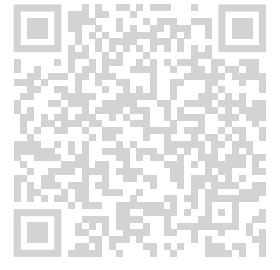


THE. » "DIGITAL CONTAINER » TAINER# N° 1/11

AN EXCESSIVE LEVEL OF TRUST IN THE DIGITAL CREATES A RISK FOR UNDERSTANDING HOW WE MAKE DECISIONS, WHICH ARE NOW INFLUENCED BY SPECIALISED ALGORITHMS. WE MUST THEREFORE BE CAREFUL AND BEAR IN MIND THAT COMPUTERS ARE PROGRAMMED TO NOT MAKE ERRORS, ALTHOUGH ERRORS ARE NECESSARY AND BENEFICIAL FOR THE PROGRESS OF HUMANITY.





BETWEEN KARCHUN LEUNG & VALERIO MANNUCCI

DECEMBER 3, 2020
SHANGHAI 6PM/
ROME 11AM

Discussing the “Digital” Container are Karchun Leung, art director, coach and fashion consultant in China, and Valerio Mannucci, co-founder of the publishing house Nero, in Rome. In an exchange that grows out of their experience, the two speakers discuss the role of publishing, writing and language in contemporary society at a time of radical changes brought on by the pervasiveness of the internet. While Karchun Leung reports a trend connecting with the commercial content of the Chinese media, something he has distanced himself from, Valerio Mannucci highlights the importance of taking a position on uncomfortable but important and necessary issues, such as climate change and research into a new cultural ecology. A reader in the 21st century is exposed to a language that is not just composed of words; it is also visual. It is in the intertwining of words and images that the expressive codes of digital communication can be found. People speak more and more about platforms, less and less about magazines. A catalyst for thought, language is perhaps the container which is the vehicle for change, it reinvents itself to capture the rhythms of the time and incorporate the variety of content and media which form expression in the digital world. A form of activism which begins with language and connects distant people, institutions, histories and geographies.

LINDA LOPPA

Hello Karchun, hello Valerio, the digital container is a good way to discuss the changes in the world. Valerio, can you introduce yourself and what you are up today in this new situation that the world is pushing us into?

VALERIO MANNUCCI

First of all, thank you Linda, for inviting me representing NERO in this discussion and well, obviously, **THIS IS A VERY PECULIAR AND DIFFICULT MOMENT FROM ANY PERSPECTIVE**. I would say that somehow all that's happening, unfortunately, resonates on some level with what we were working on with NERO. Some of our books have very eloquent titles! Take for example *In the Dust of This Planet*, by Eugene Thacker, which is a sort of "horror" take on philosophy that tries to imagine a world without humans, or Donna Haraway's *Staying with the Trouble*, which addresses our coexistence with other beings, including germs and viruses, or *New Dark Age* by James Bridle, which analyses the many forms of the technological and conceptual implosion we are facing nowadays: they all describe an approach that might even look pessimistic, but that instead is quite a strong and proactive take on our present. They are **CALLS TO REINVENT OUR RELATION WITH THE WORLD, THROUGH RADICAL APPROACHES TO REALITY**. Reinventing ourselves in this moment is indeed a pretty difficult task. During this lockdown some of us have had more time to reflect and think about ourselves and our jobs, but a lot of us have been also facing strong and destabilizing difficulties, both professionally and existentially. In this sense, **WE ARE ALL EXPOSED TO THE RISK OF SOME SORT OF "DEPRESSION"**. As Franco "Bifo" Berardi, another prominent philosopher who also happened to be one of our authors, says: **WE ARE EXPERIENCING A SORT OF PSYCHO-DEFLATION**. Due to this, he sees an inherent and inevitable need to take a clear position. There are two different scenarios in front of us: one is basically the end of the world as we know it (you can substitute the expression 'the world as we know it' with Neoliberalism or Neo-capitalism or whatever you think our world is based on). The other option, even if it sounds drastic, is somehow the end of us as human beings, basically the extinction. So again, I don't want to emphasize the pessimistic aspects of this, but the challenge of having to make a move. **IT'S GOOD TO CHANGE, BUT CHANGES ARE NOT NEUTRAL AND ARE NOT FOREVER, WE ALWAYS HAVE TO TAKE A POSITION IN RELATION WITH CHANGE AND REINVENTION**.

LL

Karchun, you took a position, you've changed your job, you've quit Numéro China.

KARCHUN LEUNG

I've been thinking about the last two or three years. I'm in China, I moved to Shanghai 13, 14 years ago, and I'm working for the media for around 20 years in Hong Kong and in China. So, I've been doing a lot of different jobs related to magazines. I started with newspapers and then monthlies, and then weeklies, and again monthlies. I've been doing a lot, in terms of publications with different frequencies, so they have different needs. I was working on a kind of commercial titles, so, **WE RELY MORE ON ADVERTISERS RATHER THAN THE READERS**. It's not only you thinking and caring about the readers, but your competitor will think in that way. So, the media groups or the media companies in China, they were starting to work like an advertising company. I don't mind working on things related to commercial, but I don't want to work only for commerce, because if I work only for that, I'm not like a media person, I'm actually like a production house or a studio. If I still want to be a media person, what can I do? What is a magazine? What is media right now? I was trying to define it worldwide, but in China with all the digital and also the printed publications that I've been working for 20 years, **I SEE THERE IS SUCH A**

TRANSFORMATION OF THE FORM OF CONTENT IN CHINA OR IN ASIA. So that's why I made a decision, okay, maybe it's about time to do other things. First of all, I really like fashion, that's why I focus on fashion. And I worked for magazines because I like fashion. I'm always working in relation to fashion, that is something I sorted out. Is it possible to work in fashion, but still using my skill as a journalist or a fashion editor? So, that's why I was thinking in a different way. What if I can deal with a different platform, or I can work with a brand, and then I still work with my ex-competitors whether they are the media people, or different magazines. Now you have the digital media, you have the printed media, you have TikTok. If I'm working for a brand, I can deliver the content I like into different platforms. So that was one of the things I was trying to shift my role into and it can be quite experimental, but at the same time, I think that this is one of the reasons I wanted to try. Because actually at the end, what we want to do is to deliver content to the readers; **SOMEHOW, I STILL BELIEVE IN CREATIVITY**. This is one of the things I am trying to test or experiment. That's what I'm doing right now.

LL

I THINK OUR TASK, YOUR TASK IS TO MAKE THIS INDUSTRY MORE UNDERSTANDABLE AND MORE ETHICALLY UNDERSTANDABLE. Because if we look at it from the outside, it's a terrible industry. If we go deeper into it, we can find the values of this kind of way of working. I think we have to combine now the old world and the new world. The neighborhood and the city. Valerio, how do you feel about this situation that we have to look at, probably listening to other people than we did before?

VM

Well, I can talk maybe about my perception as an outsider: in relation with the fashion industry, I understand and agree with what you said, that for example the work of many people who are trying to redefine the industry is not so visible from the outside. This brings me to another concept, the one of "institutions": **I HAVE THE FEELING THAT WE STILL NEED INSTITUTIONS, WHATEVER THIS WORD MEANS IN EACH CONTEXT, BUT WE DEFINITELY NEED TO CONTINUOUSLY CHANGE AND SOMETIMES DISMISS THEM IN ORDER TO SEE WHICH ONE CAN RESIST OUR NEW PRESENT**. I think that there are like some huge holes in our collective system, that we are not yet able to see clearly but we are experiencing them, we are feeling them. **I THINK THAT WE ARE FEELING SOME SORT OF ABSENCE**. So that's a good point for me to start with, the feeling an absence can trigger, I don't know, an action. It can transform an affection, a sentiment, a feeling, into an organized action. I know it's pretty vague and abstract as a discourse, but this is what I feel.

KL

I've been talking to some of the Chinese designers about the situation right now, and the results of the last season is that they are doing much better than before, which means the **IDEAS OR THE CONCEPTS ARE MUCH MORE COMPLETE** because they have more time, they isolate themselves in the studio. And because fashion used to be connected with people and going out, you didn't spend as much time to think by yourself; now they concentrate on actually **HAVING A CONVERSATION WITH THEMSELVES**. Because sometimes they've put too much attention on having inspiration or ideas or trends, but they were not doing something they wanted to do. I think this is actually a quite special period. And then they asked themselves these questions and then they tried to focus more about what they want to do and that it should be from their heart, I would say. So that's why they spend more time on this and they can deliver something much more complete. As you know, **THE FASHION INDUSTRY RIGHT NOW IS TOO FAST**. All the designers were

saying, we are doing too many collections, too many pieces. But now there's a stop. So then when you stop, you think, do I need to do so many things? Do I have to listen to all the people they were asking? Do you have one more collection, two more collections, three more pieces. So that's why they can actually do something much more complete. I think it's a quite interesting period of time to re-think what is important to you in terms of time or family or people and space. **IT'S A PERIOD TO RE-THINK YOUR CONNECTION WITH THE WORLD.**

VM Can I ask, precisely on this point, a question to Karchun? Just out of curiosity. Talking with artists and writers in the last period, I experienced exactly the same scenario. Even if I know that the fashion world is much faster and much more demanding than the art world, the dynamics are similar. So, I just want to ask you if, parallel to this relaxation, you have also encountered some sort of – let's use this word again in a very generic sense – “depression” in their feelings.

KL Depression?

VM Yes, but I'm referring to a generic feeling linked with this “having less to do”, not the actual condition.

KL There are some people questioning themselves on doing this, or doing it all the time, the same thing. Yeah, of course, there are some, but I think in China it is a little bit different, because the situation here is actually that we recovered much faster. We are doing art fairs; we are doing the fashion week much faster than the world. So, I can see they were actually feeling much more positive, but it doesn't mean that they don't worry about the situation because a lot of people are still worried about it, so what can we do or, what if we can't travel again? **IT'S LIKE, THE WORLD IS SO DIFFERENT RIGHT NOW.** There are a lot of different ways of discussing or thinking about it. But I would say, less, because right now it's a very weird period, especially when we are closing the country, we have this quantity of time. And that is a **KIND OF QUITE INTERESTING WAY, A NEW WAY OF LIFESTYLE.** I'm from Hong Kong and if I'm going back to Hong Kong, I have to consider if I want to see my parents, first of all, I need to go back. And then I have, for two weeks, to isolate in a hotel and then finally I come back to meet my family. And then when I come back to Shanghai, I have to be isolated again. This is a completely new way of thinking about how you manage your time, your life. If it is very important, you will go for it. If not, it doesn't work for you.

LL A lot of the perception of life is changing, and I think it will be for a very long term. It doesn't mean that when we'll have the vaccine it will change much. I mean, like **A PART OF OUR MIND IS ALREADY CHANGED** in some way. The way of thinking has been a little bit adjusted, because before, **I THINK WITH ALL THE GLOBALIZATION AND CAPITALIZATIONS, PUSHING EVERYTHING SO FAST, EVERYTHING IS BECOMING LIKE A PRODUCT AND WE EVEN TREAT OURSELVES LIKE A PRODUCT,** or like a machine. Right? I think Europeans are actually better. They don't think in that way, but considering the environment of Asia, Asian people, no matter if they are Chinese or Hong Kongese, Japanese, they work really hard. They want to be a machine, in that way. They work starting at the beginning of the morning and then are staying at the office until midnight. And then we come back again in the early morning and there was actually, you feel proud about this. But after this situation, a lot of people they were thinking why, what the hell? So, yes, **IT'S A SHIFT OF VALUES.** I think this value is very important.

LL Values are the most important thing in life. And I think that we

have to redefine what we really want. I think writing is something that is important for the moment. I think sometimes **I'M BEST AT DOING THINGS WHEN I FEEL A CERTAIN ANGER OR A CERTAIN DISILLUSION OR A CERTAIN DESPAIR.** Writers have to write, critics have to be critical, more critical, activists have to be more activist and things have to happen now. What do you think about that Valerio?

VM I always thought that being critical and going to the roots of issues and topics it's a necessary thing. I mean, let's take for example NERO as a publishing house: even if we actually make and sell books and we publish magazines, we never embraced the simple narration that “reading is beautiful” and that you should just do it. That's not the point. **WE THINK INSTEAD THAT READING IS SOMETIMES NECESSARY TO LIVE.** We publish books that are not always fun to read. Reading those things sometimes could be difficult and not easy to accept. But at the same time, as you just said, it can give you a lot of energy. At least, this is what is happening with our readership. We recently started a new non-fiction book series, and the response in Italy has been astonishing. **THERE'S A WHOLE NEW GENERATION OF PEOPLE, PARTICULARLY IN THEIR TWENTIES, WHO ARE ASTONISHINGLY PREPARED AND ATTENTIVE.** I think they are no more willing to be sold, sorry for the expression, bullshit. They really want things to be addressed properly, even if they are uncomfortable with those things. So yes of course I totally agree with you. I think it's very important now to be even more critical than before, and I feel that's already happening (with or without us).

LL Karchun, are you going to be radical also in your new job?

KL I think I'm not a very radical person. I think, quite slow, but yeah, I think what is important is that **WE CAN BE CRITICAL, BUT NOT JUDGMENTAL.** Most of the time, people having an opinion right now, they just give it, they just want to challenge something. I think sometimes it really depends on the understanding and the thing is that when I was trying, I'm quite straightforward, so when I say my opinion, I just want to say it, I think, it's more pure. I'm not trying to convince you; it's just my point of view and I'm not trying to challenge something. Normally when I say something, I would think, is that the best way in which the other can understand what I'm saying. So, if I want to make a statement, I make sure you guys will understand what I was thinking. I try to use a tone or a manner or my language to make it easier to understand. I'm not that type of very radical person, and at the same time I think the situation is more dangerous as we cannot have a real conversation because **MOST OF THE TIME WHEN YOU ARE TRYING TO SAY SOMETHING, PEOPLE WOULD THINK THEY ARE BEING OFFENDED OR THEY THINK YOU ARE CHALLENGING THEM.** But you're just simply asking the question. I have to say, because I've talked to my ex-Hong Kongese friends, and they were always thinking “Oh, you are challenging us”, or whatever, “you don't understand”. Yes, I ask questions because I don't understand. And that's why I ask questions. I'm not trying to challenge you. It's because I don't understand the situation, that's why I asked. It's very simple and that's human, and that's why we have to make a conversation. But this happens a lot on internet because **WE ARE NOT ALWAYS HAVING A REAL CONVERSATION ON THE INTERNET.** People always have a perception of others or they would rather not say what they were thinking, which is not pure. Or they will rather see a question and then try to go on Google and then try to search what is the best answer and then answer it or put it in a comment. So, most of the people they are actually giving up on their opinion. They are trying to repeat the opinion, which has the most ‘likes’. I

think the mindset has changed within these last couple of years with the internet. What I think is that we actually should talk to more people, to inspire the people, to have a normal, more normal conversation, so we can inspire each other. I'm not just trying to inspire you, but **I WANT YOU TO INSPIRE ME**. That is actually the simplest thing in the world for a conversation and that's what we need right now. I think.

LL I agree. And is the digital flattening the conversation? And is the print more defining the ideas? It's printed in black and white. It has more value?

KL I'm reading a book recently, it's called *World without Mind: The Existential Threat of Big Tech* by Franklin Foer, and it talks a lot about how the internet, about those internet companies that are changing the media and at the same time how they are changing our way of thinking because with all the internet companies, everything is related to the comments or the clicks or the advertisement; when we used to have a media or a magazine or even newspaper, we have different sections. Different sections, these are actually supporting each other, it's like, if I like to read about sport, I will buy the newspaper for the sports column but at the same time, the whole newspaper, has different columns; you have finance, you have news, you have like the other columns, or even for the writers, so they will wrap that together. But now, when you are on the internet, everything is piece by piece; if you like to read the news on sport news, you only buy sport news.

Everything is so concentrated but at the same time, we are actually killing the other things, which maybe they were not entertaining, maybe they were not that interesting, but they are worthy of existing like something related to culture or art or music. Of course, they will not be as fun as writing for magazines, but **THEY ARE NEEDED BECAUSE THEY ARE TELLING US SOMETHING WE CANNOT THINK BY OURSELVES**. But the situation right now, especially on media, everything is online and then everything is related to one single article instead of the whole magazine. I think it changed a lot because **THE WRITER IS NOT THAT DIVERSIFIED RIGHT NOW**, if they want to earn their living by just writing it is very difficult. If I'm not writing something, try to make people happy, you know? I think it's not very positive.

LL Valerio, I see you're thinking a lot. I see your brain is thinking.

VM I agree with what Karchun just said, because I think it can be a positive shift, even if it's really tricky like everything is in this moment. Personally, **I HAVE THE FEELING THAT WHAT WE ARE FACING IS AN ATOMIZATION, A FRAGMENTATION, AN EXPLOSION OF LANGUAGE AND COMMUNICATION**. We always talk about social platforms, news platforms, art platforms, etc. and that's a sign: **WHAT WE ARE CREATING NOW ARE "PLATFORMS", AGGREGATORS**, not magazines as we use to know. As NERO, for over 16 years, we have explored many media, we do books, exhibitions, paper magazines, digital magazines, etc.: that's not the real point, what is interesting is that against the common idea that we are reading less, there are a lot of studies which point out precisely the opposite. **PEOPLE ARE – TECHNICALLY SPEAKING – READING MUCH MORE THAN BEFORE**. For example, there was a study of about 10 years ago which said that a normal American person leaving in a city was exposed every day to 100,000 words. Words that might appear on billboards, it can be advertising, it can be – I don't know – indications on the bus, or I don't know, the rolling titles under the chest of a TV speaker. This means that we have a huge penetration of language in our everyday lives, and that **WE LIVE IN A WORLD THAT IS BASICALLY "MADE OF LANGUAGE"**. Even if the common narration is that we are heading to a "visual world", we need to

recognize that the visual itself is made of language, it's made of code. Images and videos are made of another matter: alphanumeric language. As Kenneth Goldsmith said, only sometimes we recognize it, maybe when we experience a wound in the skin of reality: for example, when the software crashes or when we receive a jpeg via email that, due to some technical malfunction, becomes an unreadable piece of code.

So, what I mean is that the relation between language and experience is completely shifting: the writers of today are not just traditional writers. We probably have to consider, for example, **CODERS AS WRITERS, BECAUSE THEY ARE WRITING THE REALITY, PROBABLY MORE THAN MOST FICTION WRITERS ARE DOING**. I think that the challenge with our work is precisely to get into this stream, into this flow, to be relevant and meaningful and find new ways of putting the right words into this huge flow of language that we are continuously exposed to.

KL There are a lot of new types of languages, I think. We communicate with each other by visual language and music, art and fashion. I think it's becoming a different type of language to get to know people better, especially culturally.

LL I think we have to close with this important statement, that language has to be reinvented. We have to be more careful about our use of language and we have to be more critical, more radical. But we are positive and we have to react. I thank you for this conversation. I'm sure we are going further on finding the right language and the right balance between the digital and the analogue, I guess. So, thank you both for taking your time for the conversation. Thank you, Valerio, thank you, Karchun. If you would connect, it would be the most beautiful present of this event.

KL Thank you Karchun and let's do it and thank you Linda.

LL Thank you for the conversation!

THE. » « EXHIBI- TION. » » CON- TAINER# N° 2/11

"THE NEW FASHION CONTAINER" PROJECT AND MASTERPLAN IS BASED ON THE ANTI-MUSEUM, ANTI-FASHION WEEK MANIFEST, A CONSIDERATION OF THE INCREASING HYBRIDISATION OF ACTIVITIES IN THE FASHION SECTOR AND THE DEFINITION OF A MUSEUM IN CONTEMPORARY SOCIETY. THANKS TO LOCAL EXHIBITIONS, THE WORK OF (UNKNOWN) CREATIVES, ARTISTS, FASHION PHOTOGRAPHERS, FASHION DESIGNERS, VIDEO ARTISTS, WILL BE SHARED GLOBALLY LEADING TO POSITIVE, PROVOCATIVE CONFRONTATIONS.





BETWEEN MARLO SAALMINK & DOBRILA DENEGRİ

DECEMBER 2, 2020
VIKELAND/ROME
2:30PM

In the Exhibition Container are Dobrila Denegri, independent curator and director for many years at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Torun, Poland, and Marlo Saalmink, founder of the atelier of the same name in Vikeland, Norway, whose work focuses on curatorship, strategic development, publishing and creative management for fashion brands. Together they reflect on curatorship as a means of encouraging the production and use of multi-disciplinarity in the sectors of fashion and contemporary arts. The system of exhibitions is still focused on a single point of view with a style and approach of broadcasting simply from one to the many. Instead cultural education will benefit from a dialogue which doesn't ignore variations in place and subculture, rather it integrates discovery and research as vectors in a continually evolving present, and invites the viewer to actively take part in the processing of knowledge. The role of the museum is not exempt from this reconsideration. Ideas of a rhizomatic, decentralised structure have begun to take root and could introduce a more mobile and nomadic way of formulating exhibitions, giving them a real connection with the contexts they refer to. In both art and in fashion there is a need to remember who is their audience, and consider the role they play as receivers and drivers of change in society and culture.

LINDA LOPPA

Hello, Dobrila, hello Marlo,

Dobrila, you are an art curator, interested in fashion and you manage to bring those two worlds together beautifully. You directed an art museum in Poland and you also did a project “*Transfashional*”, that interprets fashion as a performance and as an interactive dialogue to an audience that might feel attracted to what fashion could be. Can you talk about your work of the past years and how you see the future?

DOBRILA DENEGRI

I’m glad that you brought up “*Transfashional*”, because it was a project that engaged me for the last three or four years. And to be honest, when I started, I couldn’t imagine it was going to take so much and that it was going to grow so much as it did in the end. In the beginning it was like a leap into the void; I was leaving the museum that I was running and I was really eager to work without the framework of the big institution. **I WAS TRYING TO CREATE SOME SORT OF “MOBILE” AND “NOMADIC” PLATFORM**, which would be made of a partnership between different educational and cultural institutions. I was lucky to work with the University of Applied Arts in Vienna, London College of Fashion as well as several other universities and museums in UK, Sweden, Italy, Poland and Austria. When I say that initially it was like a leap in the void, what I mean is that first of all, it was, in a sense, that I didn’t wanted to have a concept that was somehow pre-outlined. I wanted that “*Transfashional*” was a guiding line, as it’s a word that I invented, we could say it was an empty signifier or some kind of term that could become what we wanted it to become. So, the question was, **HOW CAN WE GO BEYOND THE NOTION OF FASHION IN ITS MORE CONVENTIONAL TERMS?** And therefore, I challenged artists, fashion designers, fashion practitioners, all these, let’s say “*Transfashional*” people to do something together and to make this term acquire a meaning. In the end, I think, we reached that point where it was possible to say that there is something that we could call a fashion-based art or a practice that produces a discourse about fashion rather than something purely functional, **A PRODUCTION OF IDEAS ABOUT THE TODAY AND TOMORROW OF CREATIVE WORLDS, NOT FASHION ONLY.** Creating a world on a large scale is something that was the outcome of this journey of three or four years.

LL

DD

And also, two beautiful catalogues.

And two beautiful catalogues. Since the whole project was like a perpetual process of editing and re-editing through the format of an exhibition, it seemed important to document all these stages. We did it through the web platform *transfashional.com* as well as through the books. I was really keen to formalize everything in the form of the book and I’m happy that we had contributions from Hussein Chalayan to Lucy Orta, to José Teunissen to everybody actually who took part in this project, and most of all those who were part of the exhibitions. The second volume had a subtitle: *Post/Inter/Disciplinary Lexicon* and it functioned as an attempt to create a vocabulary of terms which can be used to define and describe all these liminal, experimental and “*transfashional*” practices. The exhibition was almost like a domino; what you left as the last mark in the previous exhibition would be the starting point for the next exhibition. So somehow it developed from one site to another, from one museum or a gallery to another to a kind of situation that not only presented artifacts, but created a community. I remember, in the last exhibition, when we were all together in Rimini, almost a year ago, that there was the common feeling that **WE MANAGED TO CREATE A COMMUNITY, AN “ENLARGED” FAMILY OF LIKEMINDED PEOPLE OF ARTISTS SLASH DESIGNERS SLASH RESEARCHERS** - I think it’s always difficult to frame them

in one term - in the end, they told me we never believed that we will feel that we have a family, finally, that we have a place where we feel we fit, because usually they feel they do not fit in either category because they are not commercial enough or because they are not artistic enough, or for any other reason. Existing categories didn’t seem appropriate yet to embrace this type of research and this type of creative work. So, I think this was one of the outcomes that I learned from this project, that **WE NEED NEW CATEGORIES, WE NEED NEW LANGUAGES, WE NEED NEW TERMS.** We really need to reassess because multidisciplinary and creativity just brought us way beyond respect of where institutions are; many are still somehow not catching up entirely what people in the creative field are doing.

LL

I see Marlo saying yes, because he’s doing it in another way, bringing a community together thanks to a strong identity, a very specific eye and a very specific aesthetic and an open mindset to education, to magazines, to print, to galleries, to designers from different parts of the world. What I like in your website is the division in “analog, catalog and dialog”, and because I’m a very conceptual thinker, I would ask you to explain those three words.

MARLO SAALMINK

Well, everything Dobrila is telling us is very relevant and very true, we need new categories. My whole idea of not being online and not having social media and not joining it is because we are born before this time; I remember a time when the internet was not an obvious thing and phones were not an obvious thing, and still now my phones are secondary. So, for me, **THAT ANALOGUE LIVING MAKES A LOT OF SENSE.** We’re based in the countryside now. This was a deliberate choice in a country that has no fashion history, none. Everything that they knew historically also was important from, you know, the Dutch traders, for instance, or even from the French empire, from Rococò. For me, editing *REVS* magazine, or writing for *Fucking Young*, or doing some slash things in magazines for a long time, **YOU’RE OUTSIDE THE INSIDE ALL THE TIME.** And I like this very much. I think this is also, next to categories, a very important thing, that also in architecture, we can pick up the dialogue between in- and ex-terior, like a lot of artists do. I hope we can discuss some later, play with this idea, looking at identities which I don’t think can be created online. I think a lot of young people struggle with the expectation of self-curation constantly, imposed by others; a kind of expectation to join and to photograph and document themselves. I think we can be more critical on that, so, hence my analogue position on my website is very understated and has been so for years. I think that it’s important to understand the tools we have today. The whole physical part, the knowledge, the research, I think it’s got to be important too. So that’s the part I do, input to the projects, working with the artists, as a curator, is like the physical part. I like the books, I like the literature, I like to open up academic debates and not narrow them per se, and to allow all people from all walks of life to come in. Indeed, we need new categories. I think for the fashion system, this is also needed. For a long time, you have had **AN ELITE GATHERING IN PARIS IN A CERTAIN WAY THAT HAS NOT OPENED UP** and opening up is not putting on-line fashion shows that everybody can watch, but having a dialogue with your customers and your consumers, with the curators, with the creators, and this dialogue has disappeared. It was there in the eighties and the nineties when magazines had more power and maybe more identity, in my opinion. But today it has faded very much to, you know, a culture of influencing, it became kind of flat. So, I like the analogue, I like the print. That’s why I do two print magazines. I think it’s important to maintain these. I think it’s important that we try to

have dialogues in different settings and that we try to involve young people and give them the tools. We, in the studio, say to them, okay, don't go online when they present a portfolio, don't give me Instagram posts, but show me books, but we need to also give them the opportunity to show them where to look and how to look and understand that they don't come from a past where entertainment was not TV. It was books for instance, or it was watching a film, really watching it, which I still do. So, this dialogue I think is very important; that's why it's very understated, I would say.

Let's talk about the museum and the exhibition concept, that in my document, I describe as quite old and tired. What I was thinking, when I hear you speaking is that we should open up to other cultures, other cities, to other neighbourhoods. We are all three fascinated by doing exhibitions and that's what I personally, love the most. But how can we find a new way to make it more interesting globally? Dobrila.

This is a big, big question. And to be honest I think, what you have started to outline through the first draft of the "New Fashion Container" project, is potentially one of the replies to this question. When you got in touch, I replied with a big enthusiasm, it's true, because what I recognized in this idea of what you call "anti-museum" is a kind of a rhizomatic structure, which can happen in a big urban centre, as much as it can happen in any other space or any other place, which has its life in that particular moment with that particular event and has its kind of echo in this zone that we are dwelling in and out of - the digital zone.

But nevertheless, this has a kind of reciprocity; on one hand, things are happening and happening in real time, in real spaces with real people, with real audiences and are connected through the network of contacts, through the web was for me kind of interesting and I think for sure it is an important idea to try to bring it up more into life.

What I liked about the structure you created with the NFCContainer project, was that it was **ENVISIONING A TYPE OF FORMAT WHICH WOULD BE POLYPHONIC, AGILE, NOMADIC, FLUCTUATING, DECENTRALIZED AND MOST OF ALL HUMAN-SIZE**. So, there are many different containers, many different spaces, which might be physical or might be interpreted in other forms. And they coexist, they live in continuum and **THEY ARE PRESENT ON AND OFFLINE**. At the same time, it's a model that is decentralized so you don't have to have one single space and this is the space, the museum. I think **THIS IDEA OF DECENTRALIZING, THE IDEA OF FRAGMENTING, THE IDEA OF INTRODUCING THE NOMADIC AND MOBILE WAY OF DOING THINGS IN DIFFERENT PLACES, WHICH SOMEHOW ARE CONNECTED THROUGH THE DIGITAL REALM AND INTERCHANGE THE INFORMATION ABOUT EACH OTHER IS VERY INTERESTING**. It looked like a dream, sure, but also it resonated with a sense of urgency to rebuild a tissue of our creative worlds starting with the feasible formats and direct human contacts. Taking, sharing, caring... Just doing...

For me, that's one possible example of how it could be done. And honestly, again, I don't think this is something that hasn't been practiced. I think these ideas of *the grassroot movement* existed in various fields, in art and elsewhere, but it never became mainstream. Mainstream is still very much about models based on the power structures, big centres, a lot of money, harsh competition, verticality. So, **ENVISIONING THE POSSIBLE ALTERNATIVES, AS YOU DID WITH NCF FOR ME WAS VERY FRESH AND ENCOURAGING...** optimistic I would dare to say. So, the question is, when are we going to

change our mind? When are we going to look only to those institutions that are part of the mainstream? And **WHEN ARE WE GOING TO LOOK TO OTHER PLACES AND FIND OURSELVES IN THESE NEIGHBOURHOODS, IN THESE OTHER, MORE, LET'S SAY HUMAN-SIZE EVENTS AND ENDEAVOURS?**

I think, when looking at fashion this past year, just in general, the big miss was a kind of societal comment or any digital reflection. I've seen very few fashion brands thinking or using this opportunity for a dialogue, for something new to - indeed - think about new targeted audiences. And when I look back at artists that you can easily connect to fashion, like let's say Bruce Nauman, for instance, who always said, "art should raise questions", right? **WHERE ARE FASHION EXHIBITIONS THAT ARE RAISING QUESTIONS**, where are exhibitions explaining the craft of fashion to people who don't know it, because don't forget that **FASHION CAN BE EXTREMELY INTIMIDATING FOR PEOPLE**. If you look at popular media, you look at films, big Hollywood productions *Devil wears Prada*, these kinds of films, they portray a perspective of fashion that is very one-sided, perhaps very elitist, very exclusive, but fashion is not that. It's about actually enveloping, it's about expression and it's about going somewhere.

I remember an exhibition I saw last year in Holland at the Nieuwe Instituut which was about the hoodie; the hoodie sweater and they centralized, in a kind of young perspective the whole exhibition historically, but also thinking of subcultures and going back to the symbolism of this garment, that a lot of people wear for different reasons, right? And this was such a simple artistic premise without an over academic analysis of it. It was very clear to the public because it showed a lower threshold for coming into fashion and understanding it. And the same goes in Japan, where I've seen so many exhibitions dissecting the craft. I remember Yamamoto, talking about how we make a sleeve and how far you can go in the shape, the length, the proportions. This kind of elements, looking at subcultures and looking at why garments are worn a certain way, can be very relevant instead of just putting them on display, I would say.

I feel that we must bring fashion to a higher level, especially culturally because it's a hybrid culture, it's a culture from different countries, different body cultures, different expressions of body culture. I think we need to have a new language, new parameters to express ourselves to see how fashion can evolve. We have to act and do something in smaller neighbourhoods, in smaller cities and bring other people together in a new language. What do you think Dobrila?

Yes, I definitely agree. We were just discussing recently this feeling that although de-colonization became a buzzword, and museums and other institutions are **CLAIMING THAT THEY ARE "DECOLONIZING" THEMSELVES, WE ARE STILL MOSTLY CONFRONTED WITH WEST-CENTRIC PERSPECTIVES**, especially when it comes to big, blockbuster exhibitions, conceived as touring spectacles which should create fascination and awe among massive but also quite passive audiences... I really liked your idea about the need to invest something in **HIGHLIGHTING LOCAL CREATIVE COMMUNITIES** as a complementary project which goes along with big spectacular displays of exhibitions divulging Western histories.

One question is this: how do we incorporate other types of visions? And on the other hand, I think, and I would really like to reinforce what Marlo was saying; what is really crucial is the dialogue. I think this is really what

somehow is missing, especially in these big exhibitions, they are big monologues, really. Somehow you see that everything is a part of a very elaborate and sometimes really beautifully done outline that visually is compelling and of course works for a great amount of people who want to be amazed and want maybe just to go through this experience, which is in a certain way unreachable. If I think about Dior or Alexander McQueen, these big blockbuster exhibitions, they are extraordinary for what they are, but at a certain time also, I think now we are more starting to be aware that it's not only about being a passive spectator in the exhibition, but it's about being active there.

SO, INSTEAD OF BIENNIALS HAPPENING EVERY TWO YEARS, ORGANIZING EVENTS THAT HAPPEN OVER TWO YEARS, EVERY TWO WEEKS, EVERY THREE WEEKS, EVERY FIVE WEEKS WITH THE PEOPLE, WITH THE WORKSHOPS, WITH THE CONFERENCES, WITH THE DIALOGUES, WITH THE EXAMINATIONS WHERE AUDIENCES ARE TOGETHER WITH ARTISTS, CURATORS, PARTICIPANTS, AND SO ON, I THINK THAT'S A KIND OF INTERESTING MODEL OR MODULE WHICH CREATES A KIND OF A DISRUPTION OF THIS IDEA THAT THERE HAS TO BE A BIG EVENT, a big thing where we are just numbers who pay tickets and the rest is, you know, just almost like what you have on the screen, something that you cannot really touch. So, I think it's a little bit about resizing everything and bringing everything into a new dimension.

I completely agree, obviously. And I think what you say Dobrila about the perspective, it is, indeed, very Western, very often. I'm curating a show with Ugo Rondinone now, opening in January, and this is also a superstar artist, but you know, you're bringing him to Norway and nobody knows him in this museum, nobody knows this man. But the dialogue with an audience is there, we strip everything away; there is no screen, nothing, just a small little pamphlet inside the room, except for **THE DIALOGUE BETWEEN YOU AND THE ARTWORKS, BECAUSE I WOULD LIKE THE AUDIENCE TO DEFINE IT.**

I think it's very interesting that you're saying when you go to a big couture show in a museum space, for example, to the Met Gala, all these things that are maybe not culture, if I may say it very loudly, and maybe they're not so cultured, but what is so interesting for me is that a new audience can discover fashion in different ways. I like to hear different opinions. I like to hear people who don't necessarily have all the baggage to understand how a suit jacket is made. I like those people too. I would like them to tell me how they experience things, which is also what we're doing with Ugo Rondinone. We all know him, the three of us, you know how famous this man is, but people don't know him. There are four artworks that I curated that are very big. Let them go in and have an interaction with them on their own. I made the room with a door and this is new and people get very afraid. I can close this door and you're in the gallery. I cannot lock it, that was one step too far for the Scandinavians. But the point is to be in the room with these works for a little moment, allow yourself to start a dialogue.

And I think in fashion too, when you walk through these big exhibitions, it's very hard because you're not allowed to touch, there's nothing to engage. Again, it's a display. And I completely agree that it would be very beautiful to have a new voice – it doesn't have to be a younger one – but people outside this industry to create new dialogues.

For the moment, in many cities, you have so many shops empty, what can we do with all those empty spaces? What can we do with the small

MS

MS

LL

LL

DD

shops in all the cities who unfortunately, have to close? Can't we do small exhibitions? We put one piece in a window and we do a little cocktail drink. We have a little party, might be nice. I think we could write a little book out of that evening. We could write to each other and dream about that little garment that we saw in a window in via Maggio here in Florence. I think that's what we feel today, I guess, after a very heavy year. **I FEEL LIKE WE NEED MORE LIGHTNESS.**

I remember we had a store in Bergen, in Norway for about four years, selling the typical Scandinavian brands from Margaret Howell to Our Legacy, etcetera. But the point was that the locality was very important, the neighbourhood. It is very important to know your clients. Many of my friends in Japan, both in Osaka or Tokyo, they know exactly the clients. When they acquire a beautiful dress for their shop, they know exactly what clients will come in and appreciate this craft. They know how to display and play with this in an artistic way. So that's kind of a hybrid between garments' interaction and showing the storytelling, which is often missing. This is very important. For the high street shops, as they are very aggressive, they are also suffering, luckily, but for them to reset their minds, that will take a longer time. So, I think we should be rebels. I agree. And start to engage a bit more in our own way.

I THINK IT'S VERY IMPORTANT THAT WE CAN BE A BIT MORE REBELLIOUS THERE. Because, I remember in Norway in my store, when people wanted to buy a jacket, a raincoat, handmade, you need to explain why it costs what it costs. It's a very boring principle, but the story, the culture around brands is very important. The same with printed T-shirts, when we had Gosha Rubchinskiy in our store. The kids who came in knew exactly what it meant, what the culture around this skateboard brand was, it was the same with Supreme and it started all those years back. Now it's just merchandise, but so what printed t-shirts can we show, what do we put on them? Why? These are very interesting questions.

And I think also museums, it's a missed opportunity sometimes to always go back to the same – as also Dobrila said – stellar names and say, okay, they provide again, obviously we've had masters, we miss couture. We miss the emotion, right? **WE MISS THE POETRY VERY OFTEN.** I do too. But there are new voices that I like that are conceptual. Very small brands. If you look at Los Angeles, most skateboard brands coming up here and there make very fun, interesting takes that are positive. So, I agree with positive.

Talking about masters, I was thinking this afternoon about Jan Hoet, he was our master, my master in curating museum spaces and curating archives and curating ideas. Jan Hoet was very strong in putting a painting upside down next to another painting on the floor. And you could see that in another context then suddenly you said, "Oh my God, I get it, I understand". I know it's (im)possible, but we have to be more radical.

We have to. I surely agree. Paradoxically there are now more and more empty spaces, as you mentioned, while on the other side artists and other creatives are suffering from abstinence of showing their work and discussing it beyond the format of a computer screen and a Zoom talk. So actually, it's all just there. And **SOMETIMES THINGS CAN BE MORE SIMPLE THAN THEY LOOK LIKE, IF WE WANT THEM TO BE SIMPLE.** I mean, I'm not '68, I was born in '70, but my parents come from there and they always tell me everything was simple, we were just doing things. So, a couple of months ago we were laughing about the difficulty today to just do things. I think this is actually what is really missed. So, I totally agree. Let's put something in whatever space

we have free and start a conversation from there. Remembering Jan Hoet and his seminal *Chambres damis* show in Ghent is a great way to trigger ideas about exhibition projects which would be born out of a mix of risk and good-will, and which would be capable of restoring a sense of pleasure in doing things with a major degree of spontaneity, simplicity and unpretentiousness. **THESE, OUR CONVERSATIONS, ARE ACTUALLY THE FIRST STEP! WE ARE ALREADY STEPPING ON THIS ROAD!**

LL _____ Yeah. Last word to Marlo.

MS _____ The spontaneity is very important. I just finished reading John Giorno's biography, the famous poet and he speaks very vividly. Of course, there's a lot of sex in there. A lot of rawness. It's about this artist in the sixties and the seventies, coming to New York, just doing things. Dial-A-Poem, fantastic concept. I think that also the playfulness in fashion, we lost it a little bit. It became kind of elitist, kind of still, maybe a bit cold. And when I read this book, I got so excited again, also with my own work and like, oh, we are applying these things because I do, **I LIKE TO ENGAGE, I LIKE PEOPLE TO COME TOGETHER.** And I think they are an inspiration, some of his words. But the same goes for Jenny Holzer when she made, you know, her manifesto and all the statements that have been used by so many art museums to kind of frame contemporary art – there's so much truth in these, they're free. But **THE IDEA OF GETTING US THINKING AGAIN FROM A REBELLIOUS MIND WITH A STATEMENT, THIS IS TOTALLY TRUE AND I'M READY. I THINK WE'RE ALREADY THERE.**

LL _____ Thank you both for being my guests and the guests of the “New Fashion Container” project. I hope we will be able to do something together in the near future. Send me your slogans and let's make a small magazine!

MS _____ Let keep talking. We have to. Thank you for putting us together. It's really a pleasure.

DD _____ Thank you indeed.

THE. » “CRIT- ICAL CON- TAINER# N° 3/11

TO FORM AND DEVELOP CRITICAL THOUGHT, IT IS NECESSARY TO FIND THE RIGHT WORDS, AN AREA WHICH BELONGS TO BOTH PHILOSOPHY AND POETRY. PHILOSOPHERS AND POETS ARE CREATORS ON THE SAME LEVEL AS FASHION DESIGNERS, BUT WHEREAS THE FORMER GIVE FORM TO CONCEPTS AND IDEAS, THE LATTER GIVE FORM TO PHYSICAL OBJECTS. THIS IS WHY THE CAPACITY FOR CRITICAL THINKING IS CLOSELY LINKED TO THE CREATION OF THE MATERIAL WORLD.





BETWEEN ANNA YUDINA & ANGELO FLACCAVENTO

DECEMBER 3, 2020
PARIS/MILAN 3PM

Angelo Flaccavento, fashion critic, writer and poet, and Anna Yudina, writer in the fields of architecture, design, urban planning and cross-disciplinary thinking, take to the Critical Container to discuss the role of criticism as a means of understanding and also reconciliation between those inside and outside of the system. The halt imposed by the pandemic has shocked the system to its core, provoking a time of reflection. Critical writing, with its capacity to provide perspectives which are objective and impersonal, rather than subjective, has the potential to set up dialogues between people from different worlds; between the designers, fashion houses, the brands and clients in the fashion world, and the political, social and economic groups of architecture and design. The critic has a responsibility to show people what is taking place, to stir the reader's emotions through abstraction, while always remaining a conduit, putting their ego aside. What makes things different is the way in which you look at them. In a universe which is made up of images that are all competing for attention, the critic remains relevant and can have an impact on the action by transforming it into poetry, by creating a narrative. If you offer people a dream, hungry as they are for optimism and for a future, then whether it is made up of possibilities or utopias, they will want to follow it.

Dear Anna, dear Angelo, you're both writers and I feel that we have to discuss away from fashion weeks or design weeks. Angelo you are the critic of fashion; you have a pen full of spirit and therefore I want to start with you. How are you feeling today and how is life without the usual rhythm of fashion weeks?

I've been mumbling on about this all these months. For so long I was writing about how unnecessary sometimes fashion travels seem to be for the whole ecosystem of fashion. **MOST OF THE TIME THE SHOWS WERE JUST A DISPLAY OF WEALTH BY THE FASHION HOUSES.** I was just reflecting that exactly one year ago, I took my last intercontinental flight to Miami where I attended both the Miami design and the Dior Homme fashion shows. And at the time, December 2019, we didn't have any idea of what was going to happen in just a couple of months. And it was like, okay, we are just traveling to the end of the world for another show. In fact, I think that the whole system was a little bit redundant. It was just a display from the big groups of what big budgets they had.

But for me as a writer and as a critic, however, I keep reflecting on how I greatly enjoy traveling because apart from the show that you're attending, you're coming into contact with other realities, with other ways to use clothing or to see fashion and live in general. Right now, I'm missing my work done on the road in the sense that I miss witnessing something live because actually, as a fashion critic, I always say that it's a bit like an art critic mixed with a theatre or cinema critic. **YOU'RE NOT JUST JUDGING THE MANUFACTURING, THE CLOTHING, YOU'RE JUDGING BASICALLY THE WHOLE PERFORMANCE,** the whole thing. And sometimes the narrative comes – nowadays more than in the past – from the package more than the clothing. I miss that part, but I know that when we will go back to normal, if there is something normal, it won't be the same thing. Something will change. For the moment I'm very worried because what I see is that the big groups are getting bigger and more powerful than ever. And the whole thing that is happening is just putting the small brands into the corner. They are either super smart and come with some genius ideas with zero budget, or they're just being swallowed up by the big brands. Tonight, after this conversation, I will "attend" the Chanel show as they're broadcasting their Metiers d'art collection. And then there is Dior in a few days and Balenciaga on Sunday. I mean, the big groups are doing whatever they like whenever they like. Gucci did the TV programme two weeks ago. Which is fine, but if fashion weeks come to an end, I will be seriously worried.

A fashion week is an ecosystem that supports the small through the big, because when we are in Paris for ten days, you attend Chanel, Vuitton and Balenciaga and whatever else, but you also see, in between, the smaller shows that sometimes are also the most interesting. If the whole ecosystem of a fashion week disintegrates into something like *I do whatever I please, however I please*, how will the smaller brands survive? How will the young up-and-coming designers have an opportunity to show to the fashion system at the peak moment of fashion? The other thing that I really miss is the interaction with my colleagues because fashion weeks are the General States of Fashion: a global gathering moment. Basically, Linda, I started talking to you because I saw you at the Y/Project show or at Raf Simon show. Otherwise, it was always very formal. You just say hi, but then once you sit one next to the other and you just start chatting it's very fluid and very democratic: **ALL OF A SUDDEN HIERARCHIES COLLAPSE.** And you can talk with whoever you like and have an interesting conversation. I miss that a lot because basically now I am alone

in front of the phone or the computer.

LL

I see. Is that the same for you Anna? Do you miss also the architects around you, the performances, writing and making books, your editing, how do you feel today? Is it also a lonely feeling?

ANNA YUDINA

On one hand, it wasn't a huge change for me as I've always been a dedicated remote worker. I definitely miss this possibility to just book a ticket and go somewhere to meet people or see an exhibition, but other than that, **FOR ME IT WAS A GOOD MOMENT FOR – AS BANAL AS IT SOUNDS – INTROSPECTION.** A moment to focus on important things.

AF

Was it natural for you to focus on the important things? I completely understand you, because I've been a dedicated remote worker all my life, too. As freelancers, we can work on weekdays, on weekends, we have no timing. Early morning, late night, whenever we want. But I found it a little bit hard sometimes to focus in these months because this kind of vacuum that was created all around me, in the beginning it seemed to help introspection, then at one point, introspection turned into anxiety. For me, at least.

AY

WHAT WAS INTERESTING IS HOW THE QUALITY OF TIME HAS CHANGED. THE PACE OF TIME SEEMED TO BE DIFFERENT THIS YEAR. THE INNER AND THE OUTER SENSE OF TIME FEEL LIKE TWO PARALLEL WORLDS. This by no means answers your question, but that's what one starts thinking about [because of this prolonged period of introspection]. Then, before you notice, interviews, lectures and books about the nature of time start popping up. And, strangely enough, this begins to very much resonate with what I'm thinking about professionally as I continue building my course on cross-disciplinary thinking.

AF

I have to say that my anxiety moment came mostly on a professional level because when this whole thing started, it seemed like it could shake the system from the foundations really hard. And then what I've seen over these months is that the big monsters – let's call them that – are getting bigger and bigger, like a Goliath while the smaller are being beaten. At first, everybody was trying to feel super good and show that the fashion system was actually a system, a place where the big and the small come together. Now, everybody thinks of themselves and that's it. Every brand is trying to eat as much as possible on the global plate and they don't care about the rest. This makes me think a lot about how our sense of community is lacking at the moment.

AY

And was there a sense of community before?

AF

No, but there was a brief moment at the start of all this when I thought, okay, maybe this is going to evolve for the good. What I see now, what really shocks me is how much the big brands are showing off what they can do. I was really shocked by how Gucci approached an idea that was, on paper, very interesting. A brand turns into a broadcasting company and produces not only the imagery, but the narratives that go with it, in film format, involving a cult director like Gus Van Sant. And in the end the outcome is a very silly kind of movie in which nothing happens. It's basically an animated catalogue and it's studded with stars like an art critic, a theatre actress and blah-blah-blah, but nothing sticks together. For me it was a waste of ideas and money. Another problem is that they don't like to be criticized, and become very aggressive. Nobody likes to be criticized anymore. In fact, this is one of the reasons **I'M REALLY HAPPY ABOUT THIS TALK WITH ANNA, BECAUSE I THINK THAT OVER THE YEARS, THE MEANING OF CRITICISM IN DESIGN OR IN FASHION HAS BEEN COMPLETELY LOST.** If you write a critique, everybody thinks you're just attacking. As critics we are not attacking a brand or a design-

er. We're just showing what, in our opinion, does and does not work. It is an opinion, out of many: as simple as that. We are simply analysing a project from the weak and the strong points. Am I right?

AY Maybe it's just an idea of two parallel systems being created. Actually, one of them – the system that Angelo is talking about – has existed more or less forever and is probably not going anywhere anytime soon. On the other hand, there is an understanding that there'll be no help from there, and so **A PARALLEL SYSTEM SHOULD BE BUILT. THE QUESTION IS, WHAT KIND OF TOOLS WE HAVE AND HOW IT CAN BE BUILT.**

LL I stepped out when I unpacked my luggage, on the 23rd of February, and decided not to go to Paris for the Fashion Week. I stepped out and now I feel much better. Lately I was running to the shows, thinking, am I on the first row, the second row? Do I have an invitation? Am I going to the Balenciaga show there in the middle of nowhere? Now, I'm looking for new energies in different cities, in different communities, and I must say that I find that energy once in a while.

AF I think that new energy can come from no money because I actually think that money sucks away most of the good vibes: as soon as it creeps in, it's just a rush to make more money. Yesterday I got my copy of System Magazine and there is a long story on Mark Lebon, the photographer who created Crunch, a kind of collective. **I'VE ALWAYS BEEN HYPER FASCINATED BY THIS KIND OF CREATIVE CROSSROADS WHERE PEOPLE FROM DIFFERENT DISCIPLINES MEET JUST TO CREATE THINGS.** Not to make money, not to conquer the world. I think that the system that is now collapsing is the idea that you should be at the helm of a fashion house to conquer the world and make all the money you can. That is so disgusting and old looking at the moment.

LL Anna, is that the same in design and architecture, because I feel you are doing a lot of work with new architecture projects. Talk a bit about that.

AY I don't even know where to start, because of course the systems, the structures are different. Architects are more independent on one hand and more dependent on the other. I think the important thing is that we're now realising that the role of the architect can change and we are witnessing this gradual change. **THE WAY ARCHITECTS UNDERSTAND THEMSELVES WITHIN A LARGER ECOSYSTEM AS THE ONES WHO DON'T JUST DESIGN A BUILDING, BUT CREATE THE CONDITIONS FOR CERTAIN FUTURE SITUATIONS TO HAPPEN.** And an architect is someone who positions themselves, by nature of their profession, at the intersection of different interests – those of the client, the community, the city, the users, the past, the future, the present ... And it is your challenge as an architect to bring these interests together, to find these kinds of fields of connection between them, because sometimes those different groups don't even understand each other. Because they really speak different languages. Architects are in a position where they find these intersections and articulate them into not even a building, but a materialized situation that will be able to evolve in time, respond to the needs of the current users, but also to future changes. Maybe, this isn't what's happening for everyone in architecture, but it's happening nevertheless. And some of the bigger architecture competitions, like C 40 Reinventing Cities for instance, are trying to look in this direction by **BRINGING TOGETHER MULTI-DISCIPLINARY TEAMS THAT INCLUDE ALL SORTS OF EXPERTS, COMMUNITIES, ETC.** And the architects, who are being the drivers of the project, try to not just understand the context themselves, but also bring together the different experts and other,

different actors who will contribute to this context. Creating not just a building, but a condition, a situation – that, I think, is extremely interesting.

Could it be copied to the fashion industry?

There could be a central "conceptor" [author of a concept], who on the one hand has their own creative ego, of course, but on the other hand thinks how the final result can be amplified though co-creating it together with the various others. Looking in very different directions and listening to every one in order to understand what they want and seeing how to connect this.

But not exploit them, which is a very normal fashion attitude. Exploiting the other interlocutors. Actually, **NOBODY BELIEVES THAT A CREATIVE INDUSTRY IS MADE JUST BY ONE PERSON: DIALOGUES ARE IMPORTANT.** Yet still, the narrative of the ego is central to fashion. And so, all the dialogues are somehow exploited in the name of the big ego. I think that if a shuttering of the ego happens, it could be a very interesting prospect for fashion. Also, Linda, I was very taken when you sent us the notes before this conversation, because you are right in comparing criticism to poetry, in a way.

MY POINT IS THAT THE SYSTEM OF FASHION TODAY IS LACKING A SOUL. Everything has become so focused on money-making and fame-making and selling, selling, selling as much as you can, there are just a few projects left that have a soul behind them. I find it interesting that you talked about poetry because criticism basically means to deconstruct an idea, look at it from every angle and explain that to the public.

And you can do that with a poetic tone instead of a harsh or analytic or dry tone, which is honestly my goal as a writer. Things that really speak to me really create an emotion, and I want the reader to feel an emotion, too, be it for performance or a building or a piece of clothing. That is always my aim also because I think that another important aspect – and I don't know if you agree with me – is that sometimes being a critic is a very hard position because if you are too harsh and too severe, you're in danger of putting yourself too much on the stage. For me, it's never about telling the reader: look how harsh I can be, how pointed my prose can be, how severe I can be. It's about trying to find the best way to communicate to the reader or the spectator about things that can excite us.

AY I very much agree with you on many different levels. On the one hand, it's always important to me, and I think for every critic, to [do more than] just show how bright, how intelligent they are. In a way, there is some intellectual showing off ... but to really ask yourself – and that's valid in any endeavour – for the sake of what am I doing that? What do I want to convey to the reader? For me, another crucially important thing in terms of time is that when someone spends time with what I have written or the show someone has created, they pay for this moment of attention with the most valuable currency they have in their life. They pay with their time, which is irrevocable. So, what are you giving them in return? **AFTER HAVING READ THIS ARTICLE, WHAT DO THEY GO AWAY WITH?** That's so important. This should not necessarily be incredibly profound, but **THERE SHOULD BE SOMETHING** that creates a certain change, something **THAT WAS WORTH THOSE 10 SECONDS OR 15 MINUTES SPENT WITH IT.**

Absolutely. And what is your takeaway for your reader.

AY Well, maybe it can be some kind of new understanding. It can be surprise ... wow, I didn't think you can look at this in that way, from that perspective! Every new facet that you can uncover, thanks to what you are reading, every new kind of opening, every new connection – because, again, maybe I'm

deviating too far, but that's something extremely valuable about each person, [the fact] that we are a unique combination of different memories, different experiences, and the way they connect with each other. Which makes [each of] us unique in what we can give out to the world. You have, of course, first of all, to understand this about yourself and what you're capable of doing towards the world in terms of this uniqueness, and then move on in this direction ... I think I've deviated terribly from your question.

I feel connected with you, Angelo, with a certain vision and mentality and attitude. So, keep on doing that because we need this kind of voice in the desert. There is a new generation that doesn't care anymore about those big brands. And they do it in their own way. They say, I have my little company and I have a nice group of people around me, that's fine for me.

Linda, the thing I like the most when I publish my stories is to get feedback from readers. Today, you can get feedback from whomever because someone contacts you on social media or in other ways. And there is always this feeling of connection with other people, but it never happens with people from within the brands. I mean, you're attacking the system or showing the weak spots of the system and nothing happens, while **I THINK THAT A GOOD CRITICISM COULD BE A VERY INTERESTING VOICE EVEN WITHIN THE BRANDS TO GIVE SOME KIND OF DIRECTION AND SOUL TO WHAT THEY DO** and not just be a financially driven enterprise. I'm always surprised by how big brands only perceive criticism as an attack on their big ego, to their big, powerful presence in the system. It's very rare that they take criticism as a way to leverage change or evolution. It happened to me many times because, as you know, I'm quite outspoken in my opinions. So, when you say something about a creative director, who's not doing that well, I mean, they get upset. They don't invite you to the next show. And then the next season they fire the creative director because it was not working. In the moment they could have had a conversation with you as a critic, they shut things down, and that is a pity.

I think it's because having a conversation is a kind of art [that one has to master]. On one hand, you have a neurotic system that has too much power over the people who play this game. I mean, **THE SYSTEM ITSELF IS NOT BUILT IN A WAY THAT ENCOURAGES FAIR CRITICISM**, just because, well, I'm saying a banality, but if you are dependent on fashion advertisers and on being admitted or not admitted to a show, you will probably think twice about what you'll be writing ... for obvious reasons. This doesn't help. And then, I think there's too much fear behind it all, the fear of this kind of open conversation, [the pressure of] being constantly under this public radar, sometimes imaginary; the fear of being less than excellent. All of this doesn't help. And then there is this art of "listening for understanding" – something which is a half-lost art, I think. Rather than projecting my idea of what your position is, what about really listening to your position, [and saying to myself], maybe they're not attacking, maybe they're trying to help?

Angelo can poetry change the world?

Absolutely. I think so. The thing for me is that poetry can change the world. There is this misunderstanding that being poetic means being utterly sentimental, while I think poetry is more about making unexpected, even volatile connections, creating bridges between things by using language. Sometimes poetry can arouse feelings and maybe those feelings have nothing to do with the thing that poetry is talking about, but that feeling can bloom into something else. I believe, honestly, in abstraction and there is a lot of abstraction in poetry because – being sometimes very short and very sharp and

very light – it doesn't have an immediate connection with reality. And yet in those spaces and in those distances, some great things can arise. One of my dream goals as a writer is to write like super short, critical essays in the form of little poems: four or five lines just to give an illumination to the reader and maybe start something new from that.

In fact, I'm completely with Anna regarding the takeaway she would like her readers to have. For me, it's the same. I would like the reader not to take away how sharp or how witty the criticism was, rather the idea that there can be another point of view, that you can look at things from down up instead, or from one side, or maybe read the whole thing just from the detail, not from the whole. It's more a method than a content, I'd say: a way of looking at things. This is also the way I have been schooled throughout my academic career and then after, when I started working: **WHAT MAKES THINGS DIFFERENT IS HOW YOU LOOK AT THINGS**. We as writers have a point of view and a gaze onto things, and it's important that this gaze changes and the gaze is what you give to the reader. And then the reader will have his or her own gaze onto things, but maybe you're just suggesting a way to use it.

We need to dream again. We have to dream again. We can dream again.

Anna? Just a final word.

Going back to poetry, and also going back to the fact that you, Angelo, and I, are both people who have one native tongue and are writing professionally in another ... Recently, I was really impressed by these words by a Russian ... I think she's a poet and a translator, and she answered the question of why sometimes you have this classic piece of poetry and its classic canonical translation of it into another language. Why then would other translators or other poets try to make other translations when this perfect translation already exists? Her argument was just incredible. She said that, no, no, no, this is not a translation. This is another version of the original. Because the poet, who is the first author, and all the translators – let's speak about the good ones – they are trying to hear as clearly as possible the original and transmit this original. In this sense, this idea of putting your ego aside ... I think it's very important in poetry, because you actually are not "making" a poem. You are listening to it and you are transmitting it – trying to be as clear and transparent as you can.

YOU'RE JUST A VESSEL. You're just a connector. I'm completely with you: putting this ego aside could be a very good step forward.

Let's finish on that, I like it. I heard so many times the word connecting, and that's what we have to do, to find a new language and step out of this kind of terrible moment that fashion design and big companies are creating. So good luck to you both and hoping that in the next Zoom we'll speak poetry.

Absolutely. Thank you, Linda, thank you Anna.

It was a great moment. Thanks a lot.

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THE. SCIENCE. CONTAINER#



“SCI- CON- N° 4/11

THESE DAYS, DISCUSSIONS ON SCIENCE NECESSARILY HAVE TO TAKE NEW TECHNOLOGIES AND DIGITAL TOOLS INTO CONSIDERATION, AND THESE ARE TWO ELEMENTS THAT FASHION, LIKE EVERY OTHER SECTOR, WILL HAVE TO MAKE FULL USE OF IN ORDER TO EVOLVE AND DEVELOP. THE MOST IMPORTANT THING WILL BE FINDING A BALANCE BETWEEN DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY AND THE PHYSICAL AND ARTISAN DIMENSIONS OF PRODUCTION TO COMMUNICATE WITH THE PUBLIC AND UNDERSTAND THE PROCESSES UNDERLYING FASHION.





BETWEEN SUKET DHIR & ARMANDO CHANT

DECEMBER 3, 2020
NEW DELHI 1:30PM/
SIDNEY 7PM

Suket Dhir, fashion designer based in New Delhi, and Armando Chant, artist, curator and academic with a background in the fashion industry, are connected through textiles, a medium that both use to express their own identity and as a means of exploring culture and society. Within the Science Container, art and textiles meet the world of the digital, videos, social media, and other new technologies. Guiding the conversation is the aim to transform systems of production within fashion with the intention of improving sustainability, and achieving a better balance between production and consumption. Textile weaving and dyeing are processes that have their own natural rhythm, which conflicts with the speed and quantities required by the market. Although the digital world moves to faster rhythms, it also has the benefit of connecting people and the potential to spread knowledge within the industry about what lies behind the products that we buy, from the choice of materials to where they come from and how they are processed. It is difficult to capture the identities of Suket Dhir and Armando Chant: the former builds on Indian artisan and aesthetic traditions, elevating them through essential and innovative shapes and lines; the latter combines art and design in a continuous exchange between the analogue and the digital. Two multifaceted characters who are capable of accepting the rules of their different universes. In particular, within the world of textiles, as with any system of production, the actions of each individual have an impact which ultimately has an effect on our planet. This process must be recognised as part of an ecosystem, and not a separate and neutral component – this is an essential starting point for spreading awareness and changing the norms.

LINDA LOPPA

Dear Suket, dear Armando, I was thinking this morning that Florence was a kind of a link between you. Armando, you came in 2015 to Florence for the IFFTI conference. You did an installation in Santa Croce, in that beautiful church. And then a year later, I think it was 2016, you Suket came as a participant in the Woolmark Prize, actually, you won. Great moments for us in Florence, for both of you. I thought it was interesting to bring you together because you are both working on textiles, not only textiles, but it's also a link in your life, I guess. Suket, you're a designer and Armando is an artist, teacher, weaver, designer. Armando, please tell me more about yourself. Who are you and how is your life going to be, because a big change is coming on.

ARMANDO CHANT

That's a really interesting question. Actually, I've really found it hard, my entire life, to define and I answer in many ways, because I am trained in textiles, I am trained in weaving. But whilst I was training in weaving, I was always reaching out to other disciplines. So, I love photography, I love printing and drawing. And then, after my studies, my Master degree, I've done costume design, I've done art direction, and in my own practice, I've covered photography, film, as well as installations. So, in terms of trying to define what I actually do, I find it very hard. **I SUPPOSE, IN MANY WAYS I LIKE TO THINK.** And I think, when I was at university, I realized that at the core I'm a creative person. And as a creative person, you can apply your aesthetics; you can apply your ideas; you can apply your skills to a diversity of different areas and industries and creative avenues. And that's really, I think, at the core of what I suppose I believe in, and which has allowed me to reach out and work with different people and collaborate with different people and I feel I've got the ability to do that.

LL

That's really the advantage of who we are. Me too I did so many different things in my life, but that's because we are creative and we have a very creative person here in front of us. Suket, how is your life for the moment? He's a fashion designer, can you imagine but he's more than that, he is a kind of, come on, define yourself, Suket.

SUKET DHIR

I think Armando you're doing a great job and I sort of felt like I was speaking for a moment. I have the same thing. In one of the e-mails you wrote you said, send me a bio. And I just pulled out one of the bios that one of my team had written and I showed it to Asha. You remember Asha, Linda, my mentor. So, I showed it to her and she said, kid, those are the reasons why you won the award, these are all the things people know you for, but who are you? And I guess that's an existential question. I don't even know who I am. I don't even think I began to answer that question yet. But, it's a good place to begin with because, I think, your email started that journey already. The last three, four days, **I'VE ACTUALLY BEEN THINKING** about that and I started taking notes. I've started writing things down and I think I might end up doing something, that I never thought or imagined doing. I am not much of a reader. I'm more of a visual person. But I might end up writing a book, who knows. **I'M IN A BIT OF A DISCOVERY, SORT OF A ZONE.** I am many, many things. And none of those are things that I imagined while I was growing up. I thought I was a singer and then it turned out that I was a fashion designer and it turned out that I'm good at textiles. And then it turned out I might be really good at art direction, and then it turned out I might be good at, I don't know, anything you start or end up with, something interesting to develop.

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That you would be a good father with two nice kids.

SD

Yeah, here he is. That's my son. He's doing his school on Zoom, just like we are doing ours on Zoom. So, he just came because he does not have

the password of the iPad, so he needs my thumb for that. So, but yes, I'm not in any dilemma. I think we have many, many, many things it's very, very difficult to sort of find a box to put us in, especially the people like us, Armando and I, and yourself as well Linda. You've had your experience with many things and you like doing many things at the same time, not just one. And I think, putting it on people or just sort of trying to figure it out in a couple of sentences. **I'D SAY THAT I'M JUST A BIT OF A SEEKER.** We love so many things and I want to do all those things and be in the moment all of my life I think, and then end up learning a lot about myself and the world around us. Just that - I think so.

LL

I was thinking that digital events, are important for the weavers because we see a kind of cliché of the industry and weaving. Instead, there is so much technique and we can make it tridimensional as Armando does. I think the digital will help us to bring a level of perception because it's a very indoor research, hidden activity. We have to bring it to the world, in order that people can become interested in it, by seeing it, by doing it, by experiencing it. And that's probably the next step to take in this new world that we're living in. Armando, do you think the world will change a little bit?

AC

I think that the world will change a lot, actually. And it's really interesting what you're saying. Because I think there are two sides of the coin which regards this. One is how the digital, and all these avenues that **WE HAVE TO CONVEY KNOWLEDGE DIGITALLY, WILL HELP US UNDERSTAND THE RICHNESS AND CREATIVITY THAT THERE IS IN THIS WORLD.** And, in many ways, to preserve and encourage that further. It will enable us to really understand what we actually have at this point in time and not take it for granted. Which is, I think, in many ways what we did. On the other side of that though, which I found very interesting, is that my work was in an exhibition which is now traveling around Australia. And what I felt was, obviously with covid-19, the exhibition couldn't open in its opening venue. So, it was online and in the second venue, luckily, we've managed to open the exhibition. What I found is that textiles are such a tactile thing. There's such an embedded knowledge within making, that the experience of the work, the people who were able to experience it in real life, **THAT'S WHEN YOU HAVE A REAL EMOTIONAL AND PHYSICAL CONNECTION TO THE ACTION,** an imaginative connection to the work itself. I think it's interesting going forward to think of **TWO SIDES OF THAT COIN.** How we can spread knowledge through digital means and educate through digital means. But also, how can we experience the item, the textile, the artistic work and still retain that physical sense as well. That's where you have the emotional connection to the world.

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I'd like to resonate exactly what Armando just said. I've been struggling for the last eight years to sort of communicate what I do with photos and a visual media. Even the stories that I tell in person, about the clothes and the reasons for doing certain things in terms of details, in terms of weaving, in terms of prints, in terms of embroideries or finishing, those are stories behind stories behind stories. And that was also the aspect of layering, I was actually talking about it earlier. It's not like layering when you actually sort of see a shirt and then there's a jacket, and then there's an overcoat, a coat. Not that; layers and layers, when it comes to thinking. And **LAYERS AND LAYERS WHEN IT COMES TO PROCESSES** as well. And it's very difficult to communicate that online. It's a bit of a challenge, and that's the thing that I have taken upon myself to figure out how to do that. But while we are doing that, we decided this year, moving away from textiles a little bit. Because again, textiles, I realized that I'm a little more besides textiles, because there's a whole narrative to the

prints that we do, the storytelling. I spoke to you Linda, about the Maharajas, translating a traditional miniature painting, and reimagining what those Maharajas would be doing today instead of hunting, which they used to do back in the days, about many hundred years back. Now, they'd be playing golf. And so, what we've done is that we kept the aesthetic, a 400 years old aesthetic of the miniatures, but when you go up close, you'll realize that instead of hunting, they're actually are playing golf on golf carts. You see the Segway's, you see the women under the trees, you see them as if they're reaching out for apples or fruit, but when you go up close, there are not reaching out for an apple, but it's a phone, they're taking selfies. And so, I used these prints on top of the Khadi handwoven fabrics. And specifically, even within the handwoven field, I LIKE TO WEAVE FABRICS THAT ARE IMPOSSIBLE TO WEAVE WITH MACHINES. You know, there are so many fabrics that are now possible to weave with the mills and the power looms. Now, it's very, very important for us to sort of focus our energy onto fabrics that are impossible to be woven with machines. So that the efforts are still relevant because I think machines and power looms are very, very important, they're here to stay and they're necessary. We are seven plus billion people on the planet, so we do need machines. And, even the looms and the mills, the machines are also man-made, people have made them. So, even it might be done by engineers, but then it's the genius of the engineers to actually come up with solutions to deal with the exploding population. So, I think it's also a miracle of modern society. But at the same time, it's very, very important for us to sort of focus on our traditional means that have been done for the last 1,000, 1,500, 2,000 years. And update those forward. And, it's very important for us to pick and choose the weaves that are relevant, the weaves that still cannot be managed by machines. PICK THOSE WEAVES, AND THEN CELEBRATE THEM TO THE WORLD. Like the Japanese, they have been doing an amazing job. They come to India, to Indian weavers, they get the fabrics made in India that cannot be done by machines. And what we can look at is how we use the digital medium and the modern technology to facilitate those fabrics and also create demand for excellent weaves.

Now, what is actually happening is that a lot of emotional blackmailing happens within that industry. "Oh, it's handwoven, you must buy it". No, you should buy it because it's excellent. It's amazing. It's handwoven, but it kind of looks better than a machine. That's how accurate it is, you know what I mean? So, the focus goes on, you guilt trip people into "Oh, it's handwoven made by a poor weaver. You must spend money so that their livelihood stays alive." I think their livelihood should stay alive because they are good at what they do. Not because of the mediocre product might produce every once in a while. So, everyone should be encouraged to do better and better and better work. And that's all of our responsibility. I mean, because WE'VE BEEN FOCUSING ON POVERTY, NOT WEAVING. IF WE FOCUS ON THEIR WEAVING, THEY DON'T REMAIN POOR. So, I think that's the more important thing that needs to be done.

Just to give an example, I follow a lot of hand weavers on Instagram and I was liking the posts and stuff, and one of them is an Ikat weaver and they were very lovely. They reached out to me and said, thank you. And one of the things that I thought that was very interesting is that I struck up this conversation and they actually asked me, they said, do you know anything about colour printers? And I was like, well, I don't really know that much, but I can find out for you. And I was like, well, what do you need to know? And the reason why they were asking after colour printers is, they wanted a larger format co-

our printer so that they could print out larger Ikat designs and experiment on the printer before they actually then apply their obviously inherent, embodied knowledge. So, they want you to visualize the design prior to actually going forward. Which I thought was A REALLY LOVELY USE OF TECHNOLOGY TO EXPAND THEIR WORK.

Absolutely. And that's the introduction of new technology that I'm talking about. I saw this movie a long time ago on fashion, was it "Dior and I" where Raf Simons has done something interesting; he had translated a painting, he printed it on the yarn and then he has woven it; it was printed before the weaving? So, it automatically gives that glitch effect in the end, which is what Ikat is. Now the whole thing about Ikat is that its hand dyed; I think it'd be interesting to see how we'd work with digital printers and if it is digital printing, see what happen on the warp and the weft, and then we weave it together and then see what kind of magic happens with what can come out of it. It'd be very interesting to see that actually.

I think we have already a lot of ideas for the future. But how is it going to work within a fashion industry, that we are a little bit hating at the moment? HOW CAN WE FIND A NEW RHYTHM IN THE LOCAL and be in the globalization of our products? We need to reach more and more people, not because we want to become more and more known, but because we can do more when we reach more people. Because we have a bigger industry and we can produce better and we can have more products and experiment more. So how are we going to resolve that slow and fast duality, Armando?

That's a really huge question. I agree with you. I think, in many ways, actually, this is the core to answering that question in terms of connecting people, of collaboration and also of RECOGNIZING VALUE. So, the reason why something is expensive is because it has a level of ingenuity, of intelligence, of embodied creativity and knowledge embedded within it. And it's one of those things, which I think we have actually got to the point where people expect more things quicker and they also expect things to be cheaper. IT'S ALMOST A PROCESS OF RE-EDUCATION OF BOTH THE INDUSTRY AND THE CONSUMER, and we need both on board. One cannot exist without the other. So, we definitely need to, I believe, get to a point where we can educate or bring the consumer into a world of knowledge. Whereby they can understand where, what they are buying comes from. Whereby if they are paying, let's say, \$200 for something, the reason it is that amount is because of X, Y, and Z. If they're paying less, it's also because of the same. And I think, it's one of those things of almost, how do you say? It's about dogs chasing their tail, whereby you're always going to be running around in circles if you're chasing the new all the time. Whereas, you need to just, like you say Linda, not necessarily stop. But MAYBE JUST SLOW DOWN SLIGHTLY OR PAUSE. So that we can take more time to appreciate the things that we're actually producing and making, rather than always striving for the new.

Linda, you know, I've been thinking about this very subject for a long, long, long time. And, in fact my whole existence is based on answering this question and I'm somewhere there now. I think, a lot of those hurdles surfaced with the Woolmark win, you know, that kind of win can give you the credibility to have a say in the larger context in the industry. But as a young designer without international recognition, this becomes a little more difficult. You are too tiny to actually have that kind of an impact. What I think is that THE SLOW AND FAST HAVE TO COMPLEMENT EACH OTHER and I'm called a slow fashion designer, because fast fashion exists. So, I sort of owe

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my existence to fast fashion. I can't really wish fast fashion away! And there's a need for fast fashion. I mean, when I was young, I remember, I think when I was about 20 years old, I wanted to experiment and figure out what my style was. So, I wanted to change things, wear new things, and I did not necessarily have enough money at that time to sort of spend responsibly. Now what actually needs to happen is a parallel thing. There are two, three, four things that need to happen simultaneously, because that's how life also is. My wife and I, we decided to have kids five years later than we should have. Because we thought that "Oh, let me settle down and then we'll have the babies", career-wise. But the thing is, we never settled down. Everything has happened simultaneously. I have the babies and I'm still settling down. So, the thing is we wanted to have them. You can start, you have to start in parallel. You have to start all of those things together and you have to focus on all those things together. Even though we want the world to slow down, in my lifetime, I don't have time to slow down. I'll have to work even faster. I want to enjoy my life and have a pace and take it easy. But the thing is that there's so much work cut out for us. **THERE'S SO MUCH RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE WORLD TO SLOW DOWN, WE'LL HAVE TO BECOME FASTER.** Which means, what I'm actually saying is, and plus we have to lead by example, we need to actually do it. I will continue doing in a very small way what my brand does and make clothes.

If we have to lead the world, for example, a person like me can collaborate with the largest scale brands. And that's when the two people collide and with them, we can actually find solutions where they can make their billions. But hopefully with my help or with my expertise, we'll be able to find solutions where they can make their billions and without surrendering too much space or surrendering too much profit. Because profit, I don't think is a bad thing. Profit is a good thing. **BECAUSE WITH THE PROFITS YOU CAN DO EVEN BETTER THINGS.** They do need to make their millions and billions. But at the same time, how can we collaborate and come up with capsules that can actually capture youngster's imagination at large? And they are encouraged to generally buy more responsible products. And when they see it happening, that all the responsible products also made a lot of money, then they can actually start converting the rest of their lines also towards responsible fashion. **BUT IT COULD BE RESPONSIBLE FAST FASHION.** What's wrong with that? You know, you can actually have things, new designs coming up every six months. But those products should last long. Those products should stay in your wardrobe. Those productions should be able to be passed on from one person to another. Like in India, we have a whole ecosystem where if I wear something, I'll give it to my siblings or I'll give it to someone who is in need. So those clothes I will wear for a season or two, and then somebody else will wear it, somebody else will wear it, until it kind of turns into of torn and tattered cloth. And that is also used to dust at home. And this is 1.3 billion people practicing this as you and I speak. So, this is a country where it is practiced 'en masse'. It's traditional, it's our heritage. This is how we've grown up. So, you know, when it comes to India, we might be sort of lacking when it comes to civic sense. But **WHEN IT JUST COMES TO NATURALLY WORKING WITH NATURE, PRESERVING NATURE, BEING LESS WASTEFUL, THAT'S SOMETHING THAT IS THERE IN OUR DNA.** I think that it can actually be a big example. For example, Armando collaborates with a billion-dollar company to actually come up with a capsule collection and that becomes a big hit where Armando also thought of the youngsters, wannabe youngsters and he's made things that'll last long. But in the end be very relevant for them. And they buy it, and they make their

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money and they'll be like, "hey, well, we need to actually do more of this".

I love this idea that you mentioned Suket as well. Because I believe really strongly in this idea of the ecosystem. How everyone is connected and have the choices you make impact others, but **YOU CAN SPREAD THE BENEFIT BEYOND JUST YOU.** So much of the design world, the art world, the creative world is based on a sole designer or a name or a brand or one of those things. But what is the impact of that brand? How can they reach out beyond the name and actually have a beneficial impact to communities worldwide as well?

So, we are going to do projects and events and digital events. I want a project; I'm definitely looking forward to something already.

I was actually thinking about that, Linda. I wanted to basically give a commitment today that I would love to do something with Armando and you. But I think we need to have another conversation to actually sort it out and figure out what. I have a habit of promising more than I can chew sometimes. So, I don't want to say what I want to do, but I will give my commitment that **I WANT TO DO SOMETHING AMAZING AND SOMETHING MEANINGFUL.** And hopefully something that can be scaled. Because I think scale is something which eludes both him and me. And if we can actually do somethings and collaborate with some brand who can actually sort of... I am thinking out loud...It could be not even scale, but scale is another thing that we can look at and see how we can actually have a mass impact of our efforts. I mean, it could just be an installation, but something that kind of goes viral. But we need to have a bigger impact than we can imagine basically. So, this is the commitment I'd like to give.

We are in the 11 Containers. So, Suket made me happy because number 11 is a lucky number.

It is! In traditional Indian thought, anything that ends with a number one, like if it's 11, 21, 101, 1001, it's supposed to be an auspicious, a good number. Because it's a beginning. It signifies a beginning of something not the end of something. Like zero is the finishing. It's like a whole number 100, it's the end of something. Whereas 101 is the beginning of a new series; **11 IS LIKE THAT. IT'S A BEGINNING OF SOMETHING.** So that's why I told her that it's supposed to be a very good number.

I'm really hoping 2021 will be the start of something good. Let's celebrate that!

Write it on your wall, we all write it on the wall!

Suket inspired me with the 1 analogy. I'm like 2021 is the one for all these exciting projects.

Well, honestly, I think 2020 it's been one of my favourite year so far. I'm not talking about in terms of misery and mayhem. Obviously, I'm sad about that. It's unfortunate. But I think it's one of those impossible years. You have the whole year to yourself, that has gone by like that, in a snap of a finger, it's just gone. And so much time for ourselves, so many things we could do. So many things we could rethink and just kind of ponder over. And I just realized, I calculated three or four days back, you know Linda, I was saying that I've volunteered to distribute meals and food to the poor during that time. We've just calculated, it was 2.5 million meals that we distributed from just one unit, from just one centre of food packing, that we had. So that was something that, I didn't even realize that so much work we were able to do in just those five to six weeks. It's a big number. I mean, I don't even know. These are the things that you put in the right situation; these kinds of things happen through you. **AND**

THAT'S WHEN YOU REALIZE THAT YOU CAN DO MUCH BIGGER THINGS WITH YOUR LIFE. And that's what we expect, what this is about, something amazing.

LL But many people changed, Armando, you stopped your educational chapter. I see many people and I talk to many people and many are changing job, taking decisions, see their lives differently. I guess it's something really, really special. So, Armando, you're going to be more an artist?

AC Yes, I've had a wonderful career in academia, which I'm very proud of. And, I was reflecting the other day and I was thinking of all the wonderful students who I've worked with and who are now out there doing wonderful things. But at the same time, I thought, well, now it's actually time for you. And now, you get to a point, I feel as a creative practitioner, when you need space, and you need time to actually focus back on yourself as well. And 2021 is that time, the start time for me for that. And, ideally yes, returning to my creative practice and my artistic practice and focusing on that. And, I already started reaching out, to be honest with you, to artisans in India as well, to see if there's a possibility of working with them, to create things and to work on new things together. So, it's an exciting time. **IT'S A VERY EXCITING TIME AND IT'S FULL OF POSSIBILITIES, WHICH IS WHAT I LOVE.** So, yes, it's great.

SD But in terms of any help you need with the artisans in India, if you need me anywhere, even translating a sentence, anything you need just let me know, give me a call.

AC I was actually talking recently to a gallerist and showed her my work and she really loved the embroidery work, which I had created with an artisan in India. And I was saying to her that the first opportunity I get, I will be on a flight to India to hopefully do a residency or spend some time there to work with people there.

SD If you're coming to Delhi, then my home is open to you. You'll have a room for yourself.

LL Wow, it's all about friendship guys, it's not about textiles, it's about friendship!

SD See — **THE DIGITAL WORLD OPENS UP TO THE POSSIBILITIES OF CREATING THOSE BONDS.** And I think, I guess, Armando is similar. I can actually guess that from the way we've been speaking. I think things are more about relationships. Someone was asking me, "who would you like to work with in the US?" I said, well, I'd like to meet the owner of a shop first and then meet their team. I just want to know what was their thoughts behind opening a damn shop in the first place, and then maybe decide whether I want to be there or not. You know, there is space for just no-nonsense work, like cut, cut, cut, cut. But **I ALSO THINK IT'S IMPORTANT FOR US TO BUILD HUMAN CONNECTIONS** and get out of the shells and meet new people, more people. And get to know them, why they do what they do and why they are crazy for time management. They're so robotic. Just to get to know those, maybe learn from them, get influenced by them and maybe influence them a little bit. Just kind of balance the whole world in that way. So, I think digitally, like you said, even for weavers, they should get access to all kinds of people who appreciate excellence and not mediocrity. Because I think that's the problem. My India's problem is that. There's been a huge amount of celebration of mediocrity for far too long. Excellent, excellent people with excellent minds and excellent skills. They need to be directed into the direction where they can actually follow excellence and not just be okay with it. And we should get into the detail of this in the next conversation that we have.

LL

Wonderful. Thank you for this wonderful conversation. I was really sure that it was going to happen. Thank you, Armando, thank you Suket. Have a nice day and see you soon.

THE.



“NOW

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TAINER#

N° 5/11

THE NEW GENERATION HAS A WAY OF COMMUNICATING AND INTERVENING IN THE WORLD THAT IS DIFFERENT FROM THE PAST, USING SOCIAL MEDIA TO GIVE VALUE TO THEIR VOICE, SHOWING THEIR CREATIONS BY BYPASSING THE TRADITIONAL GATEKEEPERS. IT IS IMPORTANT TO ENGAGE IN A DIALOGUE WITH THEM, LISTEN TO THEIR CRITIQUES, AND ALLOW OURSELVES TO BE INSPIRED BY THEIR APPROACH IN ORDER TO EVOLVE IN THE FUTURE.





BETWEEN GIANFRANCO VILLEGAS & TINTIN ZHANG

DECEMBER 2, 2020
FLORENCE 10AM/
SHANGHAI 5PM

Speaking in the Now Container are two fashion designers who were born in the 90s, TinTin Zhang, creator of the i-Cloud Hat, and Gianfranco Villegas, founder of the Self-Made brand, providing a vivid insight into the contemporary fashion industry. TinTin Zhang effortlessly combines digital, data and internet culture with artisanal production in her line of hats, revealing a process that makes herself a container, a 'cloud' ready to adapt and move between different situations, from London where she was trained, to China where she was born and continues to work. Fashion designer Gianfranco Villegas, after being spotted by a Japanese distributor and launching his collection with a video influenced by the Gutai art movement, decided to focus on experimenting with fabrics and producing something that really made an impact, both conceptually and in terms of environmental sustainability, collaborating with his suppliers to invest in recycling. The freedom with which the new generation moves between various fields within the fashion system, influenced by art and the virtual world, is connected to a search for identity that starts with the individual and goes on to form a collective whole. Who are we? What is it that we like? How can we change the world? Whereas on one side they have the physiological energy of youth, there is also a willingness to find solutions, combining the opportunities offered by technology in the 2.0 era.

LINDA LOPPA

Good morning and good afternoon both, Gianfranco is in the morning and TinTin in the late afternoon. TinTin tell us a bit about you; you are Chinese, and you studied fashion design in China, but also in London. And there, you had a crazy idea, but I leave it to you to explain the situation in this story which is very interesting.

TINTIN ZHANG

Well, I went to London to study design for five years, three years bachelor degree in Central Saint Martins and then two years master's degree in the Royal College of Art. And, I was majoring in textile design in Central Saint Martins. I am very obsessed with knitting, and combined knitting with some new technologies, engineering knits. And then I went to Royal College and I chose a very special subject, which is millinery design as no Chinese students were applying for that subject, because it's not really a big culture in China, we don't really have the habit of wearing hats. **I WANTED A CONTAINER TO EXPRESS MY FEELINGS**, rather than just making fabrics. So, **I THINK A HAT IS LIKE A LITTLE CONTAINER**, like a cup. I can pour in coffee or juice or whatever, it's not like clothes. I think I will have more freedom making a hat because people would have no expectations of what a hat should be. So **THAT GIVES ME A LOT OF FREEDOM AND SPACE TO USE THIS AS A MEDIUM**. I started to make some, and I wanted to combine data and the virtual life and internet culture with engineering meeting fabrics. Then I started to make a hat like a little cloud, like iCloud, but **IT'S A PHYSICAL CLOUD MIXING WITH A LOT OF DATA** going on and the data will influence how the yarn is going together and how the shape of the hat is going to be. Basically, that is my academic experiment. But I have to say at that time, my subject, like my content and my work were still just a little bit up in the air, like I'm in cloud cuckoo land. And then I went back to China and I went to the factory and build up a relationship with local workers in fashion, industrial, not just you know, catwalks or the beautiful things, but also **THE LIFE OF THE CHINESE MANUFACTURERS**, and also the dark side of Chinese 'Made in China'. And I found my subject and put it into my container. And so, I started a lot of social concern projects in China. The context may be quite special and a little bit hard for foreigners to understand, but not for my friends in London as they know me better and my work, while I was in Royal College of Art. But now in China, people are familiar with me and the work that I did with social concern projects.

LL

That sounds great. I like that you use often the word container because it's actually the project that I was writing and I was writing the container for the "now", generation, for a younger generation. You're already on the container project to fill ideas and content. Gianfranco is another story. I know him a little bit better. We had the chance to talk many times. He's Filipino. He was born in Florence, but I leave his little story to himself because he can tell it better than I do.

GIANFRANCO VILLEGAS

Since I graduated in 2013, already from the graduation collection I got some attention from a Japanese distributor who actually had seen not my graduation collection, and a random performance video that I did during my graduation, where I was emulating and studying this particular Japanese group movement from the fifties, the Gutai movement, that basically were like painting and action painting in a really particular way. They were painting with the water guns or with electronic cars driven with a marker attached on the back. So, I decided to study them and how they were finding new colours or new graphics by doing this crazy stuff. So, I recorded the video. I put it online on the website of 'Not Just a Label'. After two weeks, I got an email from this

distributor saying, Oh, what you did is really crazy. It's something that we never saw before. So, I got an email and they said, okay, I want to buy your graduation collection. And actually, it had a really good feedback from the end consumer. And since then, they decided to support me and to distribute my collection in Japan.

But after that, I didn't want to properly launch my brand because I felt that I was still too young. So, first of all, I moved to Antwerp where I did my very first internship. And after that, I moved to Paris to do other work in some other companies. But while I was doing my internship, I was keeping alive, let's say, my project. **I CALL IT LIKE MY PERSONAL DIARY**. So nowadays the main signature of the brand Self-Made is like an embroidery that I'm using to write my words, my feelings. So already from the very beginning, I was writing all my, let's say pain, all my joys, everything that I had in mind that I wanted to express and to tell my consumers, and actually I've noticed that the consumers, were not only attached to the garment – also because it was good quality or was a nice colour – but **THEY WERE ATTACHED TO THE THINGS THAT I WAS EXPRESSING THROUGH THE WORDS THAT I PUT ON THE GARMENTS**. Since the very beginning I wanted to stay attached to this. I call it like **MY EXPRESSIVE ANIMAL INSTINCT**, where every season I'm trying to speak about the world we're living in, how I'm feeling, how I could change it, how I can support it. And that's basically what I am doing now while I am trying to work on my brand and still trying not to be too much compromised by the real fashion system, but still trying to keep alive my joy of doing this job and still trying to talk about things that I like. But then of course, later on, we're going to see that, you know, there are certain laws in a way this fashion system is driven by – by other things that you cannot control; driven by the marketing and by the sales feedback, price points and this kind of stuff, but still, I'm trying to have fun with my project and the garments and each collection.

LL

TinTin talk about your hat, and your impressions and messages that you have in that kind of project. What is the message of your work, where do you get your energy from?

TZ

So, it is actually an organic growing process; at the very beginning when I was in London, the first question that hit me is who am I, because, when I was in China, I didn't really have these feelings of asking myself, okay, what is my identity? I'm just TinTin and I didn't have to really think about what it is like, the real identity, and I just have a very strong feeling of expressing myself like this, **LIKE AN ANIMAL INSTINCT**. I want to express; **I WANT TO TELL PEOPLE MY FEELINGS AND MY THINKING**. I don't have a technique to provide them in a very sophisticated way and in the way that I expected to be. So, when I went to London, I wanted to learn how I can express myself better. And then the question just hit me when the tutor started to ask, okay, know who you are and know what your inner identity is! Zoe is the course leader and she does keep asking us these questions. And I was so annoyed for a period of time. I didn't even want to meet her. Don't ask me who I am, I don't want to answer this because I don't know, because I thought I knew because I was always very confident and I always knew that I wanted to do this, I want to do that. But then she asked us to do a mirror project, that is, you have to tell people who you are. And I was just stuck for the first time. I think, I don't know who I am. I am Chinese and I was born in the 1990's, this internet age, but if you ask me who I am, I really had no accurate words. And if I express it in a certain way, I just felt it's not all of it, it's just a very small piece of it.

And then I started to question myself, it's was really **A BIG SELF-QUESTIONING AT THAT TIME**. And then I started to find out that

actually I'm just like a cloud, you know, I'm like a container, because, when I was little, it was already internet time and **ALL THE INFORMATION AND CULTURE THAT I LEARNED WERE FROM THE INTERNET**. There were also small pieces and there's not something that I experienced physically. It's something that I get from the screen, I get from other people's words, because I was born in the 1990s, in that period of time.

China already opened the gate and it's already embracing all different kinds of culture. And it's not like in the culture revolution, and also because of the cultural revolution and the other previous history of China. I lost my connections with my own family, like if the culture stopped. So basically, **I'M LIKE A BLANK PAGE** and other Chinese societies had been like a blank page. And then suddenly the economics just developed so fast and we're receiving all the cultures, not just by doing trade or people come to our land and have some different lifestyle. It's not this way. It's by opening the gate and then connecting with the internet. So, for me, everything is a bit like very fast, and **I DON'T HAVE A FIXED CULTURAL ROOT** in any of the things I do. I can't say that – okay, I'm Chinese so my culture is about the paper cutting, is about the wood structure, is about the dragons, phoenix, the Spring Festival. I feel strange and I don't think that I'm much more familiar with these things than you guys. So, I have to be honest, then I think, okay, I don't really have a very physical or a very fixed identity. **I'M JUST LIKE A CLOUD** and information just flows inside of me. And I'm very good at perceiving this process the information, but **IT'S ALL ABOUT UPLOADING, DOWNLOADING, UPLOADING, DOWNLOADING, JUST LIKE A CONTAINER**. So, I'm not like my friends who are from East London and they just have that vibe that I'm so jealous of – that they just have this vibe of naturally, you know, that culture, they are stuck into the culture and they are just like sponges and every, every liquid comes from their body, just from East London. Me, **I AM FROM EVERYWHERE** and then nothing is very physical and deep, but they were mixed together and connected on a big scale. For me, and I have to be honest, then to tell them that I am a container, I'm not a cup of tea or a cup of coffee or a bottle of juice. I am a cup and you can pour all different kind of liquids inside me. And then I will become a juice, become a coffee, or become something.

Then I was thinking, okay, like a hat is very close to our head I have this kind of nervousness inside of me **THAT I WANT SOMETHING PHYSICAL, MATERIAL-WISE, NOT JUST VIRTUAL**. So, I was thinking, okay, can I make something connected to my identity, the cloud, transform this activity into fabrics or something you can actually touch and feel. So, I started to collect a lot of data and mixed them together. And then I did data visualizations to transfer the data into very beautiful visuals, adding different colours and adding my emotional feelings and then transfer all the data visualizations and my design arrangements into the engineered knitting machine to knit the information out.

And it's a very interesting thing because I used the technique called jacquard. I think we must be very familiar with jacquard, because I put a lot of information into it. It got a lot of colourful pixel spots and that makes the fabric in a very big curve, and I feel this curve has actually got something to do with the pattern. And then I added some other knitting patterns to dance with the curve to make them into small curves, so they have a very beautiful flow. It's not just a plain jacquard, it's a jacquard with different knitting textures. It's not a print, it's really lively, it feels like, a digital screen, but in real life. And then I try to allow them to achieve **A MERGING OF AESTHETICS OF PHYSICAL**

AND DIGITAL SCREENS in knitted fabrics. And then I started to change a lot of data, and make a series of hats with these fabrics. And they were all in different alien shapes, but I didn't block anything or put any structure to support them. They are just growing whatever they want. And I worked with it, danced with it. And so, the first series collection, I called them, cloud hat. And then at the final presentation, I still remember, at a standard presentation at the Royal College of Art, there was a guest, a professor, I really liked him, but I forgot his name. And he asked me one question: TinTin, it's a very fabulous project, but I want to ask you about all this information, what does this mean to you? They are very fabulous, as I can see you collect a lot of data, but what is the personal connection with you and those data? And that nervousness hit me again. I was like, okay, so I don't really have a topic. I say like, give me a break. I just found out I'm a container and I just made the fabrics to express myself, and maybe my topic is the next stage. And then when I was back in China, something magically happened ... I got my context. I think what I'm doing now, putting the context into my hats is my experience when I came back to China.

It's a beautiful story. **ARE WE NOT ALL SEARCHING FOR MEANING**, Gianfranco? When I see the three of us on my screen, we are such different generations, different moments in life. And I am also asking myself every day, who am I? And what is the purpose of what I am doing, why am I writing this fashion container project, because I could have easily done without, but I think we have, all three, the kind of dream that we should change something in the world. It's about the fashion system, but also about other systems, the whole political system is so old and traditional and tired. Gianfranco, don't you feel we have to change something in how we communicate with people?

Yeah. I mean, as TinTin was saying before, **WE ARE THE CHILDREN OF THIS NEW DIGITAL ERA** in which we are living now. For sure, everything, not only fashion, is adapting to the evolution of the world and of humanity. So, for sure everything is changing. Everything has changed thanks to the new technologies. And, from the communication to the proper final product, lots of things changed. At the same time, it's good I think to change, but at the same time, it's really important to preserve the proper knowledge, the feelings that people in this industry are putting into a collection. I think we should still preserve that, that joy, that pain, that feeling that brought us to choose that colour that brought us to choose that fabric. But of course, nowadays we are not communicating anymore that product as we were doing probably in the early eighties or nineties, **WE ARE GOING TO USE THE DIGITAL EVOLUTION**.

So now with all the platforms like Instagram, like Tik-Tok, we are using those platforms to communicate that colour that we chose. So, I think it's a funny and interesting moment we're living in, for all of us, from the older generation to the new generation, like seeing this big change that unfortunately has affected the world in terms of all the disasters that are happening, you know, lately to the world. So, for us working in this industry, **WE NEED TO HELP THE WORLD TO HEAL AND START WORKING IN A MORE FRIENDLY WAY**, because I think we, in the last years, **WE ONLY THOUGHT ABOUT CONSUMING AND PRODUCING GARMENTS**.

Unfortunately, as you said, Linda, fashion is the second industry that is polluting the most in the world. So, not only me and TinTin, the younger brands, but also the bigger brands need to start changing. Only if we're working all together, can we make a proper change because we cannot hide the fact that lots of natural disasters are happening and they are not happening ran-

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GV

domly. Actually, it was interesting, at the beginning of this new collection that we're going to present in January [2021], I actually had a meeting with all my suppliers, trying to find a solution with them. Actually, we spent a whole month in all our warehouses where we were stocking all our fabrics and with my team, we were looking at each other, trying to understand how we can reuse those fabrics. We used some wool and some ready-to-print cotton from probably five seasons ago, and we are going to reuse it, or we're going to reuse some jacquard and mohair. We are going to do a kind of mix and match of different fabrics. Also, of course, by reusing fabrics that you already bought in the past seasons we reduce the costs. So, first of all, we did this as a small thing in our company, but as well together with my suppliers, **WE TRY TO FIND – TO LOOK AND TO SEARCH FOR – FABRICS THAT WERE RECYCLED FROM THE VERY BEGINNING, FROM THE LOOM OR FROM THE THREAD ITSELF**, coming from upcycled fabrics as well. So, we are trying, but in our small reality, because of course we, I, cannot change the world. As I said, in the beginning, we need all together to work in the same direction, because we cannot hide, unfortunately, all the disasters that are happening to our fantastic world. I'm trying, in my small reality and I hope that things are going to change. I'm ready to see and to look forward to how fashion is going to change because the next fashion week is going to be digital. It's going to be interesting to see how other brands and other companies are going to present their work not physically, but digitally. It's an interesting moment, I think for the general culture, not only for fashion, but for music, for musicians, as they cannot do any more live concerts. They are trying to adapt to this new world by doing concerts on streaming. Let's see how art is going to do without any physical art fair. I'm looking forward to see the evolution.

LL Yes, me too. Do you think that we can stay out of the system and create a new system that is more humble and less pretentious, gentler to each other? I think we have to find a new normal for ourselves, and it's not about generations. I don't like the division in millennials, Generation Z...; I don't like those segmentations of society. I think we are all there together to find a new different system for bringing our ideas to the world with a humbler, and a less greedy mentality. What do you think, TinTin.

TZ Yes indeed, because when I came back to China, I found that China is becoming a huge market for all the big fashion brands. I am a fashion designer I am a young generation and I do some crazy stuff. And then a lot of big brands, especially the marketing people, just invite you to grab a cup of coffee and ask you more about Chinese people. They are indeed so important because we want to express our culture and we want to educate them. I would just want to tell them how amazing Chinese culture is. I feel it's so scary because then all the young people in **THE NEXT GENERATIONS, THEY ARE JUST HUNTED BY THE BIG BRANDS**, by the culture machine, because they are the biggest cultural critic –they're so powerful. And now it is the 'social media' time as well. Anything where the information can flow like a flood can just flow everywhere into everyone's life, not just in your target markets, but also to people who cannot afford the very big brand products; they can also get all those seducing images through the information from internet, from the social media. I just feel like they are creating so many desires, they're creating cultures based on the purpose of selling things; **THE MARKETING HAS BECOME TOO HIGH A PERCENTAGE OF THE WHOLE PROCESS**. And then, like the next generation, they all get used to learning from the internet, knowing about the culture of buying stuff from the big brands; learning what is Hip Hop culture, what

is African culture, what is Chinese culture? And they were educated by the big brands, and so they approach the cultures through the translation of the fashion business.

And I'm just really worried because I think it's better not knowing something. Then you just know a very biased or a very small part of it. And you think, oh, that is all there is about it. You know? So, I think it's just like **WE ALL LIVE IN A VERY INFORMATIVE AGE, BUT ACTUALLY PROBABLY WE KNOW LESS ABOUT A THING THAN BEFORE**, because before you could still experience things. Human is not an AI based on the big data, but human is based on small data, we can just know a little tiny bit of things. And then we have the emotions to picture and to imagine the rest of the things. That's a very unique way of human learning and receiving things. And that hugely abounds with creativity, because so many data from the fashion industry educate the young generation about what culture is. Because I also teach some of the young people, I give them some lectures as well, and I feel it's so hard to approach them, because if you ask them, what do you think of, for example, a plant, a flower, the answer from them will be all the things they read about online. I read about it, something tells me about this, and I know also something like colours ... but I cannot know these are all the true feelings about this flower, swimming through all the information, all the references that they get from the internet of the brands or the pop cultures, and then to approach their inner feelings about these flowers. For me, I feel we are all customers. We are not women or men or a teacher or a student or a banker. We're all customers. **THE CONSUMING BEHAVIOUR KIND OF SHOWS US WHO WE ARE**. I appreciate this or I appreciate that, but behind it is actually all lead by the advertisements.

LL I think you're right TinTin. And I think we can't close the internet, we can't stop this moment, but I think we can go deeper into our own personalities and our own beliefs. It's urgently time to stop thinking about the fashion system as it is, but use it as you think it's necessary. But I think we are ready and I am ready. We all are ready to find a new way to communicate, because connecting is actually the key word of my new fashion container programme. So, I think we have to close here. We had a fantastic discussion. Gianfranco, the last word is for you, he is the oldest guy. Oh no, that's me.

GV Yes, we need, as you said, to look more deeply inside ourselves; we can make a small change in our daily routine by how we're going to live from the morning to the evening, all the choices we are going to choose, you know, so **IT HAS TO BE WITH PASSION, NOT DRIVEN BY A COMMERCIAL GOAL** that we've seen on the Instagram feed. That's the most important thing to me. **TO LISTEN MORE TO OUR SOUL**.

LL To our soul. That's a good concept to start the day for me and Gianfranco and to end the day for TinTin. Thank you. It was a fantastic conversation!

GV Thank you it was interesting.

THE. » “LITTLE HISTORY. CON- TAINER# N° 6/11

THE CONTEMPORARY UNIVERSE IS TRAVERSED BY NOTIONS OF GRANDEUR, AIMED AT THE CONTROL OF DIMENSIONS THAT ESCAPE HUMAN CAPACITY THROUGH BIG DATA AND TECHNOLOGICAL SYSTEMS. WE MUST ACCEPT THAT THIS IS IMPOSSIBLE IF WE ARE TO RETURN TO A MORE TEMPERATE DIMENSION AND APPRECIATE NARRATIVES ON A HUMAN SCALE, AS CAN BE FOUND IN THE ESSENTIALITY AND COMPLEXITY OF AN OBJECT SUCH AS THE KIMONO.





BETWEEN STEFAN SIEGEL & ALESSIO DE' NAVASQUES

DECEMBER 3, 2020
LOS ANGELES 10AM/
ROME 7PM

Stefan Siegel, founder of Not Just A Label in Los Angeles, NJAL, and Alessio de' Navasques, co-creator of the Artisanal Intelligence project, and a writer and curator based in Rome, embrace craftsmanship and time, giving value and importance to the creativity that emerges away from the traditional centres of fashion and business. The Little History Container is the home of two complementary visions: one of an entrepreneur who gives visibility to emerging designers, using a digital platform to bypass intermediaries and traditional power structures; the other a curator whose work focuses on the rediscovery of local artisan production, enriching it with the story of its cultural heritage, woven throughout cinema, fashion and art. The changing of a system begins with ideas that render it obsolete, in turn supported by business models and visions. For designers, their skills as an entrepreneur are as important as the skills of their craft. However, they still need to be able to take risks and make mistakes, because a society which inhibits initiative through rules, costs and lack of opportunities, runs the risk of becoming impoverished itself. There will be cities that are open to creatives, giving life to new creations. And if these are not London, New York and Paris, we will need to find others.

LINDA LOPPA

Hello Stefan, Hello Alessio,

Stefan, could you present yourself and the database 'Not Just A Label' that everybody working in fashion is familiar with. What I appreciate about your work is that you are a counterbalance on the fashion weeks who are becoming really too powerful. So please, could you address this topic for starting the discussion.

STEFAN SIEGEL

Sure. Thanks so much, Linda, for having me. 'Not Just A Label' was created in 2008 to give visibility to every designer who has a great creative idea, who has a great vision for design. And we wanted to provide a free platform because, as you know, the fashion system, as it was functioning **FOR THE LAST 40/50 YEARS MEANT THAT UNLESS YOU SPEND MONEY, YOU WILL NOT GET THE VISIBILITY THAT YOU NEED TO BE ABLE TO RETAIL YOUR DESIGNS** and to be able to reach the customer. So, the system was always built in a way that it contradicts or in some way it hinders the designers from being able to reach the consumer who might be interested in purchasing their designs. I think for the last 10 years **WE'VE BEEN WORKING ON CUTTING OUT THE MIDDLEMAN** and creating a new system in fashion that connects the creators directly with the people they need to speak to and interact with. And I think we've achieved that by creating a platform that is free of cost for now close to 49,000 designers around the world. We've been working with about 200 universities around the world to just allow everyone, and especially fashion graduates, to use Not Just A Label, a bit like how people who go and study business would use LinkedIn. So, **IT'S BASICALLY A BUSINESS CARD IN THE ONLINE WORLD**. And it allows you to do anything you want with it. Over the years, we created many great projects to go beyond the digital platforms. We have created physical events in Italy, like the Origin show in Vicenza but also huge retail stores in Dubai, New York, Berlin, London to basically show the consumer that there's an alternative to established brands, but also an alternative to fast fashion.

And I think this year has been one for a significant change, but also a significant growth and an opportunity for growth. I would say almost like not reinventing the system, but I think with this year, the system has been forced to change and we took the initiative and for the first time introduced the retail functionality to our site. So, **WE LAUNCHED A MARKETPLACE WHERE EVERY DESIGNER ON NOT JUST A LABEL NOW CAN SELL DIRECTLY TO THE CONSUMER** and can completely bypass the fashion system as we know it. So, the first three months, it's been online since August, have been fantastic. We have been seeing incredibly interesting results that will change how fashion works. 40 per cent of our products that designers sell are made to order. That means we're going away from ready-to-wear. That means designers can wait for an order to come in and then make that garment from scratch and ship it out. So, contrary to the sort of *Amazonification* of the world, where everything needs to be delivered the next day, when somebody orders something they really want, and that is made for them, they are really willing to wait up to 30 days for that product. As Not Just A Label, we take the risk away from everyone because the consumer pays us. We let the designer work on the garment, they ship it, and then the designer gets paid. We give 70 per cent of the retail price to the designers, which is huge. If you would buy the same dress on Net-A-Porter, the designer would probably get about 8 to 10 per cent. So there's a huge increase in terms of profit margin, because the designers don't have to go to fashion weeks, as you mentioned, they don't have to go to trade shows, they don't need a PR agency. They don't need to send samples to an editor at Vogue

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ALESSIO DE' NAVASQUES

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magazine. So, **IT'S A COMPLETE DEMOCRATIZATION OF FASHION**, but at the same time, you know, curating is still very important and we, as Not Just A Label, we want to make sure that this site is always well curated, because in the end, you know, the average order on our website is about \$350. So, we're still in a very high segment. But I think this is the future because **WE'RE GOING AWAY FROM DESIGNERS OVER-PRODUCING** as they can wait for orders to come in. We have a new term that we call **CUT - TO - ORDER**, which means the designer waits for the order and starts cutting only when the order has come in. So, designers are not sitting on boxes full of dresses in small, medium, and large [sizes], and are waiting to ship them out. And we have seen an exceptionally low return rate; since August, we had less than 2 per cent of returns. If you compare it to Yoox, to Net-A-Porter, the return rate is over 60 per cent for those companies. Because people buy five dresses and send four back, or even they send all five back. With us, people do not return the item simply because they know they're working directly with a maker. So, yes, **IT'S AN INNOVATIVE BUSINESS MODEL IN FASHION**, but in a very embarrassing way for fashion, it's also a business model that existed 500 years ago, when you went to a tailor and he had something made for you, you know, and it took that long for the fashion industry to change. And hopefully we can build on that.

Yes, the time was ready for a change. I guess that young designers are really enthusiastic about the change. They need to have that freedom. I think there is a lot of hope and I appreciate enormously what you do for those designers. Alessio, you are also taking care of heritage. You believe that craftsmanship and heritage are important, but you will this explain better and point to what you are up to in the coming years.

Yes, my research has started from craftsmanship because I founded the project 10 years ago, called *Artisanal Intelligence, AI*, that in a way is the opposite of Artificial Intelligence. And 10 years ago, this concept of Artificial Intelligence was not so strong as now. Artisanal Intelligence is something difficult to define, but it is present in all Italian manufacturing in a way. My research just started from that **TO CONNECT FASHION WITH OTHER ARTS, VISUAL ARTS, CINEMA**. So, we worked at this project that had exhibits, but not only on exhibits, a sort of new model, like a mood board, a sort of big mood board, in which there were heritage, new designers and archives. And this started in Rome because Rome is the place for that, in a way, if we think about the importance of cinema. We've just finished an exhibit in Rome that was about the inspiration between costume design and fashion. And this is the real DNA that we have, if you just think about the designers starting from here -Alessandro Michele, Maria Grazia Chiuri or Pierpaolo Piccioli - that is something that is very connected with the cinema heritage. What I'm talking about is that **THIS DNA IS PRESENT IN ALL COUNTRIES, IN EVERY DIFFERENT HERITAGE** there is a way to talk between people. We started this project in Tulum, that was to connect the design, the contemporary design with the local community in which the **CRAFTS ARE A WAY TO EXPRESS ALSO A SPIRITUAL AND VERY DEEP MESSAGE** that they received from nature, something super important and sacred. This is for me very important, and could be a way to rethink the future. It is becoming a trend for different brands to talk about crafts and partnerships, but it's also a way to produce less and to be more conscious and more sustainable because the artisanal production is sustainable in a way and an important value for the new generations from what I see in schools and the collaborations and workshops that we did.

Stefan, you see a lot of kids coming from school; are they always at

a good level? What do they not have?

If I would have given you an answer a year ago, there's a different answer now with what is going on in the world. I think **THERE'S PROBABLY NO EDUCATION IN THE WORLD THAT CAN PREPARE YOU FOR WHAT WE'RE GOING THROUGH RIGHT NOW**. I think there are no rules and, I mean, are designers prepared? No. But I think, I hope, they find a moment of wakening where obviously the traditional fashion education teaches you also the traditional fashion system, which includes, you know, all the middlemen that we discussed, from trade shows to fashion weeks, to distributors, to show-rooms. The fact that you have to basically rent your collection to a store and then they sell it for you and you get your money a year later, and all of these things that were so prevalent in previous times, because in some way it was built so that designers were almost forced to sort of pay their dues to be part of the fashion game and this system. I think that is gone now.

And I think if there's **ONE THING THAT DESIGNERS NEED TO KNOW RIGHT NOW IS HOW TO SELL DIRECTLY FROM THEIR STUDIO**. I think that's one really important thing. And the other important thing is being flexible in how they operate their business. I think the businesses that will continue to exist and grow next year are the businesses that can scale up really quickly, but they can also scale down really quickly. I think as a business owner, you need to be flexible and you need to be able to, let's say, **WORK FROM YOUR HOME, BUT YOU NEED TO BE ABLE TO EMPLOY 10 PEOPLE WHEN YOU NEED THEM**, but you also need to be able to run your business alone when things get really tough. And that's how I think you should continue building that business. I don't think there's any indication that teaches you what, you know, even us as a business are going through right now, because we're sitting at home and running the business from our kitchen tables. But interestingly enough, Not Just a Label in 2016, took the decision to already build up a team that works around the world on a remote basis. I've been working from home for the last two or three years because we were in London, we had about 30 employees in one big office and the rent kept on going up. And at some point, I realized that 50 or 60 per cent of our yearly costs are just overheads from having an office. So, the same thing applies to designers. I think the creativity is something they learn in school or they get inspired elsewhere and that's not what I'm concerned about. **WHAT I'M CONCERNED ABOUT IS HOW YOU GET DIGITALLY SAVVY?** How do you do your photography properly? You know, so many designers who are uploading products to our marketplace right now don't even have current descriptions; how would you describe your dress in a way that somebody wants to buy it, or how do you describe your dress so that somebody can understand if they need to get a medium or a large [size]; these are all points that designers need to start learning.

In fact, it's another business model they have to learn. And they are their own CEO and they have to be careful that they produce locally; do we produce more locally? Alessio and Stefan the same question.

I think it's becoming more interesting to be more local as we are re-discovering our production, our tradition. For me, my point is now that the creative director is becoming someone that doesn't only make clothes, but does projects with artists. When I teach, **WHAT I SEE THAT IS REALLY MISSING, IS THE RESEARCH**. The research is becoming flat, something very Instagram, very superficial. The difference is that all the brands, the big brands do millions of projects right now and in the past it was not like that. Now they do film, they do exhibits, they do collaborations with artists, because all these materials are

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produced for the online. That's why we need to be ready. Everything started from a sort of knowledge that we are losing in school, because sometimes they are very technical. And the research is flat when you see the mood board it's hard to see something really new and interesting. It's something that is taken from Pinterest, it is something that is taken from Instagram. You see this image and you ask them what is that? And they don't know; I saw it on Instagram, I saw it on Pinterest. It seems there is no story behind the research, behind an image that is taken for a collection.

How can we resolve that Stefan?

Difficult. I mean, you know, to your earlier questions, **I THINK LOCAL PRODUCTION IS NECESSARY** right now because when the lockdown started to happen around the world, there were those designers who were waiting for their shipping container from China to be offloaded at the port and their factories were closed. I think they were completely stifled in terms of how they run their business. And then there are other designers who manufacture locally and then their business is doing really well. I think that productions are coming back into the local or regional environment in terms of inspiration. I have to agree with Alessio. **SOCIAL MEDIA IS THE ENEMY OF THE WORLD RIGHT NOW**, and it's really, really hard and I think the hardest part is that social media is such a low, the lowest hanging fruit in terms of technology. You know, **THERE'S SO MUCH INTERESTING TECHNOLOGY OUT THERE**. But the fact that we, in fashion, unfortunately, are pretty happy with something that is quite average, and Instagram is now the biggest tool that people use in fashion to be inspired, but also to inspire others. And that's an issue. I read a really interesting quote and it said: "the guru does not sit on a mountain and say, have you seen my Instagram account?" And I think that really applies here.

If we can overlap the digital and become more curators, curating is a word that has been used and overused especially in fashion and in art, but I think if a designer learns to curate a dress and tell the story and make it more beautiful by producing a kind of interesting imagery, we make a step forward. What do you think Stefan?

I fully agree. I think it's just hard at the moment to sort of say we should all be more inspired. Because it's hard. I see even with myself and my girlfriend. The first four or five months of the pandemic for us were great because being in California and having nice weather and endless nature up here we completely fell in love with nature again, and we were out there and we were inspired. And now that it's autumn and it's getting colder and I'm sure in Europe it's even worse, it's just, you're stuck. And at some point, you just stop dressing up, you start wearing sweat pants, you start wearing hoodies. Sometimes you don't need to be dressed anymore. So, I have days where I'm not even inspired by my own life and I'm looking at this screen every day for 10 hours and it's just hard, but I think what is more interesting is perhaps there is something that we will find in 20 years from now, **WE WILL LOOK BACK AT THE ERA OF THE PANDEMIC AND THERE'S A REALLY INTERESTING TYPE OF FASHION THAT CAME OUT**. I hope it's more than the hoodie, but we'll see. Although the hoodie at the moment is the most sold item in fashion globally.

Stefan do you believe, or Alessio do you believe that smaller cities can again produce interesting designers?

I do a project in Italy that is about the migrant trend, the trend created by migrants, the refugees that are in Italy. We helped them to develop their dreams, to study fashion, to have their tailoring. And what is interesting

is their approach to fashion. **WE REALLY NEED THEM, BECAUSE THERE'S SOMETHING SUPER, SUPER WONDERFUL NEW ENERGY IN FASHION.** New ideas and really a new subculture, how they mix the fake, they have their trends, they love to have elements of wax mixed with street culture. We did a lot of workshops together with a museum in Rome. It was super interesting. I think the big cities are a little bit strange and in the cities that are dominated by business it is more and more difficult to find something interesting, something new.

LL Where do you find the best design Stefan? In what kind of zone in the world?

SS We've always been saying that **FASHION COMES FROM MORE THAN JUST FOUR FASHION CAPITALS** and our website is a testament to that. I mean, there are designers from 150 countries and we have 300 new designers joining every month and they come from five continents. So, the city of origin for us doesn't really matter because we see creativity being fantastic all around the world.

What is happening now though, is interesting because about two or three years ago, especially with Brexit, but also with the cost of living being so high in cities like New York and London, those two cities, they lost about 34 per cent of their young, creative populations of people between 25 and 35 years old left those cities. And we know where they went. They went to Berlin to Barcelona, to Rome, to Warsaw, in the US they went to Nashville, to Bozeman. And these are really interesting up and coming cities. What actually just happened, which is funny, just an hour ago, I was actually speaking on a panel for the region of Alto Adige, where I'm from, and they're working on some sort of way of recognizing their own creative economy. And I think they're very early in realizing that there's a regional power now. **THERE'S NO REASON TO BE IN THESE BIG CITIES ANYMORE.** I'm paying thousands of euros, of dollars, on rent. And I always said, if creatives are not allowed to make mistakes and the society doesn't benefit, because **WE NEED TO PUT CREATORS IN A PLACE WHERE THEY CAN EXPERIMENT, RESEARCH, THEY CAN MAKE MISTAKES OVER AND OVER AGAIN,** and then finally come up with something that is finally ready, but it needs to be ready when they want, and not when they need to sell it because they need to pay next month's rent. So, I think it's interesting what's happening. And there's no reason for people to live in these big cities anymore. And it's great that it's coming back, that **PEOPLE CAN GO TO SMALLER TOWNS AND THEY CAN USE THE REGIONAL RESOURCES** they have there, which are fantastic. So, we'll see what's happening.

LL I believe in those neighbourhoods and in a new energy coming from smaller cities. I'm looking forward to that new way that young people will connect, because big brands have become bigger and more powerful and the smaller ones have to work harder to have visibility. There is a kind of new balance that is going to be developed. Stefan, you were the first to prove it, but there is a lot of work to do, I guess?

SS Yes, let's say, the playing field is getting more levels. I think what is great is that if designers are digitally savvy and they can use the internet the right way, then there are no boundaries. They can become very big very quickly. **BUT I THINK THERE'S A LOT THAT POLITICS AND INFRASTRUCTURES CAN DO.** It's really interesting because I've not been living in Italy for a long time, but I was just told that the profession of an artist is not even recognized in Italy. So that's what those petitions were just saying in the panel that I was on. And I was shocked. There's no Partita Iva [vat number] for our artists, which is

crazy. You know, it's like the birthplace of art and that's not recognized. I think these are the things that need to change. And then hopefully the good thing is if you look at how much support agriculture gets. If you have to buy a machine for operating your fields and that costs €500.000, there's a way to finance that through the government. But if a photographer needs to buy a camera for €20.000, there's nothing! But I think the return on investment is huge now. I think there are cities like Antwerp, like Nashville in the music industry and so on, **IF THERE ARE SMALL HUBS THAT CAN NOW ACT AND JUST SAY, WE HAVE A BUILDING, LET'S FILL IT WITH ARTISTS, LET'S MAKE NO RENT AND LET'S REDUCE THE TAXES FOR THOSE PEOPLE AND HELP THEM, THEN THERE'S A HUGE POTENTIAL AS WELL.**

ADN What Stefan does is great. I've worked a lot with Altaroma – that's a competition that happens in Rome with young designers; the real problem for the designers, is to create their own business, as communication and publication is great, but the real point is how can you build your business? In Italy there is a big problem around that because there is no new brand really, or very, very few. And there were so many important competitions. Many designers are supported by the Camera della Moda in Milan, but no one has a real business or very few. Some, like *The Attico* who won a prize from Altagamma as young entrepreneur, by themselves through their social media power. And what Stefan does is great, to give the opportunity to develop, to have a window.

I think in the future, **THE STORE WILL BE A SORT OF ARCHIVE** in which you can see the clothes, and then you can order online. The store is a big issue to discuss, because I don't know if in the future there will be stores. It's something that will be an experience, it will be something like an archive for me.

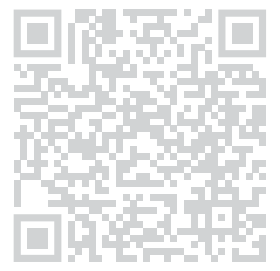
LL I feel, so far, with everybody I talked to, there was a kind of optimistic, positive feeling. There is a kind of tiredness, but I feel there is also a kind of optimism and especially in smaller cities.

ADN Yeah, I think **THERE IS AN OPPORTUNITY TO REBUILD THE SYSTEM THAT IS FINISHED IN A WAY.** With the same ways, the same worlds, there will be something new for sure.

LL So, let's finish on this survival positive note. And I thank you both for this interesting conversation. Thank you, Stefan, for all the work for young designers, we appreciate it. Keep on doing this, because we need you. Thank you Alessio. Have a nice day.

THE. » “SPEAK- ERS” . » COR- NER# N° 7/11

IN A SYSTEM DOMINATED BY A SMALL NUMBER OF IMPOSING ENTITIES, A NEED ARISES TO LISTEN TO THE PLURALITY OF VOICES THAT NOURISH FASHION AS A SOCIAL AND CREATIVE ENVIRONMENT – ONE THAT CHALLENGES THE PRESENT AND BUILDS FOR THE FUTURE. TRENDS WERE ALREADY MOVING AWAY FROM FOLLOWING UNAMBIGUOUS STYLES, TRENDS THAT THE PANDEMIC HAS EXAGGERATED, HIGHLIGHTING THE HOPE THAT FASHION WILL MIRROR THE COMPLEXITY OF CONTEMPORARY REALITY.





BETWEEN ANNE TIMERMAN & SAM COTTON

DECEMBER 2, 2020
NEW YORK 11 AM/
LONDON 5PM

Anne Timerman, co-founder of TM/R, a creative studio in New York, and Sam Cotton, a London-based designer, creative director, and consultant for creativity and innovation in fashion, find a point of contact within the Speakers Container in the use of technology relating to brand design and production processes. Together with husband Eugene, Anne Timerman has developed a unique methodology based on the systematic exploration of forms, where mathematical algorithms generate a variety of original forms, which are derived from existing graphic elements, and which highlight new areas for design solutions. The studio acts as a creative partner, with the aim of expanding the identities of collaborating brands, which include Dior, Louis Vuitton, Nike, and Cartier. With a background in philosophy, Sam Cotton has an interest in the idea of freedom of choice, in a world in which decision-making processes and behaviour are influenced by algorithms. As an example, the project 'An Image of Thoughts' is an audio installation where the words have been digitally generated, and which has its roots in studies on language by philosophers such as Jacques Derrida and Ludwig Wittgenstein. Sectors overlap and mesh, critically retracing the entire creative process of a brand, starting with the questions it has to answer about its identity, and extending into the large-scale production involved in mass consumption. Now more than ever, understanding must find its way upstream in the supply chain, so that producers as well as consumers are aware of the choices that need to be made. A process where technology, still often viewed with distrust by fashion houses, can be of integral support.

LINDA LOPPA Hello, good morning Anne, and good afternoon, Sam. It's good to have you both here in this conversation, cause you're both so fascinated by algorithms, by patterns, by a lot of things that for me are a little bit difficult to understand. I would like to introduce first Anne. What is your main job today and how are you working in relation to companies making their brand identity, working with technology?

ANNE TIMERMAN We work with a lot of companies as creative partners: Dior, Cartier, Issey Miyake, Nike, Vuitton. Our projects originate in identity and then expand into architecture, interiors, facades, even master planning. Our approach is about technology and creative ways to use it. I can tell a little bit more about what kind of tricks we're using. But, right now, there are three ongoing projects we develop in parallel and try to use with all of our clients. One is Visual Analysis that allows us to look closely at images, at existing images of the company. And since we work so much with large brands that have amazing histories, it's really a lot of materials that we can look at. We build custom databases to look at these. The next one is work with design elements and patterns, and the most recent one is transforming into time, being able to look at the development of shapes and patterns in time.

LL It might be good to talk about that, to understand where you would like to go with technology.

SAM COTTON Well, I suppose from a background point of view I approach projects and work in a similar way to Anne, but that's kind of process usually lends its way towards the actual production product and also the sort of creation and the sort of philosophy behind why that product needs to exist. So, from that point of view, I go quite deep into history of philosophy, mystery of sciences, algorithms, why people make the decisions they make, how humans behave. And through this process, I have worked with a variety of brands, in tandem with the University of Central London and the *Institute of Making*. And this year I've been sitting on these projects for a while. I kind of just wanted to really start to explore them a little bit more as some of the projects, the one you mentioned, *An Image of Thoughts*, basically challenged the idea of the fallibility of language. I've always found, I suppose from a macro level, **I'VE ALWAYS FOUND COMPUTERS AND ALGORITHMS, QUITE A BEAUTIFUL THING**. Luxury fashion really struggles with technology. I think they find technology not very sexy. Unfortunately, these sort of things, have hampered the growth of projects that I wanted to do in the past. At this point, I just decided that I would actually go ahead with it. I worked with this creative algorithmic processor based between Canada and America and New York. And together we wanted to challenge, looking at the works of Derrida, Wittgenstein, **THE FALLIBILITY, AS I MENTIONED, OF LANGUAGE**. So, we started this project together where we took the evolution of language, **WE SHOWED HOW LANGUAGE ITSELF POTENTIALLY CAN BE AFFECTED BY INVASIONS, BY CULTURAL SLURS, CHANGING OF LANGUAGES**. And what we wanted to do is that we wanted to see that sort of track of evolution towards what language is doing, and then push the language even further and see if we can get closer to meaning as Wittgenstein wanted; he wanted to find what language potentially could do for us and not be so constricted by what it's actually doing organically really.

AT Well, I think the most interesting things that happen, happen by chance. So you do something very intentionally and set up a process and then something goes wrong. Or maybe we just, you know, we're kind of clicking away. **I THINK THE WORST THING IS TO BE VERY SERIOUS WHILE YOU'RE WORKING.**

LL I know that you both are interested in errors, the error of weaving, the error of... Could you go deeper in that concept?

SC I always find there's an argument that people make that the reason why creativity through humans is always going to stand out above creativity over robotics or algorithms, is that there's **THE FALLIBILITY OF ERROR WHAT MAKES HUMAN ART BEAUTIFUL**. I've always been quite fascinated by this and the more that science has kind of read into it, the big thing that I've kind of been processing the most is this idea of the non-free will. So, everyone believes that they have the free will to make every decision they make. But ultimately through a variety of tests, which I'm not going to go into all of them because there's a lot and it takes quite a while to explain, but actually this argument, to say that **WE DON'T ACTUALLY HAVE FREE WILL, OR THE DECISIONS THAT WE MAKE ARE BASED ON, NURTURED BY OUR DNA PROCESSES** that occurred for us in the past. If that is the case and everything that we're doing, even the mistakes that we're making are, they're kind of already outlaid for us to process them and do them. Now, there's no reason why you can't do the same thing with computers. Things like chaos algorithms, there's an artist I've always loved called John Cale and John Cage as well. John Cage and John Cale both used to produce this thing called prepared piano, where they'd take equipment and they'd put nuts and bolts and scissors and stuff, and they'd be able to resonate noises that were not what that instrument was supposed to do. And in theory, it's just processing errors into the instrument. For me, it was like, how do you take that to the next level? **HOW DO YOU START MAKING ERRORS FOR SOMETHING THAT IS SEEN AS SO PERFECT?** But it really isn't because you can cause a lot of mischief and problems by putting code errors into algorithms or into machinery, like we mentioned, like weaving machines. I just find that quite interesting.

AT Yes, yes, yes. For sure. It's actually so, I love this work, **IT SEEMS THAT MACHINES CAN BE MUCH MORE CREATIVE THAN HUMANS**, but it's always the interaction between humans and computers, how you program, and how you interact with the computer. And that's actually where we try to subvert the way a program is working. Right? You can say that any computer program we use was built to do certain things. So, you can draw a rectangle or you can move or scale. **BUT HOW YOU CAN PLAY AGAINST THIS PROGRAM, AGAINST THE MACHINE, AND DO SOMETHING THAT WAS NOT INTENDED TO DO IN IT**. So, it's this kind of interaction.

SC I was just gonna say, it's the same as Anne is saying, bang on, it's like people often talk about how important craft is. And I love craft. It's like, I never knew another business that focuses on the encouragement of craft. But people obsess over the historical processes of craft and machinery and men, women putting their hands together and making something. But all of those things are exactly what Anne said that is still the same process of using a machine or a tool to process and make through human thought. Now doing that same process in algorithms or within high-level machinery is exactly the same process. So, **IT'S JUST THE NEXT LEVEL UP OF CRAFT**, basically for me.

LL I know you're both interested in 3D printing. How do you see the connection with algorithms and the errors?

AT Lots of errors happen in 3D printing for sure. But I think **IF WE ARE TALKING ABOUT COMPUTERS, WE'RE PRODUCING BITS, HOPEFULLY, WE'RE PRODUCING MEANINGS**. But if we start to talk about how we make, weave, build things that we designed, how we turn bits into the matter, it's a completely different story in terms of what kind of errors can happen.

And it becomes already way, way more complicated.

LL Sam, you were also hoping to do artistic work. How do you feel about that with the 3d printing? Is it working? At what stage are you in this process?

SC I've got a printer in Switzerland that I'm working with at the moment, and it is on trial level because I think, I mean, the things that I want to do with 3d printers have to take a lot of trust by the person who owns the printers, because I kind of want to put material through them that isn't conventional. We spoke a little bit about this and herself, quite serendipitously, was interested in running clay and cement through machines. And I've been trying to ultimately 3d printers will print anything that can become liquid form. So, metals, I've seen works by some artists to melt down the processes that they're using to generate the 3d and then reprint that into an item. Anything that can melt down and do it, is game. But it's making sure that those people who own the machines are like, okay, yeah, we can clean them afterwards, or it's not going to break the thousands of pounds worth of machines. So yeah, we're close.

LL Anne what is your latest project that you like so much?

AT Well, the latest thing that we made actually, I sent you this morning. **IT TRACKS THE DEVELOPMENT OF FORM IN TIME.** We're trying to understand what's the best way to create and develop form. The typical process, if you work with any program is command — response, back and forth. Another way is to use an existing algorithm, something like Voronoi, for example, that has a certain look that you can use. You can very easily recognize both: designs that were made with the back-and-forth process and parametric designs. You can recognize the algorithms that you know already. We work with brands that all have to be differentiated from each other. They have to be unique and look different. We cannot allow any certain recognizable look that will be the same across different brands. So what we're trying to do is build design processes, maybe they are black boxes in a way, right? You put something, some input on one side and you get a result on the other. The process is completely custom-built, code that is done for a specific project and leads to a unique, new design. **AND I ALWAYS FELT THAT THE PROCESS ITSELF IS SO MUCH MORE INTERESTING, SEEING HOW THE FORM IS PUT TOGETHER.** So now, we're trying to capture the process and see how form develops in time. So we get a time object that not only happens as one image but it's continuous. So that's, in a way, what was interesting. And I think part of it was this lockdown and the fact that we could no longer make things that are three-dimensional, for example, a facade in the store. A person walks around, the object is static, but it's animated through the movement of the person. But if we don't have that, then the movement has to be somehow built into the digital object itself.

LL There is a link between not only the technical, but also the fashion element. Sam, you're a designer, you have your own brand, Raiment, you're doing a lot of consultancy lately. I wanted to ask you about the shift in fashion, like high fashion, luxury, all those big brands where Anne, you are working for. Sam, talk a bit about your consultancy and how your brand is doing and what you actually feel about fashion today? Be careful! Because you wanted to be in the "speakers' corner" and this is the speaker's corner. We have to say what we think here. Yeah, go!

SC So, I suppose, being someone who can actually say something for free, trying to work out the best way to put it, this I suppose means being freelance to me. I was based in-house before I was freelance. I had a lot of different consultancy gigs. And I had started at my own brands, which I got

investment for. I came back earlier this year, obviously to what happened with coronavirus and, as you know, been getting more and more disillusioned with the industry itself. I'll go into that in a little bit more detailed in a minute, but I think, also basically what happened with my brand, we had a second season, we had a really good season. We took like 40 stores, we're a brand-new brand, which is really good. We were picking up like some really good department stores and luxury boutiques. Obviously, Coronavirus happened, all of those wholesale banks wouldn't lend us any money. Everyone canceled their orders or if they couldn't get money from the banks to loan because it was too much volatile market. **THE WHOLE WORLD KIND OF CHANGED.** I was thinking, I really value the life I lead in London. I really love it here. I found the city I was in quite restrictive. I found what I was doing quite restrictive and the industry quite difficult. And I thought this is really troublesome. And kind of long story short this year has kind of really changed that.

I think more companies now have become aware that **IT IS POSSIBLE TO WORK ABROAD. IT IS POSSIBLE TO HAVE PEOPLE DIGITALLY COMMUNICATE AND DESIGN IS POSSIBLE TO, I DON'T KNOW, WORK IN THIS WAY THAT INVOLVES LESS PHYSICAL PRESENCE AND MORE OPENNESS TO INNOVATIVE IDEAS THAT COME OVER, COME ONLINE.** So, for me working freelance has been really good. I think it's, in some ways, I suppose, **BEING FREELANCE, YOU'RE FREE TO SAY WHAT YOU WANT.** There is still that fear of longevity to the work that you have, but I suppose in terms of that, now it enabled me to be more selective with who I work with. I think in the past for other companies, if you worked in a house, I think you start developing the worst like Stockholm syndrome, in effect going along with that house's narrative, go along with the house typologies, what it is to deal with sales, buying behavior, who the consumer is and then I think ultimately when you're in that bubble, working in luxury, you sort of sink deeper and deeper and deeper into this reactive design decisions, which is probably the only way I can really put it.

THE COLLECTION STARTS FROM A POINT OF VIEW THAT'S NOW MIRRORING THE CONSUMER RATHER THAN CREATING SOMETHING NEW AND GROUNDBREAKING. And because ultimately, I suppose, new and groundbreaking is a risk and a risk means money and risking money is like the equivalent of playing Russian roulette with your career. It's like, it's really scary. And I think, for me now working in this way, and now there's this big shakeup in the industry where, I don't know, **I THINK FREELANCE IS NOW REALLY VITAL TO BUSINESSES BECAUSE IT'S IMPORTANT THAT THEY COME IN TO SHAKE THE SORT OF STATUS QUO OF THE BRAND THAT ULTIMATELY,** it's, I suppose, it's like a fresh set of eyes for the company. You're somebody coming in with a completely different aspect, from a completely different, maybe, cultural notion. Seeing a planet at the moment, which is shut down literally in different times in times of the week, day, month, so many changes. So, I think it's really important. I think at the moment people are starting to notice that maybe I was saying something right before all this happened and now, they want a piece of it.

LL Always good things in the bad things. It's always love and hate. And it's always a struggle if something happens like we had this year, some good things happened as well. I mean, like I was writing those containers, I didn't know when it was going to be. And here we sit talking to each other. **IT'S SOMETIMES A BREAK THAT WE NEED AND A SHAKEUP TO SAY HELLO IN THE MORNING, WHAT ARE WE DOING WITH OUR LIVES, WHERE ARE**

WE GOING?

I was just, sorry to interrupt. So, before miss the point, I was going to start with that. Um, yeah, exactly. What you're saying is, it's really weird, I mean, it's not weird how we've got into it, but that idea of you valuing products that you've owned 40 years, like, the idea of craft and consideration of design, somehow, well, **OBVIOUSLY THROUGH NEO-LIBERALISM, MASS MANUFACTURE, MASS CONSUMPTION, WE'VE NOW BEING KIND OF BLIND-SIDED TOWARDS WHAT IS IMPORTANT IN DESIGN.** And, I think for me, I mean, I know I mentioned before when we were talking about this, before you mentioned this idea of wild design being important and I think, sorry, wild ideas. And I was going to bring up this thing then, because I put a note on it. I think wild ideas are really important and shaking up the industry is very important. But ultimately wild ideas need to be grounded and understanding. **MY RESEARCH, IT STARTS WITH PHILOSOPHICAL WRITING, ECONOMIC MODELS, SOCIAL ENGAGEMENT, ETHICAL PROCESSES, HISTORICAL DESIGN.** And I think to do those wild ideas, we also need to understand where those ideas have come from and to know where we're going. For example, we know, I've mentioned, for me homogeny is one of the worst things in design at the moment, it's killing the industry. It's basically this whole industry was built on this idea of having self-expression and individuality. But brands are so scared at the moment of doing something new, and trying something that's different to what everyone else is doing. And, it's just really, really, really hard. And I think for this to have an effect, it's like you said, in the past, you've grown up valuing quality and design and something that's timeless. I need to change that, we really need to, I think we're doing it now, but **I THINK WE NEED TO GO DEEPER INTO THIS NEW IDEA OF AWARENESS** how things are being developed, why things are being developed, why it has its place in society, its meaning, its innovation. I think the only way this will ever change is if there is **A MONUMENTAL CHANGE, POLITICALLY, IDEOLOGICALLY,** I think, mass manufacture needs to be considered, we did this to ourselves with offshoring, but I don't know, until that sort of stuff is levied and controlled and businesses are more inclined to sell better and less, then we are going to find it really difficult to overthrow this sort of mass consumerism at the moment. Sorry. That was a bit of a tirade, but yeah.

Nothing is impossible. It's just to believe in it and be enthusiastic and convincing. Anne are you optimistic with your research because you found now that maybe there are smaller brands who need you.

Yes, but when you're **TALKING ABOUT THE ENVIRONMENT, I AM NOT VERY OPTIMISTIC.** We have a three-year-old and I don't know how things are going to be when she grows up. I'm coming from the old world, I was brought up in Moscow among grandparents who grew up during the first world war and then went through all of the disasters of the 20th century. Their stories always loomed large for me, only in the last few years I stopped thinking about them. And with the lockdown, the memories of my grandparents came back. At the same time, when I talk to people we work with, at technology companies, the feeling is completely different, **IT'S PERCEIVED AS AN OPPORTUNITY TO DO BUSINESS AROUND ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES** and technologies that deal with cleanup and the development of new materials and processes.

In fact, we made a mess out of it, that's true. We were unconscious, greedy, and we were not really thinking about the globe. Now, if we plant a tree every day, maybe we solve the situation. So maybe we should have a new

technology to have a tree that we can plant. I think what our work is and what your work is, it's always about passion, it's passion that drives us. And for you, that drive can bring the brand identity to a better level. I think we have to be positive in a way. I mean, you can't think about all the negative things. It's the 'speakers' corner' the solution to say what we think aloud.

And it's really important right now, personally, because I think, I mean, as you kind of touched it, I've been growing really disillusioned with the industry. I mean, as you know Linda, I mean, you more than anyone **BECAUSE YOU'VE STARTED THIS WHOLE CONTAINER PROJECT BECAUSE OF YOUR DISILLUSION WITH THE INDUSTRY.** So, I thought when COVID hit, myself felt like one of those, frustrated, prophetic, soothsayers where I was basically, I mean, I've been working on projects for the last four years, like I said, with the UCL and the *Institute of Making* and all these material innovation departments, because I just really wanted to see a change happen. That's what drove me aesthetically, functionally. And I could see how behind the times the whole luxury industry become. I saw this massive gap that was being utilized within automation and architecture. And I kind of saw this stuff, innovation, material design, economic models, marketing, all these things. And **I WAS TRYING TO BRING THE LUXURY INDUSTRY INTO THE FUTURE AND KIND OF LET IT EMBRACE PROGRESSIVE INNOVATION AND TECHNOLOGY,** but apparently that's way easier said than done, because it was difficult. Nobody wanted to budge on the old methods. And as we said technology, isn't sexy. It wasn't sexy at the moment, but now you see the whole industry, like, and it's frustrating because **YOU JUST SEE THE WHOLE INDUSTRY NOW PANICKING!** They're trying to jam round pegs into square holes and desperate for the technology to be sexy for them. But they just don't know how to do it. And I don't know, it just seems really disingenuous. And when you start seeing Chanel, without naming names, you see Chanel trying to do this, 360° digital, catwalky 3d affair things. And I'm just like, have you just gone on to future laboratory, clicked who does 3d shows when you do this? Cause this is technology. You can be smarter than that. You don't have to, your consumers, aren't people are going to log into your 3d show and get a VR headset to scan themselves into a thing, it's like be smarter. But **I BELIEVE THIS OPPORTUNITY ALLOWS PEOPLE LIKE MYSELF AND ANNE TO COME TOGETHER AND ACTUALLY START TO FIND THE RIGHT AND RESTRICTED PLATFORM TO SHOW OUR THOUGHT AND OUR DESIGN PROCESS AND ACTUALLY LET IT HAVE INFLUENCE!** I mean, Anne has all the big names, just have influence because she's got all the biggest names in the industry working for working for her. But for me, I need them. So, here I am.

The subtitle of my project containers project, is connecting people. I'm thinking that this is a good connection.

Yes, yes. Actually, because you were talking, in your project, about chaos algorithms, it started another round of discussions with my dad who is a mathematician, he specializes in nonlinear systems and the generation of patterns in nature, for example, the coloration of animals and insects. But always the discussion stops where the numbers begin, I cannot understand any of the formulas. I think that we should really push harder and get this going. But in general, **MAYBE THE SOLUTION IS ALSO TO PRODUCE LESS, FEWER MATERIAL THINGS AND MORE THINGS THAT WE CAN ENJOY DIGITALLY.**

I think it's possible. I think we can conclude, let's enjoy the digital. Let's enjoy life and the digital. Thank you both. Thank you.

SC

LL

AT

LL

SC

LL

AT

LL

SC Thanks for having us.
AT Thank you so much Linda. Sam, we'll try to catch up and discuss.
LL Yeah, we have to go further, because we could do another hour of
talking.
SC Anne, I'd love to introduce you to the guy that I'm working with,
who's a creative algorithmic processor, because I think you'd love his work, so
yeah.
AT Yes. It would be awesome. Thank you so much.
LL Have a nice day have a nice evening. Thank you, both. Big kiss.
Thank you.

THE. » “SUR- PRISE” . » CON- TAINER#N° 8/11

DISCOVERING NEW TALENTS AND REDISCOVERING THE CHARM OF SURPRISE, PASSING THROUGH A CRITICAL ASSESSMENT OF THE TRADITIONAL CIRCUITS OF THE FASHION SYSTEM. IT IS TIME TO RECOGNISE THERE ARE WORLDS BEYOND THE WEST AND ITS SYSTEMS, WHERE THERE IS AN ATTITUDE TOWARDS CREATIVITY AND FASHION PRODUCTION THAT IS LESS CONSTRAINED BY CONSUMERISM, AND HAS GREATER FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION.





BETWEEN KRISTOFER KONGSHAUG & GEERT BRULOOT

DECEMBER 4, 2020
PARIS/ANTWERP
12PM

Brimming with anticipation within the surprise container are Kristofer Kongshaug, chief creative officer at BOON Paris, and Geert Bruloot, a curator and art director based in Antwerp. Both have extensive knowledge and experience in retail, interior design and fashion, and their conversation highlights their innovation and visions of the future. The ever-increasing layers of meaning within fashion today, such as clothing, body language, art, communication, and the need to make a sale, together with a radicalization of the industry around large monopolies that dictate tastes and trends, are driving the creative sector to return to a way of making fashion for fashion's sake. It is a challenge which has been entrusted to the new generation of designers, who have grown up in a context which has no disciplinary, geographic, demographic or technical borders. What has emerged is a need for sincerity, which expresses the very foundations of contemporaneity: interaction, interdisciplinarity, and freedom from institutional ties. Established operators in the sector are responsible for creating platforms, preparing and making room for new creations, providing skills and intuition for talent scouting across the globe and outside the traditional routes. Fashion and design, which have always highlighted upcoming trends and the needs of our times, represent a privileged vector of 'global awareness' and a factor in the aggregation of people. These are the elements of our new beginnings: the language and not the system, the identity and not the consumption, the ends and not the means.

I start with Geert because he's my best friend in the world. Geert and I we have so much in common, we did so many projects in that small city, in Antwerp. We did whatever was necessary to bring the designers to an international platform. Geert worked with their companies to help them go to London, to organize their shows. He organized the shows for the Academy of Fine Arts where I was teaching. I mean, it's too long to say what we all did. But it was fun and we enjoyed every minute of it. We were both retailers and we learned a lot about retail and about the system. And we were traveling a lot to Paris and London and Florence too, of course. So that was my little introduction to Geert.

Kristofer is a completely different story; I was here at Manifattura Tabacchi, Kristofer came to me and we started talking for two hours, and it seemed like an old friendship. The things that bring you together are fashion and design as well, but also this activity, this kind of potential you have, to bring people together. I mean, you both have that. And it's very rare, because normally it's a society where everybody is quite about the ME, but we are changing that a bit into the WE, the world is changing, finally. So, first I wanted to know Kristofer about your BOON project, the agency, and, of course, your story before – because you were a designer.

Well, yes, we'll start somewhere, I guess. You know, when I started, you guys were already far ahead, I would say. So, what you guys have been living through and being part of, it's something that, when I started in fashion, I was looking up to, and, you know, those things that we looked at to learn from and we also hoped to repeat, I guess. But time has its way, and I think it doesn't really repeat itself, but it moves forward. So, we learn new things. I went to fashion school, worked for different brands and started my own brand. At the same time, I started BOON, kind of **TO CREATE A COMMUNITY**, to have a space to work in and to have a business to support my brand. After some years, it was going okay. But I got caught up by the other side of the business. If I learned one thing, it's that when you want to do something, something you're passionate about, it's easy to lose track of it when you're trying to do several things to reach that point. And in my case, I think, with time, I kind of discovered that I had passions for more things than just design. I slowly also brought in furniture design, objects, art, and so on, to the business we have in Paris. And today it has become an agency which focuses on international sales management for fashion, consulting, event management. We work with a lot of young brands helping them to develop their collections, **HELPING THEM TO HAVE A BETTER UNDERSTANDING OF THE INDUSTRY AND HOW THINGS WORK**, helping them with production and so on. On the design side, we wanted to connect art, design and fashion in a new way. I think all these industries are more and more interacting. We're not going in consulting the designer, it's more of bringing them together. And now we're creating a new brand where designers we work with from both fashion and design, come together and create additions for our brand basically.

I think the big difference between your story and our story is that **THE CONTEXT HAS CHANGED COMPLETELY**. We were many fewer players before than we are now. Society and commerce have evolved much more to producing more, selling more, **BUT WHEN WE STARTED CONTEMPORARY FASHION WAS QUITE NEW** and therefore when designers started a fashion collection, it was easier somehow, because it was simpler, it was not so complex. **THEY COULD DREAM** and believe in it without having all the dangerous planning beforehand. It was easier to dream for success than it is now. When I ana-

lyze what I have tried to do from the beginning until now is that we had stores. My drive has always been that when I discover something extraordinary, I want to show it to the people. Afterwards I analysed that was the basis of opening a store for me. **I WANTED TO SHOW THE PEOPLE WHAT EXTRAORDINARY THINGS I HAD DISCOVERED**, and I wanted to share it with them. I think this is a very contemporary idea that we have lost a bit today.

Definitely, stores today don't necessarily know their clients anymore, which I think is a huge, huge disadvantage. It's almost sad because buyers, when they come to showrooms and buy, the entire buying pattern has changed. **IT HAS BECOME OPTIMIZED AND DIGITALIZED AND YOU FOLLOW THE ALGORITHMS**, you don't buy for your end consumer anymore. I kind of experienced it when I started in fashion when I was very young, when I was coming to Milan as an assistant buyer for a store in Norway. Everything we bought, we had somebody in mind for that piece and that we don't see any more in the shows in Paris; very few buyers have that connection with their clients.

Afterwards, people ask me often, why were you never strong online with e-commerce? And I didn't have an answer right away, but over time I realized that my biggest fun was starting a store, decorating a store, showing all that I had found, presenting it well, trying to bring it to the customer who came in, **SHARING MY ENTHUSIASM** for it. And that was the act of selling, which is something I never found on the internet or the e-commerce. E-commerce is more – for me – about products, selling a product to a customer, somewhere in the world at whatever moment of the day.

Definitely. We've been trying to figure out how to personalize and make the experience of e-commerce more connected with the end consumer. And my kind of end of the research is it's not really possible. That's why **I FIND THE PHYSICAL SPACE IS SO IMPORTANT**. And especially now with Covid, if you look at it from the showroom side as well, we've got a fantastic chance through video conference to spend time with buyers, learn about their problems, share, try and find new solutions. But the common ground for everyone is that at the end of the day, that physical experience we have meeting face to face, whether it's in the showroom or in the store with the client, it's necessary somehow. It's the human way. We might sell and increase sales online, but it takes away the pleasure of it all somehow.

You cannot share emotions online in a classic e-commerce store as we know it now, maybe there will be a new e-commerce store in the future.

You can land on a web page and it can be, a beautiful story about the product, about the designer but the issue is that your attention span lasts for 10 seconds, you don't really get the story. In the end, my research shows that an online store functions better when it's just concentrated on the products, and then that takes away all the charm basically. Sadly.

I think when I was reading the questions that Linda has sent us, that this is more a quest towards how the challenges for the future will be in what we do. This Covid period is a very tough period for the world; it's such a pity that so many people are getting sick and dying. But it's a very interesting period, because it's really opening new doors and **IT MAKES US THINK DIFFERENTLY ABOUT WHAT WE WANT, HOW WE WANT IT**. I think there is a big change coming, and we are part of that big change.

A lot of the people I've been speaking with, especially fashion designers, furniture designers, have this need to slow things down and by doing so, giving people time to reflect – do I need to do four collections, six collec-

tions, eight collections a year? Do I need all these products? But on the other hand, the big problem is connected to the retailers. In the beginning of the period, everybody wanted to slow down. And then as a result of how the industry functions, at the end of the day, they kind of continued in the same pattern. And I don't know if it's unconscious or if you just ended up doing the same. So, finding the balance, it's hard. And I think **EVERYONE HAS TO REACH FOR A NEW PATH**. You can't just have one player that wants to find it.

I feel that the industry, the last 20 years, has taken over a lot. From fast fashion to luxury fashion the industry has taken over a lot and it has been producing more and more. Urban life in many cities in the Western world has changed also towards selling fashion. The oldest streets, who before had little cafes, flower stores, bookstores, food stores, whatever, all of them have changed into fashion stores. Are we doing the right thing? I don't know. I don't know. And this is the quest of all these questions, that Linda sent us. Should we continue like this? Or do we have to change? And I think we have, me **I'M CONVINCED WE HAVE TO CHANGE**, but I don't have the answer. No one has the answer for the moment, I think, but we have some big challenges in front of us.

THE INDUSTRY HAS NEVER BEEN BIGGER IN VOLUME AND TURNOVER THAN TODAY. And maybe one of the biggest issues is that the groups are just growing and growing and growing and their need for profit is just growing and growing and growing. And there's less and less space for young brands. But what happens is that now also the young brands are starting to become part of the groups, at least the few that manage to kind of stick their heads above. And there's very little room for independents left. How do we find that space? Is it by going to places where luxury is not looking? Is it by going local?

I don't know. I try to, first of all, change myself to get rid of many references I had from the past. A shop has to be like this, a collection has to be like this, a creator has to be like this. **I TRIED TO GET RID OF ALL THESE REFERENCES**, to free myself so that I can think on a white sheet of paper. I see also now a period of vintage, people buy vintage furniture, people buy vintage clothing; this is good because clothing has a second life with it. Dries Van Noten opened his new store in Los Angeles recently. I talk regularly to him and he said, do you know what department goes the best? It's the vintage part. His pieces from his old collections. When I talk to Raf Simons, he says, when I do a stock sale, it goes better than my collection because it's vintage. So, people are eager for the past somehow. And I think they're just eager for a simpler way, a simpler approach to fashion that we had in the past. If they buy for instance, a Supreme piece or a Prada piece or Vuitton or whatever – they know they buy one small part of a big production. If they go to a vintage store, there is one piece, you buy it or you miss it. That's the feeling that gets them. So **MAYBE PEOPLE ARE UNCONSCIOUSLY NOT WANTING TO BE PART OF THAT SYSTEM ANYMORE**.

I think there are two sides to the story. Especially in fashion, we've seen more and more brands over the last decade that based most of their collections on vintage research. So maybe instead of just looking forward, they tried to add sustainability, upcycling, biodegradable materials, technology, you wonder if it's, you know, nanotechnology in the fabric. It can be so many different things. But when it comes to the shape of the clothes and print research, most look to the past. And one of the reasons for it, I think, is this constant need to create new things, that you don't really have the time to create.

GB

The biggest evolution in clothing and what we wear over the last 20 years, for me, was in sportswear. Sneakers, trainers, duvets, everything we wear to protect ourselves against nature, or to make us be able to move more freely. Also, material-wise, as on shapes and not referring to the past. So, **I THINK THE ESSENCE OF WHAT WE WANT TO WEAR HAS MOVED**. And we see it now with the pandemic as well. Everyone is wearing free clothes because we don't have to go to the office anymore. We are not allowed to travel or to go in the city to show ourselves anymore, or to a restaurant. So, I think we should see fashion more broadly than only the big brands, the fashion brands or the luxury brands. In the store, we had to sell, in the last years, many fashion sneakers by big houses. It started with Prada, it ended with Balenciaga. Sneakers that changed all the time and that were extremely expensive in the end. And then what I saw is that people moved towards sports sneakers and these sports sneakers became more and more fashionable at very affordable prices. And they produce new styles every two, three weeks, let's say. So, I think we have to see fashion much more broadly. And if we look, because that was one of the questions of Linda, if we project into the modernity of fashion, I think there is a lot of modernity in there already.

KK

The biggest change for me, I think is that with marketing, suddenly everyone is targeting everybody. I went to a private sale of Filling Pieces, the sneaker brand, I think it's Dutch. And I didn't really know the brand but I got the invitation and it was next to my office. And it's in a Parisian backyard and there's a line of, I don't know, maybe 500 teenagers. I was like, wow, this is really popular. Standing in the line, I was probably twice the age of the oldest person there, like between twelve to twenty, maybe.

GB

It's amazing!

KK

It's pretty amazing. I was standing there waiting. And then I started listening to the conversations and it's all these, you know, sneaker collectors basically. And I really love shoes, but I've never really been into the collecting part of things and listening to these kids as they're talking, in reference numbers, product numbers from Balenciaga and so on. But in their mind, all these luxury brands they're mentioning and they know everything in detail, the materials, the product numbers, serial numbers, and so on, but in their mind, these are not fashion houses that make clothes, they're sneaker brands. And when this machinery has managed to convince these teenagers, who should not, I would say, be able to afford to buy these types of sneakers, that it's a sneaker brand and that it's something they need to kind of stand out – it's like, wow, I'm breathless. And you know what? I just couldn't be there anymore. **I HAD TO LEAVE AND GO BACK TO THE OFFICE, SITTING, REFLECTING. WHAT'S GOING ON?** You know, it's not the same way anymore.

GB

I think that's why I try to advise young designers to think more freely and not only shape-wise and material-wise, but also conceptual-wise. I try to advise them to think out of the blue, **TRY TO RETHINK THE REASON OF FASHION**. Why do we create fashion? Why do we create art? On one side you can say, we create art for the art business because there's a huge business in there, until before the pandemic. And otherwise, you have artists that make us think and make us change our mind and make us rebellious people, artists who are rebellious like Paul McCartney, or like Louise Bourgeois. So, **YOU HAVE DIFFERENT ROLES FOR ART, WHICH YOU DON'T HAVE YET FOR FASHION**, but I'm convinced this is the future for the creative part of fashion.

KK

I truly hope so. I think, for me, that's possibly one of the reasons I got into fashion to begin with. Fashion is maybe not the most modern industry

in the world. It's a creative industry based on the body. I think now people are thinking more about concepts and gender, and it goes into more political movements as well, than shape. One of the things I was talking about to Linda some days ago, **WHAT I REALLY MISS IN FASHION IS VOLUMES AND SHAPES**, maybe kind of dépassé somehow, which we don't see anymore.

GB Because the industry of fashion has a lot of challenges. If we talk sustainability, I had a talk a year ago on sustainability and fashion, which is the biggest contradiction I think. I did some research and I found that in 2015, textiles represented more than 50% of the amount of the waste the state of New York is producing.

KK I think at the pace that's going right now, there will be Primark and Zara on this earth way longer than there will be humans!

LL No, guys! I have to intervene. We are in the surprise container. So, surprise us, Supreme and Zara, please don't do this to me. Can we find some new talent in unknown countries and unknown neighbourhoods? Why are we always talking about Paris, London, Milan? Come on, those days are over.

KK Very much so. I think also, Paris, Milan and London are kind of stuck. I think one of the biggest jobs we do at BOON is talent research, talent scouting. And we're looking all over the world. For so many decades, people learn from France, from Italy, but we kind of learned everything they had to give. And **NOW I THINK WE NEED TO LOOK TO VERY DIFFERENT COMMUNITIES TO GET SOMETHING NEW HERE**. And we have great designers coming out of Africa, from Nigeria, from South Africa that are great, that are coming from Southeast Asia.

GB I think it's not only fashion, it's in all creative disciplines that we have to look much broader, much more globally. I see a lot of interesting architecture all over the world. It's amazing what happens at the moment. And I think it's normal that it happens like this, only we or the industry should look more forward to all this. I mean, we, as Linda says, the industry is too restricted to what happens here and you see already that art, the artists are moving already. African artists, Mexican, Latin artists, are being discovered and also in restaurants, in cuisine, it's amazing. **ALL THE EXOTIC CUISINES ARE HYPED FOR THE MOMENT**.

LL I am interested in looking at people. It's that new way and maybe that surprise that we have to create, that we created in those early days in Antwerp, that was like a surprise; what's going on there? Maybe we can translate this into a new way of meeting people and talking to people. I talked to TinTin Zhang, I never met her and we did the Zoom here and she was fantastic, so cute and so intelligent.

GB Is she Chinese?

LL Yes. I'm discovering amazing people.

KK Before, we went to London to look for extreme creativity and new things. Now, as a scout, we look to China, it's in China it's happening. The technology – it's way beyond. And the amount of people that are doing incredible things are spread all over China, it's incredible. It's really breathtaking. I think also, how the culture is built as it was so suppressed for such a long time. And, I'm not going to argue that it still is in many ways, but, at least now its creative freedom. People that get the opportunity to come and study abroad, they come to Florence, they come to Paris or they go to London. But they bring something to Europe and they bring something back and they mix it with their local identity. And that identity was taboo until five, six years ago. You couldn't really have a collection and try and sell a collection internationally if you were

influenced by your local ethnicity. I was working with a Vietnamese brand and his collection is 100% based on Vietnamese culture. The designer managed to modernize it and take the references and is making some of the most beautiful creations I've seen in years. And I think you can go all around the world and you find these people that are suddenly – it's okay, that you're not what we are in Paris or London. You're creating something new and they've passed us. It's on a completely different level. **OUR JOB AS A SHOWROOM, AS CURATORS, IS TO MAKE THE PEOPLE IN THE INDUSTRY OPEN THEIR EYES, AND KIND OF EMBRACE IT**. And I think now it's becoming easier and easier to do so. And one of the core things of what we're doing at BOON is that we're a creative community. We work with, I think almost 150 different talents from all over the world and they all are extremely different with completely different backgrounds, with completely different backing as well, which is something very important. Managing to do things on different levels, with different resources and then bringing it all together. And together people discover things, they start communication like we're doing today. And we learn from each other.

LL So, we will be surprised next year.

GB Linda, but this is not so new. What you have done at the Academy was a bit the same. You've created a mixture of cultures in the Academy, which was never seen before. At the moment you left there were more than 70% who were foreigners from all over the world. From Russia, from China, from everywhere. So, it really started there. And it's just that we may not forget to continue looking for that and developing with all the possibilities we have now. So, and all our customers that we used to have in the past, who were fortunate enough to buy luxury fashion; they are not interested anymore. For them it's not even luxury anymore. It's a big question mark as well. So, I think we're all eager to discover what's new, we're all eager. And that's also a very nice thing that Dries Van Noten has done in his Los Angeles store, that he invites young artists, musicians, whatever, to perform in the store. And it's temporary. Someone paints on the wall and two weeks later it's painted over. People come in, you can turn your music on if you want. **YOU SEE, IT'S MORE LIKE A CLUBHOUSE THAN A STORE**.

KK Fantastic!

GB I think we have to open our institutions more like clubhouses so that people come from all over the world, because **YOUNG PEOPLE, THEY DON'T LIKE INSTITUTIONS**.

KK They want to interact.

GB Yes, that's what we have to create to bring them in, to give them a podium, a platform; we the elders, have to create the platform for these young entrepreneurs and young designers and young creatives, with all the knowledge we have. And I think that's what Linda is proposing; and that's what I like to do also, and to stimulate.

KK We can stimulate and bring people together. I think it's fantastic. **AND I THINK BOTH FASHION AND DESIGN HAVE ALWAYS BEEN A BRIDGING POINT FOR GLOBAL AWARENESS AND HOW TO LEARN CULTURE, POLITICS, SEXUALITY, AND SO ON**. Everything kind of comes together. Right now, more than ever, the cultural aspect of things is coming into contemporary fashion, and contemporary design as well. That's kind of the bridging point for me that everything is really connecting through art, to design, through to fashion.

In Paris we're trying to create a community with all these artists from all over the world where they can come together, and we're giving them

a base where they're free. We have something we called "Rooms By" where we try to have a monthly exchange. We give one of the people we work with a huge space and they can do whatever they want. And in this way, we can really enable them and make more awareness and more visibility. Paris is still a global centre somehow for creativity, having outputs from all of these different countries, all over the world. In Paris, it's something really, really great.

LL Thank you both because I'm happy with what I've heard. I heard that there is "connecting" a lot. I heard that there is looking for new people outside those fashion systems and cities we know. **AND I THINK THE SURPRISE CONTAINER IS GOING TO WORK** and it will be full of ideas. It's surprising. Thank you for the conversation.

GB We should stay in touch, it's interesting. Next time I come to Paris, I come to see you, Kristofer.

KK Wonderful, looking forward to it.

LL Good. Thank you both for joining the Container Project. Thank you. Bye bye!

THE. TERN” TAINER#

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“PAT- CON- N° 9/11

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FOCUSING ON PATTERNS IN FASHION AND PATTERNS IN SOCIETY, TAKING TOKYO AS AN EXAMPLE, A CITY WHICH FEELS LIKE IT HAS BEEN SPLIT IN TWO. ONE PART IS THE 'PLACE TO BE' FOR BUSINESSES AND INDIVIDUALS, WHILST THE OTHER IS ALIENATING, WITH PEOPLE TAKING REFUGE IN LOCAL CENTRES. THE MAP OF THE WORLD IS CHANGING, AND AS KOHEI SAITO SAYS, EUROCENTRIC THINKING HAS ENDED TOGETHER WITH A WAY OF THINKING THAT DISTINGUISHES BETWEEN CENTRAL CITIES AND LOCAL CITIES.





BETWEEN MINNA PALMQVIST & ADELE VARCOE

DECEMBER 4, 2020
STOCKHOLM 9AM/
MELBOURNE 7 PM

Minna Palmqvist, a Stockholm-based fashion designer, and Adele Varcoe, an artist and designer from Melbourne, retrace the patterns and textures of fashion and art, searching out their boundaries. As if by magic, what flows from the Pattern Container is the gentle disappearance of the limits which define these universes, and the parallel appearance of new directions and crossovers, which render the concept of inside or outside the system obsolete. Both the participants traverse this threshold. Adele's performances create immersive experiences which explore the social and emotional impact of fashion, actively involving the audience, whereas the creations of Minna Palmqvist are almost impossible to categorise, on the borders of art and fashion, but with a particular interest in the female body and the standards of beauty that are applied to it. What these experiences have in common is the bond with people and place. The patterns that are used in the design of an outfit, an action or a work of art reflect the traces of social interactions, the connections that individuals feel with the communities they belong to and between these communities themselves. Is it possible to define new routes outside the traditional centres of fashion and art? How can we make sure that the fertility of the local area is represented in emerging cities? We have to start at a local level, reinforce connections between people and liberate their creativity. The richness which will emerge will contribute to a global network reaching into the uniqueness of each culture and history. A first draft seems to have been drawn up within this container.

LINDA LOPPA

Hello, Minna. Hello Adele. So good to see you together. Same haircut, same style, same ideas, same, I don't know, energy. I feel there is a good connection here. Adele, we know each other from Florence, you did that great performance in our Villa Favard, it was 2015 and since then we lost each other because we were too busy. I met you Minna through Dobrila Denegri who has made that interesting catalogue *'Transfashional'*. Adele, in your performance activity what phase of your life are you in?

ADELE VARCOE

Oh, always performing the everyday life of fashion. I think what keeps me in fashion is because I don't quite understand it. So, I keep questioning it and testing; **I'M REALLY CURIOUS ABOUT HOW IT AFFECTS US SOCIALLY AND EMOTIONALLY.** And the kinds of, I guess, patterns you could call them, they do come around, but in terms of relationships and interaction. I think fashion is something that we all participate in every day and I want to know how it just impacts our lives and how it gets into our brains.

LL

Minna, I guess you have the same questions on whether it is a collection, whether it's, an installation, it's about the female body or the body. And those questions remain as a red thread through your collections. So please, speak about the evolution in your work.

MINNA PALMQVIST

I first have to say the same thing as Adele, that **I REALLY DON'T GET FASHION. IT FRUSTRATES ME AND IT CONFUSES ME AND IT MAKES ME EXTREMELY HAPPY AT TIMES, BUT I DON'T GET IT.** I'm also just exploring and experimenting around the questions that I have around the whole system. But my project with the body started when I found the sociologist called Mary Douglas, who said something about, **WE ALL HAVE TWO DIFFERENT BODIES:** an intimate body, which is the one we actually have and we maybe don't show to too many people. And we have the social body that is the one we - in different ways - present to the world, through clothing or working out or corsets or whatever it might be. And I took her words out of context and made them mine. So, it started with working with the clashes of what we have and what we want to have and what other people are expecting from us, but I'm also very interested in **THE WHOLE SYSTEM AROUND PRODUCTION AND CONSUMPTION,** which I think is just crazy. So actually, a year ago, before covid-19, I started working on a project called *"under pressure"* where I'm squeezing stuff into and through a press machine. It's very well known in the Nordic countries, it's called a 'mangle', but it's like you roll stuff in, under pressure and it make creases. And so, I work with that pressure that we're all under and **THE PRESSURE IS UNFORTUNATELY JUST GETTING WORSE.**

LL

How do we handle the pressure, Adele?

AV

I think there have been elements of pressure. We did a pretty intensive stage during full lockdown, but it's also been incredible, the sense of community and how, I guess, **THE PRESSURE HAS BROUGHT PEOPLE TOGETHER.** Almost like Minna, I was looking at your work with the creases and folds. It's almost like, kind of moving in and out of those dark and light spaces, but I feel like we're doing it more together.

LL

So, there is a positive side to all this misery. Do you feel that you're farther away from the fashion system, further out of it, or do you want to go in and make a statement?

MP

I've been going back and forth. I started outside of it. I actually never went to fashion school. I went to clothes making and then textile art school. So, I've never done the fashion thing. That's why I'm really confused because I've never learned how to do it. I've been trying to be in the system and fight from within. And I think I still do, but I've been taking a step back because I

LL

tried to do the production and everything, and it's too stressful; making collections, all the money, all the time, all the logistics around it. So now I'm working more organically again. So, again, **I'M MORE OUTSIDE THE SYSTEM. I'M NOT SURE I WAS EVER REALLY IN IT.** I'm not sure to be honest.

AV

I think designers are taking decisions like, no, this is not for me. I'll do it at my own rhythm and with my own identity and personality and integrity. And I think that's the most important thing that is going to happen. As an artist, do you have the same decisions to take Adele or are you more free?

Well, no, I think there is a system within being an artist as well. But I was just thinking, Minna, about what you said about the fashion system, like being out of it. I personally feel like that's kind of hard to do because I guess I'm someone who thinks that if we have clothes on our bodies, we are playing a role in the system of fashion. I guess being an artist as well. And I think I'm trying to be part of it, but also try to step out of it. I feel like it's a system that maybe we're all in and it can actually be hard to escape or step out of to reflect on. It was more about being an artist. But for me, I guess these kinds of things, **TRYING TO UNDERSTAND FASHION IS PROBABLY MY PRIMARY QUESTION AT THE MOMENT.** But I do feel that within art there's also a system making it work.

LL

There is the art gallery, the art fairs, the art business, there is a system. But I think you can easily avoid it. So, I think there is a new movement that is going to happen, and we are part of that. I think I'm very happy that finally, we can talk again to each other, without talking through our press agents.

AV

I'm feeling more of a sense of maybe hierarchies that are being potentially flattened.

MP

Well, I'm hoping for that, as well.

AV

I'm hoping for that too.

MP

Because I've had a really great autumn actually in this horrible situation, because **I'VE BEEN PART OF A TAKEOVER, AN ARTIST TAKEOVER** with just women and non-binary artists taking over a huge space in the posh central areas of Stockholm. Because so many places are empty because everybody is going bankrupt and people have to move out and we would never be able to be at this address. But this amazing woman called Paola Bjäringer, made it all happen. I would say what you see there is that this crisis is hitting on all levels, also the ones with the posh places in the posh areas are going bankrupt. And then we can sneak in there and do something else. And I think, at least something is happening to the expected hierarchies. And I hope that will continue.

AV

I also wonder if that's got something to do with communicating online as well. I feel like, here we are and we're in a virtual environment. But in some ways, I just wonder how that shift, that idea of hierarchy, if it is, you know, for sort of like avatars. **I FEEL THESE VIRTUAL ENVIRONMENTS ALSO CREATED LOTS OF OPPORTUNITIES TO CONNECT.** And I think there was a question from Linda that was - let me go back through my notes - I think it was about if we can connect or interact more often with other cultures. I think the key word was just that *connection*, that word, connection. And if it is locally or globally.

MP

I think it needs to be both. I think this is amazing, we sit in different parts of the world and have this discussion and we have very much the same thoughts. But I also think the *takeover* I was part of, locally you have to find each other and build like strong, joined forces and help each other out and find spots to take over, to get stronger together. So locally you can do that because

I think that **HUMAN INTERACTION IS SO IMPORTANT**. And then also the global, to feel connected to each other, more from more far away.

I guess from that idea as well, I was just thinking – what happens locally, if you can't find your tribe? If you are someone who might not find people locally that share similar ideas. I was just thinking about how, I guess **ONLINE AND VIRTUAL SPACES CAN KIND OF BRING PEOPLE TOGETHER** or bring you closer to people who might be more like you.

Yeah, but that's the great thing. The options, I mean. That's perfect because we are all different and we also need different things, I guess.

Yeah, Yeah, Yeah

I think that more and more the designer is part of an artistic community, because of the photography, the film, the performance. Do you think it's a movement that will go on? That the performance is going to take over the fashion show?

I hope so, because I think a fashion show is wasted if you don't do some sort of performing act. I mean, a performance can be so much, to stage, to **INVITE PEOPLE INTO YOUR BRAIN AND YOUR UNIVERSE**. Because the clothes, as soon as they leave the catwalk they're gonna be taken out of context in PR, in magazines. People wearing them in ways you never maybe intended, which is also great. But this is the time you have to show people what you are actually thinking. And you can say something and you can start a discussion or just fantasize among people.

I quite like, as you know Linda, participatory performances where the audience are involved or immersed in the show and they feel something themselves, and it might be through an encounter with a performer or it might be through an encounter with another audience member. **I THINK FASHION FOR ME IS A FEELING**. It's something that we feel rather than see. And I'm always interested to try and bring that to life.

I love that about your work, the feeling and that is about something we're always in and how does it affect us? I think it's very interesting.

Speaking of the catwalk and performances, we have a main shopping street in Melbourne and during the fashion festival, I took a whole pile of buckets down to that shopping street. And we put buckets down either side of the road and the people doing their shopping were walking up and down, like it was a catwalk. And then the people sitting on the buckets were just clapping and cheering. But it was the idea of **LOOKING AT OURSELVES AND OUR COMMUNITY**, to inform about what we wear. You know, in Australia we might look to Europe. I guess I was saying that, hey, I think it's what we wear as a community that informs. What's on our bodies makes sense, I guess bringing it local and everyday.

There's so much force in that, instead of always thinking that the fashion centre is somewhere else or that, to be real, you have to do it in Paris, or you have to connect to people in Paris or in London. I mean, it's like **SO MUCH HAPPENING IF YOU JUST START DIGGING AND IF YOU START CONNECTING**, you can do so much locally, I think. And then you can make it to the rest of the world digitally.

I mean do you feel that in your city? Linda where you are, I mean, it could be considered a bit of a fashion hotspot. How is that for you? I mean, where do you look? Are you looking locally or globally?

The 23rd of February my life changed, because my husband said, I'm thinking that it's not a good idea if we go to Paris for the fashion shows. I had all the invitations. I was in the LVMH prize as a jury member for young

designers. So, I had a nice programme. And he said, not this time, my girl. Covid19 is there and we can't travel. And I unpacked my clothes and I put them back in my wardrobe. We went for a walk and we went for a nice dinner. I'm different, I don't care to be there on the first or the second row of a fashion show. I don't need all those people and queuing and waiting and see that waste of money that is useless. And so I started writing the new fashion containers in March and April. And that's exactly what you were saying now, it's connecting locally and make it globally with the digital. I'm happy with life today, with you, talking about the future and finding new patterns. I feel very in tune with myself.

That's so nice.

That's so nice. Yeah, that is really nice. Yeah, wow. I mean, at first you had your suitcase packed, you were going to Paris. Was that hard for you? To resist, the desire ... because I think there's something about fashion that is kind of, you know – it's hot, it's new. Does it kind of bring a desire? Was it hard for you to unpack your clothes and stay in Florence?

It was hard because I worked hard to have all those invitations, you know, the Balenciaga invitation etc. etc. And then I made a choice. It was five minutes, maybe difficult. And then we went for a nice dinner. I took a glass of wine and before going to bed, I said, my husband is right.

And it's interesting how quickly you can actually step out of something. Because I guess for you, you're just part of it, you know. Going to the shows, and it's something you just do and you don't have time to reflect, and it's nice. And it is like really cool happenings and you meet cool people, but it's also quite stressful. A lot of money and just more about showing your face so people know you were there and then you can just sort of run to the next. And it's interesting to hear from you how quickly that can just go – puff! And even now the people are showing stuff digitally. And you're like, I'm not very interested. It's really, really, really interesting because I think that a lot of people have a hard time letting go of the stuff that used to be and how it is now. And of course, this situation we're in, it contains a lot of sorrow and a lot of grief. But you can also, like you did, all of a sudden you see stuff in a different way. And you can try to take that somewhere, as you are really doing with these conversations.

Yes, it was not so difficult. And especially the days after we went for a walk with a beautiful weather, I went to young people who made music at the Academy of Music here in Florence. And that's fantastic.

Perfect, perfect.

Adele what is your next performance?

Oh, well just following on from what you're saying, Linda. I guess for me being in lockdown, it was a really good time just to step back and reflect. And I've been doing some writing, I'm actually working on a children's kind of graphic novel about fashion at the moment. So **I'M JUST TRYING TO DISTIL SOME OF THE MORE COMPLEX IDEAS INTO REALLY SIMPLE TERMS**. But I'm working on another performance for next year, but it's just been really nice to sit and reflect and be like, okay, well, is fashion important to me? What are my priorities? And I'm like, yes, fashion is important to me. I think it's so important how it affects every individual and how we perceive ourselves. It's massive. **I THINK FASHION IS A MASSIVE THING THAT PLAYS A HUGE ROLE IN OUR LIVES**. And I feel like my work is not done there yet.

No it's not.

Luckily for us. Are you going to do a project together?

AV

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LL

MP Oh, that'd be something let's talk about that! Yeah. Interesting. It's really interesting. Can we do that? Both locally, but then it sort of merges.

AV Is this your hidden agenda, Linda?

LL I mean, you both, you have so much in common, it's unbelievable.

MP We need you Linda.

LL Yeah, yeah I'm there, I'm there. **THE WORLD NEEDS YOUR ENERGY AND YOUR INTEGRITY.** So keep on doing those, performances and those, whatever it might be – because that's the openness in your minds, you don't have a precise goal. So you have both that inner feeling that you are doing the right thing. I guess. Last word Adele.

AV Oh, really a last word. Oh my gosh. I need time to think about this. Wait, let me look at all my notes. There are so many things I wanted to say!

LL I had another question. What about other cultures? Are we engaged enough with all cultures? That's also a point for me. We're in our little home, in our little country, in our little neighbourhood. But we're not engaged.

MP There are so many, again, we're going to hierarchies. The world, as it has evolved through hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of years in where it's like who's up here and who's down there and who is sort of taking advantage of who? And it's such a horrible mess to be honest. I think engaging in different cultures, listening to each other and doing collabs. Now I think it's like some countries, if we would say first-world countries thinking they're collaborating or something with another country, but they sort of take over that culture. I don't know. But I think **IT'S EXTREMELY IMPORTANT THAT WE WOULD START TO TALK,** to just talk more to each other and listen to each other and see what can come out of that.

LL Decolonize, we think we have the knowledge for fashion and it's absolutely not at all.

AV Yes.

MP Well, I have exactly this hope. Sort of what you've been going through, Linda, that we start to see, looking at how we used to live our lives. And it's a lot from there. We really need to get back like hugging and meeting the loved ones. All of that is, I think that's the really horrible part of this. But I'm hoping that people could just have a little bit of a wake-up instead of being like, I can't do this anymore. Be like, but how important was that to me? Did it make sense? Just trying to maybe **REALIZE THAT A LOT OF STUFF WAS JUST A FACADE** and just stuff we do to keep up appearances and just skip all that. And that's my biggest hope I think.

LL Beautiful.

AV **MY BIGGEST HOPE IS A FEELING OF EMPOWERMENT AND AWARENESS AND TRANSPARENCY.**

AV What's yours. Linda.

LL Mine is connecting, connecting with as many people as possible and bringing them together like now. So you've made my day. Thank you, Minna, thank you Adele. It was wonderful to have you both and I hope to see you soon, hugging for real.

MP Yeah. That'd be great. Otherwise let's meet digitally again.

LL Perfect. And let's write and maybe we make a book out of this.

AV Fabulous.

MP Take care, both of you.

LL Wonderful day. Bye-bye thank you.

THE. » “BRAIN” CONTAINER#

CON- TAINER#

N°10/11

THE FIVE SENSES, SIGHT, SOUND, SMELL, TASTE AND TOUCH, ARE ALL CONNECTED WITH THE BRAIN AND MEMORY, EVEN IF SOME OF THESE, SUCH AS SMELL, ARE UNDERVALUED. KNOWLEDGE OF THE BODY, THE INNATE AND HIGHLY PERFORMING APPARATUS OF THE HUMAN BEING, IS ESSENTIAL FOR LEARNING THE WORLD AROUND US.





BETWEEN FABIEN BECKERS & SISSEL TOLAAS

DECEMBER 4, 2020
SAN FRANCISCO
10AM/BERLIN 7PM

Inside the Brain Container, the conversation between Fabien Becker a senior executive and entrepreneur passionate about solving global problems, founder of the Invention Factory in San Francisco, and Sissel Tolaas, a Berlin-based artist and researcher known for her work on smells, transforms into an exchange of experiences which are as diverse as they are complimentary. Both are blessed with a curiosity for the world around them and a desire to use knowledge as a means for changing it for the better. Fabien Beckers, with the heritage of California's art and pioneering spirit, is a firm believer in new ideas emerging from the intersection of science and humanistic knowledge and exchange between professions. Philosophy, economics, anthropology, psychology, artificial intelligence, engineering, journalism: the brain does not naturally perceive distinctions between these sciences, rather it intuits creative potential. Sissel Tolaas carries out research into scent and has compiled an archive of over 10,000 smells from all over the world. Driven by the awareness that a balance between the five senses is essential for human well-being, she explores a world that is often side-lined. Traditionally, society identifies binary categories which guide our perception and knowledge; dirty/clean, right/wrong, yes/no. And yet there is so much beyond these distinctions, and what is fascinating is that the key to discovering it can be found with the human body and all the tools it is equipped with. From this container of ideas a vision emerges, one of breaking down barriers between sectors, between people and between the senses, creating a more holistic form of knowledge which is deeper and broader than the sum of the individual areas, served by technology rather than vice versa, One concept emerges above all else as a point of reflection: tolerance.

LINDA LOPPA

Dear Fabien, dear Sissel, welcome to this conversation. It's a kind of a coincidence that I thought to bring you together; you have both such an amazing career, so much experience in human research and in anthropology, and I feel we can learn a lot from your experiences. Sissel, explain this kind of passion of you searching for smell but also for individual memory.

SISSEL TOLAAS

I still breathe every breath; I inhale and melt molecules of interest. It is an endless journey and an endless passion. The topic of smell, molecule, the invisible reality that's around us, contains multiple components that determine who we are, where we are and what's going on. **UNFORTUNATELY, WE LIVE IN A WORLD THAT'S DRIVEN BY HOW THINGS LOOK.** We tend to overlook the importance of smell as utter meaning – beyond, of course, the commercial application we know so much and so well. And at one point marketing took over where science left off. **WHAT I HAVE TRIED TO DO WITH MY WORK IS LITERALLY BRING BACK SCIENCE.** Look into what is here, what is breathing? What does the air contain beyond the obvious reason for having it around us. For over 25 to 30 years, I've been analysing, **INVESTIGATING INTO SMALL COMPONENTS, THROUGH CHEMISTRY, ANTHROPOLOGY, AND ARCHAEOLOGY.** And the list is long. There are smells everywhere. There's a whole world to smell and there's a whole world to educate how to smell. So, yes, it's amazing and what it also does to me as a human is that it makes life and being alive, complex and complete again. And I have been understanding the sense of smell even more now in lockdown and with the issue that we are all concerned about, how important it is to use all the senses for the purpose of life. So, yes, I am giving that full, full, time attention, and, there's never a dull moment.

LL

I see that, you're still as passionate as I ever since I have known you. There is a kind of connection with Fabien because of your research work and the *Cloud Based Medical Imaging Software*.

FABIEN BECKERS

Nice to meet you Sissel, your work is so inspiring and fascinating. Recently I was thinking about combining two worlds in my life. The first world is a world of creativity, and that can take several forms of innovation, and the power of ideas and the other world is a world of impact. I love the idea of combining them together to have a human impact. A lot of the work I did recently was to **DEVELOP NEW WAYS OF HEALTHCARE.** This notion of really trying to invent something that will drive and change the way we will manage our health and our patient care. And so, we did that by launching a new platform. Today the way healthcare is being provided, even today through Covid, is often very opiated. A physician sees you and makes a recommendation based on a very small amount of information about yourself and about all the other patients in the world. They don't have access to the data to really help you. When you drive from a place A to B and you have a GPS, you have far more information than a physician has for you. We can leverage the power of the internet and **THE POWER OF THE DATA TO INFORM AND HELP AND ASSIST PHYSICIANS WITH ALL THE DATA TO DIAGNOSE BETTER** and help patients in a better way. And that's what we've done. Nobody thought when we started to use a browser and AI to diagnose patients around the world clinically. We did more than 100,000 of them, a lot of work on new-born heart defects, which is actually interesting. It's very graphically beautiful as well, you can see the blood flow inside the body with all the colours going in different vessels –it is very artistic in a way. We've done a lot of work for cancer, which was very gratifying and more to come, so, trying to move the needle a little bit and **IMPACT PATIENTS' LIVES BY HELPING PHYSICIANS.**

LL

Your ideas come from the crossroads of science and humanities, is that also a lesson for the fashion industry? Sissel you did some smell events for Balenciaga last year.

ST

I'm still working passionately with Balenciaga and this Sunday we are presenting the next collection with another smell, so that's an ongoing journey. I do work with a corporate world. I need to survive somehow, **SELLING INVISIBILITY IS NOT SO SUCCESSFUL THESE DAYS** and maybe now it will change. I hope so.

I'm kind of putting myself between hardcore research, innovation and commercial work and most of all education, trying to combine the four because it is very important for what I do. One is dependent on the other and I think what I have accomplished is somehow that **I CAN BE A ROLE MODEL FOR A LOT OF YOUNG PEOPLE** showing them it's possible to modify knowledge for multiple purposes. I think it is most important that the knowledge is solid and the commitment essential. That is half of my success story, to show and bring that across in every aspect of what I do. Also, in the context of commercial application I am not interested in making another perfume. There is enough of it out there and I have nothing against it. I just think there is the need to understand this dimension of life which goes invisible. With the knowledge that is there we can use it for a purpose, not only to cover up the world, but also to reveal the world with the same knowledge. My position here is literally to take up that challenge; knowledge, brings the real world into a corporation, in this context IFF, who have been supporting my research for the last 15 years. Challenge the knowledge from within and bring it together with the knowledge outside, literally bringing science and the corporation to real life. Connect them to the issues of the world, which is so very difficult for so many corporations to really get access to. **I'M KIND OF THE CATALYST OUT THERE, I THINK I CAN SAY.**

LL

Fabien, after those previous experiences, you are interested in the art world and you have founded IF studio. Tell us about the idea behind the studio.

FB

I think I have this kind weird background, because my whole childhood was around art and my parents were in art. My friends are in art. At the same time, I'm deep into science, as I always found it absolutely fascinating. The idea was of connecting the dots. Sissel, you mentioned about how you go through art, science and education. I think they're all interconnected, interwoven and **I ALWAYS WANTED TO FIND A PLACE, TO GATHER UNDER ONE ROOF IN SOME WAY, AN ARTIST, NEXT TO AN ENGINEER, NEXT TO A PHYSICIAN, NEXT TO A PHILOSOPHER, NEXT TO AN ANTHROPOLOGIST, TO REALLY START LAUNCHING AN ORGANIZATION FOR SOCIAL GOOD.** A better education in art and science. The idea would be to be able to, not be an architectural building but an architectural organization, able to look at the biggest world problems, having all the talents from these cross-disciplinary functions, to be able to address them in a new way. In physics, we've seen that if you send an input, you get to the same output. But if you change radically the input, you also change radically the output. **BY BRINGING VERY DIFFERENT POINTS OF VIEW AROUND THE TABLE, YOU ENABLE A NEW WAY OF THINKING.** Sissel you're bringing that a lot to your work, around smell; Neri Oxman at MIT Media Lab, has done that by connecting biology and architecture. Apple stands for that kind of connection. I think there are a lot of ways to affect education, healthcare, homelessness, all the big problems, climate change, in a new way. Surprisingly it doesn't exist and the idea was to

call it IF, and IF STANDS FOR INVENTION FACTORY; you can create an IF in the US, an IF in Africa, an IF in Europe, an IF in Asia, an IF in the Middle East to also cross-pollinate across cultures. And launch, for-profits because we have a non-profit, but also our products. That's something I'm passionate about. **IT'S LIKE BRIDGING DIFFERENT FIELDS** to grow from anthropology to sociology, to physics, to healthcare, to different works, I think is so enriching. And there are always dots and connections.

LL I feel that what you're saying about this complex way of bridging all different people and experiences is missing in education, especially in fashion education. Am I right?

FB It is missing everywhere. I think it can be leveraged for so many different ways of seeing the world. In the 1500s, the Renaissance was all about interconnecting those fields. And then they branched out to be very siloed. But now we see a lot of those cross-connections. I felt that to invent a new world, we really need to bring them back together more than ever before.

LL Sissel, what I wrote about your work is that smell can help tolerance.

ST Yes, we are born neutral. Humans, cockroaches and rats are the biggest generalist on planet earth and the purpose of smell and the nose, and we not only have sensors in the nose, all over the skin, the kidneys have sensors, the egg smell, the sperm, etcetera, the list is long. We cope with whatever smell setting there is, we get used to it and it's not for other reasons that the nose gets tired very quickly. Because it adjusts to suck the situation and immediately it copes with it and it has to survive. We live in a world that's sanitized, sterilized and now even more than ever, for protection, kind of. But we are missing out the core information; the body and the system are suffering. **WE ARE LIVING IN A WORLD WHERE WE ARE OPERATING AROUND BAD AND GOOD AND CLEAN AND DIRTY, YES AND NO, AND THAT IS NOT ENOUGH.** That's a very superficial type of information. Smell is very important here to become neutral towards a smell beyond those you know. All the marketing and the rhetoric out there is essential to be able to face all of these issues we are confronting.

What I try to do in my work is to **TAKE REAL SMELLS, RECORD THEM, REPLICATE THEM THROUGH CHEMISTRY, REPRODUCE THEM, DECONTEXTUALIZE THEM, TAKE THEM OUT OF THEIR COMFORT ZONE, PLACE THEM IN A COMFORTABLE SETTING AND TRAIN AWARENESS UNTIL THAT AWARENESS IS BEYOND DOUBT.** Then with that in the backpack, go back to reality, without any prejudice whatsoever, we can be tolerant towards skin, colour, religion, and so on. But if the smell is not right, that's the end of the sympathy. That is what is ruining most of the world. Again, back to education, we'll need to teach our kids to accept, not only what is there for the eye, but also what is there for the nose. And we start our lives using all our senses.

Going back to what you said, about creativity, to be creative, it's like being a child, it's like never stopping being a child. Being curious is using all your sense of being curious, **GETTING INFORMATION PROVIDED BY THE SENSES, INTO YOUR BODY AND YOUR BRAIN AND YOUR MEMORY, AND TRIGGERING YOUR MEMORY AND YOUR EMOTIONS,** and off we go. Learning in a context of emotion is essential to learning. It's not for any other reason that we learn most between zero and puberty. Whatever we learn later might stay there, but definitely what we've learned at that period stays because we learn in a context of play and enjoy all our senses. These are just facts and

I try to apply those facts to whatever I do and if I do work with the CEOs of Deutsche Bank, or the kindergarten in my neighbourhood, nobody leaves those workshops without a big smile on their face. You know why? Because they just smell the reality they live in and all that they can smell is the fragrance or detergent or the soap they normally use, but the garbage, the dog shit, the dirty street, tells quite a lot; we're cheating too much. And tolerance is a key word here.

FB I can continue to listen because this is such an incredible, fascinating topic. I think that smell is fascinating because it is also **CLOSER TO THE BRAIN, CONNECTED TO THE BRAIN.** It's one of the only senses that is not spatial which is really interesting, because it creates a surrounding right away. Sissel, maybe you can correct me if that's wrong, but I've heard that the centre of the universe tastes of rum and raspberries, because of Ethyl Formate, which is basically alcohol with other basic compounds.

ST Some of the molecules, the first molecules on the planet are still around, so we might say, pass on, some of the same molecules. I might blow it out and you get it in three days later. That is the world that I think needs to be taken a little bit more seriously especially after so many people lost the sense of smell. Suddenly they wake up like, "Oh my God, I didn't know I had one!" The knowledge is there, not just in chemistry, which is my background. **LOOK AT NEUROSCIENCE, LOOK AT PSYCHOLOGY, LOOK AT ANTHROPOLOGY, LOOK AT EVERY ASPECT OF SCIENCE.** The knowledge around smell is so much more advanced than it was when I started 25 years ago. Nobody knew "what are you doing, are you making another perfume?" I said, "no, I don't think the world needs one!". Even then I dared to say that. But the fact that I work with some huge corporations, and they don't approach me to make another fragrance or a room spray, they approach me for discovering who are we, on behalf of how we smell. I have the skill and the knowledge and the technology to show them how that smells. I think this is the new future after having scaled down, understood so much more about life and being alive, how vulnerable one is. We have something for sure, and that is the body and the senses, everything else costs money, **FIRST WE NEED TO RECHARGE AND RE-EDUCATE HOW TO USE WHAT WE HAVE FOR FREE.** And then, I think the rest can follow.

FB First of all, **WE HAVE A SMELL ID AS UNIQUE AS OUR FINGER-PRINT,** hardly anybody knows this, and because we've never had a chance – we smell our mother's deodorant before we smell our mother's milk. We should try to find out what's going on before we start to add on, in all the aspects of adding on. And I think that is part of what education should be, and then we can fully apply it if it's needed. And if not, at least we know why not. Less is more in this utter meaning. That's what I try to say. In the context of application or communication, of course, you carefully can apply a smell. And if it's only about you knowing what the purpose of the smell is, that's enough. You program your brain to be in a certain mood or make the smell do half of the communication, that is already something different. I think it's very complex and very beautiful to work with smell because it has a huge potential.

FB I think smell is so subjective and so powerful, but I would love to know Sissel, why for you it was so obvious? Why did you build your career on smell and carry on with smell? Did you know why?

ST I grew up in Iceland, Norway. I was passionate about the outdoor and never ever was interested in wearing any perfume or deodorant. I was just very curious about air and why air is so important, especially in the Northern

hemisphere. Why air brings weather, why air is the number one topic of small talk in the world. Why air is so many things. And starting to ask very naive questions around this invisibility that filled me with so much more than I know and knew at that point. So, it's a very naive, childish kind of process and the reason for doing what I do. Back to what I said in the beginning, literally I never stopped being a child. Never stopped being, just relying on what I see. I always suffered, and being born on an island, I grew up on an island, it made me, you know, **THE TOPIC OF BEING CURIOUS WAS IN MY GENES**. I decided to try it out, to try literally to be my own guinea pig and see what the purpose of the senses is meant to be. And what if I turn on and off and amplify some of the senses more than the others, what would that bring to me? Would I become different? Would I change something? Would I understand the world I live in better? And the answer is yes.

SEVEN YEARS OF FIELDWORK, TRAVELING THE GLOBE, USING MY SENSE OF SMELL AS A NAVIGATOR MADE ME ANOTHER HUMAN BEING. And this passion and commitment I have today is because of that. I dared to jump out in that deep water that surrounded my island, and I couldn't even swim. So, yes, that is what I mean with the passion and commitment, which is so very little in all aspects of education. Educate our kids to have a passion, to find that passion, how do we do that? I think the key here is to look into what the body is, **WHAT ARE THE BODY AND THE MIND AND THE SOUL AND THE SENSES ALL ABOUT**. To start, the biology, psychology, the chemistry. Then off we go with all the other innovations and you name it, technology, etcetera. But first we need to have the basics in place.

So, to make a long story short, off I went, I went as far I could get away from home. I went to Eastern Europe, and then in Eastern Europe I couldn't find any material. I was literally dependent on the air I was breathing. And I was in the middle of the revolution, of the falling of the wall. And I was hiding in the bushes, trying to make sense of the world, smelling and smelling and recording and recording and I understood that, it made me survive, not having to rely on semiotics, semantics and vision. I could rely on a lot of information and make sense out of it and have a fun time, even if I was suffering. That's my background and then I, of course, studied chemistry, linguistics. And I thought very early on, **I CANNOT SIT IN THE LAB, PRETENDING I KNOW ABOUT LIFE**. Working with the topic of smell when I know smell is happening outside in the real life. I decided to add on art and innovation so that I had a platform where I could perform and show my research in the real life.

I perform and I do research using my name on the platform rather than sitting in the lab, writing papers, having to refer and to rethink this and we should do that, etcetera. I pose the questions, I find the answer, if I don't find the answer, I move on to the next step using the creative platform where it doesn't matter who you are, as long as you deliver, that was very important for where I am today. I have to have that freedom to just explore what it means to be a human being and to be alive. That's what I do. **REAL AND REALITY IS MY TOPIC OF CONCERN**.

Fabien, It's not about me, it's about all of us. So, tell me your story.

I think my story is about this notion of very different worlds that are being part of art and at the same time I did my science and I did physics and I did quantum physics for a long time. And then I went into innovation and tried to bring an impact. I just love the notion of talking to you and I talked a few days ago to someone about healthcare and then I talked to a designer about interactive. I just I love the fun of working on different topics. **WORKING WITH**

SOMEONE CREATIVE CAN BE A VERY SPIRITUAL, TRANSCENDENTAL EXPERIENCE AS FOR EXAMPLE WORKING ON CONNECTING LIGHT WITH SOUND, for example. Other people tried to build a way to measure EEG and brain activity, for example.

I think this is really what I love, to be able to go deep in those different fields and explore them. I'm very curious, like you, and I just want to learn from all these different people. When we were at my last company, we had some really powerful moments when we had a physician calling us and we had an impact on the life of a newborn who had a heart problem, and he was just one day old or two days old then. We made the difference in his family and in the kid's life. And I think there's nothing beyond that for me. I think this is the ultimate feeling of being fulfilled in one's work or one's life. And I just want to try to do more of that. **I REALIZED THE BEST WAY TO DO THAT FOR ME IN MY WEIRD BRAIN IS TO CONNECT ALL THOSE DIFFERENT PEOPLE** and feel together and try to align them to try to solve a problem.

I THINK THAT CONNECTING IS WANTING, but also to actually do it, is very important. I'm tired of talking and now the next thing is to really develop something that has substance. I'm a doer. I don't even have a website because I'm in the field all the time and being there is half of my job. That is the, maybe, disadvantage of having so much passion for some reason you never really want to stop.

Suddenly you discover that you better kind of sit down and sum up a bit. The only moment you discover that is when all the copycats come and literally imitate what you do. You're paving the way, and then they ignore the references. I think absolutely, **I AM A DOER, TRYING TO MAKE THINGS HAPPEN AND TRYING TO HAVE IMPACT** is, I think, essential here. For all the knowledge production that we have done for so many years like you and me and others, and also Linda, now is the time to really see how we can give that back to the world in a way that benefits the world and makes the world a better one for everyone. Not only for a little, small elite, call it fashion, art or tech; I think the moment is there.

Sissel, what did you learn from creating a life around smell? Because I'm sure you have a different way of looking at the world or smelling the world through that journey, and what did you learn from it?

MOST OF ALL I'VE LEARNED TO BE TOLERANT, like you've said Linda. Tolerance is a big issue in my work and the fact that I am so tolerant is that I discovered what I didn't know existed. Back to curiosity, it's like there is no limit for where curiosity can take you. The fact that we are equipment interfaces, called sensors - five - they are just the umbrella and underneath each we have multiple other variations of balance, cold and hot, etcetera... **THERE IS A PURPOSE FOR WHY THE SENSES ARE THERE** and if we don't use them properly, we are not happy. I think the biggest illness of our time is this embodiment with technology taking over where humans left off; it is really problematic.

First, we need to understand what the senses can do and are capable of doing beyond what we thought they could do. I think this is what I've accomplished in my work also to include the sense of smell properly in the moment of perception and understanding the function of the other senses as well, because there is a balance there. All the senses are always happening simultaneously, so it's just being aware and also to train the senses the way you train your muscles, you can train the senses to turn them on and off. It's amazing to understand the capacity of what the body is able to do. And this made

ST

FB

ST

FB

me a much happier human being just to know that, wow, I'm so independent. I just need all that I'm equipped with, that's it.

THAT WAS FOR ME THE BIGGEST WAKE-UP CALL, THE MOMENT I DISCOVERED THAT THE AIR CONTAINED PARTICLES I can't see, but they are there and I can catch them somehow and if I have the right tool, that was for me, like a Newton apple falling on the head, it was like, wow, that's it. That kind of discovery changed my life. I'm never going back to where I was before I discovered what impact smell can have in my life.

FB How do you see the difference between a smell and taste? are they two different things?

ST It's the same taste, it's the same sense, literally. You have five or more directions of taste, and then you have, I don't know how many trillion directions of smells. Every breath you take, you inhale up to 26 sextillion molecules, it's unbelievable, it's massive. And it's also, not without a reason, that it's so difficult to embed technology in the sense of smell because whatever you do ends up being kind of lame or kind of a joke. Because look behind me, I have up to 5,000 molecules in my collection, plus 10,000 recordings, plus an alphabet of words and terms in relation to smell and language. It's all these data you need to get the topic of smell and it's also very interesting to see the sense of smell kind of self-defends itself. I don't want to be digitalized. **THE ONLY THING LEFT, THAT MAKES US HUMAN IS THE SENSE OF SMELL.** And it's also the sense that immediately triggers emotional memory. Quicker, bypassing rationality in the brain immediately activating memory and emotion. So, in the end, it makes so much sense. Fabien, what about you? What do you miss the most these days?

FB I think people, the smell of people, the smell of friends because we live in different parts of the world. I agree with you, what is fascinating about smell is that how incredibly interconnected it is to emotion. And I think, maybe, **THE NEW ERA THAT WE'RE GOING INTO, IS TO HAVE A BETTER UNDERSTANDING OF HOW TO TRIGGER EMOTIONS AND TO BETTER MASTER OUR EMOTIONS.** And I think smell could be an incredible part of that. To make us happy and remind us about people more than images. The new photos of tomorrow maybe will smell.

ST Linda, you are the moderator here. You have to navigate us out of the system world into the real world.

LL I am listening to you because I am so happy about this conversation; I am working on this new world outside, instead of focussing on the big brands of the fashion industry. I'm discovering new young designers in countries, in cities, I didn't know. So probably I'm picking up where you have started Sissel. I'm learning a lot because I wanted to go in February to the fashion shows in Paris and Covid came up and my husband said, I'm not sure that you have to go. So, I unpacked my luggage and I put everything back in my wardrobe. And since then, I'm another person; I thought I can bring my knowledge and my experiences to other people, in different places in the world and make a better world and bring more emotions and bring more passion. And that's what I am so passionate about. And that's why you are in the Brain Container, it's one of my 11 containers.

And you will be now the messengers to a lot of other people in the fashion industry. **IT'S A PITY THAT EVERYTHING IS SO SEGMENTED.** I think what you've said, Fabien, that all those engineers, anthropologists, sociologists, researchers have to come together is what I am trying to do. What Sissel said, I'm a doer and me too, I'm a doer. You know that Sissel, I was

always hands on and did whatever there was to do and I gave all my passion to that. **BUT NOW IT'S A DIFFERENT WORLD AND I WANT TO GIVE MY EXPERIENCE ALSO TO DIFFERENT PEOPLE THROUGH THIS PROJECT.**

ST That's great. How is San Francisco coping with the new reality out there?

FB The lack of normal maybe; but I think in the US at the moment, what is interesting living in California is that **YOU ALWAYS HAVE A KIND OF PIONEERING ENERGY HERE**, like everything is possible. It's always like "why not" instead of "why" that you have sometimes in another place in the world. It is very refreshing that you can dream, you can think and want to change the world without any scissors and people will take you seriously. And on top of it, may give you sometimes a lot of money to achieve that. Of course, now it's a weird time with Covid and then, of course, the political climate here. But I **THINK THERE'S A NEW WORLD TO BE INVENTED, THAT IS MORE TOLERANT AND MORE BALANCED AGAINST DIFFERENT GROUPS OF PEOPLE.** I think you can't have too much disparity because then the system breaks. And I think we're seeing that now. I think it's an incredible time to invent, what you and Linda have been talking about is bringing all those talents together and doing things differently. And to be more, I think, caring of everyone and inclusive and global because internet is fantastic, it's like free global distribution. I mean, what you're saying now, everyone can see it tomorrow all over the world. And of course, Linda that's the whole idea of the containers, isn't it?

ST But nobody can smell it! I cannot see these avatars some days in a box, you know, it's just like obnoxious-I'm over it.

FB I think it would be wonderful to record it. Maybe on the phone we will have one day a sensor, so you can record and send a message, a smell to someone else.

ST I've just sent it, Fabien I've just sent it, did you received it? It's on the way...

LL I think we can close the conversation here; you made my day because connecting is what was the purpose of this conversation. And I'm sure you're going to continue the conversation, and probably something new will come out. I thank you both, tremendously for this wonderful conversation. Have a nice day Fabien and a big kiss Sissel. Ciao, have a nice evening.

THE. » «DINING» » CON- TAINER#

THE DINING CONTAINER IS SPECIAL, IT IS A MOMENT OF IDEAL AND VIRTUAL CONVIVIALITY, WHERE ALL OF THE OTHER CONTAINERS FROM THE ICEBREAKERS PROJECT MEET AND COLLIDE, WHERE THE GAINS ARE COLLATED AND THE GROUND IS PREPARED FOR FUTURE CONNECTIONS. ACCOMPANYING LINDA LOPPA ON THIS JOURNEY IS HIROFUMI KURINO, WIDELY HAILED AS A FASHION ORACLE, AND CO-FOUNDER AND SENIOR ADVISOR AT THE JAPANESE RETAIL GROUP UNITED ARROWS, WITH 350 STORES IN JAPAN.



**BETWEEN LINDA
LOPPA & HIROFUMI
KURINO**

**DECEMBER 11, 2020
FLORENCE 9AM/
TOKYO 5PM**

Dear Kurino-san, it is nice to close this chapter of 11 conversations with you as we shared so many special moments thanks to fashion. It's also special to me because this is the 11th conversation. In numerology, the **NUMBER 11 REPRESENTS HIGHER IDEALS, INVENTION, REFINEMENT, CONGRUENCY, BALANCE, FULFILMENT AND VISION**; closing this chapter with you will be the opening of a new one.

Kurino-san, you are the senior advisor and creative director of United Arrows, a retail company with more than 4,000 people working and 350 shops all over the world. So, please, a short introduction of United Arrows and your story related to the company.

31 years ago, we started the company United Arrows in 1989 and in 1990 we had our first show. From 1991 we were dealing with designers such as Dries van Noten, from 1994 with Martin Margiela. We had a lot of interesting productions from all over the world, also from Japanese companies, like Comme des Garçons, Watanabe, Undercover and in 1995 we became a public company. I was the managing director in the managing board from 1989 to 2009. I left the board and became a senior advisor, working mainly with United Arrows simultaneously doing a freelance job as a kind of journalist and teaching and guiding students in their work.

Our conversation starts talking about the 'SPEAKERS CORNER'. Kurino-san, first I wanted to ask you how you feel today because **WE'VE HAD KIND OF A YEAR WHERE WE'VE ASKED OURSELVES MANY QUESTIONS ABOUT THE FASHION INDUSTRY AND NOT ONLY.**

Until last year the situation around fashion was very commercial, but because of Covid-19 the whole retail system and the feelings of the consumer are changing. We heard a lot of interesting voices from the journalists and consumers, but people ask my opinion from a fashion professional point of view. I published my first book. The title is "The World After Mode". **IN THE BOOK I AM SAYING THAT THE OLD STYLE OF PEOPLE FOLLOWING THE SAME MODE, THE SAME TREND, THE SAME FASHION IS OVER.** And maybe this trend has already happened, 5, 10 years ago, but because of Covid-19, suddenly this change became very drastic. Many people needed many voices but **IT IS TIME TO HAVE OUR OWN VOICE SAYING SOMETHING ABOUT THE FASHION INDUSTRY,** and the environmental systems.

The second container of the 11 conversations is the 'SCIENCE CONTAINER'. I had an interesting conversation with Suket Dhir, a designer in India, New Delhi, and Armando Chant an artist in Melbourne about textiles and science. Science and research are amazingly interesting fields, but we know little about them, therefore I am seeking to make science more contemporary to introduce it to a wider audience. What is your idea? How would you do that?

People ask me '*how we can balance human skills and artificial intelligence*', a balance between a couture technique and a digital technique. India has a very long history of making fabrics, dyeing fabrics. They have fantastic skills and fantastic craftsmen, but at the same time, India is famous for modern science and also for being good in mathematics. I think, that Indian people have both the creative side and the scientific side in their DNA. In general, we live in a very digital world, but at the same time we realize that science is not the answer, science is not the final answer. For example, during the lockdown people have needed the masks, but the lockdown made transportation and importing masks difficult. So, people started making their own mask and luckily, we have still many Japanese factories that can make masks, from the

simple mask to the very luxury mask, made from the Kimono fabric in Kyoto. Some masks have a highly technological function inside them. **THE COVID-19 SITUATION GAVE US A CHANCE TO THINK ABOUT HOW WE CAN LIVE TOGETHER USING OUR HANDS COMBINED WITH DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY.** Especially fashion I think we can do both ways.

Making exhibitions, events and digital events around science and research could make them more accessible in a way. Do you agree?

Last year at Tate Modern, I saw a big exhibition of Olafur Eliasson. He is a good example because on one side he's very good in modern technology, but on the other side he really wants to protect nature. So, he used his **MODERN TECHNOLOGY TO REMIND PEOPLE TO OPEN THEIR EYES ABOUT HOW OUR EARTH IS IMPORTANT,** how our earth is delicate and how we should hurry to save this world.

My next conversation was the about the 'DIGITAL CONTAINER', because thanks to digital technology we are talking today and thanks to the digital we have a lot of possibilities of meeting in this Covid moment. But is it the only solution to communication, can't we create more human relationships instead of those algorithms and those data that know more about us than we know about ourselves? What is, for you, the balance between the digital and the analogue?

I totally agree with you that the digital is a bit of a dangerous situation because **PEOPLE BELIEVE TOO MUCH IN THE DIGITAL OR THE ALGORITHMS.** I can give you a very strange experience. This week my book was published. So, sometimes I check what kind of a reaction there is to my book and check my book's title on the computer. So, one day, Amazon recommended me one book and that was my book because the algorithmic analysis made such a stupid mistake, and I really, really laughed. This is one very serious example of how we should not believe the algorithms.

I think there is a kind of danger, that we have to be careful not to lose our emotions and especially in the fashion industry, I guess.

This is maybe a cynical situation about the use of algorithms. But, if I can point out this mistake, then I'm happy to welcome it, because, **SINCE WE'VE MADE MISTAKES, HUMANS CAN PROGRESS.** If we never made a mistake, we would never have progressed, that's why I don't believe in this digital system too much.

The 'LITTLE HISTORY CONTAINER' is a subject that is precious to me. I thought that in every city, in every country, in every culture there is so much to talk about a simple or beautiful garment, that it would be nice if we could have little containers, in a small shop or even in an office space. What would be your choice of garment for the Little History Container?

TODAY, 50,000 YEARS OF HUMAN HISTORY CAN BE HANDLED BY A COMPUTER. If we track back through history, we can see the evidence of the 19th century, the Victorians or the 18th century or 15th century. There are endless examples we can learn from in history but it's an illusion that we can learn everything. I think that our brain still has a lot of capacity. I read an article about **HUMANS USING ONLY A VERY SMALL PART OF THE BRAIN.** I try to use more of my brain, but not more of the digital stock – not from the big data. I prefer the human voice, and therefore if Linda-san recommends someone to me, I go to see that person because I believe more in you than in the computer.

You were saying in one of your interviews that the Kimono was quite a genderless garment. Could you touch on that a little bit?

HK

The Kimono story is very important and very deep; if we just see the shape or if we just see the making of the Kimono, the Kimono itself is gender free. There's no gender. But at the same time, the way we dress the Kimono men have their own way, women have their own way. And for example, in Western clothing, men's jackets and men's shirts, the left side is over and the right side is under. The Kimono has the same history; this is the basic difference between men and women regarding the Kimono. When men wear the Kimono, there are not so many layers, but when women wear the Kimono, there are many layers. In this historical and cultural part, especially for women, the Kimono is like enduring culture itself. The Kimono, especially the fabric of the Kimono, has a lot of techniques. Some techniques have already gone, some techniques are already lost, or there are still very good craftsmen in Kyoto or in the countryside in Japan who are still handling the classic way of weaving the Kimono. But anyway, **THE MOST CHARMING PART OF THE KIMONO IS THE FABRIC. THE WEAVING, THE COLOURS WE'RE USING, THE THREAD WE'RE USING ARE THE CHARM OF THE KIMONO AND ALSO, IT HAS BASICALLY NO AGE, NO SIZE.** We can resize the same Kimono from mother's size to daughter's size or grandma's size to granddaughter's size. Finally, in my grandmother's day, they were making the cloths to clean the table from a worn-out Kimono. So, the Kimono was one of the most sustainable clothes in Japan in the past.

LL

We come to the 'CRITICAL CONTAINER', one of my favourite containers. I think we must be critical and although we are well educated, we have to find the words to do that. The conversation I had with Angelo Flaccavento with Anna Yudina, a very good conversation, was about poetry. Angelo is a poet, he writes so well when he writes about fashion, he's very sharp; when you talk to him, he's like a poet.

HK

In my book I SAID THAT THE PHILOSOPHER OR THE POET ARE THE ULTIMATE FASHION PEOPLE, BECAUSE THEY CREATE. Philosophers and poets never create anything physical, but they create the concept and they create the thinking, which is the biggest flexibility and freedom in the world. **I'M REALLY CHARMED BY THOSE PEOPLE WHO ARE MAGICIANS OF THE WORD, PHILOSOPHERS AND POETS.**

LL

Lately you were reading Kohei Saito, the young philosopher.

HK

Kohei Saito graduated at the University in Germany and his main subject is Karl Marx and, 'Das Kapital'. He's just 33 years and when he was 31 he received the Deutscher Memorial Prize 2018. I really respect his work because he found an ecological point of view and a sustainable point of view from Karl Marx's greatest work. This is kind of a revolution for the people who studied Karl Marx. Now we see a very edgy time of the capitalistic world, so in his work, Mr. Kohei Saito said that we should stop capitalism. **STOPPING CAPITALISM IS THE MOST RADICAL THINKING**, but at the same time when we were in the 1960s and 1970s, we said the same thing, but in a more radical way. I respect Mr. Kohei Saito because he's not pushing for violence or to a radical revolution, but he said to think more and just change the system. If we seriously try to change the system, for example, **CHANGE THE FAST-FASHION SYSTEM OR THE FAST-FOOD SYSTEM, WE CAN STOP DAMAGING THE WORLD.** I really respect this point. Mr. Kohei Saito is one of the best philosophers and the best economists of today, I think.

LL

Now we come to the 'NOW CONTAINER' and I've dedicated this container to young people in their twenties. Because it seems they have the key and the answer for everything that goes wrong in the world. It seems they really

HK

have a great voice and they have a lot of attention. They are very critical about us, the older guys as they think we did everything wrong, and I think they can have a voice in the future. How do you feel about this?

I really agree with what you're saying, and of course, now everybody knows about Greta Thunberg. She's just 16 or 17, she comes from Sweden. She's studying her demonstration just by herself. But at the same time, she can move millions of people to say yes to her activities. I really believe in these new generations. And at the same time, at this point, social media is working well. They can learn, they can use and they can use their voice in the social media. This is the biggest difference between our twenties and their twenties; in the mind, Linda's time, Kurino's time is the same. But they have also the digital, the social media and they can use it. So, I should say to the old generation, don't be afraid too much. Don't be afraid of social media, don't be afraid of the young generations. Because they're not against you. **THEY JUST TRY TO BE HONEST. THEY JUST TRY TO CARRY ON THIS WORLD.** That's why they say "no" to you. And the "no" is the start of the "yes". **"NO" IS A POSITIVE "YES"**. If they'd always said "yes", there would be no future. I really respect the people who can say a good "no" to the world. And, we should hear their voice and the same for this digital world.

For example, if, as you mentioned, the young fashion designers, if they were in Paris or Milan in the 1980s, they had to wait for some buyer or some journalist to put their name in the Figaro or in International Herald Tribune. They had to wait, but now they can put their work on social media, in their computer and quickly some people will find them. **IT'S A VERY NEW WORLD AND STILL, NOBODY IS ABLE TO USE 100% OF THIS NEW EQUIPMENT.** So, we should get used to this and put our human side into this digital world and try to find the charm of the human from digital social communication.

LL

My next container is the 'SURPRISE CONTAINER'. Are we surprised today? I want to be surprised. Because there is a lot going on between local and globalization and I think the surprise is going to come from the local communities.

HK

I have two different African projects. One project is working together with the United Nations, Ethical Fashion Initiative, EFI. This project is to make products in Africa; we're producing fabric in Burkina Faso and we use these fabrics in our tailoring. This activity is to help local people to get a job. And at the same time this activity can save the classic, local, traditional skill of the hand-weaving in Burkina Faso or hand-beading in Kenya. This is one project. For the other project, we work together with African designers. This started last year, and we named it "FACE.A-J", "Fashion And Culture Exchange. Africa-Japan". Me and my colleague started to be interested in African young designers introducing them to the world. Simultaneously talented African designers, like Thebe Magugu or Kenneth Ize were in the LVMH prize. This year we found Sindiso Khumalo at the LVMH prize. Until recently people thought just about Europe or America as the centre of fashion, but **THERE ARE A LOT OF CREATIVE PEOPLE OUTSIDE EUROPE.**

African people love fashion, not as consumerism but as **A JOY OF LIFE, THIS POINT REALLY CHARMED ME.** Because, I've mentioned about the capitalism in another chapter, capitalism is consumerism and the **CONSUMERISM SOMETIMES KILLS THE CREATIVITY, CONSUMERISM KILLS THE JOY OF WEARING.** But the way African people do it is that they just enjoy wearing clothes. It looks like in our twenties, our early sixties, seventies,

we really enjoyed dressing up. So, I'm very happy to see the African people having this DNA. And I like to work together with young African designers and introduce them to the world. These are the activities we're doing.

LL I come to the 'BRAIN CONTAINER', the brain, which I think we have to train a bit more. Many people are forgetting that we have a brain and I had a fantastic discussion with Sissel Tolaas, the smell researcher and artist, and Fabien Beckers, a scientist developing apps for healthcare. Sissel Tolaas who is a really passionate woman, talked about tolerance, that smell could help tolerance. I thought it was a nice statement to work on. What do you feel?

HK We have a lot of senses, sight, hearing, smell, taste and touch. But smell is very, delicately, related to memory. And sometimes people have problems with memory or sometimes people become forgetful. Smell can help them to remember things or vitalize their brain too. I think **THERE'S STILL A LOT OF MYSTERY IN THE HUMAN BODY** and of course in the human brain and those recent researches on senses like smell can help the scientific side and medical side too. We should learn more about the brain. Our eyes have a white part and a dark part. Within mammals, only humans have this white part and this dark part. This has a reason, because we can talk with the eyes. And if we were monkeys or lions, we should not show our eyes because our enemy could read us. So, if we were wild animals, we would protect our eyes from somebody reading our mind. But our eye is the opposite, this is very interesting physical and brain research about communication and how the human body is made, I think.

LL I want to go further into our conversation talking about the 'PATTERN CONTAINER'. The Pattern Container is very dear to me as I am the daughter of a tailor. The pattern is so interesting because it starts from two dimensions and develops into three dimensions. Not only the fashion pattern is interesting to me, but also patterns of society, patterns of cities, patterns of life, patterns of behaviour. And I thought it was a good moment to talk about Tokyo with you. A city with different cultures in different neighbourhoods, it's like one big country with different ways of living. How is Tokyo today?

HK I was raised in Tokyo, so I like Tokyo and I still love Tokyo but with Covid-19 the situation in Tokyo became a bit different. Until March 2020, Tokyo was people's dream place and all the big companies, big designer brands have their flagship shops in Tokyo, this is understandable. Tokyo is New York, Tokyo is Paris. But with Covid-19, people are afraid of Tokyo and at the same time **PEOPLE FOUND THE CHARM OF THEIR LOCAL PLACE**. So now the dream of Tokyo is half lost and half still exists. Maybe the best solution is that **WE SHOULD SEE TOKYO AS LOCAL** and not as a global centre. **THIS CONCEPT OF FORGETTING ABOUT THE GLOBAL CENTRE, MUST BE THE POST PANDEMIC WORLD THINKING**. Kohei Saito in his book about Das Kapital of Karl Marx said that now **THE EUROPEAN CENTRISM, THE WESTERN CENTRISM, PERIODS ARE OVER**. At the same time the city centrism is over, I think. Tokyo is still charming and I like Tokyo, but we should change our concept. Not a centric city anymore, but one of the very interesting local ones, the same as Nagoya, Osaka or the same as Kanazawa, Kyoto. I can say the same thing about Milan or Tuscany or Paris. all those places are interesting, especially after this pandemic. Simultaneously, **THE POSITIVE SIDE OF THE DIGITAL, THE CONNECTION CAN CHANGE THE POSITIONING OF THE CENTRE. I THINK THE MAP OF THE WORLD IS CHANGING**.

LL Smaller cities have the capacity to bring something new, based on invention and naivety. Now we have a more horizontal way of thinking. The last

container is the 'EXHIBITION CONTAINER'. I like curating, I did many exhibitions in Antwerp and abroad. What is your feeling about fashion museums, if I might ask?

HK There are many nice fashion museums and, of course, we can learn from the Victoria and Albert Museum or the MoMu in Antwerp or the Musée Galliera in Paris. But maybe they should think **ABOUT THE NEXT STEP OF WHAT IS A MUSEUM IN ITSELF**. People think too much about the function of a museum as an archive, but **IF WE JUST THINK ABOUT THE PAST, THERE'S NO FUTURE**. A museum is like a dictionary, a museum is like a tangible dictionary. I like to go to museums, from museums we can learn a lot of unknown things and some things we can't understand, this is very important, because if we understand everything, we would become stupid. **I'M VERY MUCH CHARMED BY THE THINGS WE CANNOT UNDERSTAND OR THINGS THAT MAKE ME FEEL UNCOMFORTABLE**. For example, the Fondazione Prada in Milan, there is a very good curation. I always feel a strong power from Fondazione Prada, because they don't give me the comfortless feeling, but sometimes a very strange feeling or also a negative feeling. But we need this, **WE NEED THIS GOOD POISON**. We need good noise in our life. At this point, the fashion museum shouldn't be just an archive, but also evoke, also provoking people might be a very important part of the fashion museum.

LL Thanks, Kurino-san for this wonderful dinner, I would say. And, please keep on provoking. I will do the same, because I think we need to do that. And if we can give other people the push to provoke, please do it. Thank you so much for this conversation. Have a nice evening.

BIOGRAPHIES#

ADELE VAROE	<p>Australian artist and designer who creates transformative experiences that explore the social effect of fashion. She brings people together to construct participatory performances that explore the elusive nature of fashion. Working with actors, models and the public Adele investigates how fashion affects the interactions and relations between us. She is interested in the behaviour fashion evokes and the role social interaction plays in shaping our perception of dress.</p> <p>adelevarcoe.com @adelevarcoe</p>
ALESSIO DE'NAVASQUES	<p>Founder and creative director of A.I. Artisanal Intelligence, conceived as a platform that researches and promotes innovative forms of craftsmanship, artistic expression and new talents, while keeping in mind the historical realities of Italian manufacturers. He is an independent curator and a regular contributor to several magazines: <i>I-D</i>, <i>Vogue</i>, <i>Dust</i> and <i>Artribune</i>, authoring a number of articles, interviews and reviews.</p> <p>artisanalintelligence.it @alessiodenavasques</p>
ANGELO FLACCAVENTO	<p>Independent fashion critic, writer, poet and curator. He works out of Sicily, constantly traveling on assignments. He is a columnist for <i>The Business of Fashion</i> and <i>Il Sole 24 Ore</i> and an editor at large at <i>Vogue Italia</i>. He contributed to <i>WSJ</i>, <i>Purple Fashion</i>, <i>L'Officiel Italia</i>, <i>Fantastic Man</i>, <i>Studio</i>. He curated the exhibitions <i>Due o tre cose che so di Ciro</i> and <i>Il signor Nino</i> for <i>Fondazione Pitti Discovery</i> in Florence in 2017 and 2015 respectively.</p> <p>@poeticallypunk</p>
ANNA YUDINA	<p>Architecture & design writer and curator based in Paris, France. She has authored 8 books published in 8 languages, including "Garden City", "Furniture", "Lumitecture", "HomeWork" (all by Thames&Hudson), and "Multiverse: Art, Dance, Design, Technology" (5 Continents Editions). Anna's interests span from "urbanature" (hybrids of nature, architecture and technology in the contemporary city) to cross-disciplinary interaction between design/art/tech/science, and the changing role of creative disciplines in today's world.</p>
ANNE TIMERMAN	<p>Together with Eugene Timerman founded TMR.design, a New York-based creative studio specializing in visual identity, often extended to include real and virtual architectural environments. TMR.design developed a unique methodology based on systematic form exploration. Custom algorithmic scripts are used to create a variety of new forms and outline new territories of design solutions.</p> <p>tmr.design</p>
ARMANDO CHANT	<p>Artist, curator and academic with a professional background in the fashion industry. Armando's artistic practice focuses on creating imagery, layers, and surfaces that facilitate a constant sense of visual, material, and experiential transformation. Through an expanded approach to the physical and gestural act of drawing the work explores the oscillation in-between analogue surface and the digital screen. The work is created by using diverse artistic disciplines and techniques, including drawing, printmaking, textiles, garment, photography, and film.</p> <p>armandochant.com @armando_chant</p>
DOBRILA DENEGRI	<p>Art historian specialised in contemporary art. Convinced that the museum of contemporary art is a place for the production of meaning, she launched in 2002 "Art Highlights" lecture and talks program at MACRO – Museum of Contemporary Art of Rome. She was artistic director of the Centre</p>

FABIEN BECKERS	<p>of Contemporary Art in Torun (Poland). She initiated the research platform "Transfashional" which maps fashion-related artistic practices and advocates for the necessity of promoting and sustaining fashion-based trans-disciplinary productions within art institutions and museums.</p> <p>Dr. Fabien Beckers is a senior healthcare executive, passionate about solving global problems. He received his PhD (Quantum Matter Laboratory) from Cambridge University, Masters from Stanford Graduate School of Business, and as CEO was the recipient of Top 50 World's Most Innovative Companies (2019) by <i>FastCompany</i> (#2 in healthcare). He raised more than \$50M to build one of the first cloud-AI platforms for diagnostic imaging and clinical diagnostics. Fabien disrupted the healthcare ecosystem using cloud to unlock data driven medicine ahead of his time. His company created 5 FDA-cleared products, the first open innovation platform, an AI marketplace, and launched a new method to transform how newborns with heart defects are diagnosed. As CEO, he impacted 100k+ patients globally. Fabien is currently the Head of Digital Pathology at Verily (Alphabet/Google) and is working on applying AI to oncology.</p> <p>linkedin.com/in/fabienbeckers/</p>
GEERT BRULOOT	<p>Retailer, curator, creative director mostly working in and around Antwerp Fashion. Started 'Cocodrillo' and later 'Louis' in Antwerp, the first stores representing Belgian and international designers, supporting the next generation of Antwerp fashion designers. Curated several exhibition such as Stephen Jones, "The accent of Fashion", co-curated with Walter van Beirendonck "Dream The World Awake", co-curated in 2014 the Dries Van Noten exhibition and book "Inspirations" at the Musée des Arts Décoratifs in Paris and at Momu, Antwerp in 2015, curated the exhibition and the book, "Foot - Print" at Momu Antwerp in 2015. Working with Ann Demeulemeester and Patrick Robyn on the Ann Demeulemeester-Serax project.</p> <p>@geertbruloot</p>
GIANFRANCO VILLEGAS	<p>Fashion designer and author of the collection SELFMADE is a project born from Gianfranco Villegas, a Filipino-Italian designer. The name of the brand originates from the designer's turbulent childhood growing up in Florence, Italy, as the son of an immigrant Filipino mother who didn't enjoy a privileged upbringing. Every piece in the collection is hand-crafted in Italy with premium materials and features tailored finishing. The overall concept is mixing Italian luxury culture with Filipino American streetwear and hip-hop culture. The self-made signature of hand embroidered 3d graphics is applied in silk thread using a technique unique to the brand.</p> <p>selfmadebygianfrancovillegas.com @selfmadebygianfrancovillegas</p>
KARCHUN LEUNG	<p>Senior Consultant in Fashion Industry. Karchun Leung joined Hong Kong City Magazine as Senior Editor in 2014, becoming Editor in Chief of <i>Numéro China</i> in 2013. He opened up outstanding new projects for the magazine business and collaborated with multiple brands, for <i>Numéro China</i>, as well as for <i>Modern Weekly Style</i> since 2018. By the summer of 2020, Leung opened up a new chapter of his career and became a fashion consultant, with his strong knowledge in media - where he had witnessed and participated the evolution over 15 years of fashion in China and worldwide. "It's time for a new era"; Leung spares no effort on rendering support to local designers as to promote them from China to international arena. «Fashion is the language, and creativity is the phraseology» said by Karchun Leung.</p> <p>@KKKKKarchun</p>

KRISTOFER KONGSHAUS

CEO and co-founder of BOON_ORIGIN, a group dedicated to Art Design and Fashion; BOON_AGENCY, BOON_EDITIONS and BOON_ROOM. BOON a multidisciplinary group that embraces the past, energises the present and projects the future. Representing a patchwork of more than 150 artistic talents from more than 50 countries, all with one thing in common – Something incredible to share. We operate galleries and showrooms in Paris and NY, digital eCom www.boon-room.com, in addition to distribution, consulting, PR & communication worldwide.

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HIROFUMI KURINO

Senior Adviser for Creative Direction, UNITED ARROWS LTD. Founded in 1989 in Tokyo, UNITED ARROWS LTD. Is a specialty retail company with its own unique fashion sense, providing designer brands and original menswear and womenswear as well as accessories and general goods. With fashion-conscious customers as their main target, there are 19 store brands with varying concepts and a total of over 230 stores across Japan. Mister Kurino is highly respected both at home and abroad as a marketer who comprehensively captures the trends of the times in areas such as politics, economics, music, movies, and the arts. Recently Mister Kurino's book, "The World After Mode" has been published.

LINDA LOPPA

Honorary Doctor of University of the Arts, London, 50 years' fashion industry experience / private and public sectors, 25 years directing Antwerp Royal Academy of Fine Arts, Fashion Department, 20 years retail experience and store ownership, 10 years management at Flanders Fashion Institute, 8 years as Director & Curator of the Fashion Museum – MoMu, Antwerp, 9 years as Director of Polimoda International Institute Fashion Design & Marketing. Founder of "Linda Loppa Factory". Consultant, Adviser Strategy & Vision, Curator. Author of the book "Life is a Vortex" and "The New Fashion Container" project.

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MARLO SAALMINK

Founder of Atelier Marlo Saalmink, an international atelier, with a focus on art curation, creative direction, editorials and strategic development. The portfolio consists of selected art institutes, publications, designers and institutes. Through conversations, research, directives, visualisation and sincere expression, projects are conducted thanks to a long-lasting engagement with selected museums, design schools, magazines and craftsmen. The past fuels the future, as form often follows function.

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MAX ANISH

Artist, fashion designer lives in Mauritius. My work really help me to rationalise my irrationality. Make a sense of my mess and move on. I've only recently learnt to surrender to the flow. It took me a while to want to put my Art out there because i did not have much control over it. It came like periodical massive waves of inspiration and sometimes went through periods of droughts that left me worried and thirsty for more. Instability was one of my biggest fears and i am learning to simmer in it. Nevertheless some of my best works have been when i just permitted myself to lose control.

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MINNA PALMQVIST

Finland born, Sweden based fashion designer and artist. Her practice has had its starting point in the clashes between the socially accepted female body, and the real, physical bodies we actually inhabit. No matter if the

result is a ready-to-wear collection or an art installation, the roots of her work are always found in the problematics around the female body being seen as an object there to please others. In her recent work, Palmqvist has started to visibly extended her field of creative investigations into dealing with the stress and unethical circumstances under which clothing is produced and consumed.

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SAM COTTON

Creative Consultant, Creative Director, Designer and Fashion Innovation Consultant based in London. His work specialises in Material Innovation, Design Innovation, Philosophical Models, Anthropological Research and Sustainability, working in collaboration with the University of Central London and the Institute of Making. His design experience includes working with brands such as Valentino, Alexander McQueen, J.W. Anderson, Nanushka, LVMH, Richemont, COS, and Nike. Sam is head designer of the contemporary Menswear brand RAIMENT with a focus on international collaborative British Craft. Raiment draws inspiration from cultural collaboration in craft such as, architecture, furniture, ceramics and contemporary art. The collections are fundamentally an exploration of function taken from traditional and modern garments.

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SISSEL TOLAAS

Smell RE_searchLab Berlin Smell researcher and artist. (Norway, based in Berlin, Germany). Sissel Tolaas has been working, researching and experimenting intensively with the topic of smell since 1990. She is a pioneer and unique in her approach to smells. She has developed a wide range of revolutionary projects worldwide with smells based upon her own knowledge - organic chemistry, linguistics, and the visual arts. Tolaas established the SMELL RE_searchLab Berlin in January 2004, supported by IFF Inc. Tolaas has special skills in smell recognition, analysis and reproduction. She has researched and experienced with smells in many different ways and in multiple diverse contexts and for multiple purposes. Her research and projects have won recognition through numerous national and international scholarships, honours, and prizes. She is very capable at collaborating intensively with those of other disciplines across the globe. Tolaas has shown her projects in many museums and institutions including Moma, NGV, DIA, CCA, Tate Modern, Shanghai Minsheng. She has worked with universities such as MIT, Nanyang Technical, Tsinghua, Harvard and Oxford Universities. Tolaas has done 55 City SmellScapes research projects since 1996, of, for and with major cities. She has built up several types of smell archives such as Smell & Language; Smell & Coding; Functional Smell and is currently working on smell-molecule preservation/conservation archives on the world's oceans, smell artefacts and smell heritage. Tolaas' collections of smell molecules and smell structures from 1990 till 2018 include 10,000 samples and formulas.

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STEFAN SIEGEL

Founder of Not Just A Label (NJAL), a global platform showcasing and nurturing over 45,000 emerging designers in more than 150 countries. Besides its online presence, NJAL is known for opening large temporary stores in Dubai, New York City, Berlin and London, and hosted a fair over four years in Venice Italy called Origin Passion & Beliefs to support the local manufacturing industry. Siegel also encouraged the fashion industry to support designers from lesser known countries, and politically difficult regions. Stefan Siegel has spoken at over 100 leading conferences worldwide.

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SUKET DHIR

Fashion designer whose aesthetics surpass the simplistic to the core vibe into wandering timeless beauty. His minimalistic approach deceives one, but a closer look at his work and you will see the intricacies each work possess. Suket Dhir has travelled places to give fabrics his very own definition. He won the International Woolmark prize in 2016. Revolutionizing the Indian fashion industry, Suket Dhir emphasizes the importance of playful fabrics and little details. His design philosophy follows leisure in all forms and there is no threat of light to be seen in him as he continues to design poetry and dreamy wanderings. SUKETDHIR is the epitome of elegance and yet so deceptively raw, with minimalism that transcends beyond a trend into a lifestyle through the era of timelessness.

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TINTIN ZHANG

Graduated from the Royal College of Arts in Fashion Womenswear Millinery and Central Saint Martins in Textiles. Being a fabric patent holder, TinTin has won series of awards such as International Talent Support (ITS 2018) OTB Award, RCA & Adidas Design Forum First Prize. While based in Adidas German HQ, TinTin played an active R&D role in FIFA 2018 Russia World Cup project. Neon Cloud Hat System is a new venture upon TinTin's return to China in 2018. 2019. Present Shanghai, China Officially launched Neon Cloud Hat System creative studio as founder and creator. In charge of brand creative direction, collection design and leading social concern projects.

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VALERIO MANNUCCI

Co-founder and co-director of NERO publishing. He was also the editor-in-chief of the publishing company's homonymous contemporary art magazine. Valerio has curated cultural programs, exhibitions and shows, and his writings have appeared in international magazines and art catalogues. His work mainly focuses on the relationship between visual arts and language.

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