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My approach to graphic art inspired
by fashion applications.

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Introduction

My thesis will describe how my approach to art has developed over the course of my study and which have been its important subjects. Over the years, my work has developed from two-dimensional drawings and prints to art objects which occupy some space and finally to fashion accessories. In this diploma project, Fashion design and Fine art/Printmaking are meeting on the same territory. There is just a fine line between these two territories and the materials used in both: textile and paper. Sometimes this line is crossed. My artistic approach incorporates my relationship to traditional craftsmanship and material processing.

During the later part of my studies, I have founded my own platform: a fashion project which has become an influence for my art works at the same time as my art works have influenced this fashion project. This is

particularly true as regards application of concept, approach to processing different themes and material utilization.

My diploma work is made up of prints and objects influenced by fashion elements. The final outcome of my effort consists of a combination of these prints and objects. The combinations demonstrate a confrontation between two different forms (2D prints and 3D objects). Motives for my diploma work were selected from decorative fashion elements and applications. I deliberately chose elements which are mainly used to decorate clothes. They are not practical parts derived directly from clothes patterns, because that would be too technological for my intentions.

My prints and objects are not directly applicable in the fashion context, but still the essence of this work could become useful for my future projects within the fashion realm. It is important to notice that each created element exists here for itself, not interacting with the final application on the clothes. It is only celebrating its simple shape and beauty.

This project was inspired and supported by a statement formulated by Donald Judd. He was careful to distinguish his design practice from his artwork. His art objects may seem undistinguishable from his furniture, but he avoids their connecting.

*A work of art exists as itself; a chair exists as a chair itself. And the idea of a chair isn't a chair.*¹

My inspiration comes from many different fields. I am interested in art, fashion, material technology and many other things. Therefore an overview of my inspiration is very broad. The inspiration for my diploma project could be a collection from a large retail chain as well as a small series of artistic photographs.

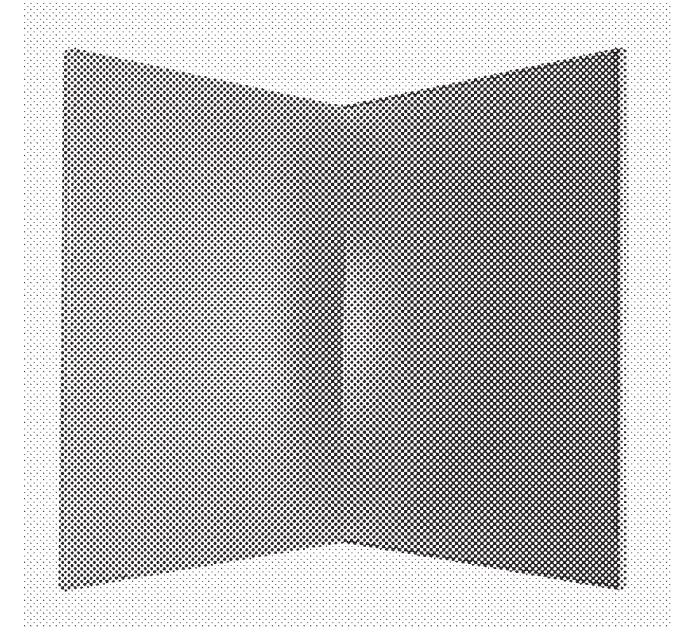
1 – It's Hard to Find a Good Lamp, Donald Judd, 1993, Judd Foundation

In my thesis I would also like to compare several terms. The differences between art and fashion, especially as regards the artist's approach. With what intentions do we start our projects? There also should be included questions of comparison of my approaches to two-dimensional and three-dimensional art pieces and comparison of processing materials (textile and paper).

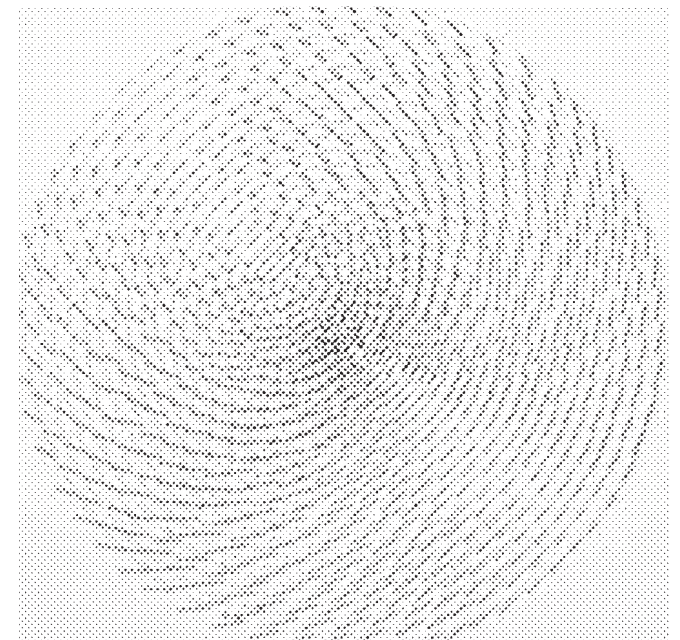
My development

At the beginning of my study at the University of Applied Arts Vienna, my work was focused on two-dimensional drawings and prints. Yet I never felt completely satisfied with this form. I eventually began to focus on low reliefs and structures. I started gluing structure on structure, cutting holes into paper, using textile and other unusual materials and objects. I called these works “Slight structures”. They already foreshadow that the sense of touch will be very important for my work. During that time my greatest inspirers were artists such as Günther Uecker, Enrico Castellani or Otto Piene. Most of them are members of the group Zero. Artists working with light and movement and, therefore, primarily also with space. I would like to point out especially a series of works by Enrico Castellani: “Superficie Angolare”. *The Angolare series consists of 12 painted works from 1960-1965 for which Castellani fabricated cornershaped armatures that impose concave and convex curvatures on the canvas, yielding subtly disorienting perceptual and spatial effects.* ² These frames were placed in the corner of the exhibition room. The unusual construction transformed a simple frame into an object. Also Günther Uecker’s painted nails on canvasboard attracted me. Structures (in this case nails) and light created shadows and thanks to them we can call it an object.

² – Haunch of Venison New York presents „Castellani e Castellani“ by Enrico Castellani. Art Daily, 25 March 2013



Enrico Castellani, Superficie angolare rossa, 1961



Günther Uecker, Spirale, 1969

Another important change came in the third year at the University. It influenced the rest of my study as well as my life besides that: it was my interest in books. If a 2D picture/print is included inside a book, it becomes part of a 3D object. I could continue to work on pictures like before but now they became something tangible. The form of a book still fascinates me very much. The form of painting/drawing of art work to be hung on the wall was never very close to my expression. It led me to an idea that form should not be fixed and limited. I can always choose it. For me this was a momentous insight, contrasting with all I had previously been taught, during my previous studies of painting and drawing in an academic manner at high school. So now the form of a book was the best choice for me. A book takes some place in space, is part of it and we can take it into our hands. It is 2D form inside the form of an object. At that time I also began to depict objects of daily use.

Inspiration for one of my most important projects in the third year were beautiful books as such. At the time, I spent hours in bookstores and watched especially book binding, paper types, book shapes and graphic design. I realized that the form of the book itself is food for thought and worth processing.

That significant project were my experiments with the classical form of sketch book/notebook. This project was not so much about creating new useful notebooks, but about breaking this form's fixed rules and demonstrating new possibilities. I have achieved this, using perforations, folds and experimental new lines. Lines were created, for example, through layers. I used transparent paper so that the layers together created different structures. Some lines were also printed with dots. Their frequency was influenced by some external factors, not by me. Some notebooks could be folded to become smaller or bigger thanks to perforation or cuts. I applied free artistic thinking to objects of every day use. The project was totally free, but at the same time each notebook was perfectly shaped for practical

use. It was interesting to sell the notebooks as well (I sold them for a normal price for a notebook = 10 euro, not for the price of an art piece). It was inspiring that the people who bought the notebooks usually told me that they just exhibited the notebook on their shelf but they did not use it. Even though, it was presented as a notebook to use. It confirmed my opinion that art can be presented in this way.

Because for what else is Art? From my point of view Art is primarily for having pleasure. Pleasure for the eye of the subject, the possibility to stop for a moment and feel that the object is beautiful, just because we like it. Art may also try to educate or moralize, but I personally do not prefer such Art.

Thanks to the notebook project, I had to learn the very basis of bookbinding. These were not my very first books but before I had produced books in a very amateurish way. Thanks to this project, I found new ways for how to work with paper. I realized that there is no need to follow routine processes.



Notebook A5/A6, 2011

What then followed was that I founded a company called PBG together with two friends: Klára Felixová and Tereza Horáková. We started to use and combine some of the experiences from my experiments with the classical form of the sketchbook. With the exception that now we decided to use them for fashion products, expanding into work with textile and leather. We were putting together two types of products which until that time perhaps had never been combined before. We started to produce bags and notebooks under the same label. Textile and paper production has seemingly little to do with one another. They seem not to be related but actually they are very close. We used the same design principles for our bags as well as for our notebooks and other products.

In my procedures I like to substitute one material for another. For example: I use textiles for the cover of notebooks. I often print my art works on textile, wood or atypical papers to which have been added some other ingredients.

Thanks to our commercial project (which is based in my hometown Prague, for the time being) I get to meet a lot of new suppliers and wholesalers in Bohemia. I also get to know many new materials, which I can use for my art projects at the University. This is but one example of how this project affects my approach to art.



Inspiration of one field to the other

At the beginning I often asked myself if it is good to combine these two apparently different fields. I was often discouraged from the idea. Today I think it can be of great benefit for both areas of my work. I don't want to create combinations of fine art and applied art: I want to keep these two interests separate, while allowing an exchange of inspiration and techniques between them. There still remains a question whether the final pieces can work in both ways or whether it has to be clearly explained to what category they belong. Donald Judd has been a great inspiration for my diploma project, with his view on this issue. It always depends on what our intension is.

Donald Judd – Furniture

The relationship between Judd's furniture design and his artistic philosophy is problematic: first of all the materials employed for both practices are the same: simple industrial planks and joints in plywood and metal. Secondly, the shapes of the furnitures echo those of the purely artistic works: both employ geometrical volumes of austere simplicity, highly controlled and serialized. Judd's main investigation remains the production of artworks which are "non-naturalistic, non-imagistic, and non-expressionistic", but, for example, in order to produce a chair he had to introduce the parameter of function (an object to sit on) and image, (that of a chair). Therefore the artist decided to programmatically detach his artistic research from his design, declaring that he didn't want to make any "artist's furniture", but real furniture that, in his words, "functioned well". ³

The configuration and the scale of art cannot be transposed into furniture and architecture. The intent of art is different from that of the latter, which must be functional. A work of art exists as itself; a chair exists as a chair itself. And the idea of a chair isn't a chair. ⁴

I identify myself and my diploma project with his theory. It is Art when it is my intention for it to be Art. It is Art when I do not have any intention for a functional purpose and I create my work for the sole purpose of visual experience. When I create a book or a notebook only for the purpose of celebrating its form, demonstrating what is it beautiful and substantial about it, the object ceases to be a practical and functional object – and becomes Art.

Nowadays, Art is open to any forms of expression and themes. There are no taboos anymore. Nevertheless, I think that especially our field – Graphics and Printmaking – is still tied to some materials and technical procedures. Based on Judd's legacy I have tried to breach some of these

³ – Is the Idea of a Chair, a Chair? Donald Judd's Furniture Design, Mariabruna Fabrizi, March 9, 2014

⁴ – It's Hard to Find a Good Lamp, Donald Judd, 1993, Judd Foundation

conventions using untraditional materials and techniques and also by choosing the motives from a purely practical field.

My approach to fashion

Nowadays my greatest interest is fashion. In particular I think of our fashion label (PBG) and the fashion accessories we produce. We founded this label four years ago. The initial inspiration for all our products is material itself. We highlight its beauty and character. We never begin to think about all the bag details until the moment we get the material into our hands. The material will give its opportunities and barriers away.

The shapes are very simple and we do not hide anything. That is how we work with material. For example: with one simple cut we indicate a pocket; through a simple fold we create a bag.

The way how we create an object from flat material is very basic. Only by simple folding, cutting, crumpling etc. It is fascinating that we can change the nature of the thing with only one simple fold. It is possible to change a piece of cloth or paper to an object with its fixed shape. That is how I want to approach other things as well, such as my art making.

I don't want to create artificial shapes. Anyway I think too complicated things are usually also not really functional. I don't mean only practical function but also the visual ones. I have a feeling that there are more solutions which are just right, and we have to look for them. I like the vision that during the creative act we are just looking for something, searching for something great which is already there, even if we don't see it yet. Maybe this idea is for me a bit calming: that one doesn't need to originate something – but rather to find it.

Feedback

Once my diploma project and its thesis are ready, they could be of great benefit to our fashion project. As I wrote in the beginning: I think one field should take inspiration from the other. My art prints and objects are inspired by fashion applications, yet these results – the art pieces – may well provide inspiration for my fashion projects. My diploma project is not just a useless summary of my study but it can also function as an alphabet of some rules and as an impulse for future inspiration. I learned many new things during the process. Especially about work with material and creating fashion applications. This knowledge can also be helpful.

Determination of the rules

When a person or a small group leads their own company, or brand, they may gradually move away from that what was important to them in the beginning. It is easy to depart from one's own concept. One reason might be that we constantly have to deal with a lot of things and so many things can be missed.

Here I have created a general overview in order to determine how I should approach these things. Thanks to that I can now define my own rules, and create a path which I want to follow. These elements could be my alphabet, my dictionary, my working Bible. I hope I will realize the essence of things because of these rules. So later I won't need to just imitate the solutions of the other designers. Thanks to this alphabet, I hope I will always be able to find my own way.

Admiration for material

Inspiration for my work is usually material itself. The treatment always adapts to the material. I always like to use the whole potential of a material. In this sense, my approach to paper is the same as to textile. For example: when textile frays, I think it is not always necessary to take up hem. When textile has different front and back sides I leave it as it is, without lining. I always like to uncover a material's essence. But only when it doesn't interfere with function. It opens up new possibilities. It is the same with paper. For example: when paper is transparent, I do not try to eliminate this function. On the contrary, I want to highlight transparency and create some possibility to see through the paper further.

I have always had a great fascination for different materials. I am searching for all types of materials within a wider field of activity. For example industrial ones, which I like to use for my art works. I don't agree with the

assertion that materials cannot be used for what they were not made for. At a certain time, for example, I printed my works on Sulfate paper (wrapping paper). It is important how we use and present the material. When I presented these art pieces people were asking me what is that beautiful paper. Of course they were very surprised that it is the cheapest paper that one can buy. This paper is perishable, but for me this aspect is also a part of the thing. Maybe in this way the art piece also gets its uniqueness.

From my point of view, one of the most interesting things that have happened over the last years in fashion has been the use of neoprene material in high fashion. Thanks to this material designers can significantly simplify their cuts. Neoprene does not require lining and selvage. Seams and zippers are not hidden. Again it is the use of an unconventional material, originally intended for something completely different.



Franziska Michael Spring/Summer
Collection 2015

COS Autumn/Winter Collection 2011

In particular, I like to work with materials where I don't need to make a big intervention. I don't want to transform them, I just try to naturally give them a shape and highlight their beauty and character. When I work in Fashion my process is very similar to my process in Art. Textile originally is also a flat material which gets its shape finally on the figure. With time I realized that I must differentiate between how I treat these two materials (textile and paper). From my point of view, we have to think about work with paper much more precisely than when we work with textile. Paper has a memory! Everything that will be executed on paper will stay visible. Textile is more malleable and forgets. Interesting is that for example leather requires a similar process as paper.

Maurice Scheltens & Liesbeth Abbenes, with Sam Logan, The humble pocket: a celebration, 2014

My diploma project – a meeting point for

Printmaking and Fashion Design

I created prints and objects to bring together graphics/printmaking with elements of fashion applications. Objects in which the artistic approach to craftsmanship and to the processing of materials meet and intersect gently. Each created element is here for itself, not interacting with the final application on the clothes.

It is important not to confuse the results of my work with real and practical objects, in this case with real applications on our clothes. There is no functionality and none was intended! That is why they cannot be considered as functional objects.

Here I attach one concrete example from another artists: The humble pocket: a celebration. Maurice Scheltens & Liesbeth Abbenes, with stylist Sam Logan made a photo series of pockets on different types of clothes. In this case pockets have been elevated into the status of beauty. From my point of view we can consider this photo series as an art piece without any connection to the original function of pockets. Photos become abstract and geometrical pictures thanks to putting emphasis on shadow and lights.



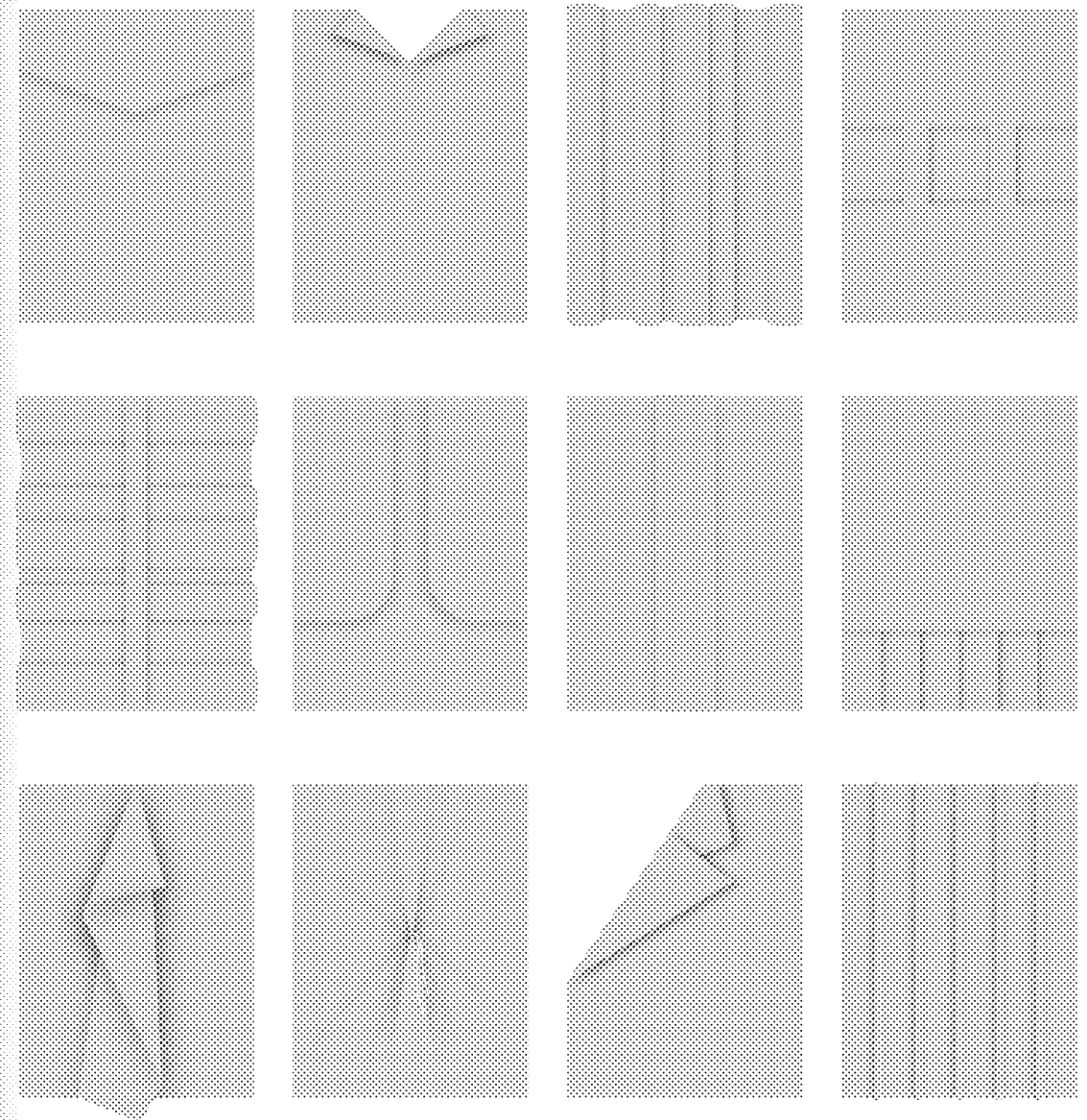
Process

1 Alphabet

In the beginning I created a kind of alphabet. Assisted by my colleague Klára, who studied at a textile school I selected some of the elements and applications that are used in fashion. I created a simple overview of the elements which I need for my diploma project.

It is not just about well-established elements, such as those which are alphabetically listed and technically described in manuals for seamstresses. Rather, it is my subjective selection of elements that I find useful. These include creations of various frills, pleats, folds, collars, cross-sections, pockets and flaps. I deliberately refuse decorating buttons, lace, rhinestones etc. They are not applications which I intend to use in the future.

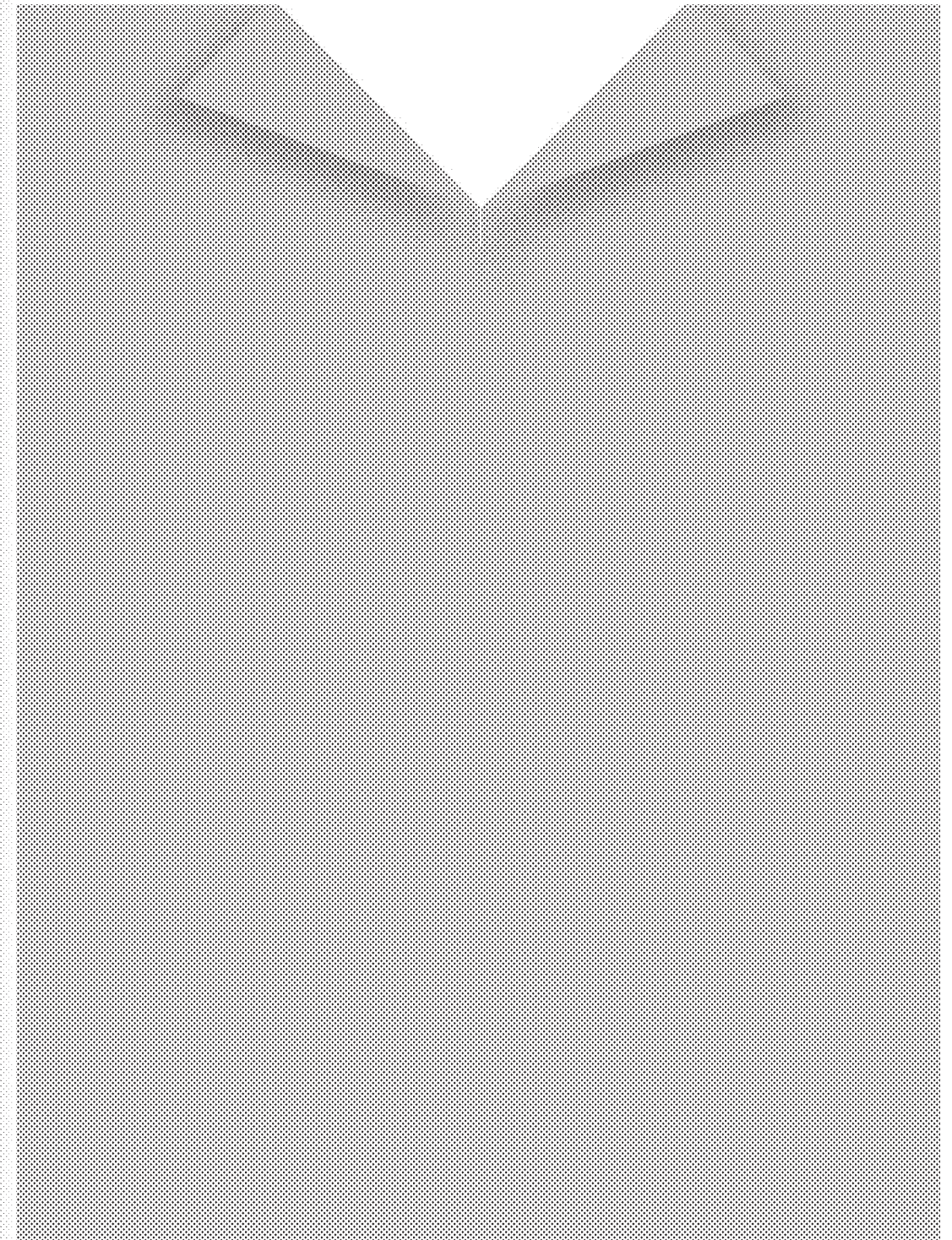
Finally, I selected 12 pieces from the original 20 pieces. The reason was that I was not sure if the rest of them are really applicable, some of them seemed to me a bit obsolete. I wanted my selection to be applicable for my diploma project as well as applicable in fashion. It is closely related. The elements which I use for my diploma project I will also probably use in fashion. They are simply in agreement with my visual requirements.



2 Print

The first of my processing solutions was printing (in silkscreen). In the beginning I have transformed the motives into reality through printing. I was thinking about the object in colors, shadows and lights. Everything is expressed on one flat area. An interesting point here is that the paper I use is made from cotton fibers. For me it is important that this material's most important area of use is textile manufacturing. It is an interesting connection. This paper has a somewhat difficult structure for printing. Each structure, or grain, even the slightest unevenness is a complication when you do screen printing.

My prints are made in two layers. The first layer is only a flat square, the second layer creates a three-dimensional appearance thanks to a grid (bitmap) which highlight the shadows. I choose this procedure, although it was very difficult to work with 2 layers which must be so exact. I wanted to create the illusion of appropriate depth in the 2D image.



3 Object

The second form is the object. I wanted to use materials which have similar characteristics to paper. More precisely, I choose lining materials which are easy to fold and which can be fixed with ironing, so that the fold holds in the position needed. After ironing this material has a similar appearance to paper. Now, motives move from graphical representation into 3D objects. The objects are created simply. For example: I created the collar by bending the corner, the pleat by pressing it. Graphics moved into three-dimensional space – and became object!

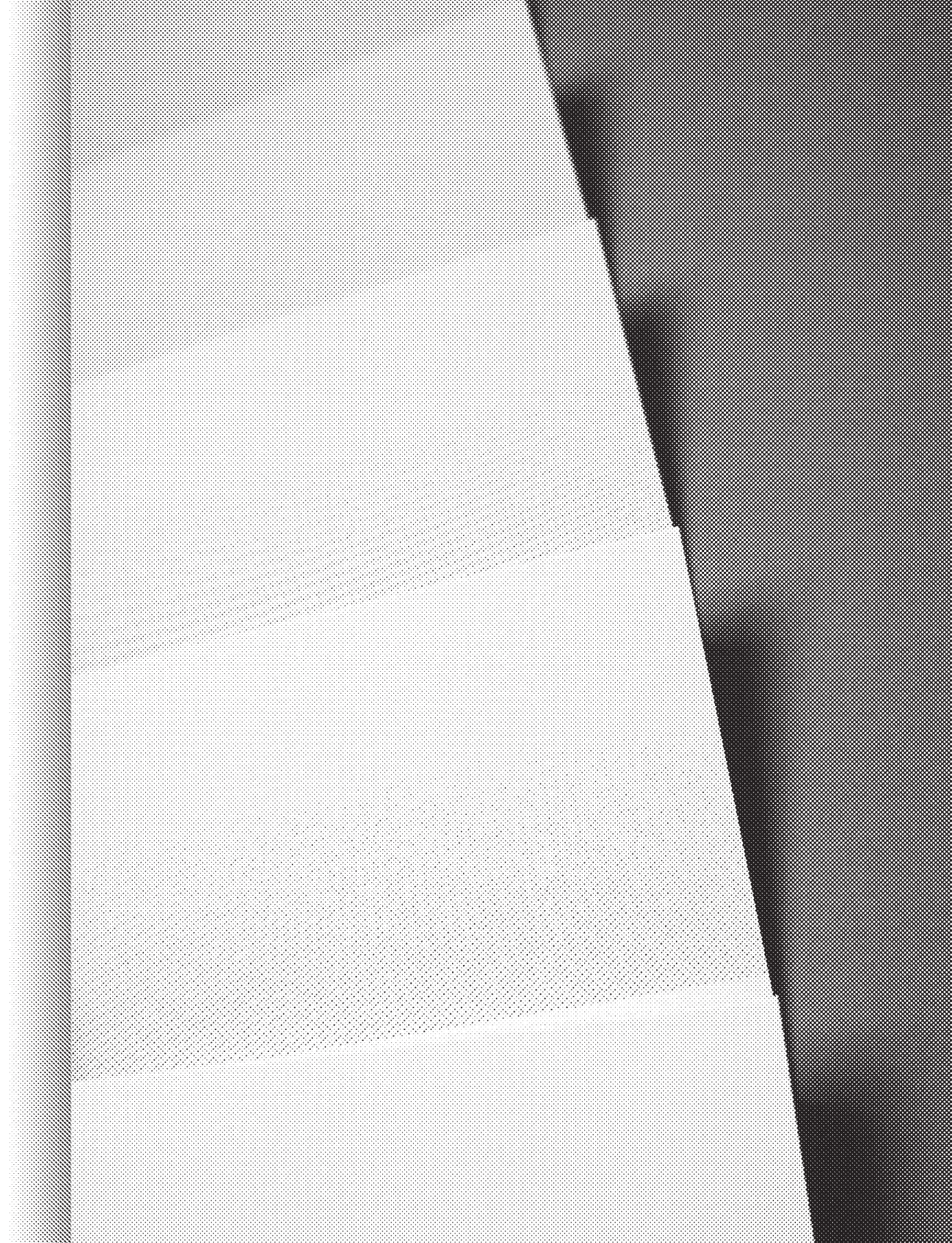
Each object consists of chipboard and lining material which is normally used for collars underlaying etc. Chipboard is usually used for industrial purposes, not for decorative and artistic ones. Here in the object, these two materials appear in a totally different context than normally seen. Thanks to the board the object appears to be presented also as a flat image, but it was no longer necessary to print or otherwise illustrate shadows, lights and colors. Shadows are created naturally by light, because the object is three-dimensional. To create these objects was very entertaining thanks to the methods of processing. The materials were ironed and folded. The whole process required concentration, not only because the size of the material had to be already counted with folds. Still, in this case some mistakes could be corrected.



4 Hybrid (paper object)

The previous two forms are followed by a little game combining both previous steps. I connect printing with bending. For the first time I chose for my project plain printing paper. Nevertheless, what I create from this paper also became an object. I have formed paper like if it had been textile. However, the paper must be handled more carefully and I must think about the folds ahead. What is once executed cannot be changed.

In these paper objects, print also plays a role: here print competes with reality. The shadows have been printed. These shadows are not anymore necessary for the understanding and visualization of the whole object. However, they are clear witnesses of a confrontation between both issues. When a real shadow appears on top of the artificial one it may move whereas the artificial shadow will always stay in the same place. It will illustrate the difference between these two forms, but it will also connect them. Sometimes the confrontation is stronger, sometimes less, everything depends on the time of day. Therefore these hybrid objects will constantly change due to changing light conditions and they will remind us of the essence of what the object is.



5 Installation

The installation is an important part for each completed project. My art pieces are to be placed on tables as spatial objects and design. Each element will be represented on the table by a print, an object and a hybrid. In this way my progress will be presented on the tables.

My art pieces should not be mounted on the walls the way pictures usually are. From my point of view the observer feels distanced to such art pieces. The prints will lay on the tables. The objects will have a little inclination to the viewer. The hybrids will stand in the space.

Conclusion

At the beginning of this text, I formulated a few questions. In this conclusion, I would like to get back to them. I would also like to evaluate the whole development of my diploma project and summarize what I have learned.

The first question was about comparing the approach of artists and designers respectively. From my perspective, as a representative for both roles, I would say that the intention and desire to create is similar on both sides. In both cases the original initiative comes from wanting to create something according to our own ideas without compromises. The idea of materialization is still in our minds. At the moment when the realization takes place, the disciplines begin to diverge. With materialization usually compromises arrive, or at least some changes. In case of an art object we usually don't have to deal with its practical function, only with the visual one. As regards my expression in art, I like to work with technical materials and I like to occupy some space. It means that my process in art is in this way very similar to my process in design. In design, however, function is crucial. When we create an art object we must think more about its concept, what is important and what is our purpose. Practical objects with a certain function (i.e. design objects) do this easier to us, because the function makes the purpose clear. However, I think that during my study, I have learned to use something from artistic concepts on design objects. I think this can be a great advantage.

It has been important to me to realize, that designers, due to the many requirements on design objects, often leave their original concept, the initial intention, behind. Also for this reason I have tried in my thesis to describe some basic rules and concepts.

From the beginning it has always been better for me (also for me as an artist) to have some straight concepts, limits and rules. Thanks to them I can easier keep my direction. Important to notice is that I must set these limits by myself, they cannot be set by someone else. It must be defined from the beginning what is the reason for my work, the intention why I am doing it. Approximately also a material which I could use. Otherwise, my work would seem to me shallow.

The second question was about comparing my approach to 2D and 3D art pieces. Why do I portray a space in a flat picture? What's the point of it? Maybe I can easier point out the things which seem to me the most important. It is easier to highlight them, the rest can be suppressed. In my diploma project, this static surfaces also help me to capture time. One moment, which is normally passing. This clearly demonstrates the third part of my project. There I caught a shadow at a certain moment of action, the real shadow moves and makes the object unstable. The conflict is visible. But is it a conflict? Maybe it is only a connection and confrontation of two methods.

The work on the first part of my diploma project required some imagination regarding how to express certain objects in 2D, it required knowledge of perspective and how shadows and lights work there. For the second part it was important to have some technical knowledge of material processing. I was also required to be a bit handy and to have imagination in space. A clue of material options and their properties. Although the last few years I have been working mainly with textiles and objects, this was for me a difficult challenge. It was hard to imagine the results, because of less experiences with this type of artistic objects. We could say that I have some experiences thanks to years working with 2D form. I know how to achieve any effect or some details. I still don't have such a certainty with objects.

For me it is interesting to experiment with materials, to try a substitution of one material for another (if it is not a problem for the function). Materials should not be doggedly used only for their traditional applications. To use a material in some unusual application can open up possibilities for surprisingly new and interesting results.

Inspiration

I found most of my inspiration during browsing the internet. I am interested in art as well as in design, or fashion. Therefore, an overview of my inspiration is quite diverse.

The inspiration for my diploma project can be a collection from large clothing retail chain as well as small series of artistic photographs.

1. Donald Judd, Furniture
2. The humble pocket: a celebration – photographers Maurice Scheltens & Liesbeth Abbenes, with styling by Sam Logan, 2014
3. COS Lookbook SS 2014
4. Enrico Castellani, Superficie Angolare Bianca, 1960-1965
5. Helmut Lang Archive, Design Labor, MAK 2014
6. Franziska Michael Spring/Summer Collection 2015
7. Smaranda Almasan, Autum/Winter Collection 2014/15
8. Aussie Dion Lee, Collections 2013/2014/2015
9. Vinícius Vitoriano Barbosa, photographic paper series Less is More, 2014
10. Gunter Uecker, White Field, 50s 60s
11. Laurie King, Untitled Forms (Sufficiency), 2014



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