



HDK – VALAND STENEBY

# BLANK! A FOUR-SEASON WARDROBE PROTOTYPE COLLECTION

Exploring set-making on the basis of making directly in  
the final material as design method

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# Abstract

This work explores set-making on the basis of making directly in the final material as design method to create new perspectives on clothes and dressmaking where there is no distinction between prototype and final garment.

The aim is to create a four-season wardrobe collection through the idea of cultivating a personal style by working directly in the final material. I rather be with the material and give attention to the process of making, in hope of finding myself, instead of being in the realms of ideas and designing in pursuit of new expressions.

My interest in fashion began with the notion of clothes as self-expression. I have come to believe that cultivating personal style is a sustainable way to approach fashion in terms of creating self-awareness in relation to clothes. A couple of years ago I started to experiment with what that meant to me. I decided to stop buying clothes and only make them myself as a tactic to cultivate my personal style of dressing as well as my craft by letting them inform each other. Through this research I discovered an interest in set-making and simple cutting which I wanted to explore further. Set-making means to make a top and bottom garment in the same fabric.

The result is a collection of white sets which I refer to as a four-season wardrobe prototype collection.

Keywords: Set-making, final material, cultivate personal style, making, clothes, fashion



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# Introduction

Firstly, I will go through my background and orientate myself in fashion and clothing and how they relate to the personal and art, and in the end conclude the various references.

I will then go into my approach where I discuss the structural frame for my working process and after that continue into the result of my process in which I go through my process in chronological order. In the end I will present two ways of displaying and viewing my work through images. This is followed up by a discussion and reflection part where I critically discuss the project and some possible further explorations.

I end the report by summing up the result and showing pictures of the work on various bodies in a forest setting.

# Background

## Fashion and clothes

Over time the role of fashion has changed from a class indicator to means of self-expression (Crane, 2000). Today there are myriads of different styles and fashion genres, as a result of fashion becoming a widely available consumer good in the late twentieth century due to industrialization. The production rate has only escalated and today the fashion industry has major impact on human and natural societies, as it promotes consumerism and exploits resources to maintain and grow itself.

Diana Crane breaks fashion down in three main categories. She says that the before "...single fashion genre, haute couture, has been replaced by three major categories of styles, each with its own genres: luxury fashion designs, industrial fashion, and street style" (Crane, 2000, p.135). Luxury fashion is concerned with style and designed by designers, industrial fashion is created by manufactures and the selling point is not style itself but an image that can compete in a world of mass-disseminated images. However, both industrial and luxury fashion is greatly influenced by streetstyle which origins from individual people and subcultures.

I believe avantgarde fashion would fall under the category of luxury fashion as it is designed by designers, artists, fashion students and researchers. Avantgarde fashion pushes fashion forward as it is highly experimental in nature and thus creates 'new expressions'. According to artistic researcher and practitioner Karin Landahl (2015) new expressions are one of the fundamental driving forces of fashion. "'Newness' can be mentioned as a possible interpretation of fashion." (Landahl, 2015, p.189). Landahls work is practical-theoretical and seeks to broaden the idea of form-thinking in knitwear design by treating knitting as a making process where form and material develops simultaneously instead of separately.

For pushing the field of fashion design forward new expressions might be required as Landahl (2015) suggests, and I agree that fashion is driven by innovation and creative investigation. However, it is also arguable if the fast pace fashion industry really needs new expressions as it is overflowing with it. I would argue that in the everyday world we need to be less concerned with creating new expression in fashion and train ourselves to also be contempt

and creative with what we have. We need to implement new perspectives on clothes and fashion.

In response to the fast pace and unsustainable course of fashion industry author and researcher Kate Fletcher coined the term *slow fashion* (Hill, 2018, 9 November). Following the *slow foods movement* Fletcher recognized a need for a slower pace in the fashion industry as well. The slow movements rest on the assumption that faster equals lesser quality and thus recognize a need for a slower pace. Essentially slow fashion wants to revive and reimplement good quality as a fundamental value in clothes and fashion. The main directives are to stop following fast trends and buying excessively. Instead focus on buying based on need and finding ethically made products.

According to Fletcher (2008) we could make a distinction between fashion and clothing and relate them to material needs and immaterial desires. Clothes are connected to our material needs, such as keeping us sheltered, protected and feeling comfortable. While fashion relates to our immaterial desires like self-expression, looking good, and group affiliations. There needs to be balance between them.

To stop buying excessively and finding ethically and well-made products some researching, and self-understanding is required. One approach to this, suggested by slow fashion activist Johanna Nilsson (n.d) is to cultivate personal style. To cultivate personal style, you can start by identifying the most used and appreciated products in your wardrobe. Then you can think that you should essentially only have these kinds of garments in there.

Both material and immaterial aspects of clothing is important, however there must be a balance where we do not fall for consumerism and tempted solely by our desires. Therefore, I believe cultivating personal style is a good tactic to educate yourself about your relation to clothes and their inherent values. It further seems like a tactic to be reckon with if we consider the possible impact that individuals and subcultures have on the fashion industry at large, as implied by Crane (2000). However, the challenge for individuals and subcultures that strive to change the industry is to not be consumed by it.

## Craft, beauty and utility

The fashion industry tends to give us the new, fresh and clean, overwhelming us with fast fashion and tempting us with luxury goods. It is quite easy to forget the actual material values in clothes and the craft behind it. Clothes is a traditional crafts object intimately connected to use. Something that we in the past was forced to take good care of and use over very long periods of time and not something we easily threw away.

*“././what is the particular kind of beauty in crafts?”*

*././Beauty that is identified with use. It is beauty born of use. Apart from use there is no beauty in crafts” (Yanagi, 2013, p.197)*

The beauty that Yanagi (2013) talks about in his book *the unknown craftsman* originates from nature and exists in the traditional crafts and is most present in the folkcrafts as they follow the natural order of things he claims. It is a type of beauty that are cultivated over long periods of time and don't have much to do with newness in itself. The traditional craftsman was anonymous and made useful things to supply a need, they were not directly involved with the intellectualization of beauty or art, therefore they produced beauty without knowing (Yanagi, 2013).

The anonymous craftsman's way has gone out of fashion and are disappearing in the shadow of industrialization, along with the natural beauty they produce. Instead the artist-craftsman has taken his role. They are more involved with the intellectualization of beauty, aiming to create it. Thus, some of the natural magic is lost. The artist-craftsman is not anonymous they employ personal expression and tend to sign their work as identification to compete with others. The challenge for the artist-craftsman, according to Yanagi (2013), is to make useful things that are beautiful and relevant without being overly artistic or intellectualized.

I understand the artist-craftsman as a skilled maker. A person who is concerned with materiality and values the hand made and utility but who also has a more personal agenda than the original craftsman. In a fashion context, perhaps Yanagis vision for the artist-craftsman could be an important figure for the slow fashion movement, someone who operates in a space between designers and artists, the manufactured and the exclusive.

## Making and designing

In the book *design methods* author and designer John Chris Jones (1992) is looking for new ways of thinking about designing to meet increasingly complex demands. The ways of the traditional crafts are too slow and the designers at the time focused more on the products itself than their purpose. Jones argues for a more user-centered thinking when designing. He goes against the idea of designers as 'black boxes', where the creative process leading to a design is hidden in the black box of creativity so to say.

Jones argues that modern designers need to be more efficient and structured in their thinking when it comes to solving design problems, without losing creativity and intuition, in order to meet the shifting demands and needs of the modern man-made world. To do this, designers must open up the creative process and become glass boxes. In a 'glass box' thinking the design process becomes transparent. Then we can break design problems down in pieces that can be structured and evaluated in order to reach proper, optimized design solutions.

In his book *MAKING – Antropology, archeology, art and architecture* Tim Ingold (2013) try to close the gap between practice and theory by arguing for the study *with* rather than the study *of* arts, which brings forward a perspective on making and interacting with materials as a knowledge building enterprise, learning by experiencing.

In a lecture from Pohjoisen kulttuuri-instituutti - institute of northern culture (2013) Ingold challenge established ideas about creativity and making. He argues for the concept of 'thinking through making' opposing 'making through thinking'. He describes 'making through thinking' as having an idea and impose it on the material, the thinking is the making and the process of making in a material sense is neglected in favor for the novel idea.

'Thinking through making' on the other hand happens when we engage with materials through making. The creativity in the 'thinking through making' lays in the improvisation and thinking that happens when we engage with materials rather than novelty of ideas. In this perspective Ingold proposes, nothing is ever finished, instead every artifact is a waystation on its way to something else, like the next artifact in the series for example. I believe this line of thought is relatable to how traditional craft artefacts develops over time.

Instead of thinking of making as a projection of form or ready-made concept onto a raw material "...making is an ongoing binding together of material flows and sensory awareness." Ingold says in the lecture (Pohjoisen kulttuuri-instituutti - institute of northern culture, 2013).

Instead of putting value to new expressions per se Ingold values the growth and life existing within the making process. Furthermore, Ingold's ideas are not only related to making art and crafts. It is also a philosophy about learning by experiencing and doing. It is essentially about growing through interactions with materials.

Even though Ingold, Jones and Yanagi, all great thinkers who are responsible for major writings, are exploring quite different fields they also have touch points. I interpret the making that Ingold (2013) talks about as intimately connected to the making of the traditional craftsman that Yanagi (2013) talks about. The making seems like the very essence of traditional crafts, the condition in which beauty can emerge. On this point however, Ingold's making (Pohjoisen kulttuuri-instituutti - institute of northern culture, 2013) and Yanagi's craftsman (2013) is totally different from Jones (1992) ideas for optimizing design through logic strategies and thinking, rather than through making. However, Jones (1992) and Yanagi (2013) put importance in the useful object.

Even though Jones focus is on optimizing design through systems as part of the man-made and not natural world his emphasis is on use. Further he recognizes that there is some special kind of beauty in craft objects, which he thinks are related to the time it has taken to develop certain forms and skills required over time, working in and with materials. Such original craft objects are developed over time in a process of making, such as the one Ingold (Pohjoisen kulttuuri-instituutti - institute of northern culture, 2013) and Yanagi (2013) describes. It is the making and engaging with materials over time that seem to be another reason for the special beauty in crafts, something that is essentially lost in design.

## Me, myself and I

I have always been intrigued by self-portraits and artists who work with identity and self-expression, who view and explore themselves through their art. Whether it is for superficial vanity, spiritual introspection or social political I believe that art processes hold a unique potential for illumination, discovery and development of self as they invite the subjective. In a famous quote Nigerian-American artist Oroma Elewa describes her way of seeing it, she says:

*“I am my own muse. The subject I know best. The subject I want to better.”* (Medium, 2019)

My interpretation is that she cannot know another subject as deeply or intimate as herself, both the good and the bad. This is the basis on which she also wants to better herself. And as I read it, to better understand herself and her relation to the world she lives in and interact with.

I find Elewas quote (Medium, 2019) relatable to the philosophy behind cultivating personal style as suggested by Nilsson (n.d). In order to cultivate a sustainable personal style self-understanding in relation to clothes are required. Cultivating personal style can be interpreted as a pragmatic and conscious strive to bettering oneself.

In her work *cool or lame?* (2002) artist Elin Wikström without any formal education in sewing decided to make her own clothes for a year and not use her bought clothes or buy any new ones (Magnusson, 2013, 9<sup>th</sup> of September). Wikström wanted to spark a critical conversation about logos, the market and resistance. She wants us to ask ourselves what we can do to change our habitual life patterns to better ourselves, and by so challenging and hopefully change the world to the better.

Our wester society is mainly built on consumerism, which in turn is interlinked with our identity. Clothes and other things that we buy and consume are supposedly what gives us identity. In her bachelor’s thesis *being a commodity: An auto ethnographic study of consumption and identity* Lovisa Blomberg (2015) explores the relationship between consumerism and identity through self-study and reflection.

Blombergs study (2015), just as Wikströms (Ehn, 2012), is based on a buy-stop experiment conducted with an autoethnographic methodology, putting themselves in the role as both researcher and research subject. In Blombergs case the knowledge is presented in text (Blomberg, 2015). But in Wikströms case the output has several dimensions and the result is versatile (Magnusson, 2013, 9<sup>th</sup> September). Her work is exhibited as art, aiming to spark conversations with its audience about how the fashion industry is organized and how it can be reorganized. However, both works has a performative aspect to them, performing self,



embodying knowledge as body-mind experience in them, aiming to shift and create new perspectives.

Elewas idea about being your own muse (Medium, 2019) has touch points with Nilssons (n.d), Blomberg (2015) and Wikströms (2002) projects. Even though they all have different angels and interest points they all put themselves in the middle of their investigations and theories as the main point of reference. Nilsson's idea is rooted in a slow fashion activism (Nilsson, n.d) that aim to question and change consumer behavior similar to the critical conversation Wikström (Magnusson, 2013, 9<sup>th</sup> September) aim to spark. Even though Wikströms project *cool or lame?* (2002) is not primarily aiming to cultivate personal style I believe her methods of only making her own clothes could be a pragmatic, hands on way to do so.

## The wardrobe project

In 2015 I started exploring the idea of cultivating personal style. I was curious to explore my own relationship to clothes and self-expression. I started *the wardrobe project* by investigating the content of my wardrobe and after a while I took the same decision as Wikström (Magnusson, 2013, 9<sup>th</sup> September), to only make my own clothes and not buy any.

Wikström also decided to not use her bought clothes and limit her project to a year (Magnusson, 2013, 9<sup>th</sup> September), I decided to slowly replace my bought clothes with self-made ones and not give it a time limit. At this point I have replaced essentially every bought garment in my wardrobe with self-made ones and the project is still active.

The purpose of this work was to better understand myself and my relation to clothes and to figure out basic values for wearing and making them. It is a pragmatic process of soul searching. The making of a new garment is often initiated by the need for a new garment or a desire to make one. The need outlines a basic plan and influence decisions like type of material, essential functions and attributes. However often the garment grows organically from me finding a material and starting to engage with it.

I would say that the progression of making my own clothes has been similar to the making that Ingold (2013) describes, every garment is a waystation to the next one. I make garments by involving myself with the material, the focus is not novelty and the creativity and fun

happens within the process of making. I learn through the material experience. Unexpected things, trial and errors happens within the process, as it is not thought out on beforehand. In this way I never really make the same shirt twice, but rather versions of the same shirt as each process of making is a different process. Wearing also becomes a part of learning about my making, as a continuous evaluation of my creations.

Sometimes I make plans but often I do not stick to them and are influenced by the process of making itself to explore thoughts that occur during making. Over the years of making my own clothes I have discovered several aspects of making and wearing. Among them I discovered an interest in sets and a love for simple and spacious cutting. I don't exactly know why but it intrigues me to make sets. A set is a top and a bottom garment from the same cloth (fig 1-3).



Fig.1, *outfit from the wardrobe project*



Fig.2, *outfit from the wardrobe project*



Fig.3, *outfit from the wardrobe project*

## Sacred Coloration

*Sacred coloration* is my BA degree (fig.4) work which I finalized right before starting *the wardrobe project* in late 2015. *Sacred coloration* explores the *body-fabric relation* through abstract painting, aiming to create new print aesthetics in fashion. It started with a very liberating process where I painted big pieces of fabric against my own body. I then analyzed

the paintings I had created in this way and stylized a grid which illustrates the relationship between body and fabric.

For the final collection I painted seven different white textile materials with the grid painted in pink as a base. The pink lines represent the body in the fabric. I also added green lines which represent how the fabric falls from the body. I used the grid made up of pink and green lines as a tool for coloring and cutting. Colors were added to the spaces between the lines.

There is a philosophy behind the colors, but the idea is not for the viewer to understand the meaning but rather to suspect that there might be one.

After I was done painting, I draped the paintings into shapes for the body. The grid guided the cutting by informing me about where the body would be in the fabric. And it was through my work with *Sacred coloration* I discovered the simple cutting which I continued exploring in *the wardrobe project*. It taught me to be playful and experimental in my cutting and dare to work directly in the final material.

This work is done within an institution, same as Landahl (2015), that encourages and expects students to find new expressions and methods in fashion design in order to push the field forward in such a way.



Fig.4, *Sacred coloration*.

## The field, clothes and fashion

I will quickly go through a few artistic references that inspires me in various ways. This is to place myself in the field of fashion and clothing and hint about what currents and aesthetics might influence my work.

The Buba (top) and Sokoto (trouser) are traditional men's attire for the Yoruba people of west Africa. When my mom visited our relatives there in 2003 she had a set made for me (fig.5). In west Africa it is still common to buy lengths of fabric and have clothes tailored. As shown by the tailor Dudu cut (Bdex Entertainment, 2017) the Buba has a quite simple rectangular cut. The Sokoto is cut similar to western trousers (Bdex Entertainment, 2018) but has a string, to tighten the trousers with, in the waist instead of a zipper or buttons. My Sokoto has gussets on the inside of the legs.

The Tangzhuang (fig.5) is a type of unisex Chinese jacket that was designed for the Asian-pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) summit in China 2001 (Tangzhuang, 2020, 1<sup>st</sup> January). It is an updated, contemporary version of the *Magua* jacket once worn by the Manchu people. It was presented as a representation of traditional Chinese clothing for the APEC leaders and became quite popular. My fascination for this garment style is associated to the Chinese martial art Tai chi, as it is common to use it while practicing. The styles used for tai chi as well as the original *Magua* has a simpler, freer cut than the APEC which has sleeve setting similar to the western suit jacket.



fig.5, left to right: *My Buba and Sokoto*, west African man in *Buba and Sokoto*, APEC Tangzhuang jacket, Tai chi master Wu Tu Nan.

I enjoy the aesthetics generated by mixing the traditional and contemporary. NorBlack NorWhite (fig.6) is a brown women-led brand exploring the grey spaces of culture via style,



space and stories. They embrace and explore the expressions of traditional craft methods within the south Asian community and culture (NorBlack NorWhite, n.d). They are based in Delhi and their garments are handmade in India.

GOOPi is a Taiwan based platform and online shop that seeks to strengthen the connection between people and nature by focusing on providing high quality urban outdoor Yama style clothing (Goopi, 2019). They are dedicated to thoughtful design and value quality fabrics and functionality. They also have their own brand GOOPiMADE. I enjoy the oversized style and how they merge traditional Asian styles with functional aesthetics and technical fabrics (fig.6).



Mriga & Amrit photographed by Bharat Sikka for Dazed Magazine April 2020 Issue



*Fig.6, left to right: NorBlack NorWhite, GOOPiMADE*

Personally, I enjoy loose fitted clothes like the GOOPiMADE jacket in fig.6 and the shirt worn by tai chi master Wu Tu Nan (fig.5). I believe it to free the body. I also think it is more comfortable, it allows for and encourage movement as it enables the body breath.

Furthermore, it has a relaxed and humble expression. I also enjoy the colors of my Buba and Sokoto (fig.5) and the fact that they are contemporary and traditional garments made by a tailor in a culture where textile crafts like tailoring is still common. It is the type of culture, crafts and expressions that NorBlack NorWhite embraces in their work (NorBlack NorWhite, n.d).

## My position and skill

I was never thought in the craft of tailoring, my education has been in rational sewing (3 years in the gymnasium) and fashion design (bachelor's degree). I think of myself as a garment-maker or a dressmaker, by dress I don't mean the garment archetype dress, but clothes in general. However, dressmaker implies a certain set of skills which I don't know if I can say that I have since I don't really follow any tradition.

I have had many teachers but unfortunately, I never really had a consistent mentor in the craft. Since I ended my first three years of textile and sewing studies in 2010 I often have had to figure stuff out myself. I don't really follow a certain tradition. I have comprehensive knowledge and understanding for the art of making clothes, but I don't claim to have the skill of an accomplished tailor or dressmaker. During my years studying fashion design focus was more on designing than making.

Therefore, I wouldn't say that my skill is in the level of Yanagis (2013) envisioned artisan-craftsman. However, I aspire to hopefully become one, one day, through repeated making and learning by doing. The past years I have been making continuously for *the wardrobe project* in search of my own logic in making and it is slowly taking me somewhere I feel.

When I make clothes, I strive to make long lasting products of good quality. My focus is not on innovation but learning through making. I value utility, comfort and a natural not overly technical functionality. I don't think clothes need to be perfectly made or flawless, but they have to be satisfying enough for the user. I strive towards Yanagis (2013) standard of beauty even though I am quite far from the effortless beauty of the crafts he describes.

## Conclusion, the project at hand

My interest in fashion began with the notion of clothing as self-expression and street styles. My interest has never really been in the creation of new expression per se, but rather in making and creating style. Later I have taken an interest in slow fashion as a branch of fashion that recognizes the need of a slower, more thoughtful and grounded pace.

Slow fashion aims to shift perspectives in fashion and clothes rather than finding new expressions for the sake of it. Furthermore, it is a context that strive to embrace diversity in

terms of style following the currents of people, not looking for fast, market driven trends. Slow fashion puts focus on *how* it is made, while big fashion industry focus on *what* is made, I dare say.

I find Wikströms project *cool or lame?* (2002) interesting in relation to fashion and slow fashion. Her project is exploring her own potential of breaking fashion norms. She didn't have any particular knowledge about sewing when she started her project, but she managed to figure it out. She also noticed that it wasn't so hard to make clothes that looked bought, people didn't seem to notice that she had made them herself before she told them (Magnusson, 2013, 9<sup>th</sup> September).

My and Wikströms interests are fundamentally the same, breaking the conventions of fashion. The difference is perhaps that she showed her work *cool or lame?* as art to spark conversations about fashion. My project *the wardrobe project* was given a name solely to be able to title it in this report. My agenda is perhaps a bit more egocentric and anonymous, revolving around cultivating personal style. However, both could be accused of having a slow fashion agenda.

I am my own muse to better understand myself. I don't shy away from putting myself in the middle of my exploration as I am the body that is closest to me. I use my body as a measuring stick and point of reference. It gives me feedback on my creations and helps me manifest values. I aspire to make clothes for others in the future, but I will continue to use myself as the body/subject of reference in this work, to further understand my relation to material and making.

I think that most artists have themselves as a point of reference and a sort of autoethnographic methodology is implied and more or less present and underlined. In this master thesis it is at least present. This work is a study of perspectives on clothes and dressmaking, through me. I take strength in the activism that both Wikström (Magnusson, 2013, 9<sup>th</sup> September) and Nilsson (n.d) express and I am curious to see if I can find new perspectives on and ways of thinking about clothes and dressmaking through making via my-self.

As for the making of clothes I have caught an interest in clothes made in sets like the Buba and Sokoto (fig.5), furthermore I enjoy the simple and direct cutting which I discovered in the work with *Sacred coloration*, which is also present in the west African set, especially the Buba (Bdex Entertainment, 2017) as well as the Tangzhuang jacket (fig.5). I am also curious about working directly in the final material like the tailor Dudu cut (Bdex Entertainment, 2017) does and I myself did in the *Sacred coloration* project.

In a sense I strive to construct my own tradition and way of making garments. My agenda is to be part of shifting perspectives on clothes and fashion away from the fixation of newness. Instead of aiming for *what* will become I focus on *how* it becomes. To do this I will embrace making in a similar sense as Ingold (2013) argues for that artefacts emerge in relation to each other and not by focusing on designing per se. However they are important as results of a process, embodied knowledge.



## Purpose

This work explores set-making on the basis of making directly in the final material as design method to create new perspectives on clothes and dressmaking where there is no distinction between prototype and final garment.

Primary motive: To explore set-making on the basis of making in the final material as design method.

Secondary: To create new perspectives on clothes and dressmaking where there is no distinction between prototype and final garment.

Tertiary motive: Study the maker-material relation and interaction

## Goal

The aim is to create a four-season wardrobe collection through the idea of cultivating a personal style and by working directly in the final material.

## Question formulation

How can I find new perspectives on clothes by working directly in the final material?

What values are important to bring to the table when working directly with the final material?

How can clothes for different bodies be developed from the idea of cultivating my personal style?

What outputs do I want for my sets and how can different contexts effect the perception of my work?

# Approach

In fashion design and dressmaking, it is common to make toiles, the toile is a mock-up, a prototype preceding the final garment. The toile is employed as a full-scale sketch of what is to be made, it helps in the search for optimal solutions and fit. The tailor Dudu cut doesn't employ a toile before making (Bdex Entertainment, 2017), instead he cuts straight into the final material, relying on his skill. Both ways of working, with or without toile is common, it is a matter of adapting different methods to different situations.

In this work I have chosen to work directly in the final material like Dudu cut (Bdex Entertainment, 2017). It is to challenge my skill, but it is also to challenge the perception of perfection and finality of a design. I build on the idea that craft objects are developed and refined over long periods of time following natural currents and repetition instead of chasing novel ideas and perfection. I want to connect this with Ingolds idea about creativity happening within the making process and the thought that nothing is ever finished in a making process (Pohjoisen kulttuuri-instituutti - institute of northern culture, 2013), and see the artefacts created in my process as waystations leading to the next artefact.

I want to rid myself of the fear of working in the final material and experience my skills in real time. Mistakes and alterations will be a realistic expectation and dealing with these feelings are part of the process, I do not search for perfection but rather growth and humility.

For the project at hand I have created a few pillars to lean on as a frame for making, as it is through the making of clothes that I will go about this project. The core pillar is set-making, to make a top and bottom garment in the same material. I have constructed a simple design method entitled *set-making*.

## **Set-making**

1. A set of garments can be various types and/or amounts of garments but at least a pair.
2. Interact directly with the final material and make a set of clothes
3. Repeat and evaluate

## Result of process

### Initiating the work

I spent most of my time in this master's education exploring various textile craft methods focusing on colouring fabric, painting and dyeing textiles. I also explored a bit of weaving. There have been some satisfactory outcomes but for a big part I been feeling un-content, aimless and restless. But at the end of the second semester, before summer break I felt a need to just cut and sew. I bought lots of greyish linen material and decided to just make loads of clothes to test, try and feel (fig.7). I just freebased and focused on having fun. This was the gateway for me getting back into making garments.



Fig.7, left to right: *Garments in greyish linen fabric, early experiments with colour*

I took the inspiration from the sessions with the greyish linen material with me as I went on summer break. During the summer I made several garments for my own sake as part of *the wardrobe project* but also as experiments, trying out ways of making and building on my knowledge (fig.8).



Fig.8, Left to right: *Linnen tricot set*, *Original blue cotton/hemp set*

The black jacket and the blue set (Fig.9) are significantly important steps in initiating my master thesis. The original blue set was made as a shirt and short trouser in the beginning of the third semester and the black jacket came into existence a few weeks later.

The blue set consists of two garments made separately. The shirt was made in an experiment where I challenged myself to cut a shirt and trouser from a limited amount of fabric and freestyle the pattern, drawing it directly on the fabric. The original trouser was short and wide. I later experimented with cutting trousers and the result was a long trouser which has gone through many editing sessions. Through usage the shirt and the long trouser, instead of the short one ended up as a set.

The black jacket was made as an experiment to see how long it would take to make a jacket intuitively without hastening the process. It took about a week to finish it. There are still details that are perhaps not optimal and I have made small alterations on it after finishing it. But the major work took about seven days. The blue set and the black jacket has been great teachers, informing me about my craft. I will refer to these and other garments from my wardrobe throughout the process.



Fig.9, left to right: *Blue set, Black jacket*

## The white sets

As I decided to make sets and work directly in the final material I also decided to work solely with white materials. It began as a thought to dye the garments later, but it also had to do with the relative lack of identity in the white material. The white represents a kind of rawness and naturality, not all fibres are white like the cotton when you pick them, but the white material evokes a feeling of origin, essence and openness. Sort of like a blank canvas. It also shows the materiality of the fabric instead of hiding it behind surface decoration.

### **Set 1: the monk wool fleece**

The first set I made was before Christmas 2019. At this time, I had only decided to: make sets, in white materials and to have an organic intuitive process of making, without too much pre-planning. The first set took me 2 weeks to finish and I spent much time with hand sewing and being very gentle with the material. Going into the process of making this set I only had a small sketch and an idea about making a fleece jacket. The process of making the monk wool fleece jacket was similar to the process of making the black jacket (fig.9).





*Fig 10, Monk wool fleece set. Left: In the making. Right: Finalized*

The outer material is a heavy wool called monk wool, due to its roughness I decided to have a sort of lining inside it. The lining material is a thin and fragile wool voile. The mix of the two wool materials give a nice feel to the material as a whole, but the voile was really difficult to work with. I also spent a whole day figuring out how to do the bottom hem of the jacket. All in all, this first set took an unproportionate amount of time to make. It is a cool and beautiful garment, but it lacked context and I struggled with how I could address it the value it is actually deserving of.

This set was essentially finalized directly. The trousers had first a button and a loop to tighten the bottom hem, however in the final one I stitched a box pleat on the backside. The waist of the trousers is closed with a hook-and-eye. The jacket has a two-way zipper.

### **Set 2: The cotton satin shirt**

The second set I made was inspired by the first, the monk wool fleece. The cotton satin set grew from an observation I made when I was sketching around with the monk wool fleece jacket. I tried the jacket on with my working shirt as the outer layer as you can see in fig 11.





Fig 11, *Monk wool fleece jacket with working shirt as outer layer*

I thought why not make an outer shirt for the monk wool fleece jacket in the same material I had chosen for its pockets and part of its lining. To be true to my decisions of making sets I made a pair of trousers as well as a shirt.



Fig 12, *Cotton satin set. Left: In the making. Right: Finalized*

In the end I thought it was more interesting to have the cotton satin set as a set instead of breaking it up. It was around here I started to feel that it could be interesting to make numerous sets and when I had more of them I could see how they could interact with each other.

The trousers are wide and straight but in the left frame of fig 12 they are tucked in around the ankles. For the final version they are shortened and there are strings in the bottom hem to adjust the size. They have an elastic waist band. The shirt has a hidden buttoning. There is also a band to tie around the waist or use for styling in various ways.

### **The Bali capsule**

Me and my partner travelled to Bali in Indonesia for Christmas. We are both creatives and we decided to do this trip as both vocation and inspiration. I had looked up some textile related things on beforehand. We visited a small factory where they do the traditional Indonesian wax batik, they also make clothes. We also saw traditional weaving and much more. It was immensely inspiring to see such a vivid culture where everyday craft and spirituality is still alive.

Before going to Bali, I managed to make some clothes for the trip. I made them super quick with no hesitation and very little thought more than to make comfortable, breathable garments. This is the thing with not buying clothes but only making them myself, I have to make clothes for situations like this when I don't have suitable clothing already in my wardrobe. I evaluated the new garments as I wore them during the 35 days long trip.

I discovered the blue set (fig.9) to be very useful, I also found the brown cotton shorts (fig.13) to be very comfortable.



Fig 13, *Brown bali shorts in cotton batik fabric from Tanzania and silk noile tricot t-shirt*

### **The concept: A four-season wardrobe collection**

During the Bali trip I got distance from school and my work in the material. However, I was writing a lot for a coming presentation. I was struggling with how to formulate my work. I thought the decisions I made to frame my work with white materials and set-making as method was enough, but felt that something was missing. I consulted my partner and she encouraged me to think of a name for my work. I came up with the idea of having a four-season dynamic, leading to the concept of making a four-season wardrobe collection.

### **Set 3: Heavy cotton fishbone set**

During my time in Bali I also managed to make one set from a random material I bought at a fabric market. It is a heavy fish bone cotton weave, probably made for interior rather than clothing. The airbnb we stayed in actually had some gears for sewing. It was liberating and fun to make it even though the machine I was using was really bad. I had brought my scissor, which is an important tool for me, and my measuring tape. I borrowed some chalk and used the shorts I made before the trip as pattern for the trousers. I borrowed a top from Aude, a girl we met at the Airbnb, as pattern for the top.



Fig 14, left side: heavy cotton fishbone set. Right side: process of cutting fishbone set trousers

I didn't fully finish this set with hems and closures or even a collar, but it was a liberating, I felt free due to the restrictions. The workers at the airbnb commented that the set is not for Bali climate. This set was not finalized in the end.

### **Line ups, illustrating and planning the collection**

Before deciding to make a four-season wardrobe collection I had almost forbidden myself from sketching as I wanted to listen to the material and be as open to it as possible. But when I had decided to have a four-season dynamic, I saw a point in sketching with pen and paper. For me sketching with pen and paper is like taking notes on what it is I am about to do. I find it a good way to structure my thoughts, like planning.

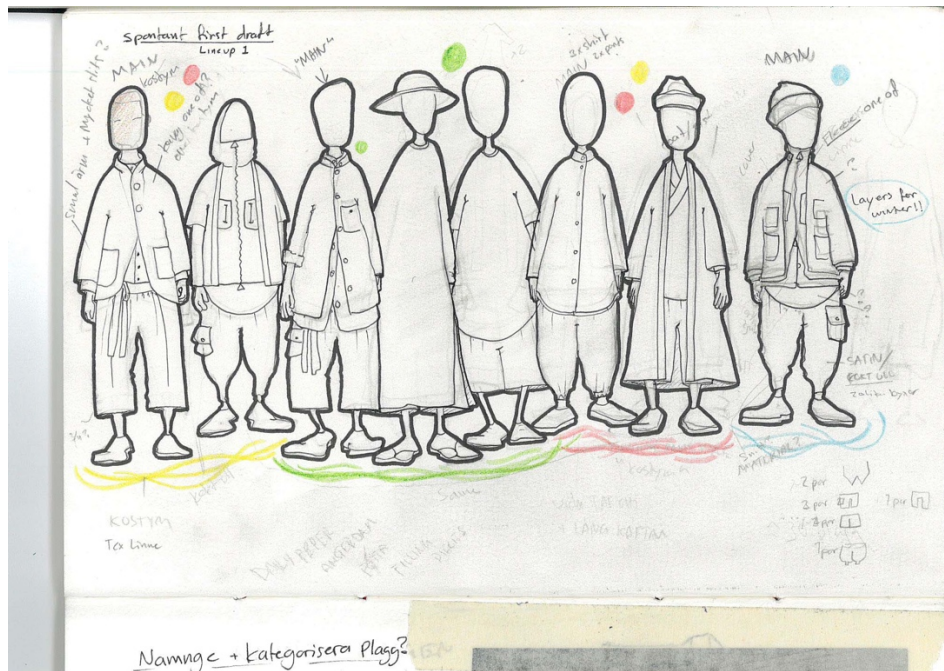


Fig.15, black penned line up, first sketch

The first line up (Fig.15) helped me to figure out what I was aiming for, it is quite illustrative. The final sketch is drawn with a black pen but before that it was drawn with a pencil and I changed it many times. The sketch evolved over time before it settled. After it settled it has become some sort of reference point as the original sketch/plan.

I decided to aim for eight sets, two per season. I also took a decision to divide the process in two stages, first I would make the forms and when I had all eight forms, I would start doing finish on them. I took this decision to be time efficient and I wanted to reach a certain quantity of garments. I was afraid that if I would put in the same time I did with the black jacket and the monk wool fleece jacket I would never be finished, or I would end up with too few garments.

The line-up sketches that comes after the first one is less illustrative and helps me keep track of what I have done like a what to do list. As a final version of the sketched line-up I created a system where I could swap fabric samples and garment sketches around to get an overlook of the collection and what fabrics belonged to which set (Fig.16). It is common to use similar structures in fashion design to keep track of all the variables.



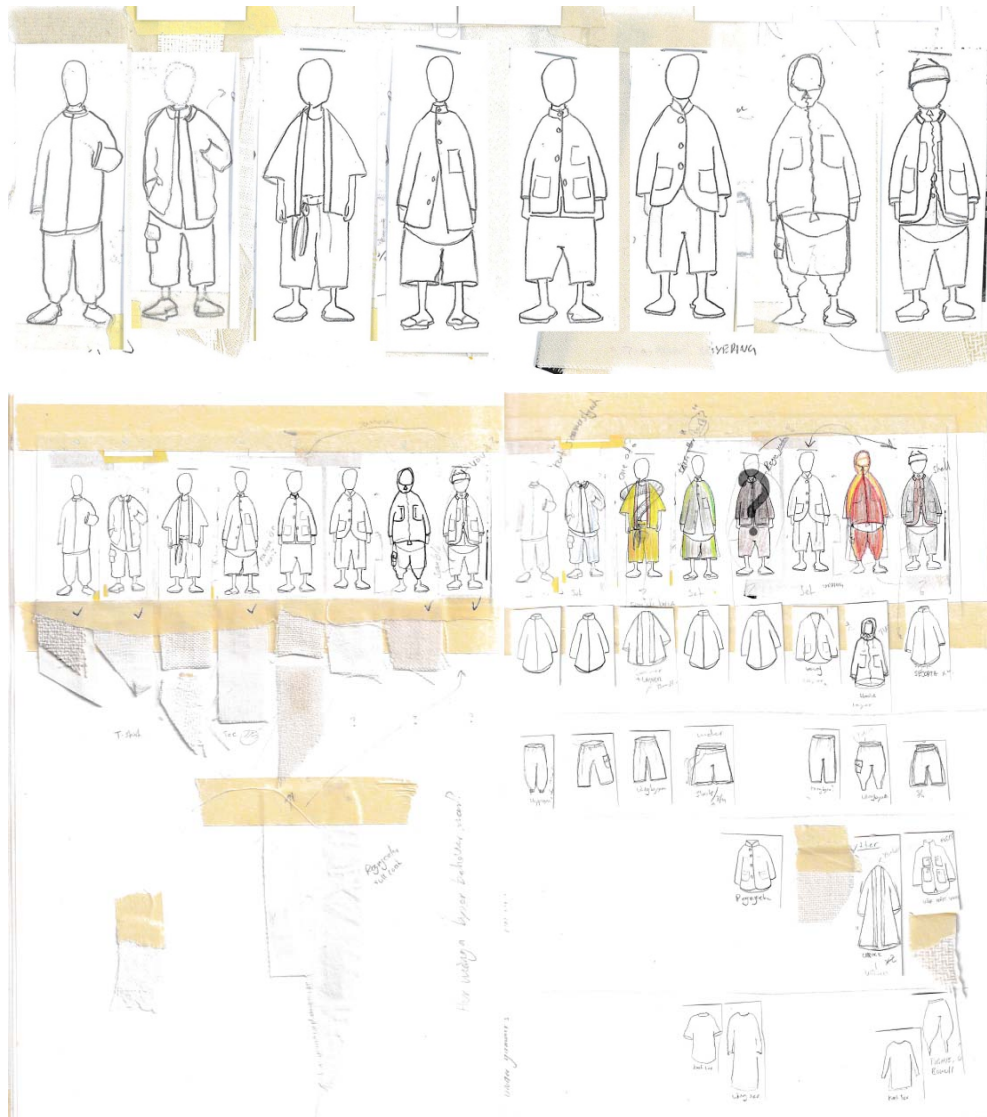


Fig.16, Final sketched line up

#### Set 4: Eko hemp set

The eko hemp set is inspired by the blue cotton hemp set (fig.9). I was inspired to make a version of that set as it was the set I used most frequently on Bali. I discovered this blue set to be very comfortable in the tropical climate and thought that a similar one could serve as a set for the Swedish summer. I made the original blue cotton hemp set as an early experiment and the trousers have gone through many changes as I have worn them, evaluated and altered them a few times.



Fig.17, *Eko hemp set. Left: In the making. Right: Finalized*

In the final version the trouser have a side pocket and a string to tightening them in the waist and can be worn by different body sizes. The shirt has a straight collar, regular centre front buttoning and cuffs with a button.

### **Set 5: Heavy silk noile**

The heavy silk noile set was made as a replica of the cotton satin set (fig.12). The initial idea was that it could work as an outer layer for the cotton satin set. I find the heavy silk noile quality intriguing and it has character, it is rigid but soft. It is heavy and rough but still shiny. I felt it to be a good spring-time material. It is also contrasting to the other materials I had used so far.



Fig.18, *Heavy silk noile set. Left: In the making. Right: Finalized*

I consider this a spring set due to its heavy quality. The trouser is straight and wide like the cotton satin set. Before it was finalized the idea was to have it tucked in at the ankles. But for the finalized trouser I decided to have a wide ending and a slit with buttoning on the sides. The buttons are classic Chinese frog buttons with loops which I knotted and hand stitched, similar to the Tangzhang jacket (Fig.5).

### **Set 6: Wool twill set**

Wool is sometimes mentioned as nature's own technical material due to its many properties. It dries fast, it can be warming when it is cold and cooling when it is warm even if it is more warm than cold so to say. Wool doesn't feel cold when wet and it is easy to keep clean. Some properties of the wool become less prominent as it undergoes industrial preparations and refinement in order to become a fabric. Due to its properties I thought it interesting to make it in the shape of a technical jacket, by technical I mean a jacket with many pockets and



adjustable closings. Furthermore, the wool twill adds to the variety of material in the collection. It is the second wool material, but it has a totally different character than the monk wool fleece set (Fig.10) as the wool twill is much neater and softer. This set is also inspired by the Black jacket (Fig.9) as the pockets are similar. The black jacket is also made of wool, but a heavier one.



Fig.19, Wool twill set. Left: In the making. Right: Finalized

The wool twill set is meant for spring and autumn usage, the trousers are also good winter trousers and the jacket can be worn during cold summer evenings and as a layer for winter days. The final jacket has an adjustable string in the bottom hem and two adjustable strings in the hood, it has four pockets, two visible and two hidden on the sides. It has a two-way zipper and bands for tightening the sleeves around the wrists. The trousers have a side pocket and an adjustable mechanism for tightening the waist which fits various body sizes.

## Fårfesten, black wool sets

I usually help my mom at fårfesten in Kil, which is a wool festival in the small town of Kil in Värmland in the middle of Sweden. For the 2020 edition I decided to make two sets for purchase. The set I made for this occasion is based on the sets for this project as an experiment to see how I could apply it in a commercial context. But instead of using white materials I used a shiny black wool material which has an exclusive look to it. I made two shirts in the same size except that one of them was a bit longer and two trousers where one was a bit longer and narrower and one a bit shorter and wider.



Fig.20, Black wool set, tall shirt and narrow trouser on two different bodies

I sold the trouser that was a bit shorter and wider, the customer named them *the skirt trousers*. But I referred to them as a pair of shorts. The *skirt trouser* model was the same as the brown cotton shorts I made for the Bali trip (fig.13). The brown cotton shorts were the trouser I used second most during my trip and they got lots of compliments and remarks from people saying

they liked them. In fig.20 the longer shirt and narrower trouser is shown on two different bodies, this set of clothes are inspired by the blue set (fig.9).

### **Set 7: Regular cotton set**

Since I sold a pair of the shorts referred to as the skirt trousers by the customer and that the original model, the brown cotton shorts was an appreciated companion on Bali I thought that it would be nice to make a set inspired by them. I decided to use a regular cotton weave. The regular cotton weave is commonly used for batiks in hot climates. My buba and Sokoto (fig.5) is made from this material as well as many of the Indonesian batiks I found on Bali. The same goes for the brown cotton shorts (fig.13) made from a Tanzanian batik fabric.



*Fig.21, Regular cotton set. Left: In the making. Right: Finalized*

The regular cotton set is made for usage in summer, but the shirt can be used as a layer in various seasons. The trouser is wide and has a string closing in the waist which allows various body sizes to wear them. The shirt has a pleated sleeve with a cuff, this cuff is a quite regular

western cuff with one button. The shirt has a chest pocket with a button and the front closing is a regular shirt buttoning.

### **Set 8: Cotton twill set**

I stumbled on the cotton twill fabric and was a bit hesitant to it at first, but due to the tight weaving of this fabric I thought it would make a good shell jacket. If the weaving is tight it is harder for water and wind to penetrate it. The material itself relates to the wool twill but is much tighter and made from a thinner yarn, which gives it a paper like feel.



*Fig.22, Cotton twill set. Left: In the making. Right: Finalized*

The cotton twill set is the set I am most unsure of as I didn't really like to work with the material. The idea was that I could wax it and it could serve as an autumn set. The jacket has a hidden buttoning, two hidden pockets with zippers on the sides and an adjustable string in the bottom hem. The trousers have an adjustable waist with two bands to adjust the tension and



size. The waist also has an elastic band on the back part which helps to stabilize the trousers on the hip. They also have adjustable strings in the bottom hem.

### The family: all sets together



Fig.23, Sets in the making on dress stands. From left to right: heavy silk noile, heavy cotton fishbone set, eko hemp set, regular cotton set, cotton twill set, wool twill set, monk wool fleece set.



Fig.24, Sets in the making flat on the ground. From left to right: heavy silk noile, heavy cotton

*fishbone set, eko hemp set, regular cotton set, cotton twill set, wool twill set, monk wool fleece set.*

At this point I had eight white sets. Except for the first set, the Monk wool fleece set, none of the sets were finished in terms of hems, buttons, closings and other trims. I was proud to see them altogether, but it was even more fun to try them on and combine them and see that they actually work together as layers (Fig.25). However, at this point they still felt kind of rough and I realized how important detailing is.



Fig.25, *Intermixing garments from various sets*

I had the aim to make two more sets, one in a regular linen material, similar to the hemp but a bit softer and one in a smooth shiny but still heavy wool satin, but at this time school decided to close the workshops due to covid-19. As we were forced to work from home due to school closing the workshops, I decided to start doing finishing on my sets instead of making more.

### Finish, trims, details and endings

To do the finishing I took out the sets one at the time and spent one or a few days doing finish on them. I got to spend some time with each set and got to know them even more intimately as I worked with them and tried them on to see what details they needed.

My goal was to allow myself to be open and experimental about it. The most important thing is to make the garment functional so that the closings and other details do what they are supposed to, like securing the trousers on the hip or waist.



Most of the sets have slightly different finishing and trims. In Fig.26 some of my favourite details are displayed.



Fig.26, 1: waist on Wool twill trousers. 2: Hood with adjustable strings on Wool twill jacket. 3: Heavy silk noile shirt with handmade Chinese frog buttons. 4: Slit on Heavy silk noile trousers. 5: Cuff with button and pleated sleeve on Regular cotton shirt. 6: Waist on Eko cotton hemp trouser. 7: Waist on Regular cotton trouser.

## Pattern construction

Essentially all the sets originate from the same construction method. For the tops I have used a torn pattern piece with little information on it. In the beginning I used the outline of that pattern and then intuitively altered it directly on the fabric before I cut. However, after a while I copied it and made a base pattern to keep track of what I was doing. I don't really make detailed patterns because I like to work intuitively. Most details on the garments are intuitively made by draping them into place. The same goes for the trousers, some trousers are made directly on the fabric without any paper pattern, and a few of them are made with a paper pattern as a base, but details are all made intuitively by draping them into place.

## The collection as a whole

When the collection was finally finished, I got to try all the garments on and really feel and see them for the first time. I documented each set on my own body (Fig.27). I also arranged a photoshoot in the woods with a few people (Fig.28) and it was a real reward to see the sets intermix with each other on different bodies and have other people trying them on and feeling them. I also hanged my clothes in an exhibition area, installing them as if they were to be exhibited in a gallery (Fig.29).



Fig.27, *Overview line up of finished collection*





Fig.28, *In the woods with the finished garments* group photo by Ariadne Sandberg Karali



Fig.29, *The collection hanged in a gallery space*, photo by Theo Rosengren

## Discussion and reflection

In a series of interactions, I, as the maker have approached the final material directly to make sets of clothes in a similar way as the tailor Dudu cut (Bdex Entertainment, 2017). Each interaction has led to one set of clothes. One material, two garments. The result is a collection of seven ready-to-wear sets each in a different material quality. The material dynamic is guided by a four-season concept. In the beginning the aim was to colorize the sets, decorate them to strengthen the narrative of the concept. But In the end, I didn't as I thought it would hide their materiality behind surface decoration.

The various white hues of the sets also tell something about them being open for interpretation and creates a suggestive atmosphere around them. It also provokes thoughts about them being prototypes which they in a sense are. They are ready-to-wear but they are also prototypes, in the larger sense Ingold (Pohjoisen kulttuuri-instituutti - institute of northern culture, 2013) describes artefacts of a making process to be waystations. They are a foundation. Instead of being a four-season wardrobe collection they are a suggestion for one, a four-season wardrobe **prototype** collection.

The concept of a four-season wardrobe collection is an attempt to place this work in a slow fashion/conscious fashion context. But it is also a pure expression of the makers (my) values and ideas about clothes and fashion being useful and material focused in the sense that Fletcher (2008) describes. The collection is heavily influenced by me, the maker and are part of the idea of cultivating personal style as Nilsson (n.d) suggests.

This collection belongs in the realm of streetstyle that originate from ordinary people that Crane (2000) talks about. It doesn't aspire to be fashion, however it can easily become fashion depending on how it is displayed and received. For example one could say that the forest photos place the work in a fashion context. If it is received as fashion, I it to be defined as slow fashion.

The hanging of them in a gallery space place them in a totally different context, they become artefacts rather than fashion. And perhaps this work is more suitable to be presented as such. With an accompanying text defining it as a work that questions established impressions of

clothes, perhaps it could than have a similar impact as the work *cool or lame?* (wikström, 2002).

As for the method, set-making, I could perhaps have been more true to the method and not divide the process of making in the two stages of making the big shapes first and doing finishing later. The first set and garment, the Monk wool fleece set jacket is made in one go, finishing and detailing is integrated. Same goes for the black jacket. Perhaps this way also corresponds better to Ingolds (2013) ide about how the skilful maker is thinking through making, meddling with the material.

Unfortunately I was impatient and afraid to not reach an adequate quantity of sets. So, I divided the process into two steps, making the overall shape of all the sets first and then doing finishing details. Probably it would have been more interesting and coherent to have made one set at the time and focus more carefully on the overall composition of top and bottom garment giving the material the respect and attention it deserves. I see my work less as a fashion collection and more as a collection of objects/artefacts, sets/garments.

I think that the biggest contribution of this work is the proposition that there needn't be a distinguished difference between prototype and final garment, that they can be both at the same time. Perhaps this line of thought is obvious but perhaps it is also necessary in order to create a more sustainable future in terms of clothing. Furthermore, I believe it has succeeded in not being extraordinary, there is no focus on creating new expression, but rather exploring material values.

I would like to continue researching set-making as design method and building on this project by introducing colour. I would then correct my error of dividing the making process into two and finalize one set or garment at the time. It would also be interesting to abstract the method even more and simply make garments one at the time, without any sort of patterns. Only make intuitively as a way to go even deeper into materials and making.

Furthermore I would like to continue researching the four-season concept and use it as a structure for creating clothing collections and capsules, but also to explore the poetic implications of it.

## Conclusion and result

Their whiteness gives them a certain aura.

The aura of something that is in-between.

In-between finished and unfinished.

In-between costume, fashion and clothing.

In-between craft and production.

In-between art and design.

It's an exploration of self and making that aren't afraid of the ordinary.

I have realized that this collection has been about gathering the knowledge I required over the years and expressing it. Not as an avant-garde piece of art, but a mature assemble of garments that express my impression about elegance, style, function and comfort as it is today.

I have chosen to only work with fabric of natural origin, embracing their naturally occurring properties. It is effortless, playful and yet sober in its expression.

The method was straight forward; to make sets of clothes, each in a different material. The material selection was guided by the idea of creating a four-season dynamic within the collection. The four-season dynamic originated from the idea of a collection that are reminiscent of a wardrobe, which to me is the symbol for the ultimate set of clothes that cover your needs and desires for years to come. This mindset originates from a sustainable way of thinking.

The sets can be presented as artefacts and I plan to exhibit them by hanging them. But they are also very much clothing and they come to life when they are intermixed and tried on.

They are meant to not only be seen but felt.





*Fig 32, Group photo in the woods*



*Fig 33, Left: Nadia in cotton satin set and heavy silk noile shirt. Right: Dorani in linen tricot t-shirt and heavy silk noile trousers*





*Fig 34, Left: Tim in cotton twill set and wool twill jacket. Right: Isak in monk wool fleece set and regular cotton shirt.*





*Fig 35, Nadia in cotton satin set and heavy silk noile shirt*





*Fig 36, Nadia in cotton satin set*



*Fig 37, Dorani in heavy silk noile shirt and linen tricot t-shirt*





*Fig 38, Dorani in heavy silk noile shirt and linen tricot t-shirt*



*Fig 39, Me in eko hemp shirt and silk noile tricot shirt*





*Fig 40, Me in wool twill trouser and silk noile tricot shirt*



*Fig 41, Tim in cotton twill set and wool twill jacket*





*Fig 42, Tim in cotton twill trousers and wool twill jacket*



*Fig 43, Isak in monk wool fleece set and regular cotton shirt*





*Fig 44, Isak in monk wool fleece set and regular cotton shirt*

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# Appendix

Text