

Copyright is owned by the Author of the thesis. Permission is given for a copy to be downloaded by an individual for the purpose of research and private study only. The thesis may not be reproduced elsewhere without the permission of the Author.

A work-from-home wardrobe for Air-Chair

Investigating (*play + logic = wit*) design

An exegesis presented in partial fulfilment of the
requirements for the degree of Master of Design

Massey University, Wellington, New Zealand

Karin Amdal

2011



FIG. 1.

ABSTRACT

A work-from-home wardrobe for Air-Chair Investigating (*play + logic = wit*) design

In my background as an art director in advertising, I used graphic wit as a communication tool to evoke emotion and connect with my audience; to trigger a smile in the hope of capturing their memories. The thought process behind wit is often a collision of two ideas which Koestler (1964, 35) refers to as 'bisociation'. Heller (1991, 11) describes "wit and humour in design occur when play and logic are seamlessly intertwined".

This research project uses (*play + logic = wit*) to explore practical furniture solutions through an intuitive and conceptually driven creative practice. Instead of dressing myself for work, I dress my work chair according to mood or business of the day. This activity revealed the lack of boundaries and transition between work and home and the effects humour can play on everyday life.

I have extrapolated this previous experience from 2D to 3D in the context of a collection of suits that dress Jasper Morrison's Air-Chair. The unstructured, understated tactility and vivid colour palette of wool felt allows me to use local raw materials, to create a fabric to tailor the suits that suggests a language of three dimensional cartoon characters. In the act of dressing the chair for work, the suits invite me to an interlude of play. In a ritual transition between work and domesticity, the chair becomes a companion. The chair and I have a subtle dialogue, an experience that creates a platform to further explore lightness in everyday objects through wit.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thanks to my supervisors, Julieanna Preston for freedom, trust and guidance, and to Lyn Garrett for offering me the challenge. Thanks to Wendy Neale for taking me under her wing and giving me hope and laughter. A special thanks to Russell for looking after me throughout this project with tender loving care. Thanks to my parents Marit and Ivar for bringing me up a playful being. And to my two lovely children Kirvil and Julius; this thesis is for you.

READERS GUIDE

This research project uses graphic wit to explore practical furniture solutions through an intuitive and conceptually-driven creative practice. It uses my own voice as a narrative and borrows the voices of an assembled collection of thinkers and designers, kindred spirits that I have found on my research journey. I am asking you to read and see how they resonate as a unified set. All images, unless otherwise identified in the reference section, are the work of Karin Amdal.

COPYRIGHT

Copyright is owned by the author of the thesis. Permission is given for a copy to be downloaded by an individual for the purpose of research and private study only. The thesis may not be reproduced elsewhere without the permission of the author.



FIG. 2.



FIG. 3.

INDEX

Introduction	10
Investigating (play + logic = wit) design: thinking	14
<i>Is there a formula to ideas? Humour and wit theory. Graphic wit in practice. Design that makes you smile. Play and logic in three dimensional objects. Research through design(ers). "I do what I am" - Richard Hutten. "I am a really slow designer" - Ineke Hans. Bliss with Bless.</i>	
A work-from-home wardrobe for Air-Chair	28
<i>Home, work, play. Working from home. Dressing a chair for work. Introducing the suits. The mannequin. The chair has turned into characters. Play. Interaction. Reflection.</i>	
Investigating (play + logic = wit) design: making	48
<i>Resolving the concept. Form follows idea. Aesthetic intuition - Norwegian values. Crafting fabric. The play continues. The textility of felt. Construction of the suits. Monday blues suit. Gst return suit.</i>	
Conclusion	76
References	80



FIG. 4.

CHAPTER I

Introduction

Today is Monday. I am seated in the Blues chair, hands delved deep into the side pockets as I reflect on the outcome of my research project. In a process of research through design, my intent has been to investigate the potential of applying graphic wit to three dimensional objects. As an Art Director in advertising I used graphic wit as a communication tool to connect with my audience. A recognition and appreciation of wit in 3D objects brought about a desire to extrapolate my 2D design experience to the design of 3D objects.

This research project uses (*play + logic = wit*) to explore practical furniture solutions through an intuitive and conceptually driven creative practice. Instead of dressing myself for work, I dress my work chair according to mood or business of the day. This activity revealed the lack of boundaries and transition between work and home and the effects humour can play on everyday life.

Steven Heller (1991, 11) says: "Wit and humour in design occur when play and logic are seamlessly intertwined". The concept of dressing a chair for work became a vehicle for investigating my own intuitive design process and making sense of the in-between spaces of 2 and 3D forms. The process linked me back to childhood years in Norway, wit and humour were important ingredients of everyday life, as were the values that have informed my decision-making throughout the project, in my use of humour, craft, colour, material, even in my urge to dress a cold looking chair.

Humour and creativity are linked through 'bisociation' (Koestler 1964, 35), through the creative leaps of play and logic that intuitively connect two unrelated frames of thought to create new meaning. I investigated humour techniques to establish how the tools for communicating humour relate to design communication in the process of translating the idea into a medium.

In connecting play and logic, design becomes a thinking process. The play constitutes freedom; from convention and constraints. The logic constitutes the reasoning behind the incongruity created by connecting two previously unrelated ideas. Ziv Avner (1984, 90) calls this a 'local-logic' that brings an explanation to the incongruity, providing the mind is in a playful state and willing to accept the unexpected twist.

Humour relies on the interaction between the creator and the appreciator. The communication of humour has to be clear to be understood. In verbal humour as well as in visual humour - brevity - or simplicity is the essence of wit. Comic Scott McCloud (1993, 30) explains simplicity as "amplification through simplification". Using familiar codes to communicate, using the material that best serves the idea.

The Air-Chair, designed by Jasper Morrison in 1999, cartoon-like in its simplicity, anonymous, with no interfering style elements or decoration, a modern, visual communication of a chair, lent itself as an ideal canvas for humorous interpretations. In an act of bisociation, it leapt at me and begged to be dressed - 'That chair looks cold, I wonder if I can dress a chair for work instead of me?'.

The unstructured, understated tactility and vivid colour palette of wool

felt allowed me to use local raw materials, to create a fabric to tailor the suits for the chair, suggesting a language of 3D cartoon characters. The process of felting fabric for the suits offered opportunities for further play, exploring the potential for humour in felt through graphic and textural techniques, and by exploring alternative felting methods.

The playful approach continues in the use of the suits. In the act of dressing the chair for work, the suits invite me to an interlude of play, a ritual transition between work and domesticity, the chair becomes a companion (Huizinga 1970, 37). The chair and I have a subtle dialogue, an experience that creates a platform to further explore lightness in everyday objects through wit.

This essay describes my journey of making meaning through design, the process of thawing the concept of dressing a chair for work instead of me. The suits – the visible tip of the iceberg – underneath, the intuitive process that created them.

The text investigates the humour of acting on an idea; the creative urge to tell a story through design, to articulate life through design, to design objects that reflect and respond to everyday life, through a range of suits that tell a story of working from home.

In the following chapters I will discuss humour theory and techniques, and how they are applied to 2D and 3D design; the design *thinking* process. I will introduce the concept and the context of my project, and finally the design *making* process.

CHAPTER 2

Investigating (*play + logic = wit*) design: thinking

Humour and wit are used as communication tools in graphic design to capture attention, evoke emotion and interaction, to make us laugh and make us feel good with an underlying aim to change our behaviour. During my career as an Art Director in the advertising business, I enjoyed using wit as a communication tool and the interaction it stimulated in my audience.

A recognition and appreciation of wit in 3D objects brought about a desire to extrapolate my 2D design experience to the design of 3D objects. This investigation revealed patterns in my thinking process such as the collision of two ideas (bisociation), the use of play and logic, and how the resulting wit related to humour theory and techniques.

The concept of dressing a chair for work became a vehicle to defrost my intuitive design process. It revealed signs that all design is communication, the challenge lies in translating the wit into a medium; of any dimension.

Part of my research methodology was to study the processes of other intuitive designers. Their attitudes to design and their conscious acts of play gave me an understanding of my own intuitive design process. This exercise highlighted the fact that a playful attitude is embedded throughout my design process; creation, realisation followed by use. This chapter considers my creative thinking process in relation to humour theory as exemplified in 2D and 3D design.

Is there a formula to ideas?

My question was in part answered by Steven Heller (1991, 11), who offers: "Wit and humour in design occur when play and logic are seamlessly intertwined". Arthur Koestler's (1964, 35) bisociation theory further explains the collision of incompatible frames of reference that together create new ideas.

In his book *The Act of Creation*, Koestler (1964, 35) introduces the concept of "bisociation" as it refers to the mind operating on two planes simultaneously, connecting two unrelated frames of thought, to create new meaning. For bisociation to happen, the mind has to be ripe for the discovery (Koestler 1964, 113), and depending on the emotional climate, the new connection of reference can lead to scientific discovery, comedy or an aesthetic experience in art.

Humour and creativity are related through bisociation. Nigel Cross (2006, 65) refers to this occurrence in creative thinking to form novel ideas as a "creative leap", and refers to the designer's intuitive ability as "designerly ways of knowing" (2006, 8).

The theory that incongruity underpins all humour was developed by critic Hazlitt and the philosophers Schopenhauer and Kant. "The essence of the laughable then is the incongruous, the disconnecting one idea from another; or the jostling of one feeling against another" (Hazlitt 1819, 414). The incongruity of humour creates absurd situations which naturally lack logic. The humorous message raises a problem that we must solve. Different to rational thinking, humour has a logic of its own. Avner (1984,

90) calls this “local logic”. The local logic brings an explanation to the incongruity. The mind has to be willing to accept this absurdity, “to be in a particular state of mind, a playful readiness not to take things too seriously” (Avner 1984, 90).

Humour characteristics

Danish comedian Victor Borge once said: “Laughter is the shortest distance between two people”.

The main techniques of creating humour share the factors of surprise, incongruity and brevity (Avner 1984, 92).

Two Swedes were having a chat.

“I bought a new toilet brush yesterday.”

“I see, is it working well?”

“No, I prefer toilet paper.” (Jertsen 2008, 111)

Humour is enjoyed by all, but taste differs. Every region has its own local humour; the nonsensical joke above may have more appeal to Norwegians, poking fun at the country next door. We intuitively know what humour is, but it is an elusive subject to define. Max Eastman (1936, 15) even claims “all attempts to explain humour have failed”. Aristotle introduced the superiority theory – laughing at other peoples’ misfortunes; Freud contributed with the Relief Theory, laughter as a relief from built up anxiety (Raskin 1985, 36, 38). All humour contains some form of incongruity and thus is the theory that is most widely referred to (Avner 1984, 91).

The characteristics and techniques of humour, as they relate to the creative process, are relevant to my project. “A joke is a play upon form”, that brings together disparate elements in a way that offers an opportunity for realising an accepted pattern has no necessity (Douglas 2002, 150). Humour takes you for a ride, it lets you escape real life for a moment, even in the darkest of situations.

There are two main dimensions to humour that need to be considered; the ability to appreciate it and the ability to create it. “Humour creativity refers to the ability to perceive relationships between people, objects or ideas in an incongruous way, as well as the ability to communicate this perception to others. Humour appreciation refers to the ability to understand and enjoy messages containing humorous creativity, as well as situations that are incongruous but not menacing” (Avner 1984, xi).

There are many types of humour. If humour is the folder, wit is the file. Of wit Mark Twain wrote: “Wit is the sudden marriage of ideas which before their union were not perceived to have any relation” (Avner 1984, 134). Finding this perfect match requires a willing and able mind; witty thinking is both conceived and recognised by the mind. Alan Fletcher (2001) refers to the creation of wit as “cerebral acrobatics”. Max Eastman (1936, 20) refers to his appreciation of wit as a “mental tickle”.

Ziv Avner (1984, 3) describes wit as a way to escape from the bondage of rationality for a short time. “Exercising our intellectual capacities to solve problems in a pleasurable way is part of the intellectual function of humour.” Which brings us to wit in the creative capacity of graphic design.

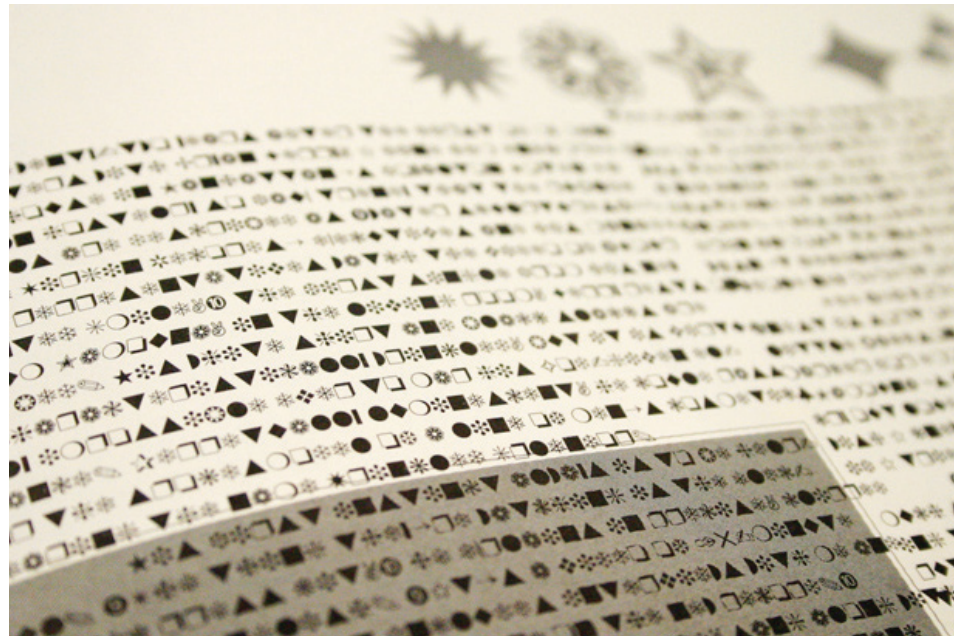


FIG. 5. Graphic wit is communication; not always legible in a traditional sense. Magazine designer David Carson found an interview with Bryan Ferry so dull he decided to typeset it in Zapf Dingbats (a typeface of symbols).

Graphic wit in practice

In graphic design wit is used as a communication tool to get a message across, to make it memorable through playing with words, through visual puns or puzzles that need decoding and invite the reader to connect; a memorable connection made.

In verbal humour as well as in visual humour – brevity – or simplicity is the essence of wit. Comic Scott McCloud explains simplicity as “amplification through simplification”. “By stripping down an image to essential “meaning”, an artist can amplify that meaning” (McCloud 1993, 30). This simplification is achieved by the use of familiar forms.

Visual wit relies on the ability of the designer to translate the ideas into a medium (Avner 1984, 134), through a language not derivative of style or fashion, but as a logical expression of an idea; play and logic, seamlessly intertwined (Heller 1991, 11).

The designer throws a ball that has to be caught; the recipient makes the necessary act of completion. The recipient is alert, with an active mind and a brain in gear. This response is based on intellectual curiosity. The drive to understand as Koestler describes it, the urge to complete something - watch the end of a film or finish a puzzle. It gives the pleasure of decoding, the response a smile or laugh - the laughter contains admiration for the cleverness of the joke and satisfaction with one's own cleverness in seeing the joke (McAlhone and Stuart 1998, 19).



FIG. 6. The FedEx logo: An internationally recognised and award winning logo - not for its colour, nor form - but for that hidden message, the rebus, which when discovered, is hard to forget.



Above: Brochure for Canon printers. Ogilvy and Mather 1993.

Right: Stationery for Tronsmo Bookshop, Oslo 1999.

Below: Branding for Amdal Nyberg Design, 2000.



FIG. 7.

Design that makes you smile

My background is in advertising. I trained as an Art Director in Oslo, Norway. Two British tutors introduced me to creative thinking processes and techniques, to creative play, and wit. Importantly, they taught me how to harness the thinking tools from my upbringing in a home that delighted in the playful tension of wit and twists on reality, tests of truth or folly as a part of everyday life. It was an intrinsic way of thinking that has inspired and led me ever since.

Working as an Art Director, brochures for Canon printers became a car race; stationery for a radical Oslo bookstore became a bomb. Each client briefing was an opportunity to find a solution with ideas that would connect with the public by triggering an emotional reaction, a smile. The playful language of illustration often provided a flexible tool to communicate ideas, and wit.

Later I started my own company. The die cut business card (left) was the entire graphic profile. It was attached to letterheads and invoices; it made people smile and curiously enough, our clients always paid on time. It had another purpose; like a post-it note, a message could be written on the B-side for clients and attached to another document. The business card was an exemplary statement - the colour, the natural matte uncoated paper printed with old fashioned offset print for tactility. It was friendly, gentle, but wanted to be noticed, it was practical, natural, simple, honest and intended to trigger a smile. The company slogan 'design that makes you smile' still represents the intent and values in my work which has crossed into other disciplines.



FIG. 8.



FIG. 9.

Play and logic in three dimensional objects

UK/Danish designer Ilse Crawford describes design as three dimensional writing - "a way of articulating life" (Gestalten 2010). The designer, then, is also an author; telling a story through an object infused with value, with thoughtfulness, with narrative that connects emotionally. The designer's personality is reflected in the object, a nick for wit revealed in the seams.

Achilles Castiglioni designed his readymade Sella stool (fig. 10) back in 1957 as a playful solution for his receptionist's chair, but it was Ettore Sottsass who set a stage for prompting more play. He created a visually-loud break from post-modernism through Memphis, a radical new style in furniture design introduced at the Arc'74 showroom in Milan in 1981. It was a pivotal point in the history of design. The exhibition made young visiting designer Jasper Morrison break out in a cold sweat, quoted as being "in one sense repulsed by the objects" ... "but also immediately freed by the sort of total rule-breaking". The style was later moderated and put on a world stage by Dutch design group Droog in 1993 as a response to a growing tendency to develop products based on strong concepts; "people were searching for ways to make design more relevant". The Dutch design academy of Eindhoven began to concentrate on people instead of products, creating "whimsical analysis of the ritual of everyday lives". (Williams 2006)

Three dimensional design wit interacts with the user intellectually and emotionally and opens the door to a wider range of design questions. I have been inspired by designers that use the interaction of play and logic. Belgian designer Bram Boo designs workplace furniture (fig. 8) that asks questions: Why do desks and chairs have to be so serious? Why can't they be silly or joyful or unexpected? Can office furniture encourage us to dream, fantasise or to think? (McLachlan 2009). Below it (fig.9), a desk with the same concept of storage on a subtler scale: 'Kant', designed by Patrick Frey and Markus Boge.

Research through design(ers)

Hearing designers speak about their own design processes in interviews and podcasts was an important part of my research process, where I gained understanding and confidence in my own intuitive design process.

I found common traits in these designers - a playful attitude to work and life, a creative urge to ask questions and tell stories through objects. The objects reflected a human touch that triggered a smile; a thoughtfulness, a common sense, a subtle wit, that gave the objects a reason for being, happily forgiving their sometimes unconventional functionality.

Nick Currie (2005) writes about conceptual design: "Rather than products, these people are designing situations, intervening in existing arrangements, framing everyday activities in ways that make us think of them, unexpectedly, as "design" in their work, with the repercussions of a gathering concern around issues like sustainability, community and responsibility". The following designers demonstrate a creative playfulness that inspire me in my work and life. Their attitude and work gives me hope.



FIG. 10. Sella stool, a playful receptionist's chair, designed by Achille Castiglioni in 1957.

"I do what I am" - Richard Hutten

A few years ago I had an experience that triggered my interest in furniture design. In a small London shop tucked in between clutter was Dutch designer's Richard Hutten's Table Chair, a plain wooden stool with a white seat and a corresponding, separate armrest table unit. It had a poetry in it that I had never experienced before; the kind of simplicity that Naoto Fukasawa refers to in traditional Japanese poetry: by writing simply "the audience is drawn into the poet's mind, their imagination is stimulated, a silent connection is made" (Objectified 2008).

A connection was made and I understood that objects have scope beyond functionality. Perhaps there was also a click of recognition of a thought process or admiration of the idea behind the Table Chair that intrigued and inspired me to go beyond two dimensional designing. Hutten calls himself the playing man and considers designing a thinking process. "I design in my head, and the idea is the essence, the concept. To me, a strong concept is the most important, and I'm not busy with the question if something looks good or not" (de Bruin and Dijkstra 2007).

Working with existing forms - table, chair - his trademark of 'no sign of design' provides him with the keys to a different approach to design, beyond form, inspired by the needs, joys, habits, humour, of the people he designs for. Instead of solving problems, he creates possibilities "like a story the end of which would be free to interpret or that might be invented by the reader". (Fitoussi 2006, 149, 154)



FIG. 11. The simple poetry of Ding 3 triggers the smile and evokes imagination of having a conversation with a friend, face to face instead of side by side.

“I am a really slow designer” - Ineke Hans

Contemplative and following her own logic at solving design problems, Ineke Hans, another Dutch designer, explores the interaction and relationship between humans and objects. I am drawn to her common sense attitude to design. She questions the existing: “why do things have to be this way!” and she longs for the basic intentions behind objects of the past: “A problem needed to be solved. The maker used common sense and did not bother about a ‘design-sauce’” (Tan 2010).

She refers to designing as solving puzzles. On her new design of a garlic crusher, she says “I have a constant feeling that I’m so normal in what I do; it’s not so spectacular at all. It’s kind of obvious”, demonstrating a playful and logical attitude to interpreting design problems. One year she decided to design everything in black, as a joking response to suppliers offering material “available in colours”, but only black, white and neutral. She uses shapes that are instantly recognisable to connect with people, only to reveal a twist by closer inspection (Fairs 2006).

Up Down Chair (below) was part of an experiment with archetypes, creating seating furniture that communicates like pictograms. Her work draws on childhood images that we have stored in the back of our minds, inviting us into an imaginary world to fantasise about the potential use of new objects and situations. (Stylepark 2010)



FIG. 12. *Up Down chair. I want to interact with it. I wonder how two people can conquer it by jumping onto one side each at the same time.*

Bliss with Bless

During my research journey, I had moments when I was feeling lost between disciplines. The discovery of German fashion design duo Bless pushed all doubt aside; working across disciplines is acceptable. The two women display creative frivolity in their work, situated midway between art, design and fashion. By following their feelings, needs and own possibilities – not their discipline, they find new solutions for everyday life, creating ‘object companions’, that sit between function and communication as events for everyday life (Piacca 2006).

In a project to revitalise design, they made a new casing for a vacuum cleaner in the form of another object. It solved a practical problem too; with no broom closet in their flat, there was no space to store a vacuum cleaner. They integrated a vacuum cleaner into a chair; with wheels. Of their chair “Vacuum Cleaner” (fig. 13) they say: “the result may look like this”. (Albus 2005, 55).

With ambition and unrestrainable desire for change their intention is not to make consumer goods, “but to generate puzzlement, to question how we see the objects that populate our lives” (Piacca 2006).

Asked if humour is important in their work, they say they never thought about it. It is an interesting reflection that humour is not an intent, it just happens; as a consequence of playing with the familiar in a local logical fashion; in a way that makes sense to them. (Bradley 2010)

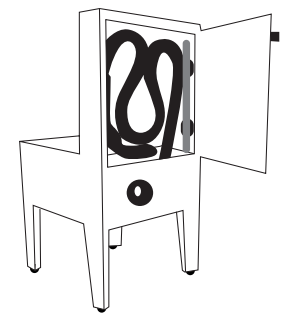


FIG. 13. *Vacuum Cleaner.*



FIG. 14. My first exploration into three dimensional works was a table permanently dressed for a quiet moment with a cup of tea. A comment about the table from a friend, Vicky Scott, was - "it's hilarious; it's a symbol of the woman we don't have time to be anymore"! This was the starting point of my master of design project; to use my own situation of running a small business from home, from the kitchen table - of juggling children, work and everyday life. I started exploring practical everyday furniture solutions for a shared domestic/office space.

Chapter 3

A work-from-home wardrobe for Air Chair

Home, work, play

Many of us live in houses that were designed for a bygone era, with furnishing that can be adapted to better reflect twenty-first century living. I am interested in how we live, how design can offer solutions that serve as tools for everyday living and have cultural connection. To find design solutions that frame everyday life, and add new dimension to familiar objects.

I see it as my purpose as a designer to communicate, to interact, to facilitate, frame or stage interludes of play in everyday life, to create tools for everyday living that are practical to use and also bring out companionship and lightness.

Using my own situation of a shared home-work space, I set out to investigate practical solutions to everyday scenarios I confronted as a woman, mother, designer working from home. How can a kitchen table also be a desk for home workers? What does a home office chair look like? In response to these questions I came up with pragmatic solutions, but another form of creativity led way to a more conceptual approach. An intuitive act of bisociation sparked the concept of dressing a chair for work, revealing more underlying issues of working from home.

This chapter introduces the work-from-home wardrobe for Air-Chair. Each suit uses wit to address issues of working from home and reflects on the effects humour can play on everyday life – how we interact with everyday objects and the play or ritual they may trigger.

Working from home

According to Statistics New Zealand, there are about 470,000 businesses in New Zealand of which more than 90% have no employees or have fewer than twenty staff. This implies there are a large number of people operating from their homes.

Some of these businesses have an office space adjacent but separate from the home. In some settings domestic and work spaces are shared. Nicknamed “kitchen table” businesses (MacLennan 2008) many of these businesses that share domestic and work spaces originated as a practical solution to everyday family logistics. This is true of my own situation.

In the twenty-first century, technology is giving us more flexibility to merge work and life. This helps close the division between public and private spaces that were created by industrial times in the nineteenth century. In my own situation, home also became, as Christine Poggi (1996, 237) puts it, “the ideal site of artistic production understood as unalienated labour” - a merger of life and work.

Running a small children’s wear company from home, I work in a corner of the dining room, from a small desk set up for the family computer. Boundaries between work and family life can be diffuse: work is always there, equally so domestic distractions. It is hard to keep a good routine; it is hard to switch on and off. The working day can be lonely. Storage is an on-going issue. My piles of work papers and files lead a nomadic life as they get shifted around the house. Office tools compete for space with toy cars and coloured pencils, and lately, pre-felted fluffs of wool have appeared on dinner plates.

By locating her work at home, performance artist Diane Boulder opens up “a new way of reading this space, which becomes the location for acts of reclamation that bring together work, play, and home. It becomes a site that no longer requires these sorts of distinctions, but rather favours flexibility and fluidity, making room for permeability and multi-dimensionality” (Moser 2008).

As home and work merge, home becomes the main stage of life, home is no longer a retreat from work, boundaries are dynamic, time and space is in negotiation with other family members. How can furniture accommodate this change and play a more interactive role in our everyday lives?

The kitchen table was the first arena of my investigation. Initially exploring storage solutions, the concepts became more tactile and conceptual as wool stockings were applied to table legs, the stockings had pockets for storing small office tools and a sock was made for computer cables. Still emphasising practical storage solutions I went on to investigate an office chair made of wood, with a drawer under the seat for a laptop and office tools and additional storage in the back rest.

Could I do the same with textiles? A flash of light struck me with an image of Jasper Morrison’s Air-Chair. Instead of dressing me for work, what is the potential of dressing a chair for work, according to mood or business of the day?

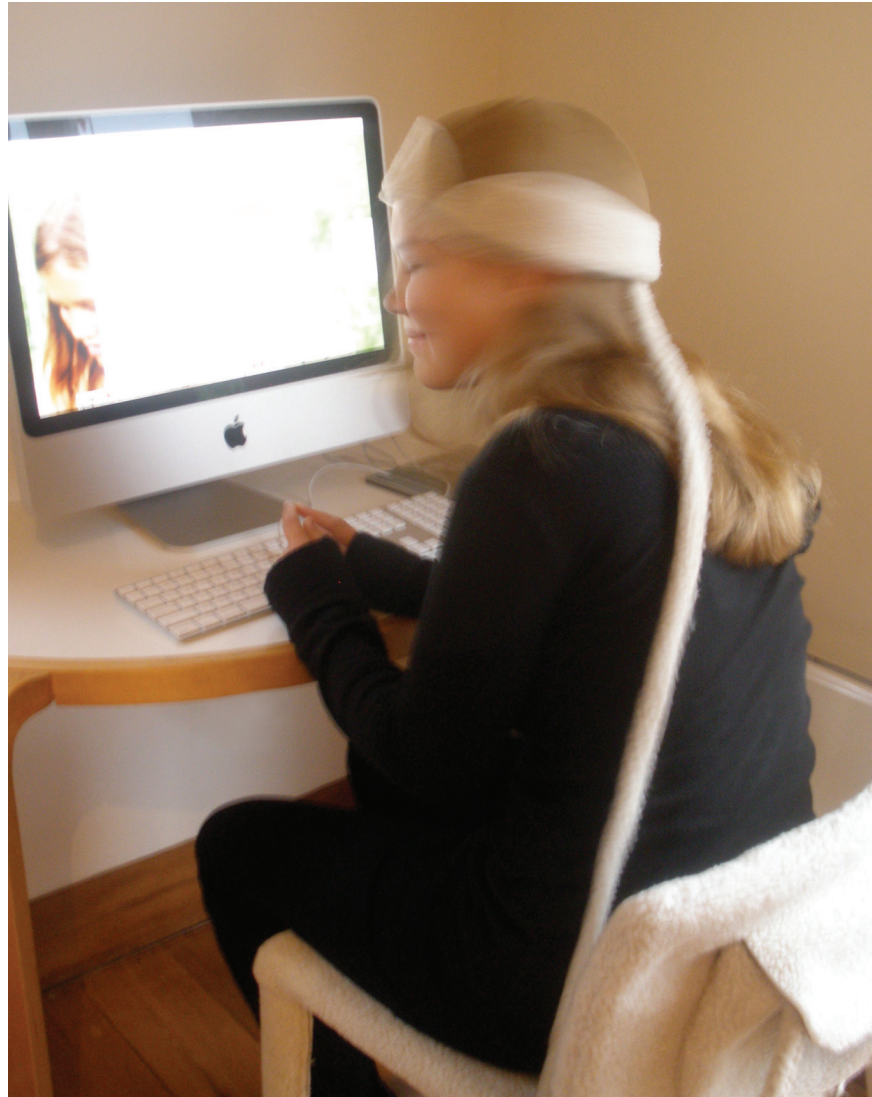


FIG.15. *Winter suit.*

Dressing a chair for work

Dressing up for and commuting to work provides a natural buffer between professional and private time. At home there is no such buffer; self-discipline and the ability to set boundaries and impose limits is required. Could dressing up the chair for work help set these boundaries - both physical and psychological - between home and work?

Taking dressing up more literally, how could I dress my chair to create an entry point to work, exiting the domestic realm? How could I re-contextualise the kitchen chair and better define the boundaries between domestic life and being at work?

I used to cycle to my work. It was a nice, flat twenty minute transition between home and work. I pedalled off in the morning reflecting on the day ahead and on the way home I reflected on the day that had been, or on how I was going to spend the evening. I dressed myself casually, cycle friendly, but smarter than a day off.

Now I work from home, my wardrobe has dwindled, (I don't even have regular hair cuts), getting the kids ready and out the door in time for school is the morning ritual and wiping breakfast crumbs off the kitchen table is as good a transition to work as it gets.

After the house has quietened down, the morning ramble is over, the kitchen table is cleared, I am showered, dressed; jeans, jersey, time to go to work. Which suit do I need today? The wind is howling outside, north-erlies, the rain is battering the windows in gushes. Mmm, I think today.. the winter suit (fig. 15).



FIG.16. Winter suit details.

I like the winter suit, particularly on a cold day. It is cozy. Makes me feel warm on the inside. Thinking of the task ahead, a few e-mails to write, having to plan a marketing stint for Halloween. I pull the winter suit out of the wardrobe. It doesn't take much space, the back forms a sleeve that the rest of the suit folds into. The suits have a special shelf in my wardrobe, it's natural to keep them there. When I am ready to start my working day I open the wardrobe door. I contemplate the day ahead, my mood, my tasks. As I select a suit, my mind switches modes.

With the suit sleeve under my arm, I walk to my work corner, greet the chair; "Hey, good morning, nice to see you." Our ritual has started, we have become work buddies the chair and I. I shake the legs out of the sleeve and complain about the weather; "This is going to warm us up". I tip the chair back a bit and pull one, then two suit legs up the front legs of the chair. I slip the sleeve over the back of the chair, zip up the back legs and pat the back of the chair; "That's better". I attach the seat flaps one by one with velcro under the seat. On my knees, I raise up, stretch, I sit down and turn on the computer. I'm ready for work.

The winter suit has storage at the back. The back pack contains a hat; a nice sheepskin hat that provides extra warmth, or noise guard, and a sense of 'putting on the work hat'. Attaching the hat to the chair created a physical boundary, a portal, a connect, disconnect to and from work (fig. 16).

At the end of a working day, I undress the chair, returning it to the wardrobe. The act brings closure to my working day. The chair too is off duty, and may be dressed, perhaps in a knitted cover for the weekend.



FIG.17. Office suit with sleeves.

Resolving the concept

There was a substantial gap in time between designing the “winter” suit and the range of scale-model suits that followed. This time was spent searching for meaning, in my own work, in relation to a theoretical context. It was a process of finding where I fit in/position myself alongside a body of work.

I had made a second suit, an “office” suit (fig. 17), in a checkered wool fabric, with a quilted warm seat and with matching arm sleeves to complete the transition from home to the home office. It was aesthetically pleasing, but the office suit did not have the magnetism of the winter suit, and it lacked humour. By contrast, the winter suit invited me to interact, to sit down, it made me smile, we connected.

I tested the winter suit in different locations away from home, and found that its ideal setting was home; it created sense and space. The suited chair defined an office space at home; it was not just a matter of dressing the chair for work, but preparing the space for work.

The concept worked well, now it was time to resolve each individual suit. Did the chair need storage? What techniques and materials would I use for the suits? Should I use the suit as an opportunity to experiment with manufacturing methods? Did I need to challenge the form of the Air-Chair and, indeed, was it acceptable to use the Air-Chair? I considered a laptop pocket under the seat and pockets for office accessories. None were practical; pockets would have to be emptied between each ‘shift’.

The concept needed to be simplified; practical and hassle-free to put on, such that the ritual of going to work was effortless, just like switching on an Anglepoise lamp, or rolling up a steel roller blind at the dairy, or punching in a time card.



FIG.18. The suits, 1st row left to right: Light therapy suit, Eyed up suit, Ball & chain suit. 2nd row: GST return suit, Winter suit, Step into my office suit, Invisible suit. 3rd row: Head above water suit, Granite suit, Monday blues suit, Comfort suit.

Introducing the suits

Pragmatic solutions were set aside as intuition led way to concepts that addressed underlying issues linked to working from home – of motivation, private space, physical boundaries, rituals, emotional comfort, loneliness and interaction with human beings.

The range of scale model suits playfully and conceptually explore day-to-day issues of working from home and the imagined interlude that they will inspire. The three dimensional concept sketches are followed by a chapter describing the process of constructing full size prototypes.

GST* return suit

This suit explores attachment. It has a large suction cup seat and a plunger that I can wear if I need further attachment to the chair. It is intended for days when I need extra suction power to keep me in the work chair; on days that I have tasks ahead of me that I do not enjoy, tasks that I have left to the last minute. The suit is a connecting medium, a transitional object that opens the door ajar from real life, and lets me enter a zone of play. In the act of putting it on, I chat with the suit: “We have a big job ahead today you and I, don’t let me out of your grip until it is done.” I find companionship in this act. I let myself be sucked into the chair to start my dreaded task. We work together; the suited chair and I, we are a team.

The colour orange brightens my mood in the gloom of duty, and extends the use of the suit beyond GST returns and accounting duties to days when I need the cheer of colour to brighten my day and the wit of sitting in a suction cup to keep me company.

The concept of the GST return suit was sparked by sudden appearances of suction cups in my life; an old rubber bathmat, a close encounter with an octopus, and a GST return waiting to be filed “. *Goods and Services Tax.



FIG. 19

Eyed up suit

This suit explores motivation. This suit illustrates the workplace pressure while bringing some of the motivating qualities home. The pressure is self-regulating, eyes can be up close peering over my shoulder or kept at a less obtrusive distance.

I never liked people peering over my shoulder; but I miss it a little sometimes, it kept me on my toes, and I didn't stop working until the job was done. It is easy to take liberties when working from home, coming and going as I please, letting myself get distracted. This suit makes sure I stay in my seat and do my jobs. We have conversations. If I try to get up to have a pre-morning tea, the suit says "eh, eh, eh...!" and I say "come on - it's nearly tea time", "have you finished what you were doing?" "not quite..", "well...?", "ok". Speaking to my conscience the eyes keep me on the job, but when the task is done, I reward myself by pulling one of the black glaring eyes off and throwing it into the corner. At the beginning of my working day I stick x number of black ping-pong ball tasks to the individual eye sockets with velcro and rip them off one by one until I'm done for the day.

The suit was inspired by the feeling of spying eyes over the shoulder; coloured green by the resemblance to an alien enhanced by the anthropomorphic qualities of the Air-Chair.



FIG. 20

Monday blues suit

This suit explores empathy. Mondays can be slow to get the work engine started. Not every Monday – but for those that are, this suit is a companion, a friend; the chair is a comforting blue just like me.

With hands delved deep into its pockets I sit back and sigh; we can be melancholic together. The Blues suit is reflective, wise. It is like an old friend. The conversations we have are deeper; more philosophical. The mood is contemplative, for pondering bigger questions. But it is also a suit that allows for procrastination, for taking it easy. Sometimes a treat may hide in the bottom of the pocket, a pick-me-up, a surprise.

A blue suit for a blue mood, inspired by the melancholic hues of hills in the distance. The quiet humour in the fabric, a secret only I know, the lining of the pockets made of bicycle felt makes me smile upon touching it.



FIG. 21.

Step into my office suit



FIG. 22.

This suit explores physical boundaries. I was curious to see how the suited chair could create a sense of office space by creating a physical boundary. Will stepping onto the suit carpet feel as though I am stepping into an office space, to a different zone?

Yes, it does, but I feel a little lost, there is nothing else keeping me in the space. Not even the colour red. Enter the house pet. The carpet circle doubles up as a pet's rug. The dog and I keep each other company, in my red office space.

Inspired by "Plonsters" the animation - a droplet of coloured clay drops from the sky and lands on the chair; bedding it with colour.



FIG. 23

Invisible suit

This suit explores focus. Domestic distractions are more predominant on certain days, especially on days that I need to focus on work. They clutter the mind, I don't want to see them, I don't want to know they exist.

The invisible suit has a hood in its work bag, it folds out and provides a barrier between work tasks and domestic distractions that are lurking behind the chair. Its colour is grey, blending in to its surroundings avoiding attention. Inside, the hood is lighter, brighter, a private office space.

The suit is a way of reinforcing and communicating that I am working. Do not disturb! It was inspired by the feeling of power experienced sitting in a particular high back chair. It was initially intended as a directors type chair with a long back. I enforce the power by ignoring my surroundings and keeping my 'office door' locked.



FIG. 24.



FIG. 25. The Granite suit explores form. I had been challenged to confront the form of the Air-Chair. I found a small sample piece of grey wool textile. A block of granite came to mind. I could test the physicality of the chair. What would the experience be of sitting on a granite chair, as opposed to the idea of a porcelain suit that was lingering in my mind? The result didn't appeal to me but the experience triggered two more suits.

Head above water suit

This is an expression of a solitary battle. It is the silliest of the suits. Working from home is generally a lonesome affair. I would take the water suit out on a lonely day when I miss colleagues; on a Friday; a sniff of weekend in the air; the mood is light, I feel sociable; it is my work chair's 'casual Friday' attire.

You step into it and pull it over your head, ready for light, imaginary or real, Friday conversations: "so how's work?" - "ah, well you know, I keep my head above water".

Inspired by the Granite suit. I made a blue mock-up for it and liked how it resembled a block of water.

Ball & chain suit

This suit explores irony. This is a chair that illustrates being chained to work, but it is a happy union, it is my own work, so it is ok. I am attracted to sit in it, it is black and slick, a bit iron-ic; it is my designer chair. I'm chained to my work, we are partners in crime. This suit comes out on creative days.

I sit straight on it, like I would in a café on a journey, alert, taking in the surroundings, feeling inspired. The suit and I don't talk much, it supports me as I work in concentration.

Inspired by the weight of the granite suit, instead, this suit lifts the weight off my mind and takes me to a creative zone.



FIG. 26.



FIG. 27. The conception of the Air Chair happened when Morrison was given a sample piece of gas injected plastic, "this looks like a chair leg". Reading this story inspired a cartoon of how the chair related to my project, joined together by the spark of an idea.

The mannequin

Cartoon-like in its simplicity, the Air-Chair (fig. 28) was designed by Jasper Morrison in 1999. In a moment of bisociation, a glorious collision of ideas, it jumped out at me. I was sitting in the car waiting for my daughter outside her dance class, she was late. I had pulled out a pencil and a notebook, glancing out the window in deep thought. Here was a skeleton of a chair, stripped of emotional warmth, nude, exposed to the conditions, emotionless.

The chair looked cold... I realised I should dress the chair for work instead of myself!



FIG. 28.

Designed by Morrison to be 'super normal' - an object that is so natural to our everyday surroundings that we do not even notice its presence (Fukasawa and Morrison 2007). It is anonymous, with no interfering style elements or decoration, a modern, visual communication of a chair, lending itself as an ideal canvas for humorous interpretations.

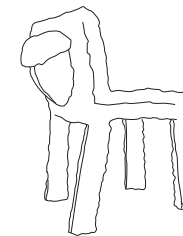


FIG. 29.

Described as a modern archetype (Sparke 2009, 56), it strikes a perfect balance between manufacturing, price point and design. The Air-Chair has good bones, good proportions, but is unlike its predecessor the Thonet chair, which is made of wood - a living material that adds memory with wear and is warm to sit on. By contrast, the Air-Chair is cold, hard, the material lifeless. It made sense to dress it, in a local and logical way, dressing it to challenge norms, not forms, and to test ideas around our emotional connection to objects and the interaction that objects may provoke.

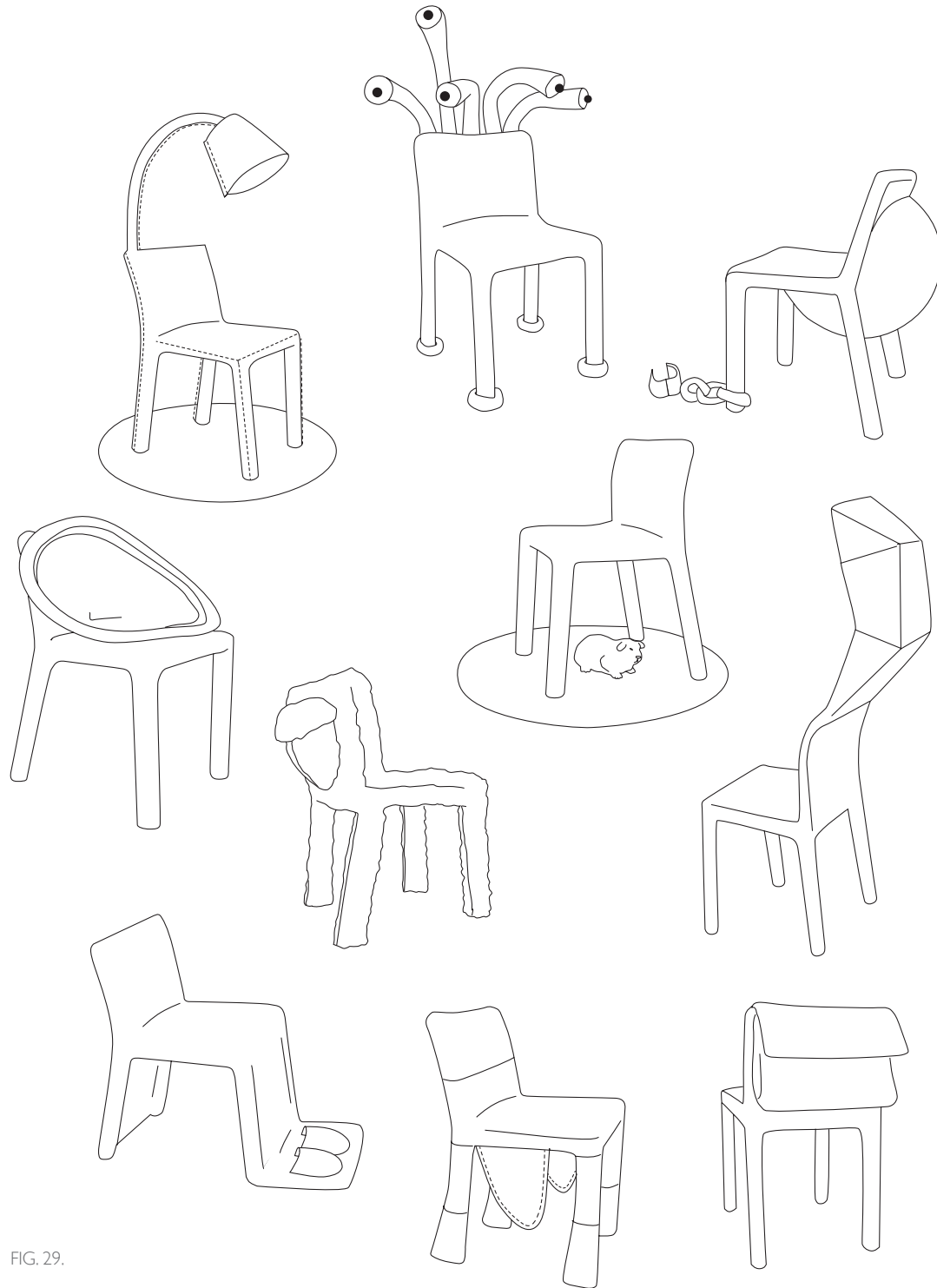


FIG. 29.

Play. Interaction. Reflection.

The suits have turned into characters (fig. 29). They invite me to interact - I accept the invitation. I set the rules by choosing the suit of my need for the day. I dress the chair as a transitional act to go to work. This action humours me and helps me do the task of the day; the chair becomes a companion, we have a subtle dialogue, it helps set a boundary between work and domestic distractions.

Playing graphically with the range of suits emphasised a cartoon language, objects that communicated, connected and encouraged interaction; not only was play a part of the creation of the suits, but also in the use of the suits. The interaction with the suited chair was important; the chair became something more than a chair; it became a companion. The suits allowed a shift in one frame of activity to another through the underlying message that this is play (Gordon 2007). This is reflected in the everyday use of the suits as a ritual of transporting me mentally between home and work, the suits become the transitional object that allows this to happen.

Spatial separation from ordinary life is one of the most important characteristics of play. The suited chair becomes a space, "hedged off from everyday surroundings. Inside this space the play proceeds, inside it rules obtain" (Huizinga 1970, 38). As long as I am willing to play, to follow the rules, the chair will keep me at work.

Presented with the suited chairs, people have reacted with a smile, and excitement, as if the suited chairs, even as small-scale models, have allowed or invited people to enter a zone of play. It is an interesting notion, size or dimension seemingly unimportant, the idea, the thought, the most important thing, interacting with people, the suits evoke more play.



FIG. 30.

CHAPTER 4

Investigating (*play + logic = wit*) design: making

Craft production was the precursor to mass production, an art that belonged to preindustrial times. Craft production is enjoying a renaissance in response to the public's desire for authenticity, quality and originality (meesterlijk 2010).

The theme of play can continue in the craft production process, through experimenting, exploring and learning new skills. The unstructured quality of wool felt allowed me to use local raw materials to create a fabric that translated the suits to full scale, holding on to the language of 3D cartoon characters. A wide range of colours and the potential for sculpting, made wool felt an ideal partner for investigating 3D graphic wit.

The range of scale-model suits revealed the humour in the project, and the link to my training as an art director in the advertising world helped resolve the concept. Intuitively, the same methodology was used - dressing a chair for work would be an overall concept, a core idea, and each individual suit would communicate its own issues, and stories, just like advertisements. It revealed communication as the common link between my two and three dimensional work, in a desire to connect and interact with an audience.

The colours, graphic language, simplicity, and use of wool felt revealed an aesthetic intuition informed by my roots and values, growing up in seventies Norway. In the construction of the suits, play and logic continued to be a part of the design process. Making fabric, resolving practical solutions for the suits; in the choice of material in a manner that communicated the idea with clarity, ensuring the humour, the delivery of wit, did not get lost in translation.

Form follows idea

In conceptual design practice, form follows idea. "If the idea is a clear one, you only have to realise it" says German design duo Bless (Bradley 2010). Naylor and Ball say: "The significance of form follows idea is not so much in the body of work itself, however much you admire the creativity of individual pieces, but in the resonant ideas that underpin them" (Naylor and Ball 2005, 6). The designed object may be viewed as a proposal, a thought in visual form. In the process of translating idea to form lies the test of resolving a visual language that communicates the idea with clarity.

In 2D design, an illusion of 3D may be illustrated through photography or drawing; in 3D design, the object itself is the communication. The choices of materials differ, but the same rules of communication govern in the conceptual design resolve process.

Before I start making, I have to have a clear picture in my mind of the concept. I came upon some personal quotes from Norwegian author Henrik Ibsen that I felt related to my process. "Before I write down one word, I have to have the character in my mind through and through. I must penetrate into the last wrinkle of his soul" and "if I cannot be myself in what I write, then the whole is nothing but lies and humbug" (Notable-quotes 2010). Of his design process, Richard Hutten says: "It is a logical process, but mind you it is very personal logic ... if you look at a tree, you can explain why it is as it is. It is rational with a lot of irrational arguments. You can see it as a kind of game in which you are the editor of the rules of that game" (Behind the designs 2010).

This game can be tense, as Johan Huizinga (1970, 29) explains: "It is this element of tension and solution that governs all solitary games of skill." Finding the essence becomes a game; I must decide how much of the information that is to be conveyed can I compress for it to still be recognisable, and what visual clues I can offer. I set my own rules and constraints in finding the essence of what I wish to communicate; weeding out confusing and distracting messages; removing any ambiguity; the objective is to communicate clearly.

A simple visual language reaches wide. Using familiar codes to communicate and using the material that best serves the idea, I play with associations, in colour and form, using archetypical shapes and staple, plain materials to articulate the forms, retaining the graphic language of wit, bringing 2D concepts into a 3D world, inviting the audience to interact physically with the concepts as well as intellectually. Wit resonates throughout. Wit is about a collision of ideas and improbable linkages; mindful all the same that the quality of the wit relies on the quality of the fit.

The translation of my ideas to physical form is influenced by an aesthetic sense nurtured in my Norwegian upbringing.



FIG. 31. Scene from "Kitchen Stories". Swede (on high chair) observing Norwegian bachelor in his kitchen.

FIG. 32. Winter landscape, Välliste, Sweden.

Aesthetic intuition - Norwegian values

The Norwegian movie 'Kitchen Stories' is based on a warm, humorous story about a farmer who allows an executive from a white-ware company to sit in a high chair in the farmer's kitchen and observe the farmer's "kitchen behaviour" (Hamer 2003). The movie also offers a small insight into the farming culture that those values derive from; objects crafted for longevity, they were modest, simple, functional, with little ornamentation and decoration.

Home is central in the lives of Norwegians, much time is spent inside due to the harsh climate. The objects that surround our everyday lives have meaning and offer emotional as well as physical comfort; referred to as 'Hygge' a feeling of warmth. Respect for nature is deeply rooted, and natural materials are favoured in objects crafted for functionality, not status. A dry, even dark, and sometimes nonsensical sense of humour is a part of everyday life; a way of keeping spirits light perhaps, in a country covered in darkness for months of the year.

The Scandinavian design movement of the 1960s had different origins in each of the three countries. Sweden's was driven by a political campaign to rebuild industry and to create 'more beautiful everyday objects'. Denmark built on its tradition of craftsmanship influenced by the Shaker tradition. Norway was a late starter in modern design, having been ruled by Sweden and Denmark for hundreds of years; its tradition is crafts. (Fiell 2002)

In my work, I use these values that I grew up with, the graphic language of 1970s Scandinavia, natural materials and simple clean lines; a suitable companion to the wit in my work.



FIG. 33. 'I've been egged'. Testing the graphic potential of felt.

The play continues

In the cool climate of Norway, wool is traditionally used in home furnishings to provide warmth and to improve indoor air quality among other natural benefits. Growing up in Norway, wool was an important ingredient of home comfort and for me it was a logical choice of material when time came to tailor the full scale suits. The lack of suitable New Zealand made wool textiles tuned me into making my own wool felt; a happy discovery that not only enabled me to use local raw materials, but provided a versatile graphic translation tool to 3D. Felt provided me with flexibility to sculpt, experiment with graphics and a wide colour range. I use colour as a communication tool for wit. Colour is evocative; it has associations, it interacts and suggests, like a part of a rebus that can be decoded. I am inspired by Danish Architect Verner Panton's playful, but unscientific theories on colour. The idea, "even the most non-sensical", was of prime importance to Panton. He is renowned for his use of bright hues, and quotes; "One sits more comfortably on a colour that one likes" and "Colour is more important than form" (Kaiser 1986).

There is humour in felt, the playful, no-rules, colourful, mouldable flexibility of it worked well with my design principles and added a nice juxtaposition to the Air-Chair mannequin, both an understated and staple aesthetic – a chair made industrially in three minutes, its suit cover made by hand in three days.

Felt artist Anne Kyyrö Quinn describes felt as a miracle material. "Felt is environmentally friendly, tactile, soft, durable and easy to work with" (Quinn 2009). Books and Youtube provided me with a wealth of felting knowledge and techniques. There are three main features of the process; hot water, soap and agitation. The wool fleece is laid in perpendicular layers, wetted with hot water and soap and rolled up in bubble wrap or a rattan

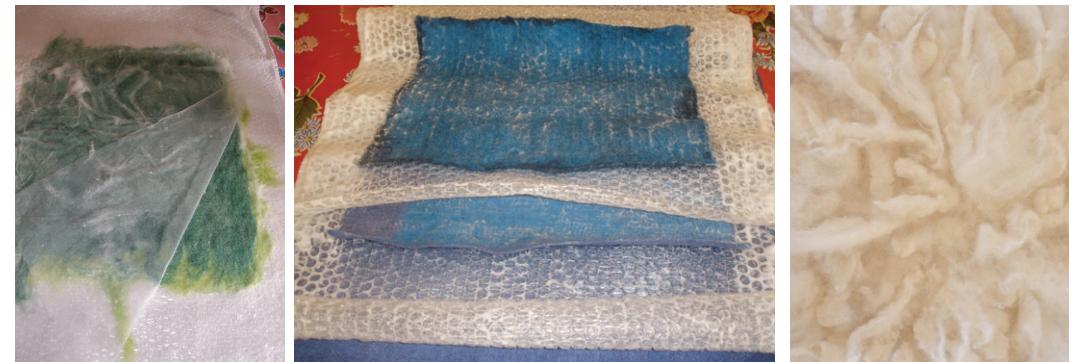


FIG. 34. 'Blue Hues'. Testing shades of blue and pockets.

blind to create friction. Felting is followed by a fulling process that hardens the felt. Felting is a physical process; rolling the felt from all directions to achieve an even result, by hand on a tall working table, in ways resembling the monotonous graphic use of felt markers, colouring in large areas with steady, persistent hand movement, creating large sheets of coloured textile. I tested and considered different techniques and mechanical equipment to make felt; a knitting machine, a needle felting bed. I found using machines to be less satisfying than working hands on, having full control over the process. The potential of humour in felt was tested through graphics, texture, details, colours and format.

I enjoyed learning an ancient craft, the craftsmanship; working with my hands in a process not unlike working with clay and wood – working the wool till it feels just right. I was able to work from home on the wool felt - a preindustrial way of life through a turbulent winter. There was energy in the air; the kids sat around, observing, learning. The dining room table was my work space, lifted on trestle legs, 30 centimetres up to allow me to work standing up. The dining table being so high made for amusing meal times, for a period of time, we felt like dwarfs.

FIG. 35. Left to right: rubbing/felting, rolling/fulling, felted wool fleece.



Crafting fabric

Dating back 7000 years, felting is an ancient craft still valued for its natural properties; contemporary artists and designers are exploring the potential of the fibre in a sustainable fashion. The tactile property of felt is described by Spanish designer Nani Marquina (Quinn 2009, 248) through her work, as an invitation to touch and feel - “as you stretch your hand out to touch a stone on the beach to capture the way it feels”.



FIG. 36.

Australian felt artist Anita Larkin displays a wry sense of humour in her work (fig. 36) and featured in a large felt exhibition “The Climate is Changing”, organised by the International Feltmakers Association in Prato, Italy in May 2010, exploring the impact of human actions on the environment, through individual artist reflections on the theme (Feltmakers 2010). In New York, The Cooper Hewitt Museum featured a year-long exhibition in 2006. One of its highlighted artists Claudia Jongstra, a Dutch felt artist, has made felting her lifestyle; she lives and breeds sheep on a farm on the Dutch flatlands in the Netherlands. The character of the sheep are still maintained in her prized felt textiles; the sheep “seem to have been skinned rather than shorn, and the fleece laboriously made into clot” (Brown et al. 2007, 52).

A sign of the times, Dutch design week in October 2010 showcased a series of felted objects in its special section of MEESTERLIJK, a part of the 2010 Dutch design week striving to strengthen the bond between modern design and craftsmanship. The humble felt fibre has even received

royal support; Prince Charles of England launched “The Wool Project” in January 2010, to boost the popularity of wool and to improve the economic viability of wool for sheep farmers in Britain, Australia and New Zealand. (Odt 2010).

The textility of felt

Judith Attfield (2007) uses the word textility to describe the characteristics that make textiles so material in accommodating memories. In the warm, tactile materiality of the textile I use the word textility to describe the making of the felt embedded in the fabric, and the potential of the felt to further contain memory as the felted fabric wears, and the fibres continue to intertwine. The material property of felt provided a flexible and versatile translating tool for applying graphic wit to three dimensional objects.

Two suits were selected after testing the material properties of felt and its potential to translate the wit of the scale models into the construction of full size practical suits. The melancholic comfort of the Blues Suit for Mondays suited the materiality of the felt, the internal structure, “the trapped energy” (Brown et al. 2007, 51) of the felt, the meditative, repetitive method of making contained within the fabric. The GST return suit with warm, comfortable felted suction cups, was selected for the humour in the felted interpretation of a rubber bathmat. The colour was inspired by the red-orange tone of a plunger suction cup; nudged into a brighter, more energetic shade of orange; an additional incentive to sit down in my work chair, and stay seated.



FIG. 37. Work in progress: the horse blanket suit.

Construction of the suits

The hand-made felt contained invested effort and I was hesitant to cut into it. To resolve the practical challenges of dressing and undressing the Air-Chair, I acquired an old army blanket from an Army surplus store. The blanket had been used in the horse stables, it was brown, hairy, a similar thickness to my own felted fabric. There were puffs of dust and horsehair as I crafted the first suit modelled on the concept of the Monday Blues suit. It was a figure-hugging and comfortable fit, and was constructed in a logical manner, as a one-piece work suit, that was easy to put on, like a jumpsuit that mechanics or technicians might wear in their workplaces. The suit (fig. 37), covering the entire chair, slid seamlessly into place, zipped up at the two rear legs, the seat flaps connected by velcro under the seat and formed an open square that revealed the identity of the Air-Chair.

I enjoyed the result of the old horse blanket suit – for its aesthetic and construction successes. Holding it up, it looked like the headless outer-skin of an animal. That animal association, its history with horses, made it too valuable to be a mere sample, to be discarded, or recycled. The suit had subtle humour too. The wool had kept a horse warm in its former life, its embroidered identification tag was intact, and kept its rider(s) comfortable. As the first completed and resolved suit in my project, it now warms the Air-Chair and my bottom. However, it is more anonymous and enigmatic than the other suits, and lacks the pull to get me to work. Perhaps more applicable as an after-hours coat for the Air-Chair, or has more commercial potential - to be adapted for a market instead of joining the work suit wardrobe.



FIG. 38.

Monday blues suit

The Monday blues suit offered an opportunity to explore new techniques of making - in this case, bicycle felting (fig. 38, 40). Inspired by the nomads of Mongolia, who make large sheets of felt by towing rollers behind horses, I adapted the concept to the bicycle. Wool fleece was wetted and rolled in bubble wrap around a galvanised steel tube. The roll was wrapped in thermal fabric to retain heat and protect the fabric. A wood dowel was inserted through the pipe, hooks on either side attached string to the bicycle seat. As a trial the experiment was successful, the quality of the felt was not as tight as I would have liked (fig. 39), but good enough to line the pockets of the Monday Blues chair; and an experience worth repeating for future projects.



FIG. 39

FIG. 40. Bicycle felting: Eight rides around the block, each time turning the felt a quarter.





FIG. 41.



FIG. 42.



FIG. 43.

The concept of the melancholic Monday blues suit was based on the calm blue hues of hills in the distance, an appreciation passed on to me by my mother in my childhood. The concept was resolved at model making stage (fig. 42, top row), but needed fine tuning, and practical issues of construction had to be solved during translation to a full scale suit (fig. 42, mid row). Using commercially dyed Corriedale wool fleece, I had three shades of blue at my disposal. I tested proportions by laying wool roving directly onto the chair, and later by pinning felted panels onto the chair. I tested a variety of line transitions, rough, sharp, hilly, through felting a range of samples (fig. 42, bottom row).

A sample of the suit was first made in cotton to test practical aspects of dressing and undressing the suit and further refined in the construction of the horse blanket suit (fig. 37). The same base pattern was then used for all the suits, with subtle differences in closures and fit; to allow the Monday blues suit to slip over the chair back with ease, a mid back slit was converted to small slits on either side of the back panel. The slits were covered by button-on cuffs (fig. 42) that became a part of the ritual of dressing the chair.

In the end, hills gave way to the concept of a hazy, straight horizon. The 1 x 1.2 meters of felt required to construct the Monday blues suit was created by traditional rolling technique, in five separate panels. The felted panels all had one layer of dark blue as a foundation to tie the shades together and to create subtle depth to the flat surface. The pockets offered an opportunity to include the bicycle-felted panels as a soft lining.



FIG. 2.



FIG. 44.

GST return suit

The GST return suit: I attended a felting workshop with this suit in mind. I needed to master sculpting techniques for suction cups. Australian artist Anita Larkin experiments with the three dimensional potential of the wool fibre. She has a sculptural background, and has developed expertise in a unique 'dry' method of felting, allowing for fibre shrinkage in a process she passionately refers to as "logical", the process makes perfect sense to her; and the method has been a useful alternative to traditional wet felting in my work. When I translated the GST suit to full scale, I didn't like the scale of the large suction cup. I tested suction cups of different sizes, and tweaked the concept; instead of one jumbo-sized suction cup I would use a number of small cups. I tested different variations of suction cups (fig.45), inspired by octopus suction cups and various domestic tools with suction cups attached.

The wit relies on the success of translating ideas into a medium. My task was to *communicate* suction cups, using a simple visual language to illustrate the concept with clarity, inviting the 'reader', the user; to enter a zone of play, of make believe; to interact physically with the idea of a chair covered in suction cups; the level of suction power relative to the level of playfulness or imagination of the user.

FIG. 45. *Testing suction cups.*





FIG. 46.

Felt enabled me to recreate suction cups, attached in the same way as on a rubber bath mat. I found it the most logical and simple way to express the concept. Once the concept was resolved, it was a matter of practically constructing the suit, step by step. It took 108 cups to cover the Gst return suit. The suction cups on the front legs were attached in the felt-ing process of the panel, a conceptually satisfying but laborious process. For the seat and back panel, I felted the orange panels and suction cups separately. After constructing the suit the cups were pinned, then needle felted on to the suit and secured with hand stitching (fig. 46).

The same base pattern was used as for the other suits. The GST return suit has a slightly tighter fit, in a rubber/wetsuit kind of way, with a zip mid-back, going along with the water theme, associations with closing a wet suit. The square that forms by attaching the seat by velcro under the seat, reveals the origin of the chair (fig. 47).

I pull out the Gst return suit on work days when I need extra suction power to keep me in my work chair; for tasks that I need extra motivation to complete. The felted suction cups keep me in my chair, as long as I play along. The suited chair becomes a companion, a motivator, and a ritual transition between work and home (fig. 48 - 49).



FIG. 47



FIG. 48.

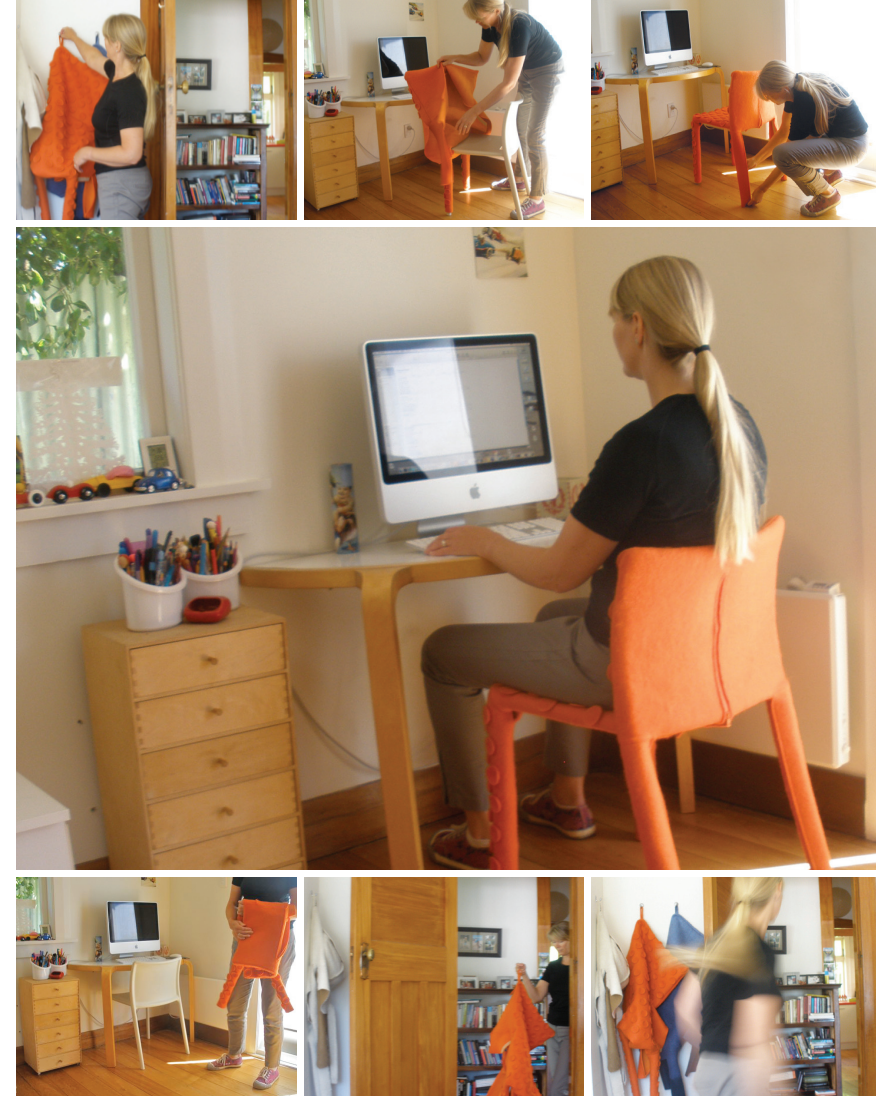


FIG. 49.



FIG. 50.

Conclusion

Today is Friday, I am seated in the winter chair; it is cold outside. My Master of Design journey is nearly over. In the past two years I have visited new shores, dipped into new pools of knowledge that have linked two dimensional design to three dimensional design. My research process has highlighted that all design is communication, and that all design is play, in one form or another. When play is mixed with logic, design becomes a thinking process, through an act of bisociation, of connecting two previously unrelated thoughts or ideas to create new meaning through a 'local' form of logic.

Communicating this idea in two dimensional design leads to graphic wit. Three dimensional design differs in that it needs to have some form of functionality. Play constitutes freedom; from convention and constraints. Play brings on change. In three dimensional design, the logic lies in observing human behaviour; to create new objects that make sense, that are almost obvious in a local logical way.

Humour is not the intention; like my kindred spirits it is a consequence of using play and logic. But it has highlighted the value of humour in everyday life. Led by an intuitive creative design practice, I have applied graphic wit to my work chair. The result; a range of suits, in cartoon language, that revealed how humour when communicated through design objects, has the potential to add another dimension to everyday life, in the physical and emotional interaction with the user.

"Design is a conversation between designer and user; one that can go both ways, even though the designer is no longer present once the user enters the scene" (Norman 2004). In this project I was both the designer

and the user; the suited chair became my companion. Through design I want to interact with people, to make new friends, to make them smile and be happy. Of his design motivation, Richard Hutten (Fitoussi 2006, 155) says; "the most important thing for me is to try to please the greatest number of people possible. The more I please them the happier I am. I would like to make a small contribution to their daily lives. I would like to celebrate every day of my life, that's why I make tools to celebrate with".

I see it as my purpose as a designer to communicate, to facilitate, frame or stage interludes of play in everyday life, to create tools for everyday living that are meaningful, objects that offer culture and nourishment, objects that respond to and reflect human behaviour; as David Trubridge states, objects that fill the empty gap that meaningless mass consumption has created in us (Trubridge 2010).

The thinking tools that I have identified as a foundation of my design work bear similarities to theories of design thinking, a holistic, common sensical approach, that can be applied to solving problems of many dimensions; creative leaps that connect new ideas, across humour, science and humanities.

My Master of Design research journey has come to an end. It has given me understanding and meaning in my own and a wider design practice, and tools to continue to design, to communicate and interact with an audience. In addition to playing with graphics I have new tools to play with, being multi-disciplined gives freedom to explore. With play and logic, familiar forms and staple materials I look forward to further explorations into a three dimensional design practice in a way that creates new meaning and cultural nourishment.



FIG. 51.



REFERENCES

- Albus, Volker. 2005. Interview with Bless (Ines Kaag, Desiré Heiss). *Somewhat Different*. 54. Stuttgart: IFA
- Alexander, Christopher, Sara Ishikawa, and Murray Silverstein. 1977. *A pattern language: towns, buildings, construction*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Antonelli, Paola, and Museum of Modern Art (New York N.Y.). Dept. of Architecture and Design. 2001. *Workspheres: design and contemporary work styles*. New York, N.Y.: Museum of Modern Art: distributed by Harry N. Abrams.
- Attfield, Judy. 2000. *Wild things: the material culture of everyday life*. Oxford: Berg.
- . 2007. *Bringing modernity home: writings on popular design and material culture*. Manchester; New York: Manchester University Press.
- Avner, Ziv. 1984. *Personality and sense of humor*. New York: Springer Pub. Co.
- Bone, Martin, and Kara Johnson. 2009. *I miss my pencil: a design exploration*. San Francisco, CA: Chronicle.
- Brocket, Jane. 2008. *The gentle art of domesticity*. New York: Stewart, Tabori & Chang.
- Brown, Susan. 2009. *Fashioning felt*. 1st Ed. ed. New York: Cooper-Hewitt, National Design Museum, Smithsonian Institution.
- Brown, Tim, and Barry Katz. 2009. *Change by design: how design thinking transforms organizations and inspires innovation*. 1st ed. New York: Harper Business.
- Bradley, Alexandra. 2010. "Bless." Accessed 15/12 2010. <http://www.cascoprojects.org/data/html/c00492.html>
- Chapman, Jonathan. 2005. *Emotionally durable design: objects, experiences and empathy*. Sterling, VA: Earthscan.
- Cieraad, Irene. 1999. *At home: an anthropology of domestic space*. Edited by I. Cieraad. Syracuse: Syracuse University Press.
- Creswell, John W. 2003. *Research design: qualitative, quantitative, and mixed method approaches*. 2nd ed. Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage Publications.
- Critchley, Simon. 2002. *On humour, Thinking in action*. London; New York: Routledge.
- Cross, Nigel. 2007. *Designerly ways of knowing*. 1st ed. Boston, MA: Birkhauser.
- Csikszentmihalyi, Mihaly. 1990. *Flow: the psychology of optimal experience*. 1st ed. New York: Harper & Row.
- Csikszentmihalyi, Mihaly, and Eugene Rochberg-Halton. 1981. *The meaning of things: domestic symbols and the self*. Cambridge Eng.; New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Currie, Nick. 2005. "Conceptual design: building a social conscience." Accessed 15/12 2010. <http://www.aiga.org/content.cfm/conceptual-design-building-a-social-conscience>
- De Bruin, Bartjan and Jurrien Dijkstra. 2007. "Richard Hutten." Accessed 15/12 2010. <http://www.richardhutten.behindthedesigins.com>.
- de Wild, Femke. 2008. The identity makers. *Frame*.
- Eastman, Max. 1936. *Enjoyment of Laughter*. New York: Simon and Schuster.
- Fairs, Marcus. 2006. "I am a colour girl. I'm not a black-dressed designer. I'm not like that at all." Accessed 15/12 2010. http://www.iconeye.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=2492
- Feltmakers. 2010. "The climate is changing." Accessed 15/12 2010. <http://www.feltmakers.com/news-mainmenu-30/62-general/623-the-climate-is-changing-preview>
- Fiell, Charlotte, and Peter Fiell. 2002. *Scandinavian design*. Köln; London: Taschen.
- Fitoussi, Brigitte, Richard Hutten, and Aaron Betsky. 2006. *Richard Hutten: for you*. Oostkamp: Stichting Kunstboek.
- Fletcher, Alan. 2001. *The art of looking sideways*. London, New York: Phaidon.
- Gestalten. 2010. "Ilse Crawford." Accessed 15/12 2010. <http://www.gestalten.tv/motion/ilse-crawford>
- Gruner, Charles R. 1997. *The game of humor : a comprehensive theory of why we laugh*. New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction Publishers.
- Gwen Gordon, Sean Esbjörn-Hargens. Integral Play: an exploration of the playground and the evolution of the player. *Journal of integral theory and practice*. Louisville, CO: Integral Institute.
- Hamer, Bent. 2003. *Kitchen Stories*. Norway: SF Norge.
- Hazlitt, William, and Geoffrey Keynes. 1930. *Selected essays of William Hazlitt, 1778: 1830*. London: The Nonesuch press.
- Heller, Steven, and Gail Anderson. 1991. *Graphic Wit: the art of humour in design*. New York: Watson-Guption Publications.
- Hinte, Ed van. 2004. *Eternally yours: time in design: product, value, sustenance*. Rotterdam: 010 Publishers.
- . 2006. *Under cover: evolution of upholstered furniture*. Rotterdam: 010 Publishers.
- Hinte, Ed van, and Richard Hutten. 2002. *Richard Hutten*. Rotterdam: 010 Publishers.
- Huizinga, Johan. 1970. *Homo Ludens: a study of the play element in culture*. London: Paladin.
- Hustwit, Gary. 2009. *Objectified*. USA: Plexifilm.
- Jertsen, Finn F. 2008. *158 Prompevitser*. Oslo: Kagge Forlag AS.

Kaiser, Neils-Jorgen. 1986. *Verner Panton*. Copenhagen: Bording Grafik.

Koestler, Arthur. 1964. *The act of creation*. London: Hutchinson.

Lucy Creagh, Helena Kåberg, and Barbara Miler Lane 2008. *Modern Swedish design*. New York: Museum of Modern Art.

MacLennan, Catriona. 2008. *Kitchen table millionaire*. Rosedale: Penguin (NZ).

Martin, Roger L. 2007. *The opposable mind : how successful leaders win through integrative thinking*. Boston, Mass: Harvard Business School Press.

Mau, Bruce, Jennifer Leonard, and Institute without Boundaries. 2004. *Massive change*. London, New York: Phaidon.

Maxine Naylor, Ralph Ball. 2005. *Form follows idea: an introduction to design poetics*. London: Black Dog Pub.

McAlhone, B, and D Stuart. 1998. *A smile in the mind: witty thinking in graphic design*. London: Phaidon Press.

McCloud, Scott. 1993. *Understanding comics*. Northampton, MA: Kitchen Sink Press.

McDonough, William, and Michael Braungart. 2002. *Cradle to cradle: remaking the way we make things*. 1st ed. New York: North Point Press.

McLachlan, James. 2009. "The world of bram boo." Accessed 15/12 2010.
<http://onofficemagazine.com/profiles/item/793-the-world-of-bram-boo>

Meesterlijk. 2010. "Fair for design and applied arts." Accessed 15/12 2010.
<http://www.meesterlijk.nu/pagina.php?p=1&lan=uk>

Michel, Ralf. 2007. *Design research now: selected projects*. Boston, MA: Birkhaeuser Verlag AG.

Millar, Susanna. 1968. *The psychology of play*. Harmondsworth,: Penguin.

Miller, Daniel. 2001. *Home possessions: material culture behind closed doors*. Edited by D. Miller. Oxford, UK; New York, NY: Berg.

———. 2008. *The comfort of things*. Cambridge, UK, Malden, MA: Polity.

Moggridge, Bill. 2006. *Designing interactions*. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press.

Moser, Bridget. 2008. Working from home: acts of domestication in Diane Borsato's three performances. *The Concordia Undergraduate Journal of Art History* 5. Montreal: Concordia University.

Mullins, Willow. 2009. *Felt*. English ed. Oxford; New York: Berg.

Naoto Fukasawa, Jasper Morrison. 2007. *Super normal: sensations of the ordinary*. Baden: Lars Müller.

Nelson, Katherine E., and Raul Cabra. 2004. *New Scandinavian design*. San Francisco: Chronicle Books.

Norman, Donald A. 2004. *Emotional design: why we love (or hate) everyday things*. New York: Basic Books.

Norman, Donald A. 2004. "Design as communication." Accessed 15/12 2010.
http://jnd.org/dn.mss/design_as_communication.html

Notable-quotes. 2010. "Henrik Ibsen." Accessed 15/12 2010.
http://www.notable-quotes.com/i/ibsen_henrik.html

Odt. 2010. "Prince Charles push NZ wool." Accessed 15/12 2010.
<http://www.odt.co.nz/news/farming/90713/prince-charles-push-nz-wool>

Opsvik, Peter. 2009. *Rethinking sitting*. 1st American ed. New York: W.W. Norton & Co.

Piacca, Mario, and Francesca Picchi. 2006. Stylefree: a suspended home. *Domus*, 54-61. Rozzano: Editoriale Domus.

Poggi, Christine. 1996. *Not at Home: The Suppression of Domesticity in Modern Art and Architecture*. Edited by C. Reed. London: Thames and Hudson.

Quinn, Bradley. 2009. *Textile designers at the cutting edge*. London: Laurence King.

Ramakers, Renny. 2002. *Less + more : Droog Design in context*. Rotterdam: 010 Publishers.

Ramakers, Renny, and Gijs Bakker. 1998. *Droog Design: spirit of the nineties*. Rotterdam: 010 Publishers.

Raskin, Victor. 1985. *Semantic mechanisms of humor*. Synthese language library v. 24. Dordrecht; Boston Hingham, MA: D. Reidel Pub. Co.

Roukes, Nicholas. 2003. *Artful jesters: innovators of visual wit and humor*. Berkeley: Ten Speed Press.

Saito, Yuriko. 2007. *Everyday aesthetics*. Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press.

Schouwenberg, Louise, and Gert Staal. 2008. *House of concepts: Design Academy Eindhoven*. Amsterdam: Frame Publishers.

Schwartz, Ineke, and Ed Annink. 2003. *Bright minds, beautiful ideas: parallel thoughts in different times: Bruno Munari, Charles & Ray Eames, Martí Guixé, and Jurgen Bey*. Amsterdam: BIS Publishers.

Sjöberg, Gunilla Paetau. 1996. *Felt: new directions for an ancient craft*. Interweave Press.

Lovell, Sophie. 2007. *Furnish: furniture and interior design for the 21st century*. Edited by Robert Klanten, Sophie Lovell and Birga Meyer. Berlin: Die Gestalten Verlag.

Sparke, Penny. 1995. *As long as it's pink: the sexual politics of taste*. London: Pandora.

———. 2009. *The genius of design*. London: Quadrille.

Stylepark. 2010. "Ineke Hans." Accessed 15/12 2010. <http://www.stylepark.com/en/designer/ineke-hans>

Sudjic, Deyan. 2009. *The language of things: understanding the world of desirable objects*. 1st American ed. New York: W.W. Norton & Co.

Suri, Jane Fulton, and IDEO (Firm). 2005. *Thoughtless acts?: observations on intuitive design*. San Francisco: Chronicle Books.

Tan, Jeanne. 2010. "The common sense of ineke hans". Accessed 15/12 2010.
http://www.design.nl/item/the_common_sense_of_ineke_hans

Trubridge, David. 2010. "The cultural designer". Accessed 15/12 2010.
<http://www.davidtrubridge.com/the-cultural-designer-3/>

Williams, Gareth. 2006. *The furniture machine: furniture since 1990*. London: V&A Publications.

Winnicott, D.W. 1980. *Playing and reality*. London; New York: Tavistock Publications.

IMAGE REFERENCES

Unless otherwise identified all images are the work of Karin Amdal.

Fig. 1: Karin Amdal. 2009. *Winter suit*. Photographed by Stuart Foster.

Fig. 2 Karin Amdal. 2011. *Monday blues suit*.

Fig. 3: Karin Amdal. 2011. *GST return suit*.

Fig. 4: Karin Amdal. 2011. *Seated in the blues suit*.

Fig. 5: David Carson. 1994. Bryan Ferry Article for Ray Gun. <http://magculture.com/blog/?p=1209>

Fig. 6: Lindon Leader. 1994. Fedex logo. <http://www.fedex.com>

Fig. 7: Karin Amdal. 1993-2000. *2D graphic work*.

Fig. 8: Bram Boo. 2009. *Overdose desk*. <http://www.bramboo.be/pages/overdose-desk-2>

Fig. 9: Patrick Frey and Markus Boge. 2002. *Kant*. <http://www.moormann.de/en/furniture/tables/kant>

Fig. 10: Achilles Castiglioni. 1957. *Sella*. <http://www.achillecastiglioni.it/it/projects/id-30.html>

Fig. 11: Richard Hutten. 2000. *Ding 3*. http://www.richardhutten.nl/products_nl/collectie.html

Fig. 12: Ineke Hans. 1997. *Up down chair*. <http://www.inekehans.com/#/work/group/111>

Fig. 13: Bless. 2002. *Vacuum Cleaner*. Illustrated by Karin Amdal.

Fig. 14: Karin Amdal. 2007. *Tablecloth table*.

Fig. 15-16: Karin Amdal. 2009. *Winter suit*.

Fig. 17: Karin Amdal. 2009. *Office suit*.

Fig. 18-26: Karin Amdal. 2010. *A work-from-home wardrobe for Air-Chair*.

Fig. 27: Karin Amdal. 2010. *Conception*.

Fig. 28: Jasper Morrison. 1999. *Air-Chair*. <http://www.jaspermorrison.com/html/7226891.html>

Fig. 29: Karin Amdal. 2010. *The suits have turned into characters*.

Fig. 30: Karin Amdal. 2010. *Green wool felt*.

Fig. 31: Bent Hamer. 2003. *Kitchen Stories*. <http://www.filmweb.no/film/article78793.ece>

Fig. 32: Ivar Amdal. 2008. *Välliste*.

Fig. 33: Karin Amdal. 2010. *I've been egged*. Photographed by Murray Lloyd.

Fig. 34: Karin Amdal. 2010. *Blue hues*. Photographed by Murray Lloyd.

Fig. 35: Karin Amdal. 2010. *Felting samples*.

Fig. 36: Anita Larkin. 2009. *Speak to me of things unknown*.
<http://www.anitalarkin.com/Gallery.asp?GalleryID=57379&AKey=7MYMJXAN>

Fig. 37: Karin Amdal. 2010. *Horse blanket suit*.

Fig. 38-40: Karin Amdal. 2010. *Bicycle-felting in Waitarere*.

Fig. 41-42: Karin Amdal. 2011. *Monday blues suit*.

Fig. 43: Karin Amdal. 2010. *Monday blues suit - process*.

Fig. 44: Karin Amdal. 2011. *GST return suit*.

Fig. 45: Karin Amdal. 2010. *Felting suction cups*.

Fig. 46-47: Karin Amdal. 2010/2011. *GST return suit - process*.

Fig. 48-50: Karin Amdal. 2011. *Workday routine*.

Fig. 51: Karin Amdal. 2011. *Hanging suits*.

Fig. 52: Karin Amdal. 2011. *A working week*.



FIG. 52.