Control Me as I Control You

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ABSTRACT

This project started with an illustration and a painting. I found similarities between them that made me think of the subject beauty and ugliness. I’ve questioned the subject from a subjective point of view. Through materials, colours and construction methods I’ve reached an expression that is a balance between the ugly and the beautiful, the crazy and the controlled. The characters is figures part of another world. The world George Grosz painted during the early period of the 20th century. The collection should be seen as wholeness. But in the collection there are different individuals working and depending on eachother.

It ended up with a eight outfit collection for men.
I call the collection Control Me as I Control You. The most important thing in the collection is about control. My feelings towards colour. How I have been controlling them and how they are controlling me. It’s about finding a balance between the controlled and the uncontrolled.
These two illustrations were one of the reasons why I started this project. I found them on a Japanese blog. I didn’t know at first sight why I was drawn to it. I tried to describe the pictures with words and wrote the word grotesque. This word made it interesting. I draw a line between these contemporary illustrations to the early modernist era.

In the earlier period of the 20th century painters like Salvador Dali and Willem DeKooning discussed the subject beauty and ugliness in their creations. The art form was known as grotesque painting. They wanted to break up from old traditions that they wanted to break out from and questioned what really makes a painting ugly. The Romantic era stood for something else. Everything in the paintings should be perfect and beautiful. If you look at the paintings I’ve chosen, you can see that they are very accurate and carefully executed even though it seems like they’re not. The paintings contain crazy and ugly insane figures in the motives. I like this mixture between the crazy and the controlled. This is a very interesting subject that I’m questioning in my project. What makes a garment ugly? Can you find a balance between beauty and ugly?

My project has been about finding a balance between beauty and ugly, the constructed and the uncontrolled. Is the controlled beauty for me? This project is a subjective process, that is resulting in materials and color that I personally think aren’t obvious beautiful.
Some of them doesn’t appeal to me at all, and some of them represents beauty. I see the result in my collection as a wholeness. I´ts a feeling to find the right balance in the collection, the same balance as I can see in the paintings. In this project I´ve been working with different construction methods, so that I could find a chaotic expression in the collection. I wanted an aggressive and edgy style in the garments. I´ve questioned my project, seeing it as a wholeness but also each item as an individual.This process has been about understanding more about colour and what it means to me. Have a more developed awareness of the surroundings and how the environment is really affecting on what we do, what we create and why people have opinions on why things are ugly and beautiful. What makes an object ugly? For me it’s about what you do with it, in this case the material and the colour.

During my process I have been thinking a lot on why I usually just work with black and white colours. When I think of a new design in my head, I always picture it as black or white. And when I try to realize it in a colour, I think it gets destroyed.

Somewhere along the road, I realized that the “ugly” fabrics that I bought early in my process, is now materials that is difficult to get rid of. After a while I started to have indifferent feelings for them. And I´ve also developed a more indifferent side in me, for things that I see in my surroundings. It´s a feeling that is new for me in such a wide extent. It´s a feeling that I don´t like very much but in some case it’s really good. I think that I´ve been able to take a step outside of my work more easily than before, and that´s a good quality. Even though my work is still all about me and what I think, I believe that it can be good to not get to emotional and to close to the project. Just not in this collection anyway.
The paintings I chose has something in common, they represent an aggressive and grotesque expression and a chaos but it’s a structured chaos. Things are very questionable and look wrong, but if you look at it for some time every little thing is on the right place. On the black and white drawings, nothing is what it should be, but in the end, it’s very controlled and structured. The paintings from Dali, DeKooning, Dix and Grosz have the same mood. They have a crazy expression, lots of colors, unreal proportions and a grotesque and scary feeling. It’s something that disturbs the watcher because it doesn’t show a normal face or a normal proportion on the body. I think it is interrupting the watchers thoughts and asks why the painter has created an ugly painting with funny objects. Why aren’t he just making a nice painting to look at?
I knew early what kind of expression I was looking for in the collection besides the colors and material. I’m always drawn to a certain type of expression and I’ve been thinking a lot on why I do that. And because I’m going to work with things like colors, which I’m not use to, I want to have something in my collection that I recognize and my familiar with. A tough expression with an aggressive attitude, edgy volumes and an overall concept is what I’m looking for in a collection. Usually I only work with dark colors, but I want to challenge myself this time. Often I think that color makes a garment more ugly, I hope that I will see it in another way after my project is finished. I think that the grotesque paintings stands for something that my project is about.

These photos has a typical type of an expression that I like. I like the mixture between the soft and the aggressive. The draped and the clean minimalistic design. These are photos from Alexander McQueen, Yohji Yamamoto and The Royal Academy of Fine Arts in Antwerpen.

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My biggest issue in this project is about something that I’ve been thinking of a lot. The subject beauty and ugliness. My aim is to question myself about what I think is beauty and ugly. Does black and white colours stands for beauty and control? And it that case, is colour something that is crazy and uncontrolled?

I want to find a balance between the constructed and the uncontrolled, the same way as I see it in the paintings/illustrations that are my inspiration for this project. To execute this and get the right expression I wanted in my result, I’ve been testing different construction methods to find the technique that was good for me.

Eventhough this has been a very subjective project I think that this issue can interest a lot of people in other topics as well. This has a lot to do with fashion and current trends. Commersiell fashion. What and who decides what we should wear? Why are people so keen on following the trends that somebody else have decided?

I think it’s very interesting to think about what really makes me think that different materials and colours are ugly. Is it the surroundings, my growth or something else that has formed my mind?
PROCESS

Method

From the beginning several important pillars was going to form my project. After a while I had to chose which one of them that was more important than the others, because it was to much for me to handle. The different subjects were the colour, the material, the accessories, big silhouettes, the pattern construction and innovative design. I chose that the most important thing for me in this project was the colour, the material and the construction. I’ve been focusing on these three subjects. I started to choose the materials, it went really well, but during the process I had to replace some of the fabrics because my colour board shifted after some time. I’ve been trying to work with fabrics that aren’t typical for mens wear.

My technique to develope sketches has been very variuos. I started to sketch by hand at first. See if I could find interesting things and silhouettes in the paintings. I went to sketching with fabric quite early in the process, I found it more easy to build up silhouettes with fabrics. I also tried other materials like plaster and foam to build silhouettes. Thesee techniques gave a lot of different expressions and I was very confused. I kept on going with my different construction techniques, draped and found more silhouettes through that. Later on in the process I made garments in toiles after been inspired by the silhouettes. I went from piece to piece, tried to develope them individual, but in the end see them as a wholeness.

My colour board are inspired by the grotesque paintings. They are very dark and dirty. I like that the colours aren’t so clean, they feel more uncontrolled this way. And something that I can handle more easy.

My current design methodology is very important for me to get the right expression in the collection. In an earlier project I developed five different construction techniques, then I chose a couple of them to keep on working with in the collection. Because I wanted an expression that says things like lunatic, confused, unbalanced, controlled and calm. And to get all of these in the same collection I had to include this in the way of constructing the pieces.

I chose to work with monochrome coloured outfits. It was an easier way for me to handle the colours, to separate the outfits from eachother but at the same time they had to have a strong connection. I was also able to make a more visual balance between the constructed and the uncontrolled. At this time I decided that some of the outfits should be just black and white. They represent a controlled part of my collection. The black and white is straight lines for me. They are easy to handle, to form and to rule over. A minimalistic expression.

Black and white colours do what you want them to do. Other colours live their own life.
I tried different methods to find silhouettes that I think were interesting. I worked on a small dummy so I could work faster. I worked with plaster. It’s a nice material, you can quickly get big volumes. I also tried FOG foam. But it was too controlled for me to work with those materials. And I saw that these silhouettes were going somewhere that I didn’t want, so I tried new methods.
Method one
The first method I tried was to fold papers in edgy volumes, but I soon understood that those silhouettes were too static for me. They became too edgy and too “Japanese origami”, it wasn´t what I was looking for.

Method two
The uncontrolled way.
I randomly made forms from the paintings, projected them into greater forms and then made pattern parts of the forms. Then I stitched them together and draped on the dummy different silhouettes. I really liked this way of working, because it´s very liberating and you´re not so fixed in how the result is going to be. But it´s also very difficult to draw to results you´re looking for.
Method three
The controlled way.
I knew which silhouette I was working at, so I sketched many different clothing and then I decided what I wanted to do and then made it with pattern construction. This method is a good way to work if you know what you want to do. But it’s more difficult to reach other levels in your creative process. The result is more determined.

Method four
The constructed uncontrolled way.
I wanted to find a way where I can have more control with draping methods and where I also can use pattern making. The result was going to be more free and not so determined. I found a way that had an expression that I liked. It was about working with the material, drape it randomly and the put the constructed pattern on the draped material, to have a draped constructed piece as a result.
Method five  
The draped way.  
I was looking for an expression that has a loose feeling. Drape it on the dummy, use a more thin and light material that gets a nice draping, and also an uncontrolled expression. The draped construction is a method I would like to develop more in future projects.

I decided that three of these methods was the right ones for me to keep on working with. I have worked with method three, four and five. I think it was good for me to try different methods very systematically, to see the qualification in each method.
Design development

I’ve chosen to show some of my design developments that I think are important to me. The jacket on the top has been a silhouette that I’ve had with me for a long time. I started in the pre-course. I made a short movie about the drapings and the way the fabric moved. I developed it to a more wearable garment. From the beginning I wanted to drape in other colors and fabrics together with the jacket. But in the end it had the wrong expression. So I decided to drape the same fabric together with the jacket. The result got another type of result, but it was more controlled and clean. It was the right decision.

The skirt is based on a uncontrolled construction on the dummy. At first I really liked the toile, but it was the wrong color. I found a really nice fake fur fabric that I was going to work with, together with another one. I tried at first with the printed material on picture number three. That fabric didn’t have a place in the collection. Then I tried with a color that really stood out, but it stood out too much and in the wrong way. In the end I chose the same fabric, the fake fur.

Conclusion: I tried to mix several materials and colors in both of the garments. In the end I realized that it didn’t get a good result, so I chose to go monochrome.
THE ACCESSORIES

One of the pillars in my project was the accessories. One thing that became very important to me was my first prototype of the masks, that followed me during the whole time. The masks are representing the character, the face of the figure. I wanted to replace the beautiful face of the human being and replace it with something that is more grotesque and questionable. The clean face should perish the expression I wanted.

The masks is still developing in this moment, but they will appear on every outfit in the end.

This is something in the project that I chose to take away from my collection. I tried for a long time to fit them in the collection but realized that they talked another language. They have a more dreamy expression, from a fantasy movie. My collection is also from another world, but not the same as these accessories.
THE MATERIALS

I’ve chose to work with materials which some of them are more traditional in men’s fashion than others are. I’ve also chosen fabrics that I didn’t liked in the beginnig. I wanted to work with them, put them in another context to see if I changed my mind about them during the process. What made them ugly for me in the beginning? I started to collect a lot of fabrics I didn’t like, but later on in the process I sorted out the ones that had the colour I wanted or the right feeling. In the end I feel that the materials changed my point of view pretty quick.

I chose materials like cotton, polyester, fake fur, denim, knitted copper metal, quilted fabrics, wool and rayon. And I’ve also dyed and printed some of them. I wanted to have a mix among the fabrics, and to get the right insanity expression I was looking for, none of the fabrics are used more than ones. The expression got more confused. I think that it improved my result.

During the process I’ve been collecting a lot of fabrics. Maybe too many, but it was important for me just to have a big material library to chose from and also to see what I didn’t wanted as well.
THE COLOURS

I’ve picked my colours from my main painting and illustration. The colours represents the balance in the picture between the beautiful and the ugly. I’ve chosen dark and dirty colours with more metallic ones. I think that there are similarities between them, they’re soiled and unclean. The black and white stand for the controlled in the collection. It’s clean and reliable colours.
RESULT

This is my project. My pieces and outfits has changed a lot during the process. Many garments has been thrown away, some of them has been there since the pre-course before the examination project started. The expression of the collection became finalised with the accessories, that I´m still working on in this moment. I´m going to add a lot more accessories and masks after the examination. It´s in a developing phase.
I´m showing eight outfits here. But in the future I will take the collection to the next step. Take it to a more commerciell expression and to a more avantgarde expression.
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Reflection

During my process I have been thinking a lot on why I usually just work with black and white colours. When I think of a new design in my head, I always picture it as black or white. And when I try to realize it in a colour, I think it gets destroyed. Somewhere along the road, I realized that the “ugly” fabrics that I bought early in my process, is now materials that is difficult to get rid of. After a while I started to have indifferent feelings for them. And I´ve also developed a more indifferent side in me, for things that I see in my surroundings. It´s a feeling that is new for me in such a wide extent. It´s a feeling that I don´t like very much but in some case it´s really good. I think that I´ve been able to take a step outside of my work more easily than before, and that´s a good quality. Even though my work is still all about me and what I think, I believe that it can be good to not get to emotional and to close to the project. Just not in this collection anyway.

I think that people in general is a bit obsessed with the words beauty and ugly. It takes a lot of energy and time in peoples lives. If you talk about commercial fashion, which is the most common fashion, it´s more important to have an opinion regarding this. If the interest lays in a commercial fashion, you often have a lot of clothes, the most of it look the same. You bought it because you thought it looked nice. The other side of fashion, the more innovative and avantgarde side works on a different way I think. The customers of these kind of fashion looks for garment that are interesting. The garments may be on a fine line between nice and ugly. But they have something that attracts the buyer. It´s very interesting what kind of customer it is that are bying commercial or avantgarde fashion. Of course, the money is one issue. But I think that many people are afraid of to been seen to much in the crowd. Or they just think that the garments are weird. They have troubles relating with the garment.

The thing with black and white colours are one thing I´ve been thinking on a lot. But I believe that those colours are safe for me. I know what they look like, how to work with them and they are very calm in it self. The expression in black and white garments are clean, minimal and rough. I like that. But I think that I´ve transfered that feeling as well to the coloured outfits. The balance between the straight and the draped is also representing controllness.

From the beginning I was focusing on to much things in my project. I wanted to work with construction methods, colours, textile and non-textile materials, volumous silhouettes, accessories and footwear. During my process I´ve narrowed it down and my focus has been on the colours, construction and accessories. It felt very good to focus on fewer things and because of the time aspect it was a good choice.

But overall, my result in this project has been about the collection as a wholeness. I wanted to have a balance between the structured and the uncontrolled.

In my project I´ve worked and experimented with different methods and construction techniques. I feel that my of working has been a bit chaotic and irregular, but I´ve wanted it this way as well. I wanted to try all the techniques before I found the right one to work with. And also to get the expression that I wanted. I focused on three different construction methods, that made my expression the way I wanted it to be. In my collection the most important thing for me has been the feeling of the collection, the whoelness. Eventhough I might question some of the pieces myself, they still work as a wholeness with the other pieces and therefore can´t be removed.

I have developed enormously this last year when it comes to my design and expression. But most of all I think that I now easily can take one step back from my collection, dare to let my darlings go and don´t think to much, just do! This type of process has really worked for me. I´m ambivalent as a person, so when I´m in a process, I only work
with one garment each time. I think it’s easier for me to focus then, and easier to throw something away.

I wanted to see how it was to work with colours in another way that I have before.

It has been a struggle, and sometimes I haven’t even believed that it was me who had done the collection. But I still see me in it a lot. It’s very personal and as I wanted it, subjective thoughts about every garment. I have learned a lot. The next project is not going to start with the fabrics. It was very difficult. Sometimes you find a nice material, but it didn’t work in the design. My choice of material have to be more considered in the future. But I’m still very happy with my collection fabrics in the end.

Collection or project?

Is my project a collection? In one why it is. It’s eight outfits that are depending on each other in some way. I don’t want to put a label on it, because every item is strong in it’s own and you could almost put them out in a store as they are. I will not say that it is an avantgarde collection. Because it’s still wearable clothing that you can use everyday and it’s made from basic traditional men’s wear. But as a wholeness I think it’s more avantgarde. The outfits can be replaced but they will always depend and complete one another.

I think that most of the pieces in my project are commersiell fashion, if you take them out from the collection and present them item by item. The garments are quite ordinary garments, pretty common colours, not so crazy materials and the design is a design that I think almost everyone can relate to. But I think that together as a wholeness the expression of the collection is quite aggressive and not so traditional.

One thing that I wanted with my collection was to find a balance between avantgarde and ready-to-wear. I think that some people see my collection as not wearable, but I think that they are only a bit closed in their mind. Not used to see new things in fashion or is ready to see other things than the traditional men’s wear.

My customer is a man that believes that fashion is more than the current trends, but he thinks that he can mix he’s ordinary wardrobe with something that is more original and with more attitude. Within men’s fashion you can see a strong development during the past couple of years. Men’s fashion is very traditional, both in the design and the materials, but I think that something is starting to change. Eventhough men often are a bit boring in their clothing it seems now they have opened their eyes for new things. I think that a part of this is because the wall between the genders are not so obvious anymore and that designers today have the courage to make other kind of expression in the clothing.

My collection has a strong connection to my inspiration painting/illustration. I want that my collection is part of this world in the paintings. I see it as a future time, a more crazy and disturbed world. The people’s way to see things, thoughts about fashion and clothes are more open and has a wider point of view. The traditional man is still there, but has a new way of seeing on life and what it should be.

These people live in a darker world with crazy people, messed up and confused thoughts. You live closer to your own feelings. There are a lot of subcultures but it’s easier to create your own culture, inspired from all the existing ones.

My collection has a fine balance between the structured controlled and the messy uncontrolled.
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