to the floor when stitched completely; all parts of a memory related to her that is activated through a picture and as Freeman mentions "[...]we rarely remember through ideas only, but rather through our encounters with things." (2016: 3). Indeed, when we encounter an object, it may remind us of a specific time, place, person, or even a particular smell, sound or taste that we experienced before. These associations can be conscious or subconscious and are formed based on the emotional significance the object holds for us. As everyone has their own experiences and backgrounds the emotional value of an object is a purely personal matter and varies from person to person. Considering emotional value as the sentimental or personal attachment that an individual places on an object, it could not be omitted that the memory that stimulates an emotionally charged object can often be traumatic.

In line with this point, the example of the exhibition titled 'What were you wearing' (2013) by Jen Brockman and Dr. Mary A. Wyandt-Hiebert confirms the potential of clothes to preserve evidence of lived interaction but more interestingly of memories of absence and trauma. The exhibition features eighteen stories of sexual violence and representations of what each female victim was wearing at the time of their assault (Vagianos, 2017). The outfits include a bikini, a young boy's yellow collared shirt, a red dress, a T-shirt and a jeans (Fig. 2). Each outfit is different, but emphasizing a common traumatic experience. Their worn state speaks of a life stigmatized, while the exposed clothes work as a reminder of our own vulnerability and the uncertain physical integrity of female existence. So, although worn and pre-used, the clothes retain a



Fig. 1

value that comes from having been touched and worn by someone else.

Similarly, Louise Bourgeois considering the way in which clothing carries the smell and the shape of its wearer, presents her mother's lingerie and dress hang on cattle bones, as if shoulders, and her childhood garments float in the still air of the gallery (Fig. 3). Bourgeois explored a variety of themes over the course of her long career including domesticity and the family, sexuality and the body, as well as death and the unconscious. She believed that clothing had the same capacity as the pages of a diary to hold memories. The haunting paradox of the black sequined dress on the bone translates to us the traumas and discomfort she held towards her own childhood and family relationships. The tension between the creative violence of her cutting fabric and the reparatory bobbins that re-emerge throughout the exhibition involves the visitor in a fraught yet intimate atmosphere.

This painful aspect of memories that objects and especially textiles can bring are discussed by professor of Integrated Design at Parsons School of Design Otto Von Busch, who argues that we often overemphasize memory and don't see what is helpful to keep (Von Busch, 2020). In that sense, he suggests that we should use textiles as a way to pinpoint a moment in time and produce new memories, rather than keep on harvesting old ones, as we can not only live in the past; we also need to forget.

However, it is interesting to note that regardless of the feelings and emotions with which each memory is linked with, the need to preserve it through a physical object or more collected objects prevails as a way of reviving what was experienced in the past. Nearly every child makes collections of anything from stones picked up in a yard to toys as well as adults collect photographs, stamps or any other item represents an old experience.

But what is the actual meaning of the collecting practice? What is the nature of our urge to collect cherished objects or even meaningless by others? As collecting is a growing discourse in modern culture studies, the next chapter pays particular attention on the social and emotional significance of collecting as described by Professor Emeritus of Museum Studies at the University of Leicester Susan M. Pearce and poet and professor in Avalon Foundation University in the Humanities Susan Stewart.



Fig. 2



Fig. 3

collecting objects, collecting memories

Collecting seems to be a habit that many people have. Research has shown that the collecting practice dates back 40.000 years as the archaeologists' findings include various strange objects, such as shells and lumps of iron pyrite, constituting the first evidence of the human impulse to collect (Zuckerman, 2000). New York Times reporter Laurence Zuckerman states that the topic has taken on greater dimensions in academic contexts regarding their interest in material culture and consumerism.

First of all, Susan M. Pearce's theory on the importance of the objects and their narratives of the past seems particularly enlightening in the context of interaction between the object and the individual. Pearce sees objects as 'cultural artifacts', which can reveal insights into the societies and individuals who made, used, and valued them (Pearce, 2003: 9). In her book 'Interpreting Objects and Collections' she explores the significance of an object's implications by citing the example of a coatee, which was worn by Lieutenant Henry Anderson at the battle of Waterloo in 1815, as now displayed in the collections of the National Army Museum in London (Fig. 4). As shown in the picture the back of the garment has signs of destruction which prove the historical conditions of the coatee at the time, place and action in which Anderson wore it. The damaged parts of the jacket are 'facts' as 'real' as any we will ever have, while as every used or worn textile its connotations and historical context gives it the value and emotional tone similar to a souvenir, thus acts as an evidence of a personal narrative (Pearce, 2003: 20).

However, this particular jacket tells a story that happened many years ago and is now exposed in a museum exhibition, raising the reasonable question of whether this is still attractive to the viewer and what kind of connections he or she can make with the exhibit. Something similar can be applied on any collected personal object as it is usually of limited interest to anybody else than the owner. How relevant is in the present time, for example, to recall a past story of the memory of the sound of Proust's mother's blue dress or the memory of the smell of the garment as my grandmother sewed it?

As the object is given meaning by its placement in a specific social and historical context, Pearce invokes Ferdinand de Saussure's semiotic theory in order to explore the content of meaning which these social and historical associations give to the studying object. According to Saussure, the fundamental principle of 'langue' upon which linguistic analysis was built was the diacritical linguistic 'sign', which links the 'signifier' and the 'signi-

fied' (Pearce, 2003: 67). The term 'langue' refers to the general faculty of being able to express oneself by means of signs or the set of rules which can be called categories and which are the material equivalent to the grammar of language (Pearce, 2003: 21). The 'signified' is a specific concept, while the 'signifier' is an utterance or sound 'picture' that refers to it. As a matter of convention, the relationship between the 'signifier' and the 'signified' is completely arbitrary, hence it has no direct relationship to reality, Pearce mentions. In the case of Lieutenant Henry Anderson's jacket, the 'sign' is the jacket that connects the 'signified', i.e. the physical garment, with the meaning of what is its 'signified'. Herewith, the coatee from the battle of Waterloo, with its distinctive shape, red color, regimental insignia and components designating rank, exemplifies material structuring in classic form. Subsequently, conforming to Saussure, the meaning of the jacket relies on a set of rules-the langue- which are determined by the historical context of Western European society in 1815. Pearce is successfully demonstrating how this jacket serves as a message in the present, acting in relation to Waterloo as both an intrinsic sign and a metaphorical symbol, the latter of which is capable of a variety of interpretations. She presents the jacket in its new form of a museum exhibit with all its worn parts and investigates how this connects to how the past shapes the present, thus offering any viewer space for new narratives.

When the same person sees the same coatee or in Proust's case the same blue muslin dress or in my grandmother's case the same captured figure working in her atelier a few years later, it may have a new appearance, which seems to be richer and more perceptive, so that according to Pearce artefact is transformed into experience. In that sense, this reflects the developing personality of the viewer, while at the same time the object itself modifies the viewer by turning him into a different person (Pearce, 2003: 26). Accordingly, the interpretation of objects involves a dynamic and subjective process of negotiation between the interpreter and the object, as well as between different interpretations and perspectives. Following Susan Pearce's approach to interpreting objects we understand the complex and multifaceted nature of material culture and the importance of contextual, subjective, and imaginative engagement with objects. Her analysis provides a framework for comprehending how our interaction with historical objects functions and, by extension, demonstrates how this contributes to form the ever-evolving present.



Fig. 4

In view of the social and emotional dimension of objects, an equally interesting approach is the one described by professor Susan Stewart referring to the souvenirs in her book 'On Longing: Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection' (1984).

The souvenirs that people purchase as mementos on their journeys can serve as an additional illustration of the connection between memory and materiality. As Stewart demonstrated, these particular keepsakes are a potent type of visual image for influencing memories. Souvenirs invite their owners to generate narratives evoked by the object itself, thus they can have a greater impact on the memory of the place or event depicted than the actual place or event itself. Stewart argues that there is a distinction between souvenirs of external sights which are typically representations and are for sale, and souvenirs of internal experiences, which are typically samples and are not offered as general consumer items (Stewart, 1984: 138), as for instance the seashells which are going to be the focus of the fourth chapter.

The dual purpose of the souvenir is to denigrate the present while at the same time validating a distant or previous experience. By this saying, the immediate feeling of contact that the souvenir serves is either too intimate and direct in the present or too impersonal and alienating. As the word 'souvenir' comes from the homonymous French word souvenir which means to remember, it is subsequently connected to the oblivion which Susan Stewart interprets as the void separating the past and present in a fundamental way, while the nostalgic aspect of the souvenir is based on the separation of the present from a hypothetical lived experience in the past (Stewart, 1984: 140).

The materiality of the souvenir becomes essential in its ability to generate narrative and memory; it is people's sensory interactions with the physical object that make souvenirs such powerful generators of memory. The souvenirs transform the public, the monumental, and the three-dimensional into miniatures that can be encased in the body or two-dimensional representations for the individual's private use. The photograph of my grandmother as souvenir can be seen as a logical extension of the smell memory of her workshop, while the preservation of this nostalgic memory is achieved through the narrative that the two-dimensional picture offers. Professor of English and Literary Studies Aleida Assmann correctly stated that by giving our memories a narrative structure, we enable ourselves to share them with others



Fig. 5

and transform a private memory into a collective memory (2008).

In the uses of the souvenir, as Susan Stewart puts in, the souvenir must be taken out of its setting in order to function as a reminder of it, but it also needs to be brought back to life through a new story. It is then restored and not returned to its 'genuine' or native context of origin; rather, it is returned to an imagined context of origin, the main subject of which is a projection of the possessor's upbringing (Stewart, 1984: 150). One way to think of restoration is as a reaction to an undesirable set of current circumstances. The restoration of the souvenir is a conservative idealization of the past and the distant for the purposes of a present ideology, just as the restoration of buildings, frequently taking place within programs of 'gentrification' in contemporary cities, has as its basis the restoration of class relationships that might otherwise be in flux. So, we may claim that all souvenirs are objects whose nature has been created by ideology. From this point of view souvenirs' owners address a general propensity to objectify natural phenomena by situating them one step removed from the current course of events (Stewart, 1984: 150). The interest in souvenirs lies in their differentiation from other objects. In the case of objects, their function is public knowledge, while on the contrary the symbolic meaning that the souvenirs carry is usually personal which is determined by its owner. As Roland Barthes argued:

The paradox I want to point out is that these objects which always have, in principle, a function, a utility, a purpose, we believe we experience as pure instruments, whereas in reality they carry other things, they are also something else: they function as the vehicle of meaning; in other words, the object effectively serves some purpose, but it also serves to communicate information; we might sum it up by saying that there is always a meaning which overflows the object's use (1996: 70).

Considering the shell-box as an example of tourist souvenir shown in Fig. 5, the object consists of a rectangle form onto which shells are glued. The customization of the object can be explained by the fact that shells collecting work as a reminiscence of summer holidays for many people, thus the narrative placed on the object itself invent the symbolic aspect of the lived experience in the present. Nevertheless, with the souvenirs, the line between the public and private starts to dissolve since either their purpose hints at their meaning or they serve no purpose other than that of a souvenir. Moreover, the tourist is also the buyer of the souvenir and as

Stewart correctly points out, the expectations of the tourist market that will purchase them are progressively shaping the product's form and substance (Stewart, 1984: 149). Subsequently, the traveler looks for souvenirs, the action of which continues and further articulates the relationship between the actual thing and its sight.

recreating memories

Having discussed how the memory of an object and particularly a textile relates to the senses, it will now be discussed how the reuse of a worn cloth or a used object or parts thereof can create space for new memories and narratives, as well as how the collecting habit can be transformed into an aesthetic approach and opinion.

Second-hand clothes may well be imbued with the smells, sweat, or shape of their previous owners. As Annenberg Professor in the Humanities Peter Stallybrass puts it, bodies come and go but the clothes circulate through second hand shops and rummage sales (1993). The value of a garment is not only determined by the material, but also by the experiences and memories connected to it.

I bought this dress in Curaçao. I wore it on one of the most beautiful birthdays that I have ever celebrated. Nice weather, good food and dancing for hours. (Versteeg, 2021).

This is handwritten in a small clothing tag attached to a summer dress. The dress can be found on a rack of one of the ten second-hand stores of the Leger des Heils, the Dutch equivalent of the Salvation Army. For the past weeks people that brought in their clothes here had the opportunity to write down a little anecdote on the clothing tag, for the next buyer of the garment. These pieces of clothing were sold over the past week, when the third edition of the Week of Second-Hand Textiles, with the slogan 'ReShare Your Memories', took place in The Netherlands.

Another remarkable approach of the reuse of worn clothes is expressed through the work of 'Tenant of Culture', the moniker of Hendrickje Schimmel, a Dutch artist working in the space between sculpture and couture. The artist works with second-hand materials and not start from scratch, thus she positions herself more within the existing materials (Fig. 6). Tenant of Culture presents the material and symbolic excretions of fashion in a fossilized state, suspended between archaeology and commodity.

Much like trash, her works often assembled using discarded and recycled shoes, denim, jackets, belts, sweatpants, socks and hats—tell stories inchoately; there is the outline of a plot, but only in the form of a puzzle, fragments of an impossible history. The materials that the artist repurposes into extravagant and fashionable hybrids are both singular objects and the residue of global consumer society, an unfathomable system of billions of objects that only grows day by day. Standing on the heap of its waste pile, carefully sorting through an infinite archive of bygone sartorial

desires through second hand shops and eBay, Tenant of Culture works up against a fundamental impossibility: how do we try to make sense of all the debris—the stuff—of permanent capitalist overdrive? Fashioning herself as a ragpicker, the artist upcycles discarded materials to speculate the life histories of commodities even if their supply chain is almost entirely obscured by branding and propose a new symbolic value in the alternative circuit of art. Therefore, the revival of memory, does not remain in its retrospective aspect, but through deconstructing its parts seeks more to create a new relationship between the fashion object and the viewer.

Parallel to the above example, Maria's Kley work is based on the historical and transformative qualities of materials and objects. Material and story come together through a labor-intensive process of gathering, examining, dissecting, washing, coloring, assembling, changing and reducing. The Dutch tax envelopes that Kley has accumulated over a 15-year period are the inspiration for her 'Tax' series (Fig. 7). The envelopes are received with stress and mistrust despite their enigmatical shape and alluring color. These works are infused with her personal experience and speak to the tense relationship between citizens and tax authorities as well as the recent scandals in the Netherlands, where thousands of people were falsely targeted by the tax authorities and placed in severe financial and psychological hardship (Kley, 2021). We could claim that this project, starting from a personal narrative and a memory that has been collected for years, manages to attract the interest of many more people in the country, thus evoking the collective memory of an experience common to all.

Another way to redefine an object's value is that expressed through the work of artists Damien Hirst and Mark Dion. The notion of the artist as collector is becoming more prevalent nowadays. The collected objects create new narratives by placing them in a new exhibition context differentiating them from the deconstructed reused pieces like those used by Tenant of Culture and Maria Kley, but using them as whole objects. Artworks as collections are the result of the work of Hirst and Dion who directly transform their collecting behaviors into an aesthetic manner (Speaks, 2016). In London, in the late 1980s and early 1990s, Hirst produced a series of cabinet pieces in which ranges of objects were presented in the type of glass vitrine typical of scientific display in a museum or laboratory, evoking the 19th century gentleman's hobby of collecting specimens. The work 'Forms without Life' as part of the cabinets sequence consists of beautiful shells placed in a



Fig. 6

cabinet, which are available to the viewer for visual and aesthetic appreciation (Fig. 8) (Manchester, 2000). Showy seashells are typically found in souvenirs stores (Hirst bought these in Thailand) and could be seen as symbols of Western exploitation both of third world cultures and the planet's natural resources. The shells are still dead and hidden behind glass even if Hirst appropriated the display case and turned it into a minimalist box, elevating them from the souvenir shop to the level of fine art.

Similarly, in 1999, Mark Dion and a group of volunteers combed the Thames foreshore. They discovered numerous artifacts from various periods in London's and the river's history. Clay pipes, animal bones, pottery and plastic toys were among the finds. Thereafter, a group of volunteers from neighborhood organizations cleaned and categorized these goods. Dion decided to store the items in a vintage mahogany cabinet (Fig. 9). The actual artifacts are informally arranged by kind, such as glassware, pottery, and metal, as opposed to historically. Dion has redefined the conventions of museum exhibition by juxtaposing ancient and modern artifacts (Dion, 1999). By doing so, Dion aims to encourage the viewers to make up their own tales and histories for these items and create their narratives and interpretations, a fact that validates Pearce's theory on the relationship between the object and the subject.

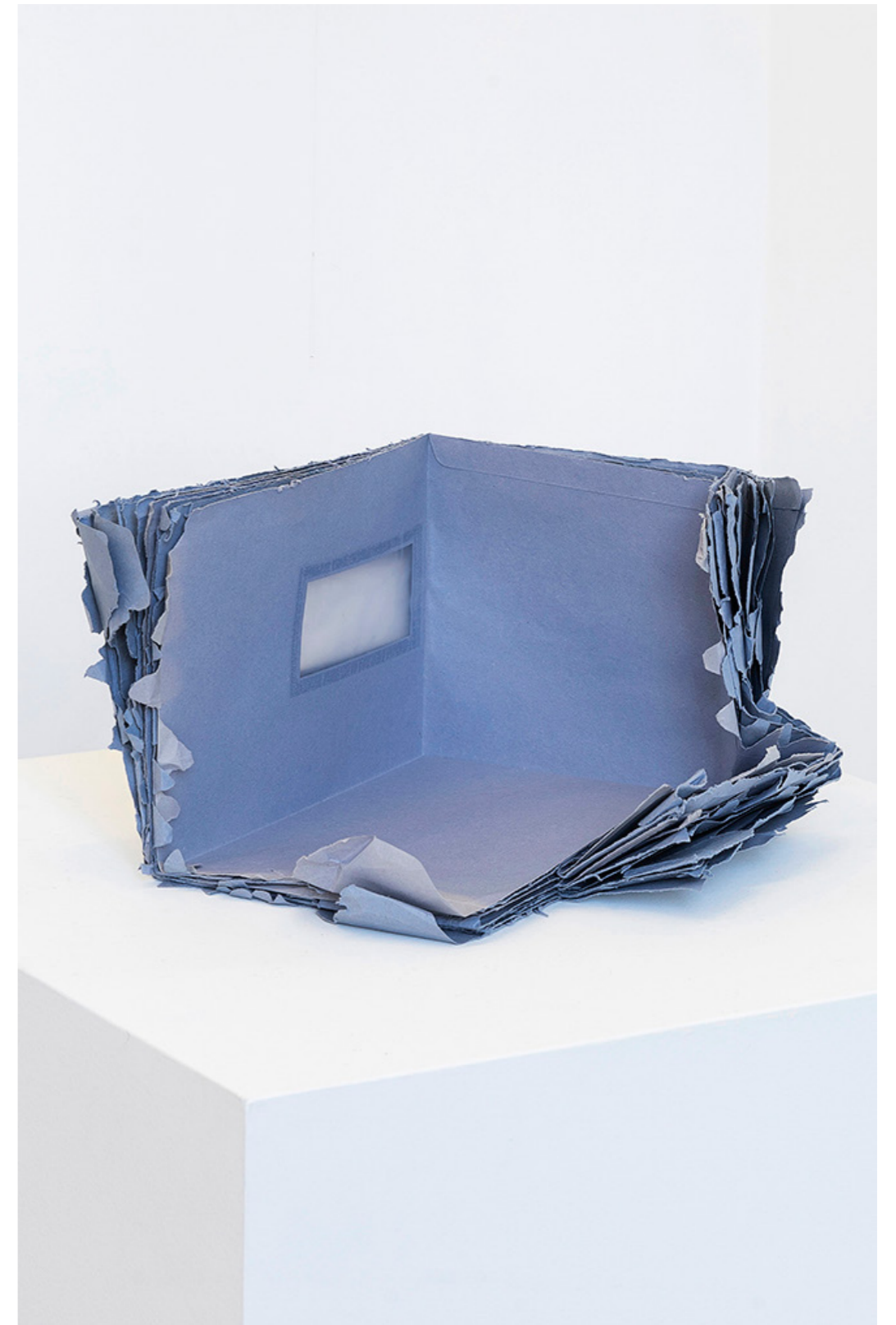


Fig. 7



Fig. 8



Fig. 9

PART 2

PERSONAL MEMORIES IN DESIGN

my souvenirs

In both my academic and personal life, I have shown an interest in memory and the significance of preserving the past. This chapter reflects the theories discussed in the previous ones aiming to answer a core question about the relationship between myself and the objects. In that sense, the subjective approach of the object or in my case my chosen souvenirs does not try to create an individualistic position or else it is not about me, but starts from me with the purpose of an inclusive condition through which readers can make their own associations. I start by telling my own story.

By the age of thirteen I lived with my family in five different places. Since then I have moved to seven places and changed fourteen houses. Most of these locations were next to the water, so I can say that this element of the nature was from an early age the image that accompanied the image of each house I had. This constant shifting of places has always made me question the concept of home as a fixed state. As each move meant a farewell, I began to develop a fascination with certain objects that I felt they preserved something from what was left behind. For some as yet inexplicable reason what has always fascinated me has been shell collecting. By the concept of collection is not meant the way many people do by collecting for example stickers, posters, butterflies, stamps, etc., but it refers more to an instinctive movement without any particular purpose for future use. For this reason my shells have never existed in any archive form, yet I still find them in my pockets, bags or drawers without even remembering which seashore each one was collected from. In her book 'Some Hobby Horses', Montiesor concludes:

For, after all, the greatest delight which a collection of any kind can afford is the memory of the days in which it was formed; the happy holidays spent in 'arranging'; the bright birthdays, which added as a gift some longed for specimen; the little squabbles and arguments over doubtful treasures; the new ideas gleaned in 'reading it up' (1890: 193 , cited by Stewart, 1984: 190).

I never wondered why I love these sea creatures so much since they always looked so intimate to me. I remember my dad bringing me beautiful shells after his scuba diving and my mom decorating them in nice plates on the coffee table. I also remember enjoying creative moments with my aunt in her room making collages onto big canvases by using sand and shells that we collected in small bottles. Focusing on the significance of the tactile sense in experiencing and understanding the world, architect Juhani Uolevi Pallasmaa in his book 'The Eyes of the Skin: Architecture and

Senses' explains that natural materials allow us to see through their surfaces and convince us of the diversity of matter (2005: 31). With the touch of the shell I now have in my pockets, I can recall the smell of summer when I first brought the shells in from the beach, the sound they made as they dropped on the canvas, and even their taste—salty and bitter, almost like the taste of a battery. These memories are undoubtedly connected to the stimulation of my senses, which meets Proust's philosophical theory of the senses power as he analyzed it in the example of the memory of the dress his mother wore discussed in the first chapter.

As seashells are the protective outer layer of the organism that lives inside, my chosen shells serve as a metaphor for my safety, resembling in some ways the customary protection that a roof provides to an individual. In many ways, shells mean for me 'home'; home in the sense of protection, enclosure, isolation and privacy. Therefore, I symbolically place part of myself in them, while they as a whole are of value to me as they represent moments from the past and somehow connect me to it in the present. As psychologist Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi argued, the objects—in my case the shells—operate as a counterbalance to the world's ongoing change, illuminating 'the continuity of the self over time' by serving as focal points for engagement in the present, relics and reminders of the past, and compass points for the future (1993: 23). In regards to the shells' symbolic meaning, I research the way in which they accumulate meanings as location and time pass. Considering the essential insights of Ferdinand de Saussure, I portray the shell as the sign, consisting of its signifier, which is the physical object itself and the signified which is still the concept of the signifier. As I integrate the shell souvenir into my own story, I create a new context of narrative in which the shell represents the house, thus the shell turns into a symbol confirming Saussure's semiotic theory on shifting contexts. This choice is based on the personal associations that my memory of shell collecting has associations that can offer a wide variety of possible interpretations depending on the context of experiences that characterizes a person.

Furthermore, in my point of view, collecting shells is akin to a daily habit. Perhaps the element of the everyday can be attributed to the fact that many people from young children to adults go through this process intuitively. The practice of this collection seems to offer a character of eternity as these shell-souvenirs act as tangible reminders of lived experiences bridging the gap between the past and the present (Fig. 10). However, the every day

contains something ephemeral or as Susan Stewart poetically wrote:

The temporality of everyday life is marked by an irony which is its own creation, for this temporality is held to be ongoing and non-reversible and, at the same time, characterized by repetition and predictability. The pages falling off the calendar, the notches marked in a tree that no longer stands—these are the signs of the everyday, the effort to articulate difference through counting. Yet it is precisely this counting that reduces difference to similarities, that is designed to be lost track of. Such counting, such signifying, is drowned out by the silence of the ordinary (1984: 14). At the same time, referring to the shell as my souvenir and using it as such as we will see in the next chapter, I could not fail to mention that as a dead object of nature, I decide to give it a meaning by placing it in the narrative of my own memory. This view speaks to what Susan Stewart called potential souvenir and mostly potent antisouvenir, as the shells indicate the transformation of meaning into materiality, as opposed to what typical souvenirs do by transforming the materiality into meaning (1984: 140).

At this point, I define the past moment of collecting the shells as point A from which I move to point B in the present time, in which I nostalgically recall the memories of the first point. The two points operate as a function of time and location, evoking various feelings in each case. The point C of developing a new design-based narrative, as a result of the first two, will be examined in the following chapter.



Fig. 10

design interpretation

The view that led to the introduction of this chapter is that of Gilles Deleuze as cited by Liedeke Plate and Anneke Smelik in their book 'Materializing Memory in Art and Popular Culture' according to which memory is a creative power for inventing the new. In light of this, memory acts through affective connections or creative encounters rather than being contained in a single location, despite the fact that it expresses itself through specific bodies and people (2013: 127). In my world, the seashells I accidentally find while organizing my drawers, are perfectly suited to serve as time-traveling tools. They cause me to briefly recall memories of times, places, people, emotions and acquaintances I once had. The act of collecting inspires me to investigate the viewpoint of a fresh narrative, which I aim to present in my graduation collection.

In the previous chapter I referred to my personal relationship with the object, defining the shell as my own souvenir. Having explained the conceptual and emotional context of the chosen souvenir, I will now develop how I used it in shaping the line up of the clothes.

The design of the collection is based on the concept of memory and traveling. Nostalgic and poetic on one hand and functional and fast on the other. In that sense, the chosen materials play a crucial role in the juxtaposition of these different worlds. As the main axis of the work is the memory which, as analyzed in the first chapter, is recalled through the stimulation of the senses, it was considered particularly important to design a collection that would correspond to that sensory aspect by challenging the collective memory. As Gonzalez pointed out, the derivation of the word 'souvenir', reflects both its physical and mental components, its origin from the French souvenir, meaning 'memory', 'keepsake', and from the Latin 'subvenire' which means 'to come into the mind.' (1996).

The shell in the collection has a dual symbolic meaning. On one hand, it is a representation of a memory from the past, on the other hand, the need to protect the vulnerable traveling body in the present. Similar to the glued shells of the souvenir box that I analyzed in chapter two, this repeating condition resulted in the formation of a two-dimensional print that captures the position of one shell next to the other. To retain the prized object in intimate contact with the body, the print is applied to fitted silhouettes or to the transparent lining of a garment (Fig. 11 and 12). The shell is symbolically used in relation to the shapes to create the silhouettes. These silhouettes suggest a container within which the body –like the shell organism– is protected and can be



Fig. 11



Fig. 12

transported safely (Fig. 13). By doing this, I am attempting to evoke a sense of protection and privacy rather than accurately depict the shell's natural shape. The transparent vase with the broken ceramic pieces inside it by the Dutch ceramist Bouke de Vries captured in Fig. 14, illustrates the idea of the body-container relationship I want to express through my work. His work called 'Memory Vessel' captures the nostalgic history of the fragments by stuffing the formerly empty space with souvenirs from the past so that the current vase retells their story by keeping them inside it. Similarly the skirt in the Figure 15 consists of a double-layered soft casing for the body while the words 'breekbaar/fragile' written above the tape at the wasteband functions in addition to the symbolism of the fragility of the transported body.

The clothes casing, as seen in Figure 16, is another component that is frequently used to depict the vessel carrying the body, since my memories are closely related to the journey. Just as these casings function for storing and transporting clothes, so I use the object itself to create a raglan coat. The intervention on the casing is nothing more than adding sleeves, collar and pockets to make it look like a normal coat. Following a similar line of thinking, I design a second coat - this time sleeveless - in the same cylindrical shape using felt to approximate the original non-woven fabric from which the first coat is made of. In order to convert into a bag when folded in half, this coat has two hanging straps on the top and bottom of the back side. In fact, I am making a duplicate of the original bag's cloth casing and repositioning it in the fashion context, aiming to examine the interaction of the wearer with the object by changing the nature of the object's use.

Drawing inspiration from Tenant of Culture, I work partly with existing objects and materials proposing a new symbolic value. In terms of value, I reuse the paper luggage labels that travelers frequently leave on their belongings for a long period after a flight. By printing the graphics of the label onto a cotton T-shirt and a viscose fabric, I upgrade the wasted item by turning it into an essential wearable cloth and accessory (Fig.17). Therefore, similarly to how souvenirs act as Stewart mentioned in the second chapter of this thesis, I embody the initial material with a meaning by replacing it with a different material which enhances its value and symbolic possibility.



Fig. 13



Fig. 14



Fig. 15



Fig. 16



Fig. 17

conclusion

Concluding this thesis, the pivotal role that the objects play in individual remembrance is evident. Memories and traces of the past are woven into everyday objects affirming individuals' endless need to preserve their memory in the present. As we are constantly surrounded by everyday objects and interact with materials, we can inform and redefine the ordinary by projecting on them multiple experienced memories. In fact, there is no memory separate from its object as there is no object separate from its embodied memory. By changing the frame each time, the objects are imbued with different interpretations which can apparently liberate the subject towards the social and emotional conventions of its time.

The interest in the significance of the senses both philosophically and in terms of experiencing memory has progressively grown throughout this research. Qualities of time, places and loved people are perceived equally by the eye, ear, nose, tongue and skin, thus the assumption of the importance of the senses in articulating, storing and processing sensory responses have been reinforced and validated. It might be claimed that all senses can be thought of as extensions of the sense of touch, because the tactility of an object has the power to evoke memories that activate all the other four senses. Accordingly, a touching experience is primarily multi-sensory. This conclusion was reached as a result of the theoretical and philosophical content of the research as well as its application to my own experience with objects and symbols of memory and collecting behavior.

Since writing this thesis I have realized that our memory is capable of either keeping us attached to the past or releasing us in the present. Alongside this opinion, we need to reconsider the very essence of the memory in relation to the perspective of recreating them, by placing them in a new social, cultural and emotional context. By examining how contemporary artists have reused pre-existing materials and items, I was able to discover the vast array of options and opportunities that memory reconstruction might produce, as well as to draw inspiration for my own approach to the symbolic elements used in the graduation collection.

The senses can not only mediate information but also spark the imagination, thus challenging the collective memory in a different way could contribute to an even growing fantasy world. After all, the ultimate meaning of any memory is beyond the object itself. Instead of keep harvesting old memories, we could rather focus on projecting new meanings. By extending the dialogue be-

tween the commonly perceived items and the wearers, fashion can serve as a communication system to deepen the emotional engagement with objects and materiality. In this regard, it could be argued that fashion has the capacity to highlight the crucial role that clothing plays in the development of new communication techniques which are based on anthropological, philosophical and theoretical frameworks in conceptual design. However, what is proposed here is not an approach that devalues the retrospective and nostalgic aspect of memories or detachment from objects, but rather a way to search for new narratives within the fashion context.

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