Else Skjold

Fashion Research at Design Schools
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Else Skjold, Ph.D. scholar, Designskolen Kolding, 19th of February 2008

The report has been commissioned by and conducted together with Ulla Ræbild, study co-ordinator for Fashion, Institute for Fashion and Textiles, Designskolen Kolding.

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This report not only addresses researchers, but everyone who works in the field of fashion, who wishes to know more about what fashion research is, how it is currently being implemented at design schools in Europe and the U.S.A. and not least how it can potentially support and inspire the fashion industry. In a few words, the project is fashion research on fashion research. It is the hope that this study can contribute to creating more qualified discussions as to how research could be conducted at fashion design educational programmes in the future.

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19th of February 2008
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Part I: Conclusions

Aims Of The Report

The aim of this report is to define positive ways in which fashion research can be integrated in the fashion design education at DK (Designskolen Kolding). The academisation of design education has come about as an irreversible top-down political process. This happened when the Danish Ministry of Culture formulated the goal that by 2010 the design schools should be accredited with status as universities.¹

However, the demand for academisation is supported by a number of other factors, which include the overall structural changes in the fashion industry that now requires fashion designers to be knowledge workers rather than only hands-on clothing production experts. In this situation, both students and employers demand that the focus of fashion design education be revised. Secondly, an academic standardisation will allow for increasing exchange and collaboration with other academic institutions. In Denmark, this primarily means a closer collaboration with the other universities, for example through student exchanges, combined degrees and research projects. In the international arena, there is a possibility for creating partnerships with academic design schools in the U.S., the U.K. and elsewhere in Europe, such as Holland and Sweden.

It is clear that students at a design school are not university students and that the primary purpose of fashion design education should not be to teach students how to do research, as it was in the old elite universities. It is vital that the implementation of theory and research procedures support students in being good practicing designers. Therefore, the crafts-based knowledge accumulated in a design education should not be neglected or lost in this academic transition and replaced by academic traditions that are not adapted to the specific needs of a design school. Otherwise, the result would be a fragmented education in which students would neither learn to work as designers nor do research and in which the different requirements of the curriculum would appear meaningless.

¹ According to the contract between DK and the Ministry of Culture 2007-10.
Presently, fashion research is an interdisciplinary field that has developed in academic disciplines such as art history, cultural studies, history, sociology, anthropology, consumer studies, ethnology, etc. Fashion is relatively under theorised compared to other aesthetic fields, such as architecture, industrial design or art. The fact that fashion research can be said to be an academic ‘rag rug’ is a major opportunity for the design schools. They can have a unique influence on the emerging consensus about fashion research, which is being established within a growing network of fashion researchers. More specifically, the design schools can ensure that practice is brought to bear on fashion research, both as a general perspective that is reflected in all research projects and also specifically through so-called practice-based research, which is conducted by practitioners who study problems or challenges concerning the production and creation of fashion.
Designskolen Kolding

Designskolen Kolding is a relatively small school situated in Jutland, near the traditional centre for the Danish fashion and textile industry. Approximately 360 students are studying the areas offered by the school at the B.A. level (3 years of study) and M.A. level (2 years of study). These areas are the Institute for Fashion and Textiles, the Institute for Industrial Design and Interactive Media and the Institute for Visual Communication. Besides these there are the Institute for Form and Theory, which is an interdisciplinary platform that combines academic theory and practice of all institutes into various modules in the curriculum, and the Research Department employing 3 senior researchers, one post-doc, nine Ph.D.s and two research assistants. Out of this, one Ph.D. is working on fashion, while two senior researchers, two Ph.D.s and two research assistants are working on textiles. At the Institute of Fashion and Textiles, approximately 30 students are accepted each year from between 130-150 applicants, based on a screening which takes into account exam papers and a two week assignment. For selected applicants, a further test and an interview are conducted to find the final 30 students. The fact that fashion and textiles are situated in the same institute at DK is a deliberate choice that has created synergies and collaborative projects combining the special skills from each area. Since the institution is under the Ministry of Culture, the education is free of charge and students receive state education grants while they attend.

Due to the location in a provincial town, it has always been difficult to attract full time teachers. Many classes are short workshop courses led by visiting professionals from Denmark and abroad. At times, this has caused discontinuities. However on the overall, it is believed that this has strengthened the orientation towards practice, because designers working in the fashion industry have been dedicated to teaching in short modules. When it comes to research, DK has chosen a not particularly straightforward strategy of combining practice-based and theory-based research, an approach that permeates throughout the entire institution.

A small, but still growing, research environment has caused a few bumps in the road. This is due to the lack of experienced researchers, who are essential to creating fruitful and constructive discussions and supervising research assistants and Ph.D. students, especially practitioners who for the first time have had to create a theory-based framework for their practice-based research.

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2 A dispensation for exam papers can be made for especially talented applicants.
3 A more detailed definition will follow later in this chapter.
research projects. On the other hand, the reward for this at times painful process is has recently begun to culminate in a growing number of staff who combine theory and practice in a very natural and constructive way and who are able to verbalise stages of the design process on a higher level than from when before they started researching. However, it is crucial that strong networks be established between academic institutions that can support and strengthen the academisation process and that the special needs and challenges relating to research at design schools be directed and analysed in order to help establish a stronger research environment. Otherwise, many of the design school researchers will not be taken seriously within a purely academic framework.

The following conclusion is based on the content of this report, and all issues mentioned will be elaborated on and supported by empirical studies, literature and concluding arguments in later chapters.

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4 Two practice-based Ph.D.s were never finalised, one in 2006 and one in 2007. This was, among other things, due to the lack of relevant supervising and a strong research environment that could have supported the two scholars.
Conclusions Of The Report

Practice-based research and the implementation of academic research at design schools are relatively new phenomena in Denmark. However, the decision made by the Ministry of Culture in the 1980s to change the name of the design education from ‘arts and crafts schools’ to ‘design schools’ is part of a long course of development where the notion of what design is and what skills it takes to create it have changed a lot, which makes the implementation of research in the education a natural step forward. The debate concerning research as such versus practice-based training has caused a very heated public debate over the past few years. This is because it is not only a discussion about how to teach, but also a matter of whose knowledge is most valuable in relation to the students and the industry. Is it academic or practice-based knowledge?

Practice-based and theory-based research on fashion can be defined as follows:

Practice-based research is research on design processes, designers and industry where research questions are formulated from within the profession, thus creating knowledge that is valuable for the practice-based training of students and as expertise for the fashion industry. In this work there is a great need for verbalising the ‘tacit knowledge’ concerning the design process for fashion designers, and it seems that design research in general and fashion research in specific are being undertheorised as it is in a descriptive phase that is very necessary and valuable in order to develop and create innovation in education and industry.

Theory-based research is research concerning fashion as a cultural and economic phenomenon. It is a field that has grown explosively over the last 15-20 years. Researchers educated within a wide variety of very established academic disciplines are increasingly looking into fashion or the design processes in fashion. From the viewpoint of a design school, the obvious is to carefully select what approaches are most easily combined with the already existing core competencies and what bodies of knowledge could best support the chosen strategies.

Through a study of relevant literature that touches upon fashion as a creative industry, the tensions and potentials of design research in relation to the so-called “expanded notion of design” and various qualitative case studies from a selected range of international design schools, this conclusion states how DK could find its own way of creating a well-balanced strategy for fashion research where academic content is used as a resource in the fashion design education. The aim is for academic content to be introduced all the
way from the B.A. and M.A. level to the senior researcher level and to the practice-based tutors, which would create a fruitful synergy between theory and practice. Therefore making theory just another tool available for students next to draping, drawing, cutting, etc.

The key questions here are:

“What kind of fashion design education is DK aiming to offer in the future, what kind of skills will the students need in their future workplace, the fashion industry, and can research work as a potential in this process?”

**Recommendations for a research strategy in fashion at DK**

Based on the analyses, comparisons and discussions presented in this report, it is recommended that the strategy of fashion research be a rather open and fluid multi-strategy with its basis in a well-adjusted balance between practice-based and theory-based research. The Royal College of Art (RCA) is a primary template for where to begin. Just like at the RCA, it seems pivotal to have staff members at DK who are supported by theory and who strengthen the crafts-based traditions. The school obviously wants to produce “material knowledge” as well as hands-on expertise, not only “immaterial knowledge.”

The recommendation of pursuing a multi-strategy is based on the very pragmatic notion that DK is a small provincial school, which because of this has to be aware of how to expand the number of its own researchers and support research projects and researchers that incorporate more than one area of design or theory. Firstly, as strong a research environment as possible must be established with the means available. Even if the design schools have to do research, they do not get the necessary funding. As a result, some of the means have to be found elsewhere in the institution, often coming from the practice-based courses or other teaching facilities. This is why it is so important to have theory tightly integrated into the practice-based teaching.

It is also important to create a strategy that does not exclude potential research candidates who want to work and even live in the Kolding area. There is an ongoing debate about how to best support design students who have an interest in research. In terms of recruitment, there are some individual courses at Danish universities that are related to or address fashion

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5 The need for this is described in an article in the Guardian, January 29th 2008, “Cheap and twice the price.” Here, it is stated that even many so-called luxury brands cannot find sufficient craftsmanship. Everybody wants to be design superstars; no one wants to be an anonymous technician.
through issues like gender, sociology, anthropology, visual culture or media culture etc. But there are currently no real traditions or established frameworks for studying fashion at universities in Denmark, although interest among university students seems to be growing. So it is now more or less a question of capturing candidates who want to go further with fashion research, independently of what academic training or research interests they may have or what “trends” are dominating the field of fashion research.

Even if the research strategy should be fluid and open towards new fields of research, there are areas that seem more obvious for DK than others, because of the accumulated competencies already existing at the institution and the perceptions among staff members of how to approach fashion design.

Strongly inspired by the ‘Centre for Fashion, the Body and Material Culture’ (CFBM) at London College of Fashion, it is suggested that these three aspects should, in a fluid triangular combination, be the main focus for fashion research at DK:

Research on fashion should be directed towards fashion as a cultural or economic phenomenon, which could be studies on the fashion system, consumer studies or studies in aesthetic meaning or expression in fashion.

Research on the body can consist of theories about embodiment or fashion or dress as a bodily practice or it can be practice-based projects on cutting, shaping, body mapping, etc.

Research on material culture should consist of practice-based projects with an industry focus that have potential for collaborations between textile and fashion researchers and external partners, the hands-on development of or innovation of fabrics and knitting or, once again, theory-based projects on fashion or dress as a bodily practice.

These three aspects could, as said before, be combined with various weights in one project, which would be advisable in the current building up of the research department. However, they could easily be treated separately in later projects. This recommendation again stems from purely pragmatic reasons, namely that in a small research environment every single researcher has a responsibility to cover more fields of knowledge. While in a larger environment or institution, there is more room for niche projects. The three aspects also open up for a discussion of how textile and fashion research could best be combined to form theoretical frameworks that would support the many collaborative projects already taking place at the student level. This way the already existing perception that DK wants to maintain a strong focus on practice can be enhanced, developed and augmented through research.
While the three aspects (the body, fashion and material culture) should form the basis of the research strategy on fashion, there are nonetheless more issues which seem obvious to study that could form natural continuations of the main elements:

There is currently a very strong focus on ethics, sustainability and environment in the fashion industry, popularly known as CSR (Corporate Social Responsibility). This is a very natural issue to pursue in both curriculum and research. Such projects could have widespread methodological focal points and aims. These projects could easily create opportunities to establish collaborative practice-based projects with the fashion industry and thus contribute to innovation in the Danish production of fashion.

Another issue that relates to the descriptive phase in general design research is the development of a didactic strategy. The jobs done by fashion designers have changed dramatically with the globalisation of clothing production. Even so, job functions are understudied and in need of critical reflection through research. This is especially true in a small research environment like DK, where the focus is placed strongly on developing research-based teaching both in practice and in theory. It could prove valuable to study and develop how to strengthen the verbalisation of the fashion design process, how sketching processes or visual research can be improved or how students can get the most out of theory in combination with their main focus – design. This kind of research would lead to an improved understanding of the fashion design profession, its place in the national and international business system and the creative and cognitive processes of fashion design.

Networks and partnerships in Denmark

There is a widespread agreement that DK cannot go through its academic upgrading alone. It is essential to establish networks and more binding partnerships with selected educational institutions or fashion companies in Denmark and abroad, in order to be able to have co-funded research projects and to share knowledge. To select the right partners it is necessary to constantly be aware of and to define what core competencies and goals DK pursues in the fashion design education and how and with whom it is possible to move forward.

In this process, it is extremely important to have a positive and constructive dialogue between the research department and the Institute of Fashion and Textiles. Fortunately, this is already happening to a large extent, because of the small size of DK everyone meets at lunch or in the hallways. Nevertheless, this dialogue could be more focused, for instance by bringing
researchers and practitioners together in teaching workshops. DK has already started experimenting with such projects with great success, just like the Institute for Form and Theory is experimenting with teaching processes that combine practice and theory.

To have a constructive dialogue externally, obvious partners in Denmark to obtain qualified knowledge from during this process could be the following:

Other institutions that are involved in constituting traditions and methodologies in design research: This has already been established to a large degree through the “Center for Design Research” (Center for Designforskning, CDF), which is a platform for design research involving the two architecture schools and design schools under the Ministry of Culture in Denmark. The Danish platform for fashion research, Modekonsortiet (The Fashion Consortium, MOKO), located at Denmark’s Design School (DKDS) in Copenhagen, is also a very useful partnership that can be developed further. Furthermore, a dialogue between the Textile Consortium, located at DK, and MOKO could help develop interdisciplinary methodologies between fashion and textiles.

Business schools with a focus on creative industries: Here, DK has already established a partnership through MOKO with the Copenhagen Business School (CBS), which has been active in establishing research in creative industries, both through the centre “Imagine..Creative Industries Research and the research programme @creative Encounters. As of January 2008, a Ph.D. in fashion has been co-financed by the Department of Intercultural Communication and Management at CBS and DK.

University departments with a strong focus on culture, art history or society: Such a partnership has not yet been formed, but there could be potential in developing a partnership with University of Southern Denmark that has institutes relating to these areas located in Kolding.

Institutes or institutions of pedagogy: Such a partnership has also not yet been established, but a potential partner could be the centre “Learning Lab” at the School of Education, University of Aarhus (DPU).

The fashion industry: Here the practice-based research to be developed at DK could prove potentially very valuable for the industry, and since Kolding, as mentioned before, is located in the traditional fashion and textile region of Denmark, it ought to be possible. Also, the Danish trade organisation for fashion, “Federation of
Danish Textile and Clothing” (DTB), is located in this area. An informal partnership between MOKO and the “Danish Fashion Institute” (DAFI), a network organisation that promotes Danish fashion, has also been established. Though there have already been established two co-financed Ph.D. projects on textiles between DK and the textile industry, the fashion industry still seems quite cautious and reluctant towards fashion research. There is a huge challenge in the following years to either start a conversation with the industry through the mentioned organisations or to start on pioneer projects, in order to convince them that an involvement with research can be worth their time and money.

International networks and partnerships

In the building up of a balance between practice-based and theory-based research on fashion at DK, the RCA in London and RISD in U.S.A. seem extremely relevant as exchange and discussion partners, especially as these institutions have also established a close connection between fashion and textiles. The interest for RISD is also stated in the report “Research in Textile Design” (Bang & Nissen, 2005). This is a preliminary study for the establishment of the Textile Consortium. Just like attempts to build a network with textile researchers at the RCA, this is an ongoing process.

In terms of the building up of a theoretical framework on the economic aspects of the fashion industry and how to implement theory and management related issues in the practice-based education, the M.A. “Fashion, Design & Strategy” (F, D & S) at ArtEZ in Arnhem and the Dutch trans-institutional programme on fashion research, which has as of now partly been established in Holland, are also of great interest to DK. Just like in Holland, the Danish fashion industry consists of partly economic driven and partly design driven fashion companies. Since the economic aspect of fashion is not a core issue of research at DK, this is a field where a partner is needed. In the partnership between DK and CBS/Creative Encounters, it seems highly relevant to further develop exchanges in courses and research projects with inspiration from the Dutch cases studied in this report.

Since fashion research is developing so rapidly these years, it is vital to keep a strong network within the already established strong international centres for fashion research and the ones that are in the making. At CUNY Graduate Center, Parsons the New School for Design and the FIT in New York City, the FBMC in London and Stockholm University, it seems from 6 it can be mentioned that Parsons the New School for Design and DK as of December 2007 have established a collaboration/dialogue regarding CSR.
the evidence in this report that everybody seems interested in exchanging knowledge, even tutors and courses via seminars or via online teaching. This is a huge area of high interest for DK and MOKO, and it should be further developed in the near future. To tie all these knots together and to make them instrumental for DK, it is vital that the school be able to attract researchers and tutors from abroad. With the great number of tutors visiting already, it would seem obvious to apply for funding for a college or prestige building that could provide housing for visiting staff members. This could not only save the school the extensive part of their budget that now goes to pay for hotels for the visiting tutors, but it could also create an attractive housing possibility in the beautiful area of Kolding where fruitful meetings and discussions could continue after work and help establish even stronger liaisons and partnerships.
Part II: Presentation

Introduction

This report has been requested by and conducted in collaboration with Ulla Ræbild, study co-ordinator for Fashion, Institute for Fashion and Textiles, Designskolen Kolding (DK), as the first step towards establishing fashion as a research field at DK. The starting point of this report was to establish a preliminary study and to find inspiration for how fashion research could best be established at DK, in order to make the school an active partner in MOKO, which was established 2 February 2006. Until then fashion research in Denmark was conducted sporadically at universities, museums or by single researchers, musicologists or students, but the knowledge they developed was not necessarily disseminated. As follows, one of the goals of this report is to contribute to the consolidation of MOKO by enhancing the collaboration between its institutions, specifically the two Danish design schools DK and DKDS.

This report is conducted from the viewpoint that it is of vital importance that fashion researchers and design schools share knowledge at this point in time and that this can be done by a disclosure of the role played by fashion research at fashion design educations, their students and the relations to the fashion industry in qualitatively selected cases from outside Denmark. The growing interest for fashion research, not only in Denmark but in a great number of other countries, seems to stem first and foremost from the fact that many countries have undergone a transformation from being fashion clothing producers to being fashion design producers. In a time where a relatively small amount of clothes are produced in the Western countries like Europe and U.S.A., an issue is to enhance the ability to produce ideas, which of course stimulates the interest for looking at fashion in new ways. These changes inevitably afflict the design educations. It is most apparent that design schools in the mentioned regions find themselves in a transitional phase where the question of how to best supply the fashion design students with appropriate skills for the reality that meets them when they finish school is heavily debated.

To qualify this debate in Denmark, it is obvious to study how these challenges are met abroad. As well as in a variety of other countries, fashion
research is presently being established and organised in institutes, platforms or collaborations in the attempt to enhance the research on fashion in the individual countries. The organisation of these platforms is very different, as is the attitude towards what fashion research is. This is mostly based on national or institutional structures and traditions. It is the aim that this knowledge can contribute to a more qualified discussion of how fashion research can be conducted, both in relation to education and industry. The structuring of the empirical material has naturally been strongly inspired by the meetings with the researchers, heads of institutes and tutors who have contributed to this report in the form of discussions, mail correspondence, questionnaires and interviews.

What is fashion research? Many suggestions should come immediately, since fashion has grown into an economically and culturally strong factor, not least in Denmark where in 2005 it was the fourth biggest export industry. No one could imagine that other economically equally strong industries would not be subject to research, for example the food or pharmaceutical industry. Yet fashion has emerged as a relatively new academic field, where pioneers are presently getting together to discuss precisely these matters. While these meetings and integrations are currently happening, finding centres that could qualify to contribute to the Danish discussion or even to find where fashion research was conducted is like being a detective. This revealed how diverse the field of fashion research has been until now. And also how big the need is internationally for knowledge sharing concerning methodology, research strategies and collaborative constructions.

There is no doubt that this report leaves out many excellent, interesting and inspiring research projects or programmes on fashion. But it requires a strong network and a knowledge of the regional status of fashion research to find them. The many focuses and platforms stand as evidence to the fact that fashion research is now manifesting itself as a newcomer in the academic disciplines and insisting on establishing its own methodologies and subjects of research. By creating a qualified outline, the hope to clarify how fashion research can be communicated and practiced in Danish design schools and not least to create awareness in the Danish fashion industry about the ways in which research can be a potential resource.
Key Questions

The ambition of this analysis is to uncover fundamental facts about the implementation of fashion research and how it is conducted in selected fashion educations and how research can be communicated in an educational institution to fellow researchers, fashion students and tutors, so that the knowledge obtained via research projects can strengthen the institution. Key questions are, according to this:

- How is fashion research implemented at a design school?
- How can fashion research create possibilities in the education in relation to the fashion industry?
- Typology of fashion research: Research subjects and methodologies
- Research strategies: How to strengthen already existing competencies through research?
- How to communicate research internally within an institution?

These questions could be answered by imitating how other design areas have developed at Danish design schools. But both in terms of industry and methodologies, there are certain problems and topics that are linked to fashion. Fashion is unique in relation to design in general, because it always relates to the body in a very literal manner, and this fact creates other topics to discuss in terms of research. With the realisation of how small the Danish cluster of researchers is at the moment, it became clear very early in the process of this project that it would be more valuable for the discussion to look at international cases relating to fashion.
Structure And Methodology

This report is divided into a conclusion, a presentation, a chapter on fashion research in context, two chapters that present a preliminary study and the selected case studies and a final summary. It is based on empirical studies, searches on websites, syllabi, planned curricula and research strategies handed over by interviewees, in addition to literature studies and studies in methodology.

The empirical study (parts IV-V) is based on facts from websites, handouts, interviews and questionnaires. In the interviews a qualitative, interactionist methodology is applied (cf. Järvinen and Mik-Meyer, 2005), which implies that the analyst is part of the creation of the meaning. Therefore, the point of view of the analyst has to be explicated. In this case, the analyst is an academically trained fashion researcher and the questions, discussions and underlying viewpoints relate to the context of the report. Thus all conversations and interview questions naturally relate to this fact. But even if the focus has been to define the role of fashion research in the selected cases, great efforts have been made to be open towards the reality described by interviewees. The focus in the interviews has subsequently been the interplay between education, industry and research. But since the cases are so different, the actual questions have varied according to what the single interviewee has defined as important.

The presentation of the selected cases is furthermore based on additional questionnaires. The questions are inspired by considerations concerning the design of questionnaires and case studies (Burawoy 1998, Yin 2003). They have been answered by the head of research at LCF, Professor Helen Thomas (FBMC), Professor José Teunissen (ArtEZ) and Dr. Professor Dany Jacobs (AMFI, University of Groningen). Unfortunately, not all questionnaires that were sent were answered. So the plan to pursue qualitative comparisons between the answers was abandoned. Instead, the answered questionnaires were used to support already conducted interviews.

The focus and structure in the presentation of the selected cases is strongly inspired by Edgar E. Schein’s levels of culture (Schein, 1994) with the reservations that the optics of Schein is the one of a consultant, where he, from a management perspective, analyses how to work with and if necessary change a company or an institution. In the report, the levels of culture are used as tools for descriptive analysis. They were seen as instrumental, because they not only uncover facts (size of institution, amount of students and researchers, extent of research), but also the identity and self-perception revealed through strategies and interviews. In this way, both formal and informal layers are part of the analysis.
Schein's levels of culture are divided as follows:

1. Artefacts: visible organisational structures and processes
2. Espoused values: strategies, goals, philosophy
3. Basic assumptions: unconscious “taken for granted” assumptions and values, ideas and perceptions, thoughts and feelings

From this structure, every case is described from the following principles:

1. Facts, number of employees, collaborative structures, syllabi and curricula, overall research strategies (descriptive)
2. Elaborations on strategies, aims and philosophies (visions)
3. Self-perception, identity (what do they think, feel and actually do?)

Points 2 and 3 are combined in a way that publicly declared visions and strategies are commented and elaborated on through interviews and questionnaires, in order to be able to define self-perception and identity in every single case.

This leads to the basis on which comparisons between the selected cases are made. Due to the diversity between the cases in terms of size, strategies and practice, a culturally oriented comparison was made, where every case was perceived as ideographically unique (Thyge Winther-Jensen 2004). Here it is supposed that borrowing (direct comparison) is not always possible or relevant, which means that detailed aspects by for example a curriculum cannot be directly conveyed from one context to another, but that the comparison is made on the basis of an overall description of the respective institutions. In this way, the descriptions of the selected cases will be subject to concluding summations throughout the report with the focus on specific characteristics in each case as well as on general themes and topics of the study.

The case studies are divided into #1 and #2, because of the simple fact that this study was conducted in two separate projects and that the material from the first project has already been made public in a report in Danish on 24 April 2007, “A Study of International Fashion Research” [En Undersøgelse af International Modeforskning]. In #1, two research trips were conducted respectively to London and Amsterdam, while in #2 the destinations were New York and Providence. It was the idea that #1 would consist of cases that could be conveyed very directly to the teaching and research at DK and cases in #2 would cover more overall thematics regarding current developments in the methodology of fashion research. This was not the case, as it was realised that at all of the fashion and research departments visited there were
considerations on how to upgrade the fashion design education with theory. It turned out that not only at Danish design schools, where research on fashion is imposed, but also at the European and American design schools visited the same challenges and discussions currently exist.

Following below in Part III, the reason for this development will be put into context anchored in the Danish situation, but related to the overall global development of the fashion industry. The development of fashion as a creative industry will be discussed here based upon an overall perspective of what creative industries are, as stated by Andy C. Pratt (Pratt 2000; 2002; 2004) and Mark Lorenzen (Lorenzen 2007).

Further on in the text, a focal point in this discussion is the tensions and possibilities created at the Danish design schools due to the new ‘intruders’ – the academics. Why the academics have arrived here and who produces what kind of knowledge will be discussed mainly through the sociologist Feiwel Kuperferberg’s notion of creative regimes (Kupferberg, 2006). Here, the main thesis is that hybrids are inevitably appearing as two or more professions that start to merge their skills and knowledge and that this creates an enormous potential, because of the present development in the so-called creative industries. Of course, the danger of creating struggles for power and money is also present in this situation, which will appear through articles from Danish newspapers, websites and academic journals. It is shown how these tensions and possibilities are being heavily debated, in the efforts made to define and conduct research-based teaching at the design schools, practice-based or theory-based research on design in general and for the design schools and designers to maintain a sense of identity in Denmark these years.
Part III: Fashion Research in Context

“The Industrial Revolution began with farmers who started fencing in land, saying it was now their property. Until then land was common property and everyone had the right to let their animals graze there. Today it is not land that is fenced in. It is knowledge. One of the most debated issues today is the relation of copyrights to intellectual capital. Why? It is here where there is money to be made.”

Elsebeth Gerner Nielsen, rector at Designskolen Kolding

____________________________________________
Fashion as a Creative Industry

“(…) design and marketing relations to Western consumers are the last strongholds for the Western companies(…) if companies are able to bring these two core competencies together in a close creative collaboration between designers and marketing people – for instance supported by anthropologists and ethnologists – they might be able to keep the lead. For a while. But for how long? (…) it is naïve to believe that the Chinese or Indians have not got a sense of the possibilities in beautiful and user-friendly design (…) The global design race is not won by the half-hearted or those, who believe that they automatically are born world champions.”

Hartmut Esslinger, frog design

In the quote above, Esslinger points to the challenges that countries like Denmark face, in relation to fashion and design in general. Almost all manufacturing of designed products is outsourced to Asian or other countries that have a cheaper labour force to pay than in our own country. In the Danish fashion industry, this happened 10-15 years ago. We must now make money on innovation, a buzzword that has been picked up by politicians in their efforts to secure our future economy. This means that we are left to produce ideas, concepts and design solutions that demand a high level of

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education, skills and creativity. There is a need to define creativity in relation to the rise of, “the knowledge economy,”\textsuperscript{10} where creativity is in demand both in relation to technological innovation and labour market dynamics. Here, hybrids between various types of knowledge and professions are occurring spontaneously and/or encouraged by politicians for the reason that, “it is well known that interactions between artists and production technologies produce innovation. If these are physically separated, the local endogenous innovative potential will be diminished.”\textsuperscript{11}

Research on creative industries, which has its main focus on studying the dynamics and interactions happening in culture production and economic development these years, is still an emerging field of research that is similar to research on fashion, since it is still in the process of being defined. This was stated by Dr. Andy C. Pratt (Pratt, 2000), Director of Centre for Urban Research at the London School of Economics and one of the leading scholars of creative industries. The term culture industries was defined in the 1930s by Adorno and Horkheimer, who equated it with mass society and thus perceived it as a debasing of society. At a UNESCO conference in 1982, a report was produced with the title “Cultural Industries: a challenge for the future.” Here, the term included not only artists but the whole system which produced, distributed, managed and sold creative products. This is a definition that still defines largely what creative industries are. Nevertheless, a variety of definitions has been developed locally and on a national level based on this. There seems to be no bona fide consensus on how to define what industries are exactly related to creative industries.\textsuperscript{12}

When speaking of creative industries, creativity is no longer associated only with the artist who creates art, design, music, fashion or films, but also with, “how firms, industries and society at large organise for creativity. That is a core issue, and the challenge is for managers and policymakers to opt for the most efficient organisation in order to profit from the creativity of labour and citizens.”\textsuperscript{13} In this respect, creativity has come to be seen as a raw material created by artists or creative people in the broadest definition, who are given the central importance of sustaining the European economies in the future. According to the theory, innovation happens when creativity and the organisation of money, knowledge and value flows meet. But this does not occur automatically by just placing different professions together.

\textsuperscript{11} Pratt, 2000, pp 6-7.
\textsuperscript{12} Pratt, 2000, pp 4.
\textsuperscript{13} Lorenzen 2007, pp 3.
The true challenge for our economy in the future, if innovation is to happen and money is to be made, is therefore to find the right formula for mixing business, knowledge and creativity.

The question for design schools is what will happen if no platforms are created on which diverse professions like academics, design school tutors and industry members can interact? If this happens, we will lose the opportunity to direct and control the meeting between creativity and business.

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**Interactions Between ‘Creative Regimes’**

“There is nothing wrong with our creative potential – we have lots of ‘curly brains’, a creative business and first-rate cultural institutions (...) However, we are missing a political commitment concerning where the ‘experience economy’ belongs in the educational system. We call for a systematic integration of the creative professions in the mercantile courses – because the minute that universities, design schools and other creative institutions get the opportunity to interact, the exciting multidisciplinary effects of synergy start to emerge.”

*Larsen & Armland, Jyllandsposten, 24 October 2005*

The reason why tensions often appear in the attempts to organise interactions between diverse professions is conceptualised by sociologist Feiwel Kupferberg (Kupferberg 2006) with his term *creative regimes*. His notion of creativity is rather broad and used to describe how four various professions are socialised to perceive and conduct their work, namely educators, entrepreneurs, artists and researchers. The aim of Kupferberg’s analysis is to strengthen and improve creative processes for both educators and students at educational institutions. His key research questions are: What kind of society is the didactic practice and reality to be conducted in? For which kind of individuals? In what kind of reality?14

Kupferberg’s definitions of the four *creative regimes* are based on Luhman’s notion of the self-referential self-communication of the systems or *autopoiesis*.15 Like Luhman, he points to the fact that it is very human to view the world from one’s own position and that this can be very problematic

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in our current economy, as described in the previous paragraph. Individuals simply do not understand the motivations, motives, practices or even ways of communicating of each other. So in order to establish platforms on which the four selected professions can interact, there is a need, as Kupferberg sees it, to create a higher level of consciousness between the differences among the professions and then to concentrate on areas where meetings are possible.\(^{16}\)

What first and foremost precipitates problems is the fact that all persons need to be approved of by peers or gatekeepers within their own system.\(^{17}\) Each profession is socialised to practice certain values that do not necessarily correlate with the values from another system. Kupferberg goes on to state tasks, norms and competencies for each of the four groups, which he does as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Profession</th>
<th>Task</th>
<th>Norm</th>
<th>Competency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Academic</td>
<td>To reflect in-depth</td>
<td>Critique</td>
<td>Analytic distance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educator</td>
<td>To reduce complexity</td>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>Illustrative unfolding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Artist</td>
<td>To express deep feelings</td>
<td>Authenticity</td>
<td>Empathy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Entrepreneur</td>
<td>To create consumption</td>
<td>Adaptation (to the market)</td>
<td>Specialising</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As Pratt, Kupferberg’s focus is on how these groupings interact in what he terms the industrial regime of creativity\(^ {18}\). To enhance the symbolic value of products, academics, artists and entrepreneurs, they collaborate within one system or economy and educators socialise students to be able to understand their own potential role in this type of society. He states that this is a consequence of Post-Fordism, where the emphasis is no longer on mass production, but on adapting products to niche segments in a way that makes product development and design solutions vital to our economy.\(^ {19}\) The risk here is that the various groups will not necessarily interact, but rather misunderstand each other, be suspicious of the methods and results of each other and of each other in general, which will definitely not result in new ways of thinking. I will not elaborate on Kupferberg’s didactics. What is important here is the way that his analysis can be used to understand what is happening at design schools these years, as various professions with different aims and communication styles interact here. In this report, Kupferberg’s term

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\(^{16}\) Ibid, pp 213: “We have to take the thesis of the polycentric universe [...] seriously and not try to replace it with a quasi-religious hierarchy, where one particular creativity regime dominates the others. Attempts to impose the adaptation norm of the industry on research, that has to be critical in its essence to survive, is just as condemnable and destructive for creativity as the current tendency to impose the critical norm of the academic creativity regime on the universe of didactics.”

\(^{17}\) Ibid, pp 27: “(...) creativity, as opposed to our perception of the lonely genius, is in reality a socially institutionalised and very regulated activity.”

\(^{18}\) Ibid, pp 46: Kupferberg’s term is inspired by the definitions creative industries (Cares, 2000), cultural industries (Hesmondalgh, 2002) and cultural economy (DuGay & Pike, 2002).

\(^{19}\) Ibid, pp 70.
“educator” will be replaced by “tutor”, since this is the common word used for practice-based educators at design schools.

In fact, this report could be an example of the tensions and misunderstandings created between professions at design schools. As it is written in an academic language, so that it can be subjected to criticism from other researchers, it might cause reactions from designers and industry members that both refer to another value system. They would probably wonder what and who all the words and literature references and footnotes are for, when it could be explained much more simply. But the task for an academic is not to reduce complexity, as it is for the educator, to express authentic and personal feelings, as it is for the artist, or to adapt to the market forces, as it is for the entrepreneur, but to reflect in-depth and to subject to formalities from within the academic value system. The point is that a report like this is written primarily for other academics, for them to approve of the methodologies and theories applied. If they do not, it will lose all value within the academic system and the knowledge produced will only reach a small audience. So as an academic, one would have to ask oneself the question of how the research results can be communicated to other professions without losing the possibility for positive peer approval.

What happens when professions start to interact and become subjected to the norms and values of each other at design schools? The problems concerning this are pinpointed by Professor Morten Kyndrup, who is on the advisory board for the CDF, with the statement, “it is and never will be easy to position oneself in relation to opposing systems of legitimacy,” (Kyndrup 2003). By this he addresses the Danish polemics concerning the so-called “artistic development”, “academic designers” and the development of practice-based design research in Denmark. Due to the fact that practitioners have to apply academic research for their knowledge to be approved as research, they have to submit to two different value systems. And this is very difficult, which will be touched upon in the next paragraph.

Kupferberg’s definition of the four creative regimes is at times rather rigid, but is still found to be very instrumental for describing what happens in general, when interactions between professions become such a strong focus in a society, as ours is currently, that everyone who works with knowledge, business or art have to, in some way, find a way of managing the interactions taking place. And when all professions are struggling equally to get on top of the “knowledge hierarchy”, in order to obtain most power, influence and funding.

I have chosen to bring in Kupferberg’s creative regimes because there is a strong need for an understanding of the gap between the perceived societal and political need for a closer collaboration between research, design and
business, and the actual misunderstandings, mistrust and wishy-washiness that often occur in meetings between designers, academics and business people. These are conceptual tools to understand what goes wrong and to begin to formulate the criteria for good collaboration.

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**Practice Versus Research**

“‘To draw,’ I said, ‘is like taking a walk with a line. It leads you to places you could not imagine.’ ‘You can imagine everything,’ they said. ‘Not everything. Some things are beyond the thought.’ ‘Are they now,’ they said. ‘Are they now? Realisations demand words. Words, words and words again. A line is not a word. A line leads to nowhere.’ ‘A line leads everywhere,’ I said. ‘A line can be used when we cannot make do with words.’ ‘We see! And where does the line come from?’ ‘It comes from everywhere. From the hand. It is in the eye. Inside and outside.’ ‘Is it now,’ they said, and started cutting off my fingers. One by one. In the name of the good cause.”

Ken Denning, artist/author, tutor at Denmark’s Design School, satirical essay, Politiken, 14 January 2007

The essay from which this excerpt was taken was published in a large Danish newspaper Politiken at the height of the debate concerning the academisation process at Denmark’s Design School.

Can practice, in itself, be research? My answer to this question is – no. I agree with Professor Hans Siggaard Jensen, the head of the Institute at Learning Lab, DPU, who argued in regard to the implementation of research in the design education that a vital criterion of research is that it can be reviewed and critiqued. And for this, there has to be a shared framework, a value system as Kupferberg would define it. If one is to give a qualified critique to a painting, one would have to create another painting to answer it appropriately. It is exactly this attitude towards design research that has heated up the debate. In the article “The academic tailors”, it is stated that at Denmark’s Design School, where the academisation of the school started in around 1999, some tutors were replaced by researchers from academic disciplines like anthropology, ethnology or art history. A scary vision is put forward by students arguing the frustration regarding the situation where,

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20 At a seminar on the implementation of research in the design education arranged by CDF on 10 January 2008.
21 From notes taken during the seminar.
“(…) you have a tutor in glass and ceramics who shows how to throw, and in the corner stands a researcher babbling on about verbalisation and the plasticity of the shape according to Foucault.”\textsuperscript{22} The situation is paraphrased with nurses who accordingly, “(…) can quote Habermas, but have no idea how to make a bandage.”\textsuperscript{23} This situation, as is stated in the article, creates an A and a B group of staff, where researchers and tutors are not integrated and the knowledge of the researchers is considered more valuable than that of the tutors. If the design school were Bourdieu’s field of power,\textsuperscript{24} the transition phase has resulted in a slide downwards for the tutors with a subsequent loss of economic and cultural habitus and of course power and influence.

Though the situation at Denmark’s Design School has changed since the debate was at its peak, the quoted contributions reflect a certain anger and bitterness from tutors, because they feel their skills are not being fully acknowledged in the ongoing academisation process. As it stated in the conclusions of this report, DK is trying to avoid this situation by finding a way to create a balance, or a common platform, for the two professions. The main focus is to strengthen the competencies already existing, by developing research and artistic practices that can support each other in a fruitful manner.

The following is a short introduction to how research has been introduced and attempted to be implemented so far at design schools in Denmark and at DK with the aim of meeting the challenges described in this paragraph.

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**Design Research In Denmark**

In 2000, the Danish Evaluation Institute (EVA) conducted a report on how to develop the research possibilities at design schools in Denmark. Their recommendations and conclusions led to the establishment of the “Centre for Design Research” (CDF) in September 2004, a centre for research realised in collaboration with the two architecture schools and two design schools under the Danish Cultural Ministry. The centre arranges seminars and funds various research projects, in order to help build up a Danish network for design research. The centre actively supports the schools in building up research environments, so that they can obtain the accreditation needed for when they are to be evaluated in 2010 on the basis of the demands in the results

\begin{itemize}
  \item 22 Jensen & Libak, 2007.
  \item 23 Ibid.
  \item 24 Bourdieu, 1984.
\end{itemize}
contract of 2007-10 from the Ministry of Culture. Here it is stated that by 2010 DK should, “conduct research, artistic development activity and general cultural activity with the aim of supporting Danish design,” and that focal points for the research at DK should be, “design theory and methodology, textile and fashion design, visual communication and interactive design.” It is also stated that, “the four architecture and design schools should prepare and conduct, collaboratively, a research evaluation of the design research at the respective schools in 2010.” The process of preparing the evaluation criteria is ongoing, and has created, at times, heated discussions, but it seems that a consensus has now been established supporting the fact that research should and ought to be conducted at the design schools, that there is no turning back and that this should happen in a dialogue between artistic development and academic practice. The very pragmatic aim is to turn the two schools into academic institutions that can educate at the M.A. level (a three year B.A. plus a two year M.A.) and at the Ph.D. level. Both schools are striving hard to reach this goal.

The main issues in the ongoing discussions are of course: what exactly is understood by design research, who should conduct it and why and for whom should it be done. And finally, research at a design school should somehow be anchored in the artistic practices conducted and developed there. In relation to the academisation taking place at the design schools, there has been various contributions to the debate concerning the “expanded notion of design” that reflects the fact that, “(...) design no longer primarily is all about giving shape to physical objects, but that design also involves strategies, planning of services, interaction design, branding, etc.” In other words, design is not only about shapes and materials; it is about finding ways of problem solving. This is where academic methodologies and practices come into the picture, because designers today more than ever need to think and work in an interdisciplinary framework.

25 According to the contract between DK and the Ministry of Culture 2007-10.
29 Stafetten 1, Newsletter, CDF, 2007. The term was introduced in Denmark by the interviewee in this article, Ida Engholm, who in 1999 together with Anders Michelsen published the book Designmaskinen [The Design Machine]. Here they quote the designer Buckminster Fuller, who in the 1970s said, “design is everything,” meaning that all human creation is design.
Design Research at Designskolen Kolding

The following presentation of the approach to design research at DK is based on a lecture held by head of Institute of Form and Theory, Ulrik Jungersen (UJ), at “Day of Research” 18 January 2008. The statements of the presentation are commented in the shape of interviews with UJ, the head of the Research Department, Thomas Leerberg (TL) and the head of the Institute for Fashion and Textiles, Lone Dalsgaard (LD).

According to the presentation, DK follows “two paths in research”. One path, “(…) seeks through established academic disciplines to research in design,” whereas the other, “(…) takes a starting point in the matter and professional logics of the design objects.” The contract between DK and the Ministry of Culture states that one third of the teaching is to be research-based. A further definition of this term is elaborated on in the presentation through the four ideals of research-based teaching as stated by Per Fibæk Laursen, Associate Professor in Theory of Education at the University of Copenhagen:30

1. The content of the teaching consists of research results.
2. The teaching is associated to a research environment, in the sense that research is conducted within the frameworks of the institution.
3. The teacher is an active researcher in the discipline he/she teaches, and the teaching is inspired by his/her own research.
4. Students learn about how to conduct research by working on research projects with practicing researchers.

According to Laursen, only the fourth definition lives up to how research-based teaching should ideally be conducted, because here students are actively involved in research projects, and this makes them understand much more about research than if they were just introduced to research results in the teaching in one way or the other. To reach the aim of building one third of the education on this type of teaching, DK is currently developing the following levels of the curriculum:

a. Types of dissertations: problem solving or development oriented
b. Theory and dissertation descriptions: literature, syllabi, etc. (how much are students to read?)
c. Pedagogy: courses, supervising, study groups, group work, lectures

d. Staffing level: one or more tutors (practitioners and researchers together)

e. Teaching experiments, student involvement in research projects, etc.

Teaching experiments have already been conducted (c+d) very successfully in a number of workshops, where research theses are tested through design experiments done in collaboration with students. This has not only sharpened the focus in the relevant research projects, but has also involved students actively in producing research material, which they have responded to very positively. The results have animated a discussion at DK about whether it would be a good idea to establish a “didactic strategy” for how to involve students in research based on the experiences so far. As a new Ph.D. student in fashion has started in January 2008, it is obvious that a teaching model like this should also be developed on fashion.

The Department for Form and Theory is central to the academisation process, seeing as it is directed towards all students and all three levels of activity at DK; research-based teaching, artistic development and teaching on specific profession-based proficiencies – providing the students equally with, according to UJ, knowledge, skills and competencies. UJ elaborates on the importance of balancing these three parameters:

“(...) it would be a really bad thing if we make it illegitimate to make a lot of quick choices based on intuition and experience. This is the biggest challenge, the academic values, which demand verifiable results in contrast to ‘gut feelings’ and intuitive choices of the designer (...) if you are to convey academic practice and values to the design process, a door handle would cost £ 35,000”.

What is of course described here is the clash between two creative regimes that each have their own value system. The head of the Institute of Fashion and Textiles, LD, has been instrumental in keeping focus on practice-based and crafts-based competencies at the school, which she sees as highly important in the transition that DK is undergoing. However, she agrees that the development of research and the implementation of theory at DK have provided fashion design students with a new “tool” for reflection in their design process and indeed also a new self-perception. She states:

“A new dignity can be sensed around fashion design as a profession

31 In a workshop by Ph.D. student Mette Harrestrup, students were involved in creating design solutions to “wayfinding”. Mette has now implemented the experiments from the workshop in her research project. Also Ph.D. students Malene Leerberg and Thomas Markussen worked with students on the concept “embodiment” to study new ways of learning at design schools. Finally, Ph.D. students Anne Louise Bang and Kirsten Nissen have had a workshop about user driven design in the textile industry.
and the designers themselves. Earlier on, part of our status was the mystery of the artist that shrouded our profession, not so much rational competencies. Respect for actual competencies rather than aura is definitely preferred. By providing competencies related to reflection and communication of a complex profession, future fashion designers are perceived more like skilled problem solvers than as passionate entertaining creatures."

She verifies that at an early stage of the academisation process, it was difficult for DK, but still she also sees the process as necessary and fruitful for students, tutors and researchers at DK. The head of the Research Department, TL, contributes to this statement:

"The fact that fashion design is a bit diverse from other areas of design demands a specific framework for fashion research. For example, it can be difficult to get close to the designer and generate knowledge about the design process when you aim for more than just describing the unique designer and the design object. This is exactly why it is so important that research in fashion design be embedded in the specific practice that characterises fashion design."

Conclusion

It is obvious that DK is very aware of balancing each creative regime equally and of keeping a focus on the unique knowledge generated at design schools. It is also obvious that the academisation process is far from finished. There is a long way to go before the triangular strategy between knowledge, skills and competencies will be close to perfect.

The field of fashion research is of course subjected to the same conditions as design research in general. As the mapping out of fashion research in this report shows (parts IV and V), it is striking that this is mostly taking place at design schools. Very few universities have of yet established fashion research as an individual field of research alongside other aesthetic fields. What are the consequences of this? Firstly, many (fashion) researchers at design schools are recruited from academic institutions, where they have been trained in traditional academic research environments in already established disciplines. Secondly, trained (fashion) designers who teach at design schools are arguing that their hands-on knowledge should also be developed through research. Then this specifically creates discussions, at least in Denmark. Can practice be research? Or on the other hand, should practice and research be kept divided, like it is the strategy at
Denmark's Design School? Here, scholarships have been created for “artistic development” alongside their research department, which consists of trained academics. Or should they be combined into “two paths” as introduced by UJ, inspired by the English traditions for practice-based research? The point that hands-on design skills should somehow be upgraded through research is widely acknowledged in Denmark, but as it appears, there is not any real consensus on how. It is of now up to the design schools themselves to define what design research is and to pose the most relevant research questions.

In the following chapter, a qualitative case study presents how the challenges described in this chapter are approached in terms of balancing research and practice at selected design schools in Holland, England and the U.S.A.
Part IV: Case Studies (#1)

Presentation

This case study is based on two projects. In the first project, #1, a preliminary study was made to try and map out where fashion research is currently conducted, in order to motivate the selection of final cases. Two research trips were conducted in January 2007 to London and Amsterdam respectively and selected programmes and design schools were analysed on the basis of facts and interviews.

In the second project, #2, a research trip was made to New York in September 2007. The aim was to discuss further the methodological aspects of the current fashion research, but it turned out that the design schools visited were all planning on establishing M.A. level courses on fashion.

The summaries and conclusions in this chapter will focus on the differences between the way fashion research is communicated internally, in the selected cases, and how it is implemented in practice-based teaching.

Preliminary Study

Two exemplary environments for fashion research were originally suggested as cases in this study, namely Kyoto Costume Institute in Japan (KCI) and Centrum för Modevetenskap at Stockholm University. In the following the motivations for these suggestions will be clarified as well as why they soon turned out to be unsuitable for this project.

The two cases were chosen by geographical criteria, the extent to which they could be directly conveyed or compared to Danish fashion research and its historical, educational and societal preconditions. It was the aim that one case should be close to Denmark in terms of research traditions, traditions for collaboration with industry and the structure of the educational system and that the other should diverge considerably in relation to these parameters. The main point was that the report in this way could both contribute experiences
and knowledge that could be conveyed directly to Danish education models and could inspire an entirely new mindset regarding research strategies and the implementation of collaborative projects within the industry, thus infusing domestic practices with new ideas.

**Centrum för Modevetenskap, Stockholm University**

On the 4 January 2006, the Erling-Persson Foundation, founded by H&M's owner Stefan Persson, announced an agreement had been made with Stockholm University for about SEK 30 million to go to the establishment of a centre for fashion research. The purpose of the donation was according to the official press release:32

“(…) to increase the interchange between industry and academics within an economically expanding area with an extensive interdisciplinary breadth (…) the coupling between fashion as a cultural expression and fashion as a market economics factor should be highlighted within the framework of the new topic. The importance of entrepreneurship within the fashion world will also be emphasised.”

With the formation of the Centrum för Modeveteskap, Stockholm University was the first of its kind in the world to expose fashion as an independent academic field of research related to other aesthetic areas like movies and media, music, literature, etc. This of course creates a large amount of interest amongst fashion and dress researchers, as to what kind of research strategy is selected here. Also, it is highly interesting that Persson chose to donate all this money precisely to research. It must be emphasised in this connection that it is not H&M as a company that donated the money, but Persson as a private person in charge of a family foundation. Persson in an interview states the following incentives for the donation:

“We hope that our donation will change the perception of fashion and that it will establish a foundation for this topic as an academic discipline, which is necessary to create knowledge and credibility around this important cultural expression. This type of interdisciplinary research is not to our knowledge conducted in any part of the world. And to see Sweden at the forefront of this research and teaching is consistent with the picture of Sweden as a prominent nation when it comes to design (…) This is of great importance to an area that is close to the hearts of our family – retailing. We hope that it will

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32 Press release on the website of Stockholm University, 30 January 2006.
have a positive influence in terms of employment and export possibilities."\(^{33}\)

Central in Persson’s statement is his emphasis on the notion that strengthening fashion as an independent academic discipline will directly have a positive influence on the fashion industry, in that it is assumed to have such a positive signal value that it can strengthen Sweden as a fashion nation. From Persson’s perspective there are no conditions attached for the research conducted to provide directly applicable results to the fashion industry, which is clearly reflected in that the board that manages the funded money is independent, assembled from professionals from the fashion industry, the university and the design education in Sweden.\(^{34}\)

The donation that is disbursed over a five-year period is earmarked to establish an introduction course, a Master's programme and the recruitment of research assistants, a number of Ph.D.s and a head of research. In the long run, it is the aim to establish an independent M.A. When the starting point, as it is evident in the press release, is rather broad in terms of topics, the overall research strategy will depend upon the person chosen as head of research. This person will, as the person responsible overall for the research strategy of the centre, come to decide the main areas of research through the appointments of research projects, Ph.D.s and research assistants.

At the commencement of this project in September 2006, only the introduction course and a single M.A. course had started, while the remaining programme was still in the planning. Senior Lecturer Rebecca Arnold, presently a research fellow at Royal College of Art, was from the Autumn Semester of 2006, recruited as Guest Professor, in order to buy time to find a Professor to function as the head of the Centre. So while it has been extremely interesting to study the syllabi and topical structuring of the already established courses, it had to be concluded very early in the process, so that the Stockholm Centre could not contribute much new knowledge before a further development had taken place. However, what is happening in Stockholm is of course of great interest to Danish researchers and a clear research strategy must be expected to emerge after the appointment in September 2007, of Peter McNeil as a leading Professor.

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33 Article by Thomas Heldmark at Stockholm University's website from the 4 September 2006: "Storsatsning på modevetenskap"; http://www.su.se/pub/jsp/polopoly.jsp?d=2019&a=7608
34 Press release from Stockholm University's website 28 September 2006.
Kyoto Costume Institute

Through the associated tutors and textile researchers at DK, solid networks have been established with a number of Japanese museums and educational institutions. And the coherence between style and material, as well as fashion and textiles, is essential to the understanding of fashion and dress at DK. So it was considered an obvious choice to expand the already existing network between textile researchers to also include fashion research. A study of a Japanese case would make it possible to shed light on a milieu in a region of the world, which within the last 10-15 years has occupied a key position in the global fashion industry, being considered the leaders in technology and finance in the area. An institution from Japan was thought to be an illustration of the technological and economic development generally taking place in the Asian fashion industry.

Furthermore, Japan has been a highly influential fashion nation that has been mentioned as the already existing fifth cluster of the fashion world, a position that more European countries, amongst them Denmark, are competing for. This is not least due to the fact that the Japanese people are amongst the top fashion consumers in the world, a fact that naturally causes interest from the perspective of a design school. But also in relation to fashion as a profession, Japan seems very interesting. The Japanese fashion industry seems unique in the sense that it, like few others, has managed to integrate new technological knowledge with old handicrafts and traditions. At the same time, Japanese designers have, since the “Japanese Revolution” on the Parisian catwalks in 1981, had an enormous influence on especially the avant-garde of European fashion, a tradition reinterpreted by for example the famous Antwerp Six from Belgium that later again inspired designers like German Bernard Willhelm or Danish Henrik Vibskov. The conceptual or intellectual approach to fashion represented by designers like the mentioned has strongly influenced the teaching and milieu of fashion at DK, so naturally there is a high interest to study the Japanese research and teaching on fashion.

From all of these assumptions, it seemed very relevant to choose a Japanese case. A precondition was of course that fashion research should be

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35 In the article “Stop the conceitedness!” [“Kom selvfedheden til livs!”] (trade magazine TØJ, from trend agency pejgruppen, nov. 2006): “According to the opinion of the researcher (Ph.D. scholar Erik Hansen-Hansen, DKDS), Tokyo is outpacing both New York, Paris, London and Milan, when talking about numbers and consumption, which means that the fifth cluster is already established here.”

36 This is indicated by the fact that luxury brands like Prada has their most prestigious flagship stores in Tokyo, which they do not do without reason.

37 Elements in the education are highly inspired by the design school in Antwerp, as it was introduced to the school in the period 1999-2001 by visiting tutor, Annette Meyer.
conducted at the selected institution. Here, it was found that especially at the Kyoto Costume Institute (KCI), a museum that has an impressive collection of dress from both Europe and Asia, from where books are regularly published about the collection, had to be of relevance for the project. However, this notion proved to be wrong. The previously mentioned assumptions were extremely vivid and in fact mixed up concerning the concept of fashion research. It turned out that the research conducted at KCI was related primarily to costume history and museology. So the case could have been interesting in another context, but as one of the projects main goals was to conduct research into the typology of fashion research, the research at KCI was found to be too narrow for a further study and the museum had to be rejected as case material.

**Conclusion**

The proposition of cases and the later rejection of both can be said to be symptomatic of the reality of fashion research as a relatively new academic discipline, where it seems difficult to create an overall notion of what is going on, who to ask for advice and where to look for good examples. In the following, the process of selecting the final cases is described, on the basis of the knowledge obtained about Sweden and Japan.
Finding Relevant Cases

With the rejection of the originally selected cases at a very early stage in the project, an extensive preliminary study began in the search for new relevant cases that could make sense in relation to the purpose of the study. At this stage, the idea of a Japanese case was still found to be interesting, just like the notion that the other case should still be a European institution that could relatively be easily related to Danish conditions.

Japan

An intensive search of a Japanese institution that could work as a case study began. Both universities and design schools were aims of this search, primarily based on searches on websites. In that connection, it must be concluded that it was very difficult to find information on Japanese websites without knowing the language, because translations are often sparse. While many structures and courses were explained thoroughly in Japanese, you could find very little information in any other language. It proved rather hopeless to find an example through this method. At the same time, colleagues warned to go to Japan without having an interpreter. Since no funding was included for this post, Japan started to look like a less attractive setting for a usable case. Of course it would have been possible to visit central institutions like KCI or Bunka Fashion College in Tokyo, but with no certainty that it could prove useful in relation to the purpose of the report, Japan was rejected.

Very late in project #2, it became clear that several institutions could have been interesting to visit. Here it is relevant to mention the Department of Fashion and Performance at Joshibi University of Art and Design, the Department of Product and Textile Design at Tama Art University, The Doctoral Programme in Environmental Clothing Studies and Master’s Programme in Clothing Science Studies at Bunka Fashion Business School and the Graduate School of Design Research at Kobe Design University.

The U.S.A.

The U.S.A. was briefly considered a potential case, but the study changed direction. According to the criteria earlier mentioned, the U.S.A. might very well have worked as a case study that could not be directly compared to Denmark, but who could provide new ideas in the Danish debate. But at this stage it was assessed that the production of knowledge
would be far more valuable if both selected cases represented institutions that exhibited closely comparable conditions to the Danish conditions. With the time and travel possibilities available during the project, it was assessed that even if there was interesting research on fashion going on at the FIT or other institutions in the U.S. it would be far better to concentrate on countries and institutions that could provide qualifying knowledge to apply to the situation at Danish design schools. So it was decided that the cases for the project should be found in Europe.

Italy, France and England

Considering the fact that Europe is the setting for fashion clusters like Paris, Milan and London, it seemed natural to look for cases in these cities. Because of the teaching approaches and traditions at the Institute for Fashion and Textiles at DK, institutions like Central Saint Martins, London College of Fashion and the Royal College of Art in London seemed to be relevant. The same counts for the research traditions of these institutions that are largely based on humanistic studies and a cultural historical approach, where fashion is considered a cultural phenomenon in a social and historic context. It is of course difficult to ignore centres like Milan and Paris and these cities have naturally been considered. However it was concluded that in terms of teaching and research traditions, they are too different from Denmark and therefore they were rejected in this context. The teaching at fashion educations in Danish design schools have a research-based and concept-oriented approach to the design process. The Italian and French schools have a high emphasis on aesthetics.

Therefore the strong bonds between fashion industry and education in both countries might prove very interesting and even obvious to study, but the result would be difficult to convey directly to Danish conditions.

This assessment builds upon the notion that the teaching and research profile within an institution must be co-ordinated closely to provide students and tutors common competencies. From this viewpoint, it is seemed highly problematic to implement a research tradition linked to a teaching practice very different from the Danish one. From this understanding Milan and Paris were abandoned. As further research showed that Central Saint Martins and the London College of Art had formed a joint research centre on fashion

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38 The same tradition is reflected in the research profile at MOKO and also to a high degree at CBS in Copenhagen, where the research programme “Creative Encounters” includes a series on fashion runs from 2007-11.
39 This information is obtained through discussions around possible cases with study co-ordinator Ulla Ræbild at DK.
called “Center for Fashion, the Body and Material Cultures” (FBMC) and since DK already had positive experiences with exchanging students to the Royal College of Art (RCA), it was obvious to select these institutions as cases.

Again, very late in project #2, Eugenia Paulicelli from CUNY Graduate Center made it clear that Milan University has established a centre for fashion research that could also be interesting to study.

**Final Cases: England and Holland**

With the intentions of bringing in as much knowledge as possible to the Danish debate, it was assessed that it would be both realistic and desirable to find one more institution/region to implicate in the study, apart from England. The fashion education in Arnhem, Holland, seemed an obvious opportunity. There are two things about this education that are very interesting in this context. On the one hand, the way fashion theory is implemented at both the B.A. and M.A. level, in particular the M.A. in “Fashion, Design & Strategy” (F,D&S). On the other hand, the research programme on fashion that is applied for by the Fashion Institute at Arnhem, Amsterdam Fashion Institute (AMFI) and Maere Saxion Enschede (MSE) and others. By selecting Arnhem and the Dutch programme as additional cases, several of the aspects originally considered in the project could be highlighted. The M.A. in Arnhem could provide an example as to how fashion theory is implemented at a design school and how the introduction of theory all the way from B.A. level can increase the possibility of inside recruitment for the planned research department at the institute. Also, Arnhem, in this way, could be a model as to what roles theory and research are given in terms of the overall educational structure, curriculum-building, etc. The research programme, on the other hand, is a perfect example of how different institutions with each their core competencies can supplement each other. While Arnhem has a design-artistic education that is very similar to the Danish design schools, AMFI is a business related school for the strategic and economic professions in the fashion industry, while MSE also is a business related school that over many years has had textile innovation as central competency. To expose how these institutions wish to collaborate in a common programme could provide an opportunity to discuss how we in Denmark could collaborate cross-institutionally. Just like Holland, Denmark is a relatively small nation both geographically and when it comes to fashion, so it seems obvious to

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40 These three institutions constitute the main forces behind the programme. In the exposition of the programme, all involved parties will be mentioned.
learn from each other. Both countries have relatively recently started their own fashion weeks and whilst Denmark is in these years experiencing a hype around their fashion weeks and Holland is not as yet, both countries are known to be good merchants and traders.

Conclusion

To sum it up, the overall criteria for the selection of cases were the following:

- What nations or institutions are conducting fashion research at the moment and how?
- The likeness with Danish traditions within research and teaching.

Already before a more thorough study started and before the research trips were conducted, it was obvious that the now selected cases each represented aspects with specific relevance in relation to the original setting of the report that in a short excerpt was formulated this way:

“(…) typology, strategy, level and extent [of fashion research] as it is expressed in the collaboration between educational institutions and industry (…) [and] (…) the importance that research might have on fashion educations and on the level of innovation in the fashion industry.”

With the described starting point of the project the focus in each case was as following:

- The Fashion education at ArtEZ and the Dutch programme: Research strategies and identity, collaborative structure between the involved parties. Specific focus on curriculum building in terms of the interplay between practice, theory and research and industry.
- FBMC: Research strategies and identity, typology, collaborative structure between involved parties.
- RCA: Research strategies and identity, curriculum building in relation to implementation of research and theory and knowledge sharing with the industry.

In the following chapter, the three cases will be examined in relation to these perspectives.
Presentation of Selected Cases

In the following, facts and general conditions in each case are presented. Thus, preconditioned and historic conditions, institutional character and organisation, implementation of fashion research and theory and the extent of fashion research in each case will be described. Furthermore, the overall methodological approach to fashion research will be presented with a main distinction between a cultural studies inspired research tradition and a practical technological approach, as it is these two approaches that are most dominating. After this, there is a more in-depth presentation of the research strategy in each case.

ArtEZ fashion in Arnhem and the Dutch programme

The fashion education in Arnhem is situated at ArtEZ hogeschool voor de kunsten, which also is the setting of academies for dance, music, theatre and art. The fashion education offers a practice-based B.A. and M.A. in fashion design and a strategic theoretical M.A. in management, innovation and concept development in the fashion industry. Within the institute, there is also ArtEZ Modelectoraat headed by Professor José Teunissen. The department arranges an annual symposium and a range of workshops and guest lecturers, closely co-ordinated with the publication of edited or authored books by Teunissen. The activities of the department are also co-ordinated with the three educational courses. A brief orientation of the activities so far arranged by ArtEZ Modelectoraat show that in terms of typology, a cultural historical Anglo-Saxon approach is dominating.\footnote{Which is confirmed by Teunissen at the seminar “Fashion-ology or research on fashion? Politics is knowledge” that took place during 25-27 September 2006, at CBS in Copenhagen.}

At the moment no other fashion researchers are associated to the fashion education in Arnhem besides Teunissen herself. In order to contribute to the unification of Dutch fashion research, she is member of a study group that works to formulate a comprehensive research programme on Dutch fashion that is strongly inspired by the Danish MOKO\footnote{As expressed by Dr. Prof. Michiel Scheffer during the research trip to Amsterdam: “What do you want to know – we copy you!”} that at the time of the research trip (January 2007) had the working title “The Construction of Fashion Identity in the Netherlands.” The study group consists of five researchers, with the core members being Teunissen, Dr. Michiel Scheffer (M.S.E.) and Prof. Dr. Dany Jacobs (AMFI). The programme is closely
correlated to Radboud University Nijmegen, from where Prof. Dr. Anneke Smelik from the Institute of Visual Culture has participated in the planning, as has also Drs. L. Huiskens from the Premela Foundation in Amsterdam (a trade association). The material presented in this report stems from applications sent to the Dutch government.

FBMC

FBMC is a research centre initiated by Professor Helen Thomas, who in 2004 took up office as head of research at LCF. Centre members include fashion researchers from LCF and CSM, both institutions under the University of the Arts, London, which means that both institutions have university status. Associated researchers mainly come from these institutions, which are rather diverse:

CSM is a design-artistic education that is the setting for aesthetic disciplines like theatre, art, multimedia, graphics and fashion. In terms of research, the institution profiles itself as having played a leading role in the development of so-called practice-based research. As expressed in the official research strategy at CSM’s website under Practice-led Research Degrees:

“Central Saint Martins has played a leading international role in the development of research degrees in the art and design practice. Students may undertake a programme of research in which their own creative work forms, as a point of origin or reference, a significant part of the intellectual inquiry and, as such, is submitted for final examination. Such work is accompanied by a written component (…) which must conform to the usual scholarly requirements.”

Oppositely at the LCF, the impetus is not only on fashion in relation to the design-artistic education, but just as much in relation to relevant aspects that relate to the fashion industry, fashion as expression and phenomenon in our history and culture and the communication and presentation of fashion in museums, in the media and in education. These topics can be explored in twelve different M.A.s and four one-semester courses.

The research strategy of FBMC is to develop research in the tension field between already existing humanistic research, as it is conducted at universities, and the knowledge development and research within fashion itself, in relation to design processes, didactics, technology, etc. In other words, it is done in order to strengthen the synergies between theory and practice. The three sectors in the research programme, fashion, the body and material cultures, are chosen on the basis of discussions amongst core
members before an application was submitted to a body under the University of the Arts, London, that approved it in April 2005. FBMC opened officially on 24 May 2006.

At present the centre has fourteen core members consisting of senior researchers, Doctors and Professors. Besides further fourteen theoretical and fifteen practice-based researchers are associated who all come from CSM, LCF, Victoria and Albert Museum (V&A) or various universities under University of the Arts, London. On top of that international guest professors are regularly associated and 23 Ph.D. students are associated with the centre.

RCA

RCA is an art school that offers M.A.s in a range of artistic disciplines like architecture, glass and ceramics, accessories, visual communication, photography, painting and sculpture and fashion and textiles. All institutes are characterised by a high standard of skills and crafts and close bonds to the industry.

This is confirmed by the profiles of the thirteen research and tutor profiles associated to the Institute of Fashion and Textiles. Here all without exception have a substantial practical experience from the fashion and textiles industry and many of them are still practicing their profession in some form. The research they conduct is without exception practice or practical technologically based, and from the thirteen profiles five are occupied with fashion as researchers, project managers or tutors. The practical technological focus is reflected in the overall research strategy of the institute, where a close collaboration with the more commercial part of the fashion and textile industry is emphasised as something characteristic for the RCA.

RCA also offers an M.A. in the History of Design that has thirteen tutors and researchers teaching who all come from the Applied Art Research Group. This group is composed of people from the Department for Critical and Historical Studies, with three associated researchers, four M.Phil. students and one Ph.D. student, and the Department for History of Design, with ten associated researchers, eight M.Phil. students and four Ph.D. students. At the two departments together, one researcher is a trained designer and one is a trained artist, so the approach is predominantly theoretical.
Elaborations on the Research Strategies

In the following, the research strategies of the three cases will be presented more thoroughly. It will be clarified how approaches to design, political and economic conditions or organisational culture have framed the respective strategies and how the strategies are also linked to the dominant self-perceptions and feelings around identity in each case. It became obvious that a research strategy is often based on pragmatic conditions, like what types of researchers are associated, what their interests are, what kinds of projects they have worked with and how all this fits with the underlying self-perception at the institution. This is why strategies that appear similar in the official research profiles can prove to be completely diverse when it comes to what and how research is conducted. The goal of a strategy is to address how local problems or challenges can be complied in relation to the dominant self-perception.

The Dutch programme

The main reason for the efforts made by the Dutch researchers can be explained by comparing with the previous situation in Denmark before the establishment of MOKO. Fashion research is conducted in Holland, but as was the case in Denmark just few years ago, the research is scattered around the country without any formalised body or institution to unify and constitute the results. But as in Denmark, because of the small size of the country, a relatively large degree of knowledge sharing has been going on, since everybody knows each other. But as expressed by Prof. Dr. Dany Jacobs (AMFI):

“(…) for the moment there is not much research on fashion in general in the Netherlands and certainly not in universities of professional education. So, that is what we try to stimulate (…) (by) (…) increasing co-operation and interaction (…)”

While MOKO is mainly occupied with fashion as education and cultural phenomenon, the Dutch programme is divided into a cultural-historical
sector that directs Dutch fashion identity and a socio-economic sector that wishes to analyse the Dutch fashion industry as an economic factor in a globalised reality. This is very clearly expressed in the two following excerpts of the introductory chapter in an early outline for the programme. Firstly, an excerpt from the argumentation for the cultural-historical sector:

“(…) the creative industry of fashion has been remarkably successful in the past few decades. Research into the Dutch fashion industry is relatively rare. As yet, there is little understanding or insight into the construction of fashion identity in the Netherlands. Therefore, we do not have answers to questions like: how do consumers use fashion to construct their identity? How do fashion designers construct a specific identity that allows them to compete internationally? Is there such a thing as a Dutch style in fashion design (...)?”

Secondly, an excerpt from the argumentation for the socio-economic sector:

“(…) in this social-economic research project, we will analyse the dynamism between economy, technology and fashion design. Globalisation of production is a strong trend in textiles in clothing (...)”

The programme obviously seeks to explore the complex correlation between Dutch fashion industry and Dutch fashion identity. The application seeks funding for four Ph.D. scholars and one post-doc project. The idea is for these researchers to work together across the involved institutions, in this way providing knowledge sharing between the parties. In terms of methodology, there is a consensus on an interdisciplinary approach that is based in various humanistic and economic studies. The four Ph.D. scholarships are based on the core question: “How has a fashion identity been constructed in this country?” The four Ph.D. scholarships are spread out as follows:

1. A historically descriptive (diachronic) perspective with the working title “Cultural Heritage in the construction of Dutch Fashion.”
2. A theoretically explanatory (synchronic) perspective with the working title: “The construction of fashion identity through performance.”
3. A socio-economic perspective with the working title: “The construction of identity of a brand by designers and consumers.”
4. An economic (or socio-economic) perspective directing technology, with the working title: “The construction of Dutch creative fashion industry in a globalised market.”
By November 2007, the status is that a scholarship for a Ph.D. on subject 1 has been funded by members of the fashion industry and private foundations, to start at ArtEZ. The other sectors are still being treated by NWO (Nederlandse Organisatie voor Wetenschappelijk Onderzoek).

FBMC

At the FBMC, the challenge is to unify or create synergies between the research on fashion already taking place. At this point, England is the country with the longest traditions for fashion research, so there is huge potential in creating a central international centre of excellence around fashion research here. Professor Helen Thomas (HT) expresses the following, concerning the aspects of establishing such a centre:

“The biggest challenge for FBMC is to keep its impetus up, and to keep in the fore front, really. Because I know that H&M have supplied £5 million to Sweden, I know that we have visitors from Japan who are interested in developing fashion centres there, and the same with for example FIT in America. So I think our challenge is to build up a very robust centre, so that people will see us as the centre to go to, internationally, and to make links with other international institutions (...).”

So what HT believes the centre has a potential for is to naturally constitute a unified profile that is strengthened through various initiatives. An example is the promotion of centre members, their publications and exhibitions in connection with symposiums and lecturers within the framework of the centre or in the LCF newsletter, “The Hub,” that HT initiated immediately after her accession as head of research for LCF. But the precondition for establishing a common forceful profile is, according to HT, that researchers start to communicate with each other and initiate collaborations across institutions, methodologies and fields of research, which even after the establishment of the centre has caused great challenges. Even if all parties acknowledge the need for a centre and have placed many hours in the building up of a common structure, they rarely have time to meet. So a very basic objective from the centre is according to HT:

“(…) to get colleagues to talk to each other, basically. People are very busy, and you know last term it was very hard to get people to get together, even to meetings and things like that, really hard (…) There could be fantastic collaborative projects, so in a way that is what I am interested in (…) we have to build up the internal structure, really, to get people to work together, and then to look out and to work with colleagues like yourself [MOKO] and H&M [Center för modevetenskap, Stockholms Universitet] (…).”
These two aspects, to unify researchers and to make them collaborate, are the overall starting point for the research strategy at FBMC, in relation to the structure and activities of the centre. This is why the sectors reflect to a very high degree the research profiles of the core members who have contributed to the development of the centre. The fields of fashion, the body and material culture have been defined by these members as being central to fashion research. The sector of material culture has the limitation that it only touches upon material aspects connected with fashion or dress, since other areas within textile research are conducted by original associated members, who in December 2006 established a separate centre for textiles, the Textiles Future Research Group.

The research strategy at the FBMC is pursued by several frequent internal and external activities. Once a month there are workshops or seminars, where practicing designers, museum curators and practitioners and academic researchers from the centre or outside present and discuss their work. Ideas and core discussions from these events are once a year presented at a symposium, which in this way defines the identity and profile of the centre to the outside. In addition, the centre offers two Ph.D. courses per semester for the associated scholars. During this programme, they have the opportunity to present their projects to each other under the supervision of a centre member. There are also attempts to form a workshop for fund raising for the centre to generate more projects.

To support especially the practice-based research projects\(^\text{45}\), a project fund has been established where CSM and LCF each contribute £10,000 to the fund. Members of the centre can apply for up to £1,000 per semester to finance exhibitions or technical support related to their projects. They also have the possibility of applying for a certain amount of time for assistance from a technician who works full time for the centre.

The overall objective of getting practice-based and academic researchers to exchange knowledge through the three sectors is fundamental in the centre. HT expresses how attempts are made to ease the tensions that she believes are precipitated between the two groups:

“(...) actually via our seminar structure (...) what we try to do is to get a practitioner paired with a theorist, so the practitioner, or indeed the theorist, might present their work and then there is a kind of interlocking, a kind of discussant (...) it is often the case that practice-based researchers think they

\(^{45}\) This is based on the notion that practice-based research projects are generally more expensive than academic, because of the use of materials and technical aids.
are not doing research, but of course they are (...) I think there is a tension between theory and practice, and I find that practice colleagues tend to not attend seminars with theory presentations and vice versa. It is precisely this sort of tension that we want to explore in the FBMC research centre (...).”

The considerations being made at the FBMC concerning practice-based and academic fashion research are also to be found at the RCA, but not in the same way, simply because of the differences in size and structure between the two institutions. While the FBMC is mainly concerned with research, because their platform is based in a huge institution where they can allow themselves to focus only on this, the RCA is as a small institution more concerned with getting the various institutes to interact for simple pragmatic and strategic reasons.

**RCA**

In the following, an elaboration on the research strategy on fashion at the RCA is presented with quotes by the head of the Institute for Fashion and Textiles, Professor Wendy Dagworthy (WD) and Juliet Ash, tutor at Critical and Historical Studies and History of Design (JA).

At the RCA, the same organisational challenges that face the FBMC are not present. Approximately 850 M.A.s and doctoral students study at the RCA and approximately 100 tutors are associated. The RCA is an independent Art School not affiliated with a university; they offer only M.A. level programmes. The institution was granted university status in 1967. The communication of research reflects the size of the institution as students are incited to seek the knowledge they need from researchers or tutors at any institute they wish. Ph.D. students are not obliged to teach or lecture, but they are often used as supervisors in connection with courses, dissertations or seminars.

The research conducted at the Institute of Fashion and Textiles is dominantly practice-based, which supports the impression the impetus at the institution is the high level of skills and crafts provided by tutors. This is confirmed by the head of the Institute, WD, who comments on the balance between practice-based and academic research at the institute:

“(...) I think we will keep it practice-based, definitely, because we are an art college, and that is the way we go (...) I think that research in fashion is very difficult, actually. It is a very hard thing to do. I think a lot about it, I mean, what is research? It is difficult in the fact that we as fashion designers, we are practitioners, so that is what we do (...) I think it is sometimes hard to explain our professional practice as research, as many times it is not recognised as research (...).”
The reflections pointed out by WD seem to be the basic starting point for the research strategy at the institute, i.e. build on the practical competencies that they wish to offer their students. WD elaborates:

“(…) our research strands came from the interests of the individual members of the staff. This is how we built up the strategy and the strands, and this is what we want to recruit, too. So that we can help the students through and have the expertise to actually supervise them as well (…)”. 

The supervision that WD describes is of a practical character. It is obvious that the RCA is taking their image as an art school very serious. There is a great impetus to have staff members with close bonds with the fashion industry and who still work as consultants or designers, because it is these experiences that they are asked to pass on to students. All staff members are obliged to conduct research, but fashion research can be a diffuse notion and the frustration of not having acknowledgement for the research conducted at the institute from fellow researchers is articulated by WD in this manner:

“(…) I think there are a lot of books being written just because they have been told you have to do research (…) but they do it because they have to do research, and it is for the sake of that and people are being forced to do it, when they are not real researchers (…)”. 

The theoretical research conducted under the Applied Art Group also has an emphasis on including the practice-based research in their strategy. Practice-based research projects are part practice and part theory. In terms of methodology, the approaches are interdisciplinary, stretching from anthropology to more technology-based studies. All research projects on fashion at the RCA lie within this framework, where some are half practice and others are only theory-based, independently of what Institute they are associated with. As commented by JA:

“They [research projects] are all connected through the idea that in the end, fashion and textiles are about a combination of contemporary practice, historical research and theoretical research. And they are interlinked, but they need specialist areas of research.”

This approach is related to the English tradition of implementing theory at design schools, which started back in the 1970s with the Implementation of cultural studies in Birmingham. According to the Coldstream Report from that period, JA states, all practice degrees should have a component of a context. Therefore, students should do written work as well as practice. All this came from demands from art and design students wanting more context and politics in their educations. Also at the RCA today, all M.A. students have to write a
dissertation of between 6,000 and 10,000 words regarding possibilities for their final collection, in terms of theoretical conceptualisations of areas that interest them. In the future, JA calls for a more ethical approach to fashion research. Again, this area is to be approached from both a practice-based and a theory-based methodology.

Conclusion

An overall conclusion must be that in all cases there is an obvious coherence between Schein’s three levels of culture, which are the physical and factual conditions, strategies and visions and identity and self-perception. In every selected institution, there are more or less conscious opinions formed by context and practice that cause very similar vocabulary concerning research strategies to actually mean something very different. For instance, when it is mentioned in the strategy of the FBMC that some of the main topics are “Historical and Cultural Studies” it means something quite different from what is stated in the research strategy at the RCA: “Contemporary, Historical and Cultural reflection of Fashion & Textiles, Art & Design.” In the optics of the RCA, a historical and cultural reflection on fashion is explicitly connected to the practice of the designer, while at the FBMC the development of academic methodologies seems to be a parallel to, but not necessarily intertwined with, “Fashion design and technology.” In the same understanding it seems that the self-perception building the basis of the Dutch programme is the notion of the Dutch being good merchants, and therefore the economic aspects of the fashion industry, and the emphasis on innovative thinking, are emphasised.

So the strategies are natural extensions of the institutional culture and the self-perception that is prevailing at each institute or centre. Even if the three cases all try to encompass the tension field between practice and theory, precisely because they are design schools, research on fashion is conducted quite diversely. These variations become still more evident when looking at the implementation of theory and research in the curriculum building in the three cases. It is very much at this level in the teaching of the design students that the self-perception and the so-called basic underlying assumptions are constructed.

46 This is from HT’s PowerPoint presentation about the FBMC.
47 This assumption is fortified with the following quote: “Current research projects investigate the practice of individuals and groups of designers and makers resulting in prestigious exhibitions, publications and high level media coverage.”
48 Ibid footnote 43.
Implementation of Theory and Research in Curriculum

This chapter will not present an in-depth analysis of the curriculum-building in each case. The objective is to put the above-mentioned strategies into perspective, so it is clarified how research strategies can reflect the teaching of students. For this purpose two M.A.s are presented that each have significance in the context of the report, namely Fashion, Design & Strategy (F, D & S) at ArtEZ and the menswear department at RCA. The latter is presented through an exposition of a research project conducted by the senior tutor in menswear Ike Rust. It does not seem relevant in this context to go through the various curricula for the respective design educations at the LCF and CSM, as the FBMC functions as an independent research platform with no direct connection to the design schools. The M.A. in History and Culture of Fashion at the LCF will be shortly presented though, along with the plans for an M.A. within the framework of the FBMC.

ArtEZ and the fusion of the fashion industry, research and design-artistic based fashion education

The balance between economic and cultural aspects of fashion that is expressed in the Dutch programme on fashion is also evident in the M.A. in F, D & S that was established in 1990. The objectives of the M.A., an alternative to the practice-based M.A. in fashion design, are expressed as this in the curriculum description:

“F, D & S seeks to produce students who think and act in an innovative, conceptual and commercial way in different contexts (for the fashion branch, the field of journalism, museum curators and related areas).”

This aim is pursued by an interdisciplinary approach to societal and consumer structures, commerce and product development, development of conceptual strategies, visual analysis methods, company strategies and theoretical abilities. In the context of this report, it is important to take notice of the way theory is implemented in the curriculum:

- “A Fashion Theory section explores the impact of fashion as an important cultural phenomenon in our visual culture and the social society. The aim/goal is to gain a general theoretical conceptual and reflective attitude towards the discipline of fashion.”
- “A Social Sciences section that aims at familiarisation with social and cultural issues and prepares for strategy development.”
“A Cultural Sciences section that aims at analysis and interpretation of images and that prepares for generating and applying (own) images.”

According to this, theory is used to establish a high level of reflection that can improve the ability of the student to create unique visual and conceptual strategies in the fashion industry. Academic disciplines like semiotics, sociology or anthropology are introduced with various perspectives like globalisation, modernity or the construction of identity, fashion as cultural innovation, visual representation, the notion of fashion in the western and non-western world, stylistic history viewed from a modernity perspective and fashion as a theory of science. These elements constitute five of the nine so-called main courses. Moreover, there are four “Specialisations” where students may specialise within certain fields or obtain work placements within the industry. The study culminates with a project that can consist of a hypothetical brand concept, a research or brand project of an innovative nature created in connection with a work placement at an already existing company, academic research that is presented as an exhibition concept, a series of journalistic articles, a concept for a magazine or an academic essay.

It seems vital to encourage students to apply their knowledge in a project that they can use in a very direct way in the fashion industry or in other related companies or institutions. In this way, fashion theory is used as the “tool” that can help place fashion in a societal cultural context, while other courses provide insight into the structures and working methods of the fashion industry. A similar approach to theory is found at the B.A. level, where it is introduced in courses treating aspects of the history and profession: *kunst/ vakgeschiedenis*, where fashion is related to art and other areas of design, and *vaktheorie*, which offers theoretical insight.49 So what can be concluded is that what is conducted at ArtEZ, especially in connection with F, D&S, is a teaching strategy that includes both industry and research aspects as element that supplement and strengthen the designer. This also demonstrates that fashion theory is being allowed to play an active and constructive role in practice-based fashion education, a role that is even meant to be expanded.50 At the same time, it is no secret that theoretical teaching is established with the intention of being able to recruit researchers from within the discipline.

JT comments on the situation:

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49 Quote from the curriculum: “Vaktheorie heeft tot doel het verkrijgen van theoretische inzichten omtrent de wijze waarop het fenomeen mode in de samenleving anno nu functioneert. Vaktheroie dient een eigen visie te stimuleren met betrekking tot mode als product (...).”

50 Answer of questionnaire from JT: “Fashion research is implemented in some courses, but we have to work out more courses in this direction, especially in the B.A. We will do that next year.”
“There already was a theoretical M.A. Fashion design and strategy, but I wanted to implement more fashion theory in this course (…) Students that are interested in these courses are more on reflection. They usually have a university background\(^{51}\) and find our course as a specialisation. These are the kind of students that I can use for doing research during the study or afterwards as Ph.D.s.”

It is obvious how the fashion course of study in Arnhem wishes to relate their research to the institutions involved in the Dutch research programme, in that all the sectors of the programme will provide relevant knowledge that can directly benefit students, because they reflect the curriculum so well.

**FBMC and the recruitment of new researchers**

At the FBMC, the coherence between the design-artistic education and research is very diversely constructed. As earlier mentioned, the FBMC recruits their researchers from associated universities under the University of the Arts, London, the V&A and the CSM and the LCF. At the moment, there is no M.A. directly linked to the centre, but there are future plans of establishing one. The M.A. that comes closest to representing a direct recruitment platform is History and Culture of Fashion at the LCF, as is stated on their website:

“The M.A. (also) provides an excellent preparation for higher level research degrees (M.Phil. or Ph.D.) with an increasing number of graduates undertaking research in fashion related subjects, in practice or theory or entering into education as lecturers. Previous M.A. History and Culture of Fashion graduates have progressed to lecturing in art and design in Europe and America, archival work, fashion curation, journalism and retail consultancy or further research for a Ph.D.”

The M.A. reflects in many ways the future planned M.A. under the FBMC, but according to HT the future M.A. is thought to be project oriented, thus ending up with a propeadeutic research programme where the centre can grow their own researchers. The projects will be rather self-defined by the single student with supervision and guidance from centre members. It is the hope that the M.A. will be established around 2008-9.

Even if there is no direct coherence between the fashion design education at the two design schools and the FBMC, theoretically interested students are eased naturally into the Ph.D. programme of the centre. Students at both the CSM and the LCF are obliged to write a dissertation of a theo-

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\(^{51}\) F, D & S has many students coming from Radboud University Nijmegen, one of the partners of the research programme.
retical character, and it is deeply rooted, as expressed by JT, in the English notion of design to have a high conceptual and intellectual approach to the profession. It seems that the main objective of the FBMC is research and not design education, however the research strategy or way of thinking still reflects the related fashion design educations. The interplay between the centre and education must nonetheless be seen amid the understanding that with the huge possibilities of recruitment, being under the University of the Arts, London, it is possible to establish a centre that is only occupied with research, which is simply not possible for smaller institutions like the RCA or ArtEZ.

**RCA and the balance between curriculum and industry**

The way of thinking, or as Schein would see it – the basic underlying assumption that students must think in concepts, is also fundamental in the self-perception of the RCA. Here, senior tutor in menswear, Ike Rust (IR), has compared this self-perception to the curriculum for his institute at the time when he took up the office in 1998. The challenge here was not to find a balance between academic research and practice, but to explore the relation between curriculum and industry.

IR’s paper from 2007 “What is an effective balance between industry and academia?” is an analysis of the relationship between the English fashion industry and the curriculum building in menswear at the RCA. The analysis is based on relevant articles and reports and questionnaires sent to members of the industry connected to menswear, asking about their expectations of the students from the RCA. Thematically, the core question is: “What use is creativity and depth of learning to industry?”

The paper reflects the practice-based and industry-based approach to research at the Institute of Fashion and Textiles, in the sense that it is not based on an academic approach, and in the same way IR’s use of the word ‘academe’ is used to characterise both teaching and research. Nonetheless, the project must be seen as a natural outcome of the research strategy and the teaching approach at the institution.

In an earlier paper: “Rethinking and reshaping a postgraduate menswear design course” (IR, 2004), IR states the following:

“if a student’s search for meaning and originality is to be maintained,
they need to effectively balance artistry (vision, research and design), craft (technical skill) and business (professional practice and placement).”

The motivation for IR’s study was that the curriculum, when he took the position as a tutor, in his opinion was far too accommodating to the industry. It was stated in the guideline that all student research should be related to the industry in the shape of projects. Instead, IR wished to base the curriculum on an investigation of the creative vision of the individual student. He divides the learning methodologies into respectively “individual” and “industry-based” projects. According to IR, the first approach provides the student with an individual approach to designing totally independent of the industry. For this, he uses the term identifying self. The other method provides the student with the ability to adapt to the industry. He refers to this method as applying self. This distinction he believes to be pivotal in a didactic perspective, because the two methods represent two very diverse ways of teaching. He further states how orientation towards the industry at both universities and design schools is given great impetus from a governmental level. According to IR, the problems regarding this, seen in an educational perspective, are manifold. In part, he questions whether the fashion industry sees its role in the interplay with the fashion educations as a consumer or a stakeholder. To a certain extent, he also questions to how high of a degree research and teaching are influenced when funding, budgets and sponsorships are part of the considerations. In his optics, the starting point for the fashion education at the RCA must be the question: “In what ways is the RCA stimulating industry?” and not “In what ways is the RCA serving industry?” The importance of this is evident when looking at the questionnaire he made for 25 leading menswear producers. Here, it can be concluded that the industry sees itself as a passive contributor, whose main perspective must be its own needs. They expect students to be specialised, focused and able to multitask. Students must also have a more realistic notion about the production process and understand the importance of their own commercial value for the company. On the other hand, many of the interviewees were aware that they need designers who can think creatively in processes and who can function as inspirational individualists. Some even state that the new generation of designers are far too occupied with being professionals and adaptable to

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53 Ibi d.
54 Again the term ‘research’ is used in a very broad sense and does not necessarily mean academic research, but rather practical-based studies.
55 In this connection, he submits quotations from following reports: Malcolm Newbury Consulting Company (2003), A Study of the UK Designer Fashion Sector: Findings and Recommendations, conducted for the Department of Trade and Industry and The British Fashion Council, Cox Review (December 2005), Cox Review of Creativity in Business: Building on the U.K.’s strengths, “Universities and design schools working with business: why HE is joining forces with business – and why tie-ups suit both parties?” (From the website of the Design Council.)
56 One of the things IR concludes is that the interviewees wish to employ designers only to do research and to be innovative.
the production form of the industry, which causes them to lose the ability to think creatively. They demand designers who are conscious about the actual conditions in the industry, but who are not impeded by short-sighted needs. In relation to the demand for specialisation, there are various statements. However, IR concludes that it is important for the designer to understand technical terms and processes even though they do not need to have the skills to actually practice them, because some of these tasks are taken care of by other specialised employees. It is mentioned as very important that the students have the ability to communicate to the production sector, at which a high level of basic design skills is needed. But the far most important competency is to have the ability to create innovation through research and to have good collaborative skills. It is the ability to have new ideas that is most important, IR concludes, and to do this they must be trained to be creative independent thinking designers. As students are trained in these competencies at the RCA, IR sees it as thought provoking that earlier students describe their way from education to industry as a culture shock. Here he rejects the common notion that students then ought to have more introductions to ‘reality’ at the education level. Instead he employs that if the industry wants innovative creative designers, it must learn to adapt, so that it attracts the most creative designers.\footnote{A major problem for the English fashion industry is, according to IR’s study, that the most talented designers immigrate to the big fashion capitals Paris, Milan and New York. He cites a quote from an article by Caroly Asome: “Talented young Brits with designs on the world stage”, Evening Standard, June 2006: “Gucci, Louis Vuitton, Alberta Feretti: the names might be foreign, but the designers are now likely to be as British as a bowler hat.”} As he states:

“(…) God did not make enough ‘time’ for the fashion industry. Freneticism is the heart of the business, which puts it somewhat at odds with innovation.”\footnote{IR 2007, pp 17.}

IR is advertising for a more fruitful balance between education and industry, where education makes students aware of the industry without providing them with specialisations other than their own field, fashion design, and at the same time he advocates that industry understand that creativity and innovation demand space and time. It is from this understanding that he has developed the curriculum at his institute.
Part V: Case Studies (#2)

Presentation

In the second research project, four institutions based in the area of New York were visited. It was presupposed that the selected cases would contribute to the project in terms of the methodological aspects of current fashion research and knowledge about how American design schools interact with the industry. The four cases of Parsons the New School for Design (the New School), Rhode Island School for Design (RISD), the Fashion Institute of Technology (FIT) and CUNY Graduate Center (CUNY), represent four very diverse institutions. What all the design schools had in common is that they are currently, like the Danish design schools, in a transitional phase. However the preconditions for the changes are not quite the same. The cases will be presented in the following analysis, which are conducted according to the same principles as the case studies in #1, with an overall interest in the interlocking of practice and theory. However since the American cases are not seen as directly conveyable to Danish design schools, the summaries and analysis will not be as elaborate as the European cases and the emphasis will be more on theory and methodology than practice.
Parsons The New School for Design

Approximately 3,500 students go to the New School with 500 students being accepted each year. Over the last five years there has been an initiative to bring the different schools under the New School together as a sort of liberal arts college, which demands that graduate programs are be developed for all areas, including fashion. Faculty, as well as tutors, can also apply for tenure, but if they get it they are to be reviewed every three or five years on their research results. All of this of course increases the emphasis on theory and writing at the New School. There is a great amount of concern amongst faculty regarding the criteria on which they are going to be reviewed, as many of them are originally trained designers. No sort of ‘point’ system or criteria has been set up for faculty to relate to. As expressed by Chair and Professor, Department of Art and Design Studies, Hazel Clark (HC):

“we have got sort of hybrid people like myself, who have got a fine arts background, you know, so we have people who might be equally in a kind of problematic position in terms of tenure (...) the problem is that at the moment you do not really know what the expectations are, so we may be in a situation where practice-based faculty are being expected to do conventional academic research and get Ph.D.s. But I do not think we will actually, I think that something will be developed where practice will be recognised.”

It is obvious that the New School is undergoing the same transitions as the design schools in Denmark. This not only causes both tensions and concerns, but also new ways of thinking and organising at the institution. An elaboration follows below of what kinds of changes are happening that relate to the fashion design education.

Curriculum and a future M.F.A., the Fashion Design Department

All fashion design students take a foundation year that is inspired from the Bauhaus traditions embedded in the School, where they learn a variety of practical skills and some basic skills for art and design. Students can then choose between eight departments in different art and design areas, and half of them, approximately 250 students, choose fashion. The Fashion Design Department is situated in the fashion area on 7th Avenue on Manhattan.

The junior year is very skill driven, although there is great emphasis, “to encourage creativity, curiosity, experimentation, discipline and “designer-self”
“Discipline” covers training in keeping deadlines and schedules, a skill that needs to be learned for the quite young students attending. Croquis and visual research is considered important, as is the ability to stay aware of current developments and events in the fashion industry. Through their skill driven courses they are introduced to various types of fashion, like menswear, sportswear, etc. During their junior year, the teaching is more conceptually driven. The courses at this stage are often thematically-based. They get a concept and can make styles out of that based upon their own research and imagination. In the second junior semester “concentrations” are offered. This is where students specialise in an area, like womenswear. The senior year is dedicated to the production of a thesis collection and portfolio that is reviewed by industry members. The education has traditionally been directed towards 7th Avenue, so there is great emphasis on adapting ideas and collections to the market. Approximately 120 students graduate every year.

In terms of reading theory, the head of the Fashion Design Department, Steven Faerm (SF), believes that the training in making concepts and the holistic Bauhaus orientation makes it a natural approach to their development. But as an overall perception, SF states that:

“(…) I think that students respond to things (…) where it is academic but you make it visual, or you show how an inspiration becomes the product (…).”

SF obviously believes that in order for fashion design school students to engage in theory, there has to be a visual aspect in the teaching. Otherwise the students may not understand the relevance. This interlocking is envisioned to happen in the planned M.F.A. “Fashion, Design & Society” that is inspired by the M.A. at Central Saint Martins in London, which will be started up in Fall 2008 through funding from previous alumna, fashion designer Donna Karan. The future M.F.A. is to focus more on concept development than the existing M.A. SF judges that as one of the country’s leading design schools, this kind of education is just the next step to offer, with students asking more for theory than, “(…) dark is wrong or that fabric will not work(…)”. As SF states: “(…) do not look at just costume history, why cannot you look at other things like the world history or economic history?” The future M.F.A. is for between 40-60 top students per year. The content for it is built on the following excerpt:

“The curriculum will integrate knowledge of the global economy, international business, the social sciences, a concern for ecology and social values, new technologies and design history, all built around a core of advanced design work and the cultivation of a personal point of view.”

A professor has not yet been appointed, but when this happens the full
curriculum of the M.F.A. will be developed. The person should, according to the position description, be a trained designer in fashion or a related area with an interest in and knowledge of teaching, theory, sustainability and globalisation. Realistically, the M.F.A. will be offered from 2010.

**Department of Art and Design Studies**

All B.A. students at the New School have to take 42 credits, approximately one third of the education, in courses offered from the Department of Art and Design Studies, which are either required or elective.

At the moment all M.A.s consist of 132 credits, but as part of the review process of the New School, there is talk of reducing this to 120. This would probably lead to a more coherent curriculum and maybe even to the extra time needed for students to read theory. No time is currently put aside in their schedule for this.

In 2006, Heike Jenss (HJ) was employed as Assistant Professor, in order to bring a higher emphasis on fashion theory. The department, that has fourteen full time faculty and 130 part time faculty, runs 2-300 courses each semester. Currently two Master’s programmes are being developed, an M.A. in art and criticism and one in fashion. There is no connection to the planned M.F.A. at the Fashion Design Department. HC and HJ emphasise how they, like SF, believe that the way forward for the fashion design education at The New School is a more critical approach to fashion. But presently, in their experience, students tend to take the elective courses that fit their schedule and only few – maybe 20% - actually take a real interest in theory. As expressed by HJ:

“(…) the interest in reading, critically engaging with the text, linking texts with fashion, I mean, realising that you can approach fashion also from a theoretical perspective, is something that is not too developed, their interest is not so high.”

It seems that at the moment, theory and practice are not successfully interlocked at the New School. As HC comments:

“What we are doing now at this department is very divorced from what the students are doing in the studio. That is true with all of the programmes, but it is more so with fashion because it is in a different building.”

Apparently, there are intentions for the theory teaching to be more engaged with the studio teaching, but because of the large scale of the
school and all the transitions already taking place this has not happened yet. The future M.A. in fashion is, according to HJ and HC, to be inspired from the LCF or Scandinavia and is to attract students from both the M.F.A. in fashion, from the social sciences and other students in the university. This M.A. is supposed to begin in 2009.

**Conclusion**

Though it was not at all expected, the New School in many ways faces the same challenges as Danish design schools. A range of initiatives has been made to upgrade theory in the curriculum, however there is a problem in terms of time. Curricula are growing, the workload of the students is becoming heavier and no time is reserved for reading. There are challenges in terms of defining research on fashion and how to accredit it in relation to the university system. They, like the Danes, seek inspiration in the way English design schools implement theory in fashion design education.

The English design schools are also studied closely at FIT, another gigantic NY institution, with an even higher emphasis on the industry in its fashion design education than at the New School. The institution has had a special position in the current development of fashion research, in that the director of the FIT Museum, Valerie Steele (VS), has done pioneering work as the editor of the first academic journal of fashion in the world, *Fashion Theory* (1997-present). Another leading person in fashion theory at the moment, Yuniya Kawamura, works as an Associate Professor of Sociology at FIT. The main aims of visiting the FIT were therefore on the one hand to talk to these scholars about their judgments of the current developments in fashion theory and on the other to learn what the approach was in the fashion design education at FIT towards the balance between practice, theory and industry.
FIT

FIT offers four-year degrees and M.A.s. They are especially recognised for the M.A. Fashion and Textile Studies: History, Theory and Museum Practice. This M.A. correlates very well with the Museum at FIT, which is the only museum for fashion and textiles in New York and has a considerable dress collection. FIT also offers three other M.A.s relating to market, exhibition practice and illustration, and two Master’s of Professional Studies Degree Programmes on marketing and management within the cosmetics and fragrance and fashion industry. The latter are programmes for upgrading current fashion executives for management positions.

The focus on the M.A. in Fashion and Textiles, according to the description, “(…) prepares students for professional curatorial, conservation, education and other scholarly careers that focus on historic clothing, accessories, textiles and other related materials.”

The curriculum consists of a variety of practice-based courses, such as conservatory practice and teaching in fabrics and fibres. It also consists of theory-based teaching with a focus on methodology and theory and fashion and textiles design history. The M.A. has a curatorial and a conservation track. Students must submit a, “Master’s qualifying paper based on original research.”

The relation between FIT and the industry is close, as it is stated by the Dean of the School of Graduate Studies, Steven Zucker (SZ), who believes that FIT sees itself as, “(…) a kind of intersection between business and design (…) we basically train people to be buyers in department stores or other kinds of businesses, and we are very successful at this.”

There is a programme on fashion design at the undergraduate level, but no M.A. in fashion, though there are serious considerations about establishing one. SZ has recently been in London to study various models. The main idea is at this stage, according to SZ:

“(…) creating a programme that is very much matching upper level design skills with kind of pure theory (…)”

The intention is that part of the programme should be online based, so that part of faculty and students could in principle be scattered all over the world. This idea is very pragmatically based: “(…) it is very difficult to bring the faculty here physically, New York is expensive, to get release from their
own universities is not easy, and there are not many fashion theorists.”

The construction of the programme should open up for expansion in the shape of a future Ph.D. programme, perhaps in collaboration with other institutions. When asked why theses programmes should be established at the FIT, SZ answers:

“(…) if you look at the way that fashion is increasingly integrated into other disciplines, I think very often theory and business can function as the bridge, and I think that fashion is very healthy when its very sort of embedded with and informed by other design disciplines and, in a sense, the environment in which it is placed.”

SZ also believes that the American fashion industry is now ready to understand why more theory and contextualising should be implemented at design schools, as there is“(…) a new language, that allows for designers to communicate.” With this new language, new ways of thinking can be brought into the industry, which is in SZ’s mind the reason why it should be introduced in the fashion education.

Although no specific outlines for the programme have been established, it is clear that the M.A. will address fashion designers who have already worked in the industry and who wish to advance within the academic system or to rethink what they are doing in the industry. As SZ says, “in the marketplace perhaps you do not have the time or ability to spend that risk.” That is, the risk of spending time developing further as a designer, thinking in new ways or rediscovering why fashion design was the chosen career path.

What can be concluded is that even at the FIT, a very industry-oriented school, there is a growing interest in fashion theory. A more overarching discussion of current developments in fashion theory will be presented in the following, as commented on by Valerie Steele (VS) and Yuniya Kawamura (YK).

Valerie Steele and Yuniya Kawamura on fashion theory

According to both VS and YK, there is not much theory in the undergraduate courses at the FIT. An exception is the elective course taught by YK called “Clothing and Society”, which presents various sociological approaches to fashion as appearance, identity, system and culture. VS explains the lack of theory, when compared to European schools, in this way:

“I think most American schools have been sort of pretending that this
[theoretical approaches/changes in the industry] is not an issue. Because I mean our strength has never been creativity, it has been a sort of promotional, or the marketing and business side of fashion, and so you can kind of say well, our fashion design kids will at least know how to market the stuff, they will still have some business savvy which the Europeans do not”

In her mind, American design schools like the FIT are resting on their laurels and not quite realising that the market has changed so much that new approaches to the fashion design education must be established. As she explains, traditionally the studies at fashion design schools have concentrated on fashion journalism, which is not scholarship, and costume history, which is not theory, and this is still the approach at many design schools, which she finds rather problematic.

At this point then, what is fashion theory? As VS explains, she actually found the title “Fashion Theory” for the Journal she edits quite polemical, because really there is no such thing as a fashion theory. Her ambition with the journal was to emphasise the fact that in a lot of countries various researchers studied fashion and they were very isolated. She wanted to establish a forum that could present this, which she did. As she explains: “the idea of fashion studies as a kind of intellectual endeavour really only began in the 1990s in a way, as anything that had any kind of institutional apparatus around it.” She is cautious of the attempts to come up with a unified fashion theory, but realises that the field of fashion research seems to be moving towards something unified. Nevertheless, she basically acknowledges the field of fashion research to be interdisciplinary.

YK agrees that especially at this point in time, where fashion theory is a relatively new field of research, it is vital that fashion researchers be trained academics, but that the field of fashion research can be approached from many academic disciplines. In her opinion, what fashion researchers can contribute at design schools is to try to make fashion design students understand that there is a difference between fashion and clothing. As she states:

“(…) fashion in my mind is not tangible, clothing is tangible, you can touch it, you can feel it. But fashion is not tangible. It is an idea, a belief. It is within the context of society. So to have them understand that there is culture around it, there are people around it and it is placed in society.”

In other words, the focus for YK is that there is a great difference in studies of fashion production and clothing production. Clothing can be fashion, but is not necessarily so. Therefore, fashion design students need to understand what kind of societal and cultural mechanisms transform some clothing into fashion, while other types of clothing will never be perceived as
fashion. Surprisingly, both VS and YK comment that such a thing as practice-based research is not advisable, because research should be conducted only by trained academics. VS says that:

“to ask someone who is essentially a design practitioner to do the equivalent of a Ph.D. with all the academic apparatus and theoretical structure. I think that is actually unreasonable. Because it would be as though, Valerie, you are not allowed to write about fashion, you can drape a pattern and sew. Sew a book”.

Conclusion

All interviewees at FIT emphasise the need for implementing theory in the fashion design education for the benefit of both students and industry. What was very surprising was the attitude towards practice-based research, with it simply not being acknowledged as being research. At FIT, fashion theory is very much perceived as it is at ArTEZ, as an extra “tool” offered from the design education to make students understand the cultural and societal context of fashion. In Kupferberg’s terms, this would be only acknowledging the academic creative regime and its values in terms of research, which would not lead to new hybrids and new ways of thinking. One could argue that hybrids are also being established in this model, namely hybrids between already established academic disciplines and fashion as a research object and that this in itself generates new ideas and ways of perceiving fashion.
RISD

RISD is situated in Providence, which is north of New York. At the Division of Architecture and Design, led by Dean Dawn Barrett (DB), about 1000 students pursue in total five different B.A.s and M.A.s. Out of that, there is a B.A. in apparel and a B.A. and a M.A. on textiles. The total number of students at RISD is around 2300. There are a total of 17 departments, divided into five areas.

Approximately 25 students are admitted each year to the Apparel Department. The Textiles Department is very influential on what happens in Apparel. The two areas often interlock, as is also the case at Designskolen Kolding.

RISD is, like the New School, Bauhaus oriented. This influences the way that fashion, like other areas of design, is perceived in a historical and contemporary context. A holistic approach to design is also created at the foundation year, where students from all design areas meet. This stems from the fact that RISD was established by the so-called “three mothers”, textile designers who wanted to change textile design from beaux art to ‘modern’. 59

The introduction of pure theory is scarce at the individual departments, but undergraduate students do have to take fourteen liberal arts courses at the Liberal Arts Department. The aim of this, according to the description, is to “strengthen reading, writing, speaking and critical skills; to provide a broad background in art historical, literary, cultural and social studies to augment and deepen a student's professional studies.” 60 All departments can offer a “concentration” for students who take interest in theory and writing. As it was the case at the New School and at FIT, the Apparel Department and the Liberal Arts Department seem rather isolated from each other, at least in practice, based on the evidence given by the head of the Apparel Department, Donna Gustavsen (DG), and Professor Emeritus, the previous head of the Apparel Department, Lorraine Howes (LH). The Apparel Department has its own course in Design, “History of Dress”, taught by LH, which is not directly related to the curriculum at the Liberal Arts Department. This again resembles the structure at the New School.

59 The group was called “Centennial Women”, and they founded RISD in 1877. (RISD website.)
60 RISD Web site.
Approach to research at RISD

At RISD, there is a different appreciation of what fashion research can be than the one dominating at the New School and FIT, as explained by DB. She states that all research in design there has developed and is still evolving from a practice-based perspective. In other words, research ‘grows’ out of practice, from the pragmatic viewpoint that RISD is a learning and teaching institution – not a research institution. This means that basically, research in design is applied research, not basic research. She states:

“For a studio-based educational institute like RISD, both education and research are approached from the position of practice (...) research is embedded in the curriculum (...) as (...) an important point, of pragmatic as well as pedagogic relevance (...) the role of research develops primarily from the relevance and usefulness of the research to the pedagogic, curricular and programmatic aims and secondly because of the added enrichment which research projects bring to the learning opportunities of students.”

Like it is the idea at DK, external partners in terms of research are carefully selected by choosing issues, problems and partners strategically. Research is mostly conducted in so-called “sponsored studios” or centres of research between an external partner and RISD, involving research, technology and industry expertise provided by partners. It is not to be seen as design commissions or ‘problem solving’ for companies, but rather as ‘problem addressing’ that has a “give and get” aspect for both, in terms of knowledge exchange.

What DB describes as most essential, in relation to practice-based research at design schools, is that designers have to provide topics or themes for research, in order to develop relevant research questions as an extension of the practice conducted. At this stage, she defines design research is in a descriptive phase, where methodologies, theories and approaches have to be further developed.

Fashion design education at RISD

Even if there is no teaching in pure theory in the fashion design education, the idea of fashion as a kind of problem solving, in relation to a historical and contemporary context, is far from not existing in the teaching and curriculum. DG states:

“(…) we try very hard to create a balance between being marketable as well as being highly creative, and we really, I think, if this department is about
one thing, it is about helping the individuals find their own sense of who they want to be as a designer.”

Also at RISD, the balance is to keep the curriculum from exploding, while at the same time providing the students with all the skills needed in the future fashion industry. DG states that:

“(…) there seems to be a different perception of what fashion is about that has been building. Because you have architects doing clothing, there is a lot of crossover that has happened, so it’s no longer just, oh those fashion designers with their extravagant personalities, but really a consciousness of the art form, and you can see that even in our media nowadays.”

In regards to the historical contextualisation of fashion, there are more and more relationships being built between the Apparel and Textiles Department and the RISD Museum, which has an extensive dress and textiles collection that gives plenty of opportunity to do visual and technical research on fashion at various periods of time. In terms of crossovers and contemporary contextualisation, the “History of Dress” course by LH places a high emphasis on connecting fashion to society and history, as well as to theory, although students only get recommendations on reading that they are not required to read. In connection to her course, they also write essays, though very small and based on visual research rather than theory. Nevertheless, they become aware that a body of research is building up within their design area that they can later unfold. This is all connected to the way DB describes the approach of RISD to design as problem solving, or problem addressing. As LH describes it:

“(…) that is so interesting, that most of the RISD alumni go into other fields, they are in their own field for a while, but their education as Donna said, is such a problem solving education that they can move and have very successful results, and this is because of the way of the whole education which is practical and intellectual, side by side.”

Conclusion

RISD in many ways resembles DK in their approach to practice-based research. But contrary to DK, the curriculum is built on the same educational model as at the FIT and the New School. At all these institutions, the theory-based teaching at this point seems separated from the practice-based teaching. In terms of implementing research on fashion, however, RISD seems well prepared, because of their approach to what fashion design is, namely that it is a cultural and aesthetic expression in a historical and contemporary
context. It will be interesting to follow the three institutions in the future and their ambitions to establish a more theory-based or research-based fashion design education.

CUNY

CUNY is a research institution under University of New York, and it is therefore not involved in the pragmatic considerations regarding curriculum building at design schools. Here, Professors Eugenia Paulicelli (EP), Comparative Literature and Women’s Studies, and Joseph Glick (JG), Psychology, have recently been approved to head a concentration in Fashion Studies. It will consist of a faculty and student run Fashion Studies Forum, a lecture series divided in two courses and a Salon for Fashion scholars in and outside CUNY.

The concentration is presented in this report, because it can contribute to overall perspectives about how fashion research is a growing field of research in a range of academic disciplines these years and what methodologies and theories are focused on in the current fashion research. There will be no presentation of CUNY as such, since it is not a design school and it is therefore not in any way conveyable to the other cases. The focus will be on presenting the concentration and its content.

The two courses, “Fashioning the Self in Social and Cultural Spaces” and “The Fabric of Cultures: Fashion, Identity and Globalisation”, have been developed over the past few years through various events and previous courses conducted by the two initiators. Primarily, the courses are based on two IDS courses previously offered.61 The aim of the proposed courses is to “put theories of fashion centre stage and examine their interactions with theories of identity, globalisation and the technological media revolution.”62

In the handed out proposal, the current establishment of fashion research is compared to the one of Film Studies, and it is stated that just like film, fashion is, “(...) both art, industry and a manifestation of popular culture.” It is stated that, “(...) Fashion Studies is not an already complete and well-defined field of inquiry,” which is why one of the aims of the concentrations

61 Spring 2005 and 2006, respectively.
62 From handed out proposal, September 2007.
is to, “(...) enrich the dialogue among the disciplines in social sciences and humanities.” As an overall approach, fashion is very much linked to the identity building of the individual in modernity, with the media, globalisation and societal structures as elements having influence on the aesthetics of fashion. It is stated that while fashion research has been mostly developed as a field of research in England until now, the study of fashion is presently getting more and more attention in other countries. A centre for fashion research at Milan University, the FBMC and Stockholm University are mentioned as collaborative partners, in order to enhance the future development of fashion research.

It is also stated as a fact that, “Fashion is by definition an interdisciplinary field of research which cannot be grasped without being aware of other critical discourses such as Queer theory, gender and performance studies, art, film, design literature, technology and media that in turn assign meanings to clothing and culture.” The idea is to bring in faculty at CUNY that already have regular teaching loads at the institution or via the CUNY allocation system. This supporting faculty will consist of scholars within a range of academic disciplines that relate to the context of the courses. In the future, the overall aim is to make fashion research more visible and to contribute to its consolidation within the humanities and social sciences. Also it is key to link academia with the industry at some point through research projects, seminars with scholars and practitioners, etc.

EP, who has written several books on fashion and has been a well-known fashion scholar for years, explains about her own interest in fashion:

“I think that fashion, differently from other topics, can be a unique vantage point in order to get a fresh and multifaceted perspective on current and past histories. It is private and public, affects feelings, personal perception and the body as well as beauty and memory. I also try in my own research on fashion to show how fashion can be a window into the history of national and personal identity.”
Concluding Summaries

The words ‘balance’ and ‘dialogue’ are emphasised by every single interviewee at some point in this case study. It is obvious that Kupferberg's four creative regimes, educators, entrepreneurs, artists and academics and the interlocking of their value systems, are at stake in the academisation process at the design schools studied here. Therefore, it is crucial for all design schools to find the right formula in interlocking the four groups, just like it is crucial for the fashion industry to understand what kind of changes are taking place.

DK has taken the first steps in developing new didactics, in order to meet these challenges. The future will show whether we are going in the right direction. But as this report shows, the way forward is to critically analyse and direct the new possibilities and to keep a focus on the specific and unique knowledge, skills and competencies developed at design schools.

Design schools hold the key to their own future. They can never and should never be universities or business schools – others are far better at this. Only by balancing design, business and research in unique hybrids can design schools move forward without losing their special skills, values and identity.
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