

This item was submitted to [Loughborough's Research Repository](#) by the author.  
Items in Figshare are protected by copyright, with all rights reserved, unless otherwise indicated.

## **From Rag Picking to Riches: Fashion Education meets Textile Waste**

PLEASE CITE THE PUBLISHED VERSION

LICENCE

CC BY-NC 4.0

REPOSITORY RECORD

Townsend, Katherine, Emma Prince, Alison Escott, and Gill Barker. 2019. "From Rag Picking to Riches: Fashion Education Meets Textile Waste". figshare. <https://doi.org/10.17028/rd.lboro.9724655.v1>.

# From Rag Picking to Riches: Fashion Education Meets Textile Waste

KATHERINE TOWNSEND, EMMA PRINCE, ALISON ESCOTT, School of Art and Design, Nottingham Trent University, UK

GILL BARKER, Emmanuel House, Nottingham, UK

Referred to as the 'Golden Dustman' (Evans 1998) Martin Margiela's approach to sourcing and reworking vintage garments was likened to that of a Victorian ragpicker. Today, the abundance of second hand clothing donated to charity shops presents fashion designers with the opportunity to reprise Margiela's role, by considering textile waste as valuable, raw materials. Donating unwanted garments to charity is a prolific cultural practice, perceived as philanthropic and sustainable. However, donations of unwanted clothing comprise 80% fast fashion, which cannot easily be re-used, re-sold or biodegraded. Emmanuel House, a homeless charity in Nottingham have a three-tier sorting system: 1. To clothe its service users; 2. for re-sale in the charity's shop to fund its work; 3. to be sold as 'rag' by the kilo (shipped to developing countries). This conversion to cash process raises various ethical concerns.

This paper reports on a social/design innovation collaboration between Emmanuel House, and Year One BA Fashion Design students, devised to raise public awareness of what happens to clothing donated to charities, including: the resource rich sorting process; unwanted clothing versus clothing poverty; the potential for a circular design approach at end of product lifetime and how strategic re-design can lead to innovative, suitable clothes that enhance user experience and self-esteem.

Through volunteering for Emmanuel House, the students have acquired insights into homelessness, textile waste and sorting charitable donations. By using their tacit knowledge of textile quality and performance, garment construction, fit and silhouette, they have identified valuable materials within existing garments. The selected items formed the basis for critically designed solutions, created using a 'deconstruction/ reconstruction' methodology, incorporating upcycling, customization, overdyeing and repair. Outcomes integrate practical details to accommodate rough sleeping and outdoor, nomadic living, including: waterproof/warm outerwear; multifunctionality/ transformability; multiple pockets for carrying/concealing items and potential e-textile functionality to augment light/ heat.

Additional Key Words and Phrases: Second hand clothing; Rag picking; Textile waste; Upcycled fashion; Community; Human centered design; Deconstruction; Fashion education

## 1 INTRODUCTION

The *emmanuel house X ntu* project explores the problems faced by charities and society in dealing with textile waste through applied creative research. While donating unwanted clothes to charity is viewed as preferable to sending them to landfill, according to Emmanuel House, mass produced fast fashion garments now account for more than 80% of their donations. As stated in the Environmental Audit Committee's 'Fixing Fashion': "We buy more clothes per person in the UK than any other country in Europe. A glut of second hand clothing swamping the market is depressing prices for used textiles." [1].

Emmanuel House uses second hand clothing donations to support the homeless and vulnerable and raise funds to run their services. Rough sleepers require warm, waterproof clothing, which form a small percentage of donations. National organisations like Sue Ryder and Oxfam have re-branded themselves, taking advantage of vintage and craft trends, which in Nottingham has given them a competitive edge over smaller, independent charities.

In response to this situation, a collaboration between Emmanuel House and first year (Level 4) students from the BA Fashion Design department in the School of Art and Design, Nottingham Trent University (NTU) was established to raise awareness via a user-led/ upcycled design project. The partnership between a charity, its service users and young fashion designers provided real world experience for the students, enabling them to gain insights into social and ethical issues (homelessness, clothing poverty and textile waste) whilst offering a vehicle to develop and enhance their critical design skills.

In May 2019, the resulting collection of outerwear garments were presented at a public fashion event at Emmanuel House (EH), where service users modelled pieces alongside students and volunteers. This applied research project and its outcomes support the need for fashion and textile design to be more accountable in terms of researching and developing more sustainably resourced products that acknowledge diverse clothing contexts. This work is particularly relevant given global concerns relating to climate change and enforced nomadic lifestyles.

---

**Publisher:** Loughborough University (© The Author(s)). The authors of this paper acknowledge the right of Loughborough University to publish the paper under the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International (CC BY-NC 4.0) licence.

**Rights:** This work is made available according to the conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International (CC BY-NC 4.0) licence. Full details of this licence are available at: <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>.

**DOI:** <https://doi.org/10.17028/rd.lboro.9724655>

©2019

## 2 THE TEAM

The collaborative research team was comprised of academic and professional practitioners from NTU and EH who coordinated and managed the project through student/staff engagement. The BA (Hons) Fashion Design course involved, consisted of 75 Level 4 students, and seven tutors working across 2D/3D design and product development. The project was instigated following contact between Katherine Townsend and EH in April 2018 to develop a funding bid to support research into clothing use, disposal and poverty. An introduction to the support centre, charity shop, and donation sorting strategy by Gill Barker, Fundraising & Marketing Assistant at Emmanuel House, revealed some of the key issues faced by the organisation, informing the bid and the idea for a live, student-led project that could highlight social/clothing sustainability issues and aims of the charity.

Emma Prince, Course Leader of BA (Hons) Fashion Design, NTU visited EH in July 2018 with Townsend and through collaboration with Barker devised the *emmanuel house X ntu* project brief, with the aim of benefitting the charity, students and service users, through an engagement whereby textile waste would provide the raw materials for inclusive fashion designs. Prince also acted as module leader for the project. Alison Escott, Senior Lecturer on Fashion Design, utilized her recent experience of working in the Industry and interest in sustainable design to contribute to the project brief and advise the students on developing their research and design concepts. All four authors contributed to briefing lectures, and volunteering sessions and the public fashion event, coordinated by Barker and the wider EH team.

## 3 FRAMING THE APPROACH

The *emmanuel house X ntu* project was contextualised by a module briefing session and two lectures including 'Fashion as a Social and Sustainable Practice' presented by Townsend (13/02/19), incorporating alternative approaches to fashion including 'Everything and Everybody as Material: Beyond Fashion Design Methods' [2]. Using a programme of papers and curated exhibition, the EEM conference challenged the finite categories, established processes and the materiality of the current fashion system by questioning:

"What is a material (in fashion design) and what are the things we design? The role of things we use to design with, the shifting categories of these things that become 'material' and the body that makes or performs (fashion) is of key interest. Fashion design no longer occupies a singular category where a linear methodology is enough to account for the current conditions of practice." [2]

### 3.1 Materials and Newness

In her keynote at EEM, 'Visions of Newness', Helen Kirkum advocated a radical approach to upcycling and reuse through footwear designs that question what 'materials' can be and how their contrasting qualities affect our perceptions of 'newness'. Kirkum's reanimated sneakers, patch-worked from numerous discarded pairs, do not match perfectly, but do embody the craft and history of their making; helping us imagine different norms for the life-cycle of fashion products [2].

Earley and Goldsworthy, who co-direct the Centre for Circular Design (CCD) established in 2017, use recycling as a "design practice to innovate and inform the development of the circular economy" [3]. The work of CCD builds on Textile Environment Design (TED) where Earley and Politowicz developed TED's TEN [4] in 2010, a sustainable textile toolbox, which was integrated into the undergraduate and postgraduate textile design curricula at UAL and numerous courses across the UK, including NTU. While all the tools remain relevant, Cards 9 and 10: Design to Dematerialise and Develop Systems and Services and Design Activism, particularly resonated with the 'circular design' approach of the *emmanuel house X ntu* project. And while the authors agree with the Union of Concerned Researchers [5] that a circular economy (CE) will not rectify the damage caused by the fashion system, young designers adoption of the principles of circularity/recycling is an important step towards changing perceptions about materials, clothing and wearers.

Somers and De Castro's global organisation, Fashion Revolution (2017-) has highlighted the relationship between clothing and its makers, inspiring individuals across the world to question 'who made my clothes?' while reinforcing the message that 'loved clothes last' [6]. However, fewer garments are discarded when worn out, because as western consumers, we purchase more than we need [1]. This raises the contradiction presented by 'sustainable fashion', when "fashion is by its [very] nature temporary and ephemeral and its mutability makes it a difficult topic to define and to research. [But] In spite of being ephemeral, it is indexed

in material forms.” [7] The culture and consumption of fashion is both material and materialistic, comprising the physicality of textiles, labour and energy alongside acquisition [7]. Current wardrobe practices have resulted in affordable high fashion made with low grade fabrics, often being donated to charity after minimal wear. Re-selling fast fashion presents charities with a problem, as the clothing is no longer ‘new’ or embodies the desirable ‘notions of wear’ and inherent material qualities associated with vintage [8]. Consequently, the contemporary rag-picking process becomes paramount when trying to turn ‘trash 2 cash’ [3]. At EH the three-tier ‘picking’ process is organised to redeem highest fashionable/material value of donated items by identifying garments to: firstly, address the clothing needs of service users; secondly, re-sell in the charity shop and thirdly, to sell as ‘rag’.

### 3.2 Rag Picking and Deconstruction

The rationale for reprising the role of the Victorian ragpicker in a sustainable fashion context, builds on Martin Margiela’s transformation of, and references to, used clothing and his imagined role as a ‘golden dustman’ [9]. Evan’s conceptualisation of Margiela as a rag-picker, draws upon Baudelaire’s analogy between the poet/ragpicker who gathers the day’s refuse in the city, “finding treasure in all that is discarded, despised and lost to be reshaped as useful or gratifying objects...” (Cited in Benjamin 1997: 79) [9]. As Benjamin reiterates, new industrial processes gave refuse a certain value, resulting in ragpickers appearing in larger numbers, working for middlemen, as a sort of cottage industry located in the streets (Ibid. p.19) [9].

Margiela’s practice therefore embodies the rationale by which the students were encouraged to source and re-use second hand clothing and textiles as raw materials for the project. The upcycling of these items involved a deconstruction/ reconstruction method involving the unmaking of existing products to remake new, wearable fashion [10]. This ‘deconstruction fashion’ approach draws on the recognized trend of the 1990s, associated with Margiela, other Belgian (Antwerp 6) and Japanese designers like Rei Kawakubo, who enhanced the value associated with imperfection (or wabi-sabi) in fashion, including the use ‘recycled’ garments [11]. The requirement for the students to deconstruct readymade items provided free materials while teaching them about garment construction through reverse engineering and a process of ‘analytical creation’ (Martin and Koda 1993 cited in Gill) [7].

### 3.3 Human-Centered Design

Collaborating with a local organisation, outside of the university, presented opportunities for ‘socio-cultural’ and ‘socio-material’ engagement [12] using fashion as a bridge the academic needs of the students (to learn about textile waste and user-centred design) in response to the human needs of the charity/ service users. Addressing the individual circumstances of the EH service users, required a sensitive, ‘human-centred’ approach, involving ethnographic research to inform the design of a garment system that was “physically, perceptually, cognitively and emotionally” responsive [13]. As new undergraduates, this was the first time some had considered a consumer as other than someone of their own age and background. Working through the inclusive and diverse design brief was supported with opportunities for reflective learning by encouraging students to ask themselves questions about the processes they were undertaking, and how they might act upon this learning in the future [14]. The project united students from all over the world with a range of contrasting abilities and perceptions about sustainable fashion.

The project was devised in line with NTU’s strategic research aims and themes of Sustainable Futures and Creative Community specific United Nations Sustainable Development goals:

1. No poverty,
8. Decent work and economic growth,
9. Repurposing old material,
11. Sustainable cities and communities,
12. Responsible consumption and production
13. Educate young people - climate action

Alternative, craft models of practice by design practitioners were used to exemplify Goal 12. For example, Atelier and Repairs adopt a circular approach by re-engineering and re-designing reclaimed garments and textiles “fostering each item’s existence at the highest value possible - for as long as possible.” [15] NTU-based researcher, Amy Twigger-Holroyd’s Re-Knit Revolution encouraged hand knitters to repair and reuse their damaged knitwear through a process of skilled unravelling and re-knitting. Three techniques of “cardiganise, replace cuff and stitch hack” were devised and shared through participatory practice by Twigger-Holroyd, whose ongoing research supports the development of the “domestic circular economy” [16]. Christopher Raeburn, who has lectured at NTU, established his eponymous global brand with sustainable and intelligent fashion design based on a RÆMADE ethos involving the reworking of surplus fabrics and garments to create distinctive and functional pieces [17].

#### 4 DEVELOPING THE BRIEF WITH SERVICE USERS

The needs of the service users formed the most significant aspect of the project brief. In a presentation at NTU Barker gave a presentation (14/02/19) encompassing a short history of Emmanuel House, which was founded in 1976 to give ongoing support for vulnerable adults. The growing number of service users, equating to over 2000 visits a month are supported by 22 staff and 70 volunteers [18]. Barker discussed the paradox of the service users having a very limited number of clothes amid the plethora of fast fashion donations; how both these challenges might be addressed through a human-centred approach to fashion design. A previous group discussion at EH with service users who had, or were sleeping rough, asking them what they would want/need in an outer garment, which they expressed as:

*A onesie sleeping bag with fur inside of it/thermal in one colour e.g. red, blue, black*  
*A sleeping bag that you can walk in with pockets A panic button / alarm A light in the hood*  
*Inside pockets*  
*A specific logo – to be decided*  
*A long zip – to be able to go to the toilet! Packable*  
*Washable*  
*Can be turned inside out*

In her module briefing (14.02/19) Prince Reflected on these personal requirements by identifying nine keywords to further communicate this information to the student cohort:

- Be protected
- Be secure
- Be warm
- Be dry
- Be comfortable
- Be visible
- Be transformable
- Be detachable
- Be functional

For example: ‘Be protected’, referenced: defence, shelter, preservation, safeguarding, sanctuary, refuge, visualised via Orta’s Refuge Wear [19], Massimo Osti’s poncho for CP Company and the Kevlar ‘stab-proof’ vest. Other concepts included transformable products by NTU alumni, such as Brydie Raybould-Cridge’s Cagoule/Hammock (2017); Junya Watanabe’s multi-wear walking coat for North Face/ Karrimor (2018), Puma detachable hoods (2017) and Hi-Tek conductive fabric, slash-proof composites and reflective numbers from Poundland.

Students were asked to select two titles from the ‘Be-word’ list to develop an initial concept and inspire designs for an outerwear piece. To help them conceptualize their ideas, students had the opportunity to meet with a panel of service users at EH, where they learnt how changing circumstances had led them to destitution, and to explain in what kind of outer garments they needed or would like to own. Some individuals disclosed their interests, hobbies, vulnerabilities and other types of values associated with clothing and textiles – touching on emotional as well as product durability [20]. One ex-service user and volunteer mentioned how he had been a hairdresser and had continued to cut hair (when homeless and housed) to raise the self-esteem of the different people he met. He stated that the inclusion of discreet, lined

pockets inside a jacket would be useful to carry (and hide) his scissors. Figures 1 – 4 illustrate different interpretations of the paired Be words.



Fig. 1. Left to right: Be Warm/ Functional, Eloise Smart; Be Visible/ Comfortable, Emily Hawkins; Be Functional/ Detachable, Jungmin. Photographs by Becky Sherwin and Aidan Saunders, 2019.

## 5 SIGNIFICANT LEARNING VIA ACTIVE RESEARCH

The BA (Hons) Fashion curriculum for level 4 is broken down into seven assessed learning outcomes which evidence that core skills have been learnt, as reflected in the brief. The students were asked to design a range of six garments in response to a body of personal research; to develop, pattern cut and manufacture an outerwear piece based on one of their designs, which could be menswear, womenswear (or both) and produce a final portfolio showcasing the project journey while demonstrating an understanding of CAD.

Students were tasked to undertake market research into sustainable designers/brands, identifying and studying one in depth. Research should encompass: sketchbook work, contextual documentation; textile/material processes; stand work and design development; pattern and 2D development; sampling and 3D manufacture. The act of creating these materials is based on the curriculum's focus on active/experiential learning. Students learn both passively and actively, with passive learning taking place through students accessing receptacles of knowledge via lectures and discussions [21]. However, 'active, or 'significant learning' is more likely to take place when students are engaged experientially, supported by reflective dialogue, doing something besides listening." [22]

The project coincided with The Community Live in Nottingham, at Bonington Gallery (2019) [23]. Established in 2016, the 'Community' is a collective of eight practitioners, who create platforms in which different creative disciplines including art, fashion and music can interact. Tenant of Culture, described as a "rag-picker of mass-media or media-industrial production" [24] invited the fashion students and service users from EH to take part in one of their 3-day workshops (13-15 March), facilitating collaboration and opportunities for experimentation using textile waste. The group created speculative art/fashion objects - using deconstruction, sewing, bonding, painting and model making, to upcycle second hand garments and discarded packaging/plastic waste - and displayed as part of the Community Live closing event [23].

### 5.1 Good, Bad and Rag

During the months leading up to the start of the project, EH staff selected clothes and fabric donations to put aside for the students to use. Additionally, a clothing/textile bank was set up in the School of Art and Design, where staff were encouraged to donate unwanted warm clothing, sleeping bags and household textiles. Prince also encouraged students to volunteer on a bi-monthly rota at the EH centre to help pick out clothing for the shop by building on the existing EH sorting pathways, paying special attention to:



1. Warm, waterproof, comfortable garments suitable for outdoor conditions.
2. Good quality, fashionable and desirable items selected for re-sale in the charity shop.
3. Clothing suitable for its textile waste set aside for up-cycling with worn out, unfashionable, soiled items collated to be collected by the rag man.

By handling and categorizing the plethora of clothing waste hidden from public view in the cramped EH store room, students gained tacit knowledge of garment/textile design longevity. Both staff and students were surprised by how many of the donations were classified as 'rag' to be sold to 'the ragman' by the kilo. This involves two categories of (good and bad) rag as Barker stated, "to avoid getting the lowest price (for shredding), items have to be wearable, as they are sold on to be shipped abroad". As reported recently, the western practice of exporting unwanted clothing to other countries presents an unsustainable model of recycling, as many of these garments are made from synthetic fibres, impractical in warmer climates. UK consumers over-consumption of fashion is causing a waste problem in our own and other countries, and while the sector is becoming more resource efficient it still operates on "a linear model of 'make, use, dispose'." [1] Some of the students expressed that experiencing these consequences first-hand at EH had influenced their view of the industry, making them think about how they might design better quality, more long-lasting products.



Fig. 2. Left to right: Be Protected/ Functional, Liberty Green; Be Transformable/ Visible, Rachel Payne; Be Warm/ Detachable, Xing Wang. Photographs by Becky Sherwin and Aidan Saunders, 2019.

## 5.2 The deconstruction/ reconstruction process

The core aim of the brief was to use 'up-cycling' to create products that were of higher quality/ value than the original. By sorting garments for re-sale and setting aside others for their own developments, students creatively analyzed garment materials and details, silhouettes and design features for future end-use. For example, there were copious pairs of jeans, some of which were too worn at the knees for re-use but which retained less worn material in areas of the garment. While the production of much denim used in fast fashion is acknowledged to be environmentally damaging, garments made from (woven cotton) denim are durable and uniquely valued for the narrative of wear embodied within the fabric [8]. The students were quick to capitalize on this, by collating similar and contrasting indigo, ice blue, black and grey shades in various dyed and washed treatments, to re-assemble later.

Other identified groups of materials selected from EH and NTU donations included: sportswear (fleece, sweat shirting) outdoor clothing (water/showerproof fabric); camping products (tents, sleeping bags);

household textiles (shower/curtains, carrying bags) and traditional clothing (woven/wool). Students deconstructed their garments to use their constituent materials in various ways, including:

- Details and parts to re-use. e.g. zips, buttons, pockets
- Fabrics to patch together or use as panels.
- Over-dye, bleach or tie dye.
- Quilt and pad.
- Bond together and laser-cut
- Embellish - embroidered, appliqued, printed

This idea of 'working in reverse' by starting with a garment/material is quite unique to this NTU project. Usually fabrics are sourced after a concept has been derived, not in tandem with its development. Students learnt how having fabrics already selected directs the design development process. Emphasis was placed on challenging and pushing their pattern cutting and manufacturing skills, to make outer garments that were both comfortable, durable and ideally transformable, to allow for changing weather conditions. These were not occasion wear, but like the refuge-style wear made by organizations like Sheltersuit [26] which may be worn repeatedly and lived-in, "becoming a space of everyday inhabitation, dwelling and configuration." [11]

## 6 DESIGNING A GARMENT TO LIVE IN

Following an initial self-directed research week, in the first design tutorial students and tutors were asked to bring in 'a significant item of clothing that they were connected to and explain why?'. The exercise was used to encourage the group to think about garment longevity and emotional durability [20]. The students were encouraged to think about their wardrobe in relation to the 'practice of use' of the selected garment [27] from purchase through continued wear by considering: colour/print; quality/comfort; sentimentality (had someone bought it for them?); hand-me-down (embodied narrative); easy care (limited washing/ironing); style (looks good); flexibility (coordinates with everything in wardrobe) or functionality.

The show-and-tell session prompted interesting conversations around second-hand garments, the idea of someone else wearing our clothes, based on perceptions and practices formed by individual's different social and cultural backgrounds, and ultimately how personal expression and identity are forged through entanglements between people with clothing [7]. Challenges raised through the session included: a lack of understanding or experience of the second hand clothing context, as some students had never needed/wanted used clothes, visited charity shops, car boots or jumble sales; others questioned why they would have to give away their finished outerwear (when the idea of gifting to a service user was raised); confusion relating to using existing garments to take apart, and rework into a newly designed garment. The sharing process provided the student groups with insights into their own and others personal relationships with clothing, encouraging understanding of the wider aims of the *emmanuel house X ntu* project, and to learn through questioning, review and comparison of their work with peers [26].

Most students selected at least two 'Be' words to start their design investigation, while others broadened their research through visits to art exhibitions, army surplus stores, store visits to research into sustainable brands and looking beyond garments at modular products and organic forms. One student used the concept of 'Abode', looking at how animals use shelter and portable habitats, to inform a garment design that could be worn and slept in outdoors.





Fig. 3. Left to right: Be Transformable/ Dry; Be Functional/ Protected; Be Functional/ Detachable. Photographs by Becky Sherwin and Aidan Saunders, 2019.

Designing for an identified end user required critical thinking and analytical skills to derive suitable outcomes. Problem solving was key to thinking about their design in terms of its functionality in human, technological and environmental terms [13] beyond personal preferences. Students were encouraged to explore material processes to support the deconstructed approach; selected items had to be carefully unpicked, cut-up and re-assembled using hand and machine stitching, patchwork and repair techniques such as darning and mending. Requests by the service users for garments to incorporate logos, highlighted the need for the designers to consider aesthetics as well as practical issues, and the role of clothing to both clothe the body and constitute personal identity [7]. The idea of “luxury as an egalitarian material” as explored by Glaum-Lathbury in EEM [2] via the integration of special details inspired one student to learn new software skills (Rhino 6) to 3D-print, mould and cast initialized badges, which were sewn onto her outfit.

## 7 FASHION EVENT AND OUTCOMES

Students and service users came together on 30<sup>th</sup> May, to model the final garments in a salon style presentation held in the EH support centre, making the show inclusive and accessible to the local and wider community. Over 150 guests of all ages; from customers of the charity shop, members of the Creative Quarter, to friends and colleagues from NTU. Coordinated by Barker, EH volunteers and the NTU, 34 different looks were presented by 17 models, encompassing themes based of Hi-Vis, Denim, Craft, Comfort and Functional. High-Vis featured reflective tapes, applied fabrics and trims. Denim garments showcased a range of patch work, overdyeing, bleaching and printing to produce stylish and distressed pieces. Craft became the theme for those using home furnishings, nostalgia and tradition referenced through hand-made finishes using lace, knitting, darning. Comfort conceptualized the garment as a hug, using padding and quilting to enclose the body and create feelings of safety and warmth. Functional included elements of waterproofing, pocket details for carrying personal belongings, transformable elements to accommodate a nomadic lifestyle. The final garments demonstrated thoughtful/ meaningful design ideas using variety of textile processes, identifying strong silhouettes and design flexibility.

### 7.1 Feedback

The event was extremely well received, afterwards the audience met the models and students, questions were asked about their approach and they were complemented on their designs, which many could not believe had been upcycled. Some guests tried on the garments and asked to purchase them, highlighting how innovative design can emerge through collaboration. It was encouraging to see how students embraced

the project, thinking differently (about fashion) had been challenging for some, but on reflection it had encouraged them to be more experimental and to take risks in their practice.

The celebratory nature of the event was equally significant for the EH service users, giving them a voice and a feeling of being valued. Vulnerable people they are often made to feel invisible/worthless but throughout the collaborative project they had been acknowledged and their contributions recognized. One woman who struggles with anxiety/depression, became involved in the project and modeled in the catwalk showcase, the whole experience enhanced her self-esteem and confidence. The event presented an interesting contrast to the high profile, fashion industry catwalks, by focusing on 'sharing' (as opposed to showing) what had been made through cooperation between different socio-cultural groups, together [28]. These and other observations are recorded in a documentary film made by Tim Basford [29] which has been accepted for The Gwangju Design Biennale 2019: Human City.



Fig. 4. Left to right: Be Functional/ Secure, Kirsty Leniham; Be Detachable/ Secure, Millie Hoole; Be Comfortable/ Protected, Phoebe Sinnassamy. Photographs by Becky Sherwin and Aidan Saunders, 2019.

### 7.3 Towards the House of Emmanuel

The positive feedback on the project has instigated plans to repeat the initiative next academic year, making it a core part of the Level 4 Fashion curriculum and other courses in Art and Design. Students from BA (Hons) Fashion Communication and Promotion, Graphic Design and Photography, who also contributed this year by developing visual merchandising and recording the event and design outcomes, have inspired further multidisciplinary engagement for 2019/20 with BA (Hons) Animation as part of their Lifeline industry projects.

The donations (or 'strategic rag picking') scheme established in the School will be expanded throughout the university, encouraging graduate leavers to donate clothing, household items and course equipment to the EH charity for resale. Monthly upcycling socials are planned to re/make products to be sold in the shop. The fashion event triggered numerous enquiries from individuals volunteering time to help maintain EH e.g. shop fittings, interior design, garment mending, repair and creative workshops.

With the global environmental impact of fashion so evident there needs to be greater focus on consumer and community led projects with academia and industry [28] such as further research into how different socio-cultural groups and demographics practice sustainable clothing use. Extended methods exploring what, how and why particular items of clothing are kept [26] are revealing the deep connections that some individuals have with the textiles their clothes are made from [20]. The concept of making functional and beautiful clothes that make individuals feel and look good, two of the main influences on garment longevity, needs greater involvement with and between young designers and real people.

This simple but radical idea resonates with Kasia Gorniak's 'observations from real life as ideas for a fashion collection' exhibited in EEM [2] where compositions created by bodies and materials in action acted as conceptual source material. Projects such as *emmanuelhouse X ntu* builds on this idea by through initiatives where students can learn from diverse contexts and each other, so that perhaps in the future they can teach the service users who they have learnt so much from, a range of deconstruction, repurposing and mending skills that could be practiced in both community and domestic settings towards a more circular economy [16]. This would reinforce community building, enhance teaching/learning, whilst upskilling and increasing self-esteem.

## REFERENCES

- [1] Publications.parliament.uk. (2019). *Fixing fashion: clothing consumption and sustainability - Report Summary - Environmental Audit Committee*. [online] Available at: <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201719/cmselect/cmenvaud/1952/report-summary.html> [Accessed 10 Jun. 2019].
- [2] C. Thornquist and R. Bigolin (2019). *everything and everybody as material: beyond fashion design methods | Borås, Sweden June 7-9, 2017*. [online] Everythingeverybodyasmaterial.com. Available at: <http://everythingeverybodyasmaterial.com/> [Accessed 7 Jun. 2019].
- [3] UAL. (2019). *Centre for Circular Design*. [online] Available at: <https://www.arts.ac.uk/research/research-centres/centre-for-circular-design> [Accessed 12 Mar. 2019].
- [4] The TEN. (2011) <http://www.textiletoolbox.com/media/uploads/resources-pdf/ted-the-ten-cards-english.pdf> [Accessed 10 Aug. 2019].
- [5] Union of Concerned Researchers (2019) <http://www.concernedresearchers.org/> [Accessed 30 July 2019].
- [6] Loved Clothes Last (2018) Fashion revolution fanzine #2
- [7] S. Woodward, S. and T. Fisher (2014) Fashioning through materials: Material culture, materiality and processes of materialization, *Critical Studies in Fashion and Beauty*, (5) 1, pp. 3-23.
- [8] K. Townsend (2011) The Denim Garment as Canvas: Exploring the notion of wear as a fashion and textile narrative, *Textile: The Journal of Cloth and Culture*, 9 (1), pp. 90-107.
- [9] C. Evans, (1998) 'The Golden Dustman: A Critical Evaluation of the work of Martin Margiela and a review of Martin Margiela: Exhibition (9/4/1615), *Fashion Theory*, 2.1, pp. 73-79.
- [10] S. Kettley, K. Townsend, S. Walker, and M. Glazzard, (2017) Electric Corset; In: *RTD2017: Proceedings of the 3rd Biennial Research Through Design Conference, Edinburgh, 22-24 March 2017*. Research Through Design, pp. 486-500.
- [11] A. Gill (1998) 'Deconstruction Fashion: The Making of Unfinished, Decomposing and Re-assembled Clothes', *Fashion Theory*, 2:1, pp. 25-29.
- [12] L. Tangaarde (2012) The sociomateriality of creativity in everyday life. *Culture & Psychology* 19(1), pp. 20-32.
- [13] J. Giacomini (2014) *What is human centred design?* *Design Journal*, 17(4), pp.606 - 623.
- [14] S. Grace, and P. Gravestock (2009) 'Inclusion and Diversity', Abingdon: Routledge.
- [15] Atelier and Repairs [Online] Available: <https://atelierandrepairs.com/pages/about-our-story> [Accessed 5-May-2019].
- [16] A. Twigger-Holroyd (2018) *Reknit revolution: knitwear design for the domestic circular economy*. *Journal of Textile Design Research and Practice*, 6 (1), pp. 89-111.
- [17] Christopher Raeburn [Online] Available: <https://www.raeburndesign.co.uk/> [Accessed 5-May-2019].
- [18] Emmanuel House [online] Available: <https://www.emmanuelhouse.org.uk/> [Accessed 5-May-2019].
- [19] Studio Orta 'Refuge Wear' [online] Available: <https://www.studio-orta.com/en/artworks/serie/1/Refuge-Wear> [Accessed 14-June-2019].
- [20] K. Townsend & A. Sadkowska (2017) *Textiles as Material Gestalt: Cloth as a Catalyst in the Co-designing Process*, *Journal of Textile Design Research and Practice*, 5:2, 208-231.
- [21] M.P. Ryan and G. Martens (1989). *Planning a College Course: A Guidebook for the Graduate teaching Assistant*. Ann Arbor, Mich: National Centre for Research to Improve Postsecondary Teaching and Learning.
- [22] Fink, L. (2013) *Creating Significant Learning Experiences: An Integrated Approach to Designing College Courses*, San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- [23] Bonington Gallery, THE COMMUNITY LIVE IN NOTTINGHAM, 4-30 March, 2019, [online] Available: <https://www.boningtongallery.co.uk/exhibitions/the-community-live-in-nottingham> [Accessed 10-June-2019].
- [24] J. Pristauz, Tenant of Culture: Acknowledging the Pre-Existing Lives of Materials, *PW-Magazine*, Blog 21 August 2018, [online] Available: <https://www.pw-magazine.com/2018/tenant-of-culture-acknowledging-the-pre-existing-lives-of-materials/> [Accessed 10-June-2019].
- [25] Sheltersuit [online] Available: <https://sheltersuit.com/en/our-story/> [Accessed 5-May-2019].
- [26] K. Fletcher and I. Grimstad Klepp, (2017) Method 13, Practices of Garment Use: Fletcher, Craft of Use, In *Opening up the Wardrobe: A Methods Book*, Novus Books, pp. 53-55.
- [27] H. Fry, S. Ketteridge and S. Marshall (2008) *A handbook for teaching and learning in higher education* (second ed.). Abingdon: Routledge Falmer.
- [28] R. Sennett (2013) *Together: The rituals, pleasures and politics of cooperation*, London: Penguin Random House.
- [29] Emmanuel House X NTU (2019) Video film (5 mins) [Online] Available: <https://vimeo.com/352901660/16e95ff7aa>

Edited by Tim Bassford.