

## Breakage and Repair: Cardigan Print

'Bodies come and go; the clothes which have received those bodies survive' (Stallybrass, 1993).

This print plays with the thingness<sup>1</sup> of the textile object; we see a cardigan which is not a cardigan, we see its qualities and some of its life, but what we see is no longer wearable, has had life stilled into an image. Inking and printing this cardigan, displaying its material existence by crushing and rendering on old cloth its knit, stitches and entanglements, stretch and stretched out pockets and missing buttons, snags and holes, effort and engineering of production shows it as both broken and fixed.

If, as Foster says, 'identity is not the same as identification, and the apparent simplicities of the first should not be substituted for the actual complications of the second' (Foster, 1996, p.174), the ethnographic nature of it identifies as a print of a cardigan but not as a cardigan in and of itself. I ask if Perry is right to say 'wear, damage, dirt, repair, corrosion and decay are a large part of the language of authenticity' (Perry, 2011, p.177) as it does not have the authentic traits of the cardigan - it cannot be worn, the button is not a raised, separate item of different material and it cannot be undone, it has no inside, offers no coverage, warmth, protection or style. The print simultaneously takes and gives properties, colour and material to these melded textile objects. It converses with us as a wearable but is unwearable.

Continuing the feminist ontology of using 'craft (with all its intermingled associations of the 'nicely made', the functional, the proper and appropriate, the domestic and utilitarian, the low, the decorative...)' (Harper, 2004, pp. 22-25); occupying a liminal space between fine art, craft, design and making; referencing lowly textile materials and mundane clothing, the print support is old ripped bedsheet. This disrupts the traditions of print materials but as we 'give things that look old the benefit of the doubt' (Perry, 2011, p.177) the patina of the fabric assumes a both a narrative and relic-ish nature.

Clothing is worn in different ways by different people, so it would be oppositional to fix the cardigan as a print block. Of the three prints in this series, the paper print captures traces of ink seeping through the initial fabric print (from experience I was aware that this might happen); the second fabric print exhausts<sup>2</sup> the last of the ink in the block (cardigan). The act of free collographing bends the process of print-making, this block only becomes concrete as a printed image. This method conserves the wearability of the cardigan, rather than it becoming a rendition of itself, to create renditions.

The prints mimic lost and discarded clothes - objects-of-cultural-insignificance - crushed underfoot or under car, as Harmony Hammond mimics shards of objects-of-cultural-insignificance with her false fragments<sup>3</sup>. As with Hammonds' objects, 'rarely exhibited, less because of their preciousness than for their ordinary, fragmentary state and their association with utility' (Auther,

2010, p.143) the cardigan is not usually seen as an art object. Material parallels are demonstrated by the stratification of process, textile use and representation, with both works capturing and setting a temporal moment.

Representing the material qualities of the cardigan and stripping away its other aspects means that, as a cardigan, it fails.

When a tool fails, its unobtrusive quality is ruined. There occurs a jarring of reference, so that the tool becomes visible *as* what it is: the contexture of reference, and thus the referential totality undergoes a distinctive disturbance which forces us to pause" (Harman, 2002, p.45)

But 'repair can dissuade us from thinking about prevention' (Spelman, 2002, p.126), so the question I must ask myself as maker is does this print read as intended – as a hack<sup>4</sup> of use-value in order to display material properties and subordinate predicted life-cycle (buy, wear, discard) with simultaneous acts of metaphorical, environmental and actual preservation - when we know that repair is ongoing, not static.

So on one hand inking a cardigan and printing from it is a brutal, ruinous process, on the other it preserves and heightens detail. This work deliberately breaks the being-ness of the cardigan in order to take a (potential) step towards sustainability-as-flourishing<sup>5</sup>, enacted by an initial reparative action through printmaking to acknowledge the value inherent in the cardigan as materials-with-form.

- 1 'The thingly character of the thing does not consist in its being a represented object, nor can it be defined in any way in terms of the objectness, the over-againstness, of the object.' (Heidegger, 2010, pp.405-406)
- 2 Exhaust processes are those by which as much dye pigment is removed from the dye bath as possible through use before the near-water is discarded as effluvium
- 3 'A group of mock clay fragments or shards ... impressed [with] traces of basket and textile weaves, and a group of encaustic paintings with abstracted patterns of the structure of woven cloth incised into their surfaces' (Ather, 2010, p.143)  
<http://www.harmonyhammond.com/othersculptures.swf>
- 4 "Hacking is a response to the intense occlusion and uncommunicative nature of the things with which we are now surrounded"  
"hacking ... is still necessarily post-production, with users working against the intention of the original author" (Maxwell in Floirat et al., 2012, p.23)

- 5 sustainability-as-flourishing is defined as 'the possibility that humans and other life will flourish on the Earth forever' (Ehrenfeld and Hoffman, 2013, p.17)

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