AGREEMENTS OF OTHER NORMATIVES

A PERFORMATIVE WORKSHOP FOR DESIGNERS

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THESIS ESSAY

BFA IN INDUSTRIAN DESIGN

This thesis consists of a workshop that investigates the performative act of designers in producing gendered product aesthetics. Product designers make many active choices in the project they are working on, but what about the not so active choices, the ones that just happen because it looks right or because it fits the product? By putting the gendered assumptions of formgiving into the hands of the designers, I hope to generating a realisation of the (re)creation of the gender norms of society into products. I wish to put the designers in a position where they formgive wrong in relation to the norms of product aesthetics, so that the form feels unfitting or misplaced. This to expose the suggestion of how the development of products not only is an iterative design process, but also an iterative process of re-installing norms and objectives of society into the design. The end product of this project will be a workshop where the designers gets to try out how another normative agreement of product aesthetics would appear.
**AIM**

Associate Professor in Arts Linda Fagerström writes in her research project *Sex Gender and Design* how gender perspectives appears to be poorly represented within design educations.\(^1\) Both the design historical claim of whom gets to represent the designer (in comparison to similar (re)claims within the art history field), but also how focus on the designer’s role in this context is lacking, but much called for. Throughout my education I have searched for ways to express critique of gender norm using design, but also for guidance within topic. This has led me to the starting point of this thesis.

In the gender sensitive or critical product design projects that have been realized the observer is exhibited alternative ways of approach in product design. I would like to take these inspiring and challenging visuals to the hands of the designers. If designing a product is an iterative process, then I would like to give designers the haptic realization of performing an alternative outcome. Furthermore I see the end product of this thesis, the workshop both as a possible tool for working with norm critique in a design educational context, and as a professional development course for active designers. An example of such a tool which is already realized is *Nova - tools and methods for Norm creative innovation*\(^2\) and services by Add Gender.\(^3\)

In the first year of my industrial design bachelor there were various projects that put focus on the formgiving aspects of design. In two of these projects I received mentoring that expressed how I used aspects in my design which usually is not favourable within product design. In the design of the knife handle I used multiple facets which all met at one point in the rear end (figure 1). The kitchen tool was also designed with facets, but with one of them fading into a plain surfaces (figure 2). The critique of these designs concerned difficulties of production technique aspects but also the aesthetics, which was explained as not in sync with today’s product aesthetics. These comments started within me a thinking process of what the unspoken - or even spoken ‘rules’ or guidelines to favourable product aesthetics is. Which later developed into the reflection of how designers send messages with the products they design. Products tells stories, how they are told depends on aspects such as their given context,

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\(^3\) [http://www.addgender.se/](http://www.addgender.se/) [2017-04-27]
whom the user is and where they will be used. If these aspects for example are perceived as the culturally constructed category ‘feminine’ this will be revealed in the expression of the product and the status of this product will be perceived as lower than if these aspects were to reflect the culturally constructed category ‘masculine’ as professor of Design History Penny Spark expresses in As Long as It’s Pink. From this it can be concluded that there is hierarchies added to the stories that products tell, agreements of the storytelling. This leads me to my aim with this thesis project. Can I challenge how these stories are allowed to be told with an alternative normative agreement? I wish to investigate how aware the designers are of the reproductions of gender norms in product aesthetics? If the relation of the socially constructed dichotomy of ‘male’/‘female’ is assumed to be visualised in product design, and the outcome is bearing a gendered aesthetics of one of the two. Then in accordance with philosopher and gender theorist Judith Butler’s theory of performativity a crossover from the socially expected perception will challenge the prevailing norms in that it bids an alternative reality, Butler calls this the act of drag.5 If I was to generate a position where the designer creates a


My starting point for this project will be the formgiving aspects of product design, how we through the appearance mirror the product placement, the context and the user of a product. To talk about these aspect I will use the Offenbach theory of Product Language which explains that between the user and the product there are functions. These functions can be divided into practical functions and sensual functions where Gros names the later the Product Language. Within the product language these is divisions such as the the Formal Aesthetic Functions - the shape, colour, material and decor; Indication Functions - the graphics and buttons; and the Symbol Functions - the metaphors of the product (see figure 3). According to Gros all these aspect play a role in how we recognize the product as a whole, and I will use the term product language in reference to the formgiving aspects in this project. With this said I do not mean to say that these are essential gendered truths to a product, but rather that I wish to use the product language as a definition to inspect how gendered values is inscripted in products through a performative act. They are not to be seen as a measurement of each other, but rather how product language can be seen as an outcome of a performative act. From this definition of product language, another startpoint of this project will lie in the assumption that there are product languages that reflects the socially constructed dichotomy of ‘male’ and ‘female’. When talking of dichotomous relations, gender historian Yvonne Hirdman’s theory of the Gender Contract will be used to explain how hierarchy and separation illustrate how we relate to the male (superior) and the female (subordinate) elements of the dichotomy. From these dichotomous relation of product language I will look at their assumed inherent values and how they are (re)produced in relation to Butler’s theory of performativity. In her book Gender Trouble, Judith Butler talks about how gender identities are re-created through an theatrical like act, a performance of expected behaviour designated by the performers sex, gender and sexuality. Through the repetition of this act the performer both secures their own gendered belonging and the mainte-

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6 Jochen Gros and Richard Fischer have at the Academy of Art and Design Offenbach Germany since the mid 70’s developed the theory of product language which is a used to bridge and enable the aspects of theory and practise within design. http://www.hfg-offenbach.de/en/pages/product-language#about  [2017-04-26]


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nance of the normative gender identities. Butler explains her proposal of performativity in Gender trouble to be a theory of agency which does not fully account for the embodiment of the performative act nor placing it in a given time and place. Other scholars have since defined this connection between the materialization and performativity. In her paper from 2003 feminist theorist Karen Barad discusses how the linguistic aspects overrule the matter - materiality and signification, and how both 'human' and 'nonhuman' bodies gets inscribed by material-discursive practises.

"Matter is not a fixed essence; rather, matter is substance in its intra-active becoming - not a thing but a doing, a congealing of agency. And performativity is not understood as iterative citationality (Butler) but rather iterative intra-activity".10

Butler explains the act of drag as such: when we see a person performing drag, we conclude what is understood to be the biological sex as the true gender origin of that person. The gender that is performed in the act is perceived as play, an illusion or even an insincere behaviour. Even if we were to see the ‘real’ sex this would not resolve the belonging category of that person, for the ways we see and perceive in are also culturally and socially constructed. With this realization the act of drag shifts what is understood as a fixed reality into a reality which is changeable and revisable.11

Design norm critical researcher Karin Ehrnberger touches in her paper Visualising Gender Norms in Design the subject of drag - or cross dressing as she term it, as the outcome of switching the product languages of two gendered product categories.12 The drill Dolphia which displays the product language of a hand blender is as a consequence of the swap, in a European context, perceived as unfitting of perform its purpose. Here one can argue that due to its recognized cultural gender belonging, Dolphia is seen to be performing an insincere behaviour - an act of drag. But what is interesting, is that since Dolphia is an artifact there is no biological gender origin to speak of, only a constructed gendered belonging. This interpretation of the design is to be understood in a social, cultural and economical position of Scandinavia, whereas it was perceived without questioning in an Asian context.13 Therefore the social and cultural positioning will play a role in the understanding of my workshop, and I will have Scandinavian viewpoint as origin for my project.

**Methode**

The theory of performativity and the subject of gender norms can be both serious and challenging. I have developed the components of my workshop with design students and teachers at Konstfack as well as active designers through workshops and tryouts along the project. In the performance of these workshops and in the developed outcome I wish to avoid the occurrence where the participants feel that there is an expected way to act when designing, a wrong or a right way to meet the tasks. I have hence tried to asked questions and given assignments that aims to uncover the designers or design students connotation of a gender related topics. My aim with this has been to reach the iterative (performative) actions of the designers without revealing the gendered connection. As a design student, performing workshops with other design students and professional designers, I am apart of the social context I wish to analyse. I will hence use the qualitative method in this project to pursue behavioral observation. The end product - the workshop that investigates designers in relation to gender norms, be expressed as a game where the conditions and the playing will appear to be randomly selected.

**DESIGN PROCESS**

As mentioned, I will create a workshop - a game. My intention is that the game will bear the expression of classical board games such as trivial pursuit or monopoly with components as playing cards, a dices, game pieces and a booklet with the playing rules. My game will not have a game board, as it is not a competitive game but rather a instrument for insights. Instead each player will be given a lump of clay to design an artifact with. There will also be a pad of paper sheets for the purpose of documenting the design process - explaining for whom the artefact is designed. Decks of cards containing different product languages, products and contexts will guide the player through the task of designing an outcome. A dice that selects the playing progression and a booklet with the playing rules will also be provided, all this will be retained in a game box (figure 7).

**THE WORKSHOPS**

Throughout this project I have held nine workshops in total which have varied in length. Four workshops were 30 minutes long, four were 1 hour and one were 3 hours long. Three were at design companies with a total of fourteen participants, four teachers at Konstfack and sixteen students from both bachelor and master level participated in my workshops. The design companies that workshoped was Howl, Electrolux and Myra and at all occasions I visited their office. The workshops has been a way to test my concept and the different components which I use in it, and after each occasion different modifications have been done.

**THE PROJECT TITLE**

My earliest working name for this project was just a reflection of what it was meant to be: a noncritical workshop. Early thought were to capture something catchy but concies. But I had trouble coming up with such a thing, so for long there was no name. It was in conversation with one of my mentors, writer and dramaturge Pernilla Glaser, that she said "you want to try another normative agreement with your game". This matched my intentions and ideas that spun form this was: A Separate Normative Pact; Some Other Normative Agreement; Another Normative Agreement. Next it was my writing mentor, design and philosophy theorist Christian Björk that suggests a rewriting of the title: Agreements - other normatives, which I agreed upon but with a minor alteration. My title is: Agreements of other normatives, a suggestion to look...
beyond the segmented prevailing norms of product design and reflect if other perspectives would enrich product aesthetics and include for a wider identification.

COLOUR, DICEs AND CARDS

In the first prototype of this project the intention was to use a wheel that randomly selected an outcome, much like a fortune wheel. At that point the components of the game was fewer and with no division between them. Since then aspects of the game has developed to be based on dichotomous socially constructed assumptions of what is considered to be 'male' and 'female'. With this development the randomly selecting wheel got replaced with a pair of dices. The two positions that dichotomous relations provide is branched by a colour code which leads the players through the game (figure 4). In the second prototype the colours were introduced and yellow and green were chosen, for the reasons of being somewhat gender neutral within this social construction. This prototype was played in the workshop with the first year bachelor at industrial design and feedback from this occasion suggested that the yellow tone was hard to read. In conversation with Rudy Loewe, who has illustrated the context cards and choose the colour scheme for the game, purple was decided to replace the yellow. One of the dices are coloured purple and green and strokes the path which the player is to undertake in the game. Even though the game builds upon dichotomous relations there is not a path which is 'male' nor 'female' but they are both mixed. There is hence not one gender to each colour paths, this in the aspiration to have a drag outcome. The second dice is numbered one to six and decides with card to take within the colour scheme. The various components of the game will be presented on cards much like those of a deck of playing cards.

CLAY AND PLAY

As mentioned an important component to this game is the haptic realisation of the design. Images can be distinct and convincing through its communication and sketching can have a visualising dialogue depending on the skills of the designer. There are surely intuitive patterns to catch from this are as well. But I have chosen to focus on the haptic sculpting of the hands in clay. When the designer is forming the clay, movement and interaction in required. This activity engages the body in a playful way which connects the designer in an emotional and spontaneous way to the action. The immediate physical feedback of interacting with the material also sends an emotional response to the designer which professor in theoretical and applied aesthetics Cheryl Akner-Koler describes as haptic aesthetic sensitivity\(^\text{14}\). It is this playfulness and the spontaneous and emotional response of the haptics that i wish to provide the designers with. The clay that have been

\(^{14}\) Akner-Koler, C. Ranjbar, P. Integrating Sensitizing
used in the workshop has varied in the search of which type of clay I wish to use in this game. At the workshops performed at Konstfack Techclay has been used, which is a modeling wax from the car design industry (figure 5). The clay need to be heated to 50 degrees to be easily shaped and can then be moulded with sculpting tools. This clay has been ideal to use at Konstfack since it is easily accessed and well known medium among the students. But it does require constant heat or it will harden and get tough to work with. I therefore used another clay in the design-a-word workshop (which will be explained in the next paragraph), since I moved around the different departments of Konstfack asking for participation. The clay that was used was Plasticine which is a non drying oil based clay or wax that can easily be reshaped. When workshops were made outside Konstfack like the ones at Howl, Electrolux and Myra plasticine was used (figure 6).

THE PRODUCT LANGUAGE CARDS

As mentioned before I seek to avoid asking the obvious or straightforward questions in relation to gender norms. In the matter of the product language such an obvious question would be - create a form with a feminine product language. This question is straightforward and I would most likely gain an outcome that reflects what the participant would consider the socially constructed assumptions of what a feminine aesthetics would look like. But it is not their consideration of the socially constructed assumptions that I seek, but rather their intuitive and iterative actions in relation to the socially constructed assumptions. So instead I chose another course of action. An area that is still relatively segmented in the relation to gender is the occupation we hold. Even though change is progressing there are still occupations which Statistics Sweden forecast to ‘male’ and ‘female’ dominated in 2030. With this information I decided upon the occupations logistics/transportation, finances and computer science on the ‘male’ side; dental hygienist, midwife and preschool teacher on the ‘female’ side. I then gathered a wide selection of technical terms that is used within these fields of work and wrote them on small pieces of paper. Interesting to mention is that it was easy to find glossary lists of the male dominated work fields, it became a matter of what list to use among the many companies and trade unions who posted such. Whereas the glossary lists from the female dominated work fields were more challenging to find and the publications came from the municipality or other governing organ or even a parenting magazine. Here I performed what I call the Design-a-word workshop (figure 7).
I printed the words on small pieces of paper, then walked around Konstfack and asked students there to form a small lump of clay in an abstract interpretation of a given word. My expectations of the different aesthetics that the words led to was met. The words form the ‘male’ orientated occupations more often led to angular, faceted and complex shapes while the words from the ‘female’ orientated occupations more frequent where rounded, organic and soft. An early intention of mine was to use the outcome of this workshop to determine shapes that would display ‘female’ and ‘male’ product languages. I would then use these shapes as determined product languages game pieces which would be selected by the dice. But what I found in the Design-a-word workshop was that the designers interpretations of the words was more interesting that any shapes I would determine as consequences of them. So instead I decided to select twelve words, six from each of the dichotomously dominated work fields to be used as input in the game. I chose among all the selected words and decided upon categorised that would work as topics to mirror each side of the dichotomy in some way. The categories and words I chose were; a process - Diapering and Conveyancing; a method - Indexation and Pedagogy; production - Gutta Percha and Mass Customization; handling work - Unitization and Embryo Transfer; a specification - Halitosis and Code base; a measurement - Bitwise Operator and Fetal Heart Sound (Figure 9).

The font used for the game is chosen in the separatist ambition to promote female designers. I used art director Kimberly Ihre’s platform Typequality which was her graduation project for Beckmans College of Design, where typefaces made by females is collected. I chose the font Slurm, created by Czech type designer Nikola Klímová in 2014.

**PRICE/PRODUCTION**

A component to the paying progression which I have debated whether to use or not is price and production levels. When looking at this aspect from a gender hierarchy perspective the price can play a vital role in how the the product language is expressed. As Ehrnberger describes "There are many examples where a masculine product language is used to communicate superiority. These products are described with superior adjectives such as professional, exclusive or intelligent. More simple and cheaper versions of the same product category tend to adopt a more ‘feminine’, often bordering on childish expression”.

From this we can conclude that the hierarchy and separation that Hirdmant talks

16 http://typequality.com/ [2017-04-13]

about in the gender system also can be understood to work in products. With this in mind, the aspect of price would play a vital role in how products are expressed and therefore be of relevance in my playing progression. Another aspect of my game is to inspire to playfulness and express unexpected forms and design choices to reveal how design could look - other normatives. One participant of the Howl workshop made the comparison of playing my game to making a quick life drawing, it opens up for creative playfulness. What I have found is that the price and production aspect reduces this playfulness with active designers when it too much resemble the reality of a design project. Here the two aspects clashes, or at least the position of the designer participation in my workshop affects the reception of the price and production condition. For active designers the aspect of production series and the end product price are defining components of the design process. If I which to separate them from this reality and enter a playful environment with me, then it is possible that this aspect hold them back from the discovery of other normatives. But on the other hand if I wish to highlight the patterns in which I imply they are steering, then the aspect of price/production might reinforce this. Here different paths or progressions to the game starts to reveal depending on desired outcome or insights. Therefore three card with price

THE CONTEXTS CARDS

This is aiming at an aspect which plays a crucial role in how artefacts is designed, namely where the product will operate - its context. My game has throughout its concept built on the dichotomous relations of what is considered to be 'female' and 'male' with the purpose to reveal how such stereotypical assumptions is manifested in products. When it comes to the component of contexts, I have chosen a different take on these relations. The contexts in my game also build on dichotomous relations, but instead on what is to be 'expected' of the sexes, it displays behaviour or expressions that could be considered as trespasses from what the norms suggest. On the 'male' side I chose the contexts of; 

Erectile Dysfunction, Balding and Scrawny as physical unwanted attributes that suggests an 'unmanliness'. Hesitant and Showing Emotions are used to illustrate character traits that deviate from a stereotyped 'macho masculinity'. Lastly Dieting is drawing from the same stereotype as an unwanted action. On the 'female' side Menstrual Blood, Unshaven Armpits and Big Boned portraits unwanted attributes that suggests 'un-femininity'. I chose the words Heartless - like a female disney villain, and Taking Space - a loud and dominant person as traits on

the ‘female’ side. *Boot Camp* is used to illustrate a ‘non-feminine’ action. An observant reader will notice that the actions and traits are crossovers from what is expected or accepted of the opposite sex, with the exceptions of menstrual blood and erektile dysfunktion that are tied to biological features of the sexes. It can also be argued that big boned is unwanted by both the sexes, especially in the health aware times we live in. But I would like to argue that it is more greatly accepted and sometimes even glorified among ‘men’ to be big boned. These crossovers goes in line with my aim to explore the possibilities to challenge gender norms within product design with the act of drag. But when presented as words they can easily be recognised as the opposite, to be apart of the stereotype. These words will therefore be presented as illustrations made by Rudy Loewe form the visual communication master at Konstfack (figure 10). Rudy works norm critical in their illustration work with a focus on intersectionality, class, gender and hetereo安全性 and was one of the founders of Brown Island at Konstfack. Brown Island “...is a resistance towards the white hetereo-normative environment, creating a space curated by and for people of colour” 18

I am very happy for the collaboration with Rudy and I feel that their work will enrich my design proposal. So how does this go in line with the space in which a product will operate? That is not very clear, which is exactly my aim. With the contexts in my game I wish to mess things around for the designers. With the suggestion that the contexts they work with in general actually are socially constructed standards of how things should be. If we look beyond these norms we might find other ways of being, doing or perceiving things.

**THE PRODUCT CARDS**

With this title I am aiming at the artefacts that are to be designed in the game. as previously mentioned Ehrnberger talks about product languages in relation to Hirdmans Gender Contract and how the ‘male’ side can be understood as superior to the ‘female’. By this follows that products that are aimed for ‘men’ are described as professional, exclusive, power tools with complex and faceted shapes in dark colours. The products aimed at ‘women’ are presented as soft, beautiful, home appliances in organic shapes with bright colours and decorative decor. 19

Interesting to mention is that the ‘male’ products also bear decor but it is rarely perceived as such. In the ‘male’ category the decor is often camouflaged as functio-

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18 https://www.konstfack.se/Aktuellt/Kalender/2017/Brown-Island/ [2017-04-27]

nal additions as an extra ventilation hole or angular patterns in the gripping area to display performance. According to these relations I have chosen products that display these conditions. On the ‘male’ side; a hot air gun, bbq tong, leaf blower, car key, sanding machine and a gun. On the ‘female’ side I chose; a hair straightener, food processor, hairdryer, sewing machine, electric mixer and a breast milk pump (Figure 11). My attempt is that the game through its progression will put these according to the social construction ‘stereotyped’ products and their product languages in a crossover to the other dichotomous side, so that the artifacts will perform an act of drag.

**The Personas**

When thinking of the task I assign the participants of my game I realised that it is not only the haptic creations in clay they make that I am interested in, but also who it is in their mind they are designing for. Judith Butler writes in *Gender Trouble*;

“There is no gender identity behind the expression of gender; that identity is performatively constituted by the very “expressions” that are said to be its results”\(^{20}\)


My interpretation of this statement in relation to my game, is that the product language the designers is creating will be reflected in the gender of the designated user, e.g. a ‘male’ product language will consequence in a ‘male’ user. To gather output on this matter, I decided to formulate a way for the designers to document this for me. Therefore I designed a form to be filled out as the last step of the workshop. I choose upon the questions; name, age, occupation, residence and about where the designer could write freely about the user for this form. Along with this I drew four different head shapes that the designers could choose among and then illustrate how their designated user would look. The head shapes varied in shape to account for various expressions but with one thing in common, all the shapes came from an illustration of ‘female’ facial forms. So regardless if a shape was considered to be ‘manly’ it’s origin was ‘female’ suggesting a disruption concerning the idea of gendered facial shapes. After performing the workshop five times I decided that the personas needed a further development, mainly because the about question was challenging and time consuming for the designers fill out. I want to provide a quick and easy way for the designers to describe their user, to get the intuitive answers of what the design suggests. I researched how service design personas are formulated and found that more precise questions, quotes and scales often were used. In the personas I have chosen to move away the socially constructed

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*figure 12. The Persona*

*figure 13. The Product cards*
normative dichotomous assumptions otherwise used in the aspects of the game, this as mentioned before to gather the designers own intuitive interpretation from the designs they have made. My final personas contains the questions; name, age, occupation, residence in the first column, followed by a quote, then five scales describing the personality of the user and lastly three reasons to use/buy product (Figure 12). My main area of interest among these questions is the name to interpret the gender of the user, and the reasons for using/buying the product to get an idea of the relation this user have to the product.

THE GAME BOX

As mentioned in the introducing text about the design process, games like Monopoly or Trivial Pursuit are idea images of how my game might be expressed. For long I saw the container of my game like a classical box similar to those mentioned. I pictured it to be a printed carton with the game title and maybe one of Rudy’s illustrations on it. But as the game developed and grew in its components and complexity, this idea of the box shrunk to feel deficient in communicating my ambitions. I received the mentoring advice to think outside the box of how a game and its box is expected to be presented. This led to a creative blast that ended in teddy bears, robots, metal trays and silk fabric pieces. I discarded these ideas as a bit too loud and that they would overpower the overall concept and intention of the game, but they brought a previous idea to mind. In Sex Gender and Design, Fagerström talks about how hierarchies and separation (Hirdman) acts among the different fields of design. Carpentry and metalwork are seen as more ‘masculine’ traits while textiles and pottery are considered ‘feminine’. Also industrial design is considered to be a more ‘masculine’ profession. These assumptions falls fittingly in line with the dichotomous relations that I have been working with throughout the project and my box will therefore represent the ‘masculine’ woodwork, ‘feminine’ textile work and lastly some plastic fantastic - the industrial designer. The bottom of the box is a wooden frame of thin plywood stapled together much like a fruit box. The lid is a piece of fabric that has some letters of the title tufted with yarn and the rest sprayed on with the font used in the project, together they make out the title Agreements of other Normatives. The fabric (but not the yarn) is made solid with epoxy glue. The interior of the box is a vacuum suctioned plastic mold that holds the game’s contents (Figure 13).

**HOW TO PLAY**

The first playing progression of this game came about as the design-a-word workshop developed. As I came to the insight of how engaging each designer’s interpretation of a word was, this became a starting point for the game. The game contains of three decks of cards; Product Language, Product and Context. The designers are first asked to roll the colour dice to see which colour code to follow for the progression of the game. After this the second dice with numbers is rolled to indicate which card within the given colour code to pick from the Product Language deck. Depending on the length of the workshop a time frame is given to interpret the word on the card in a smaller lump of clay, for a one hour workshop 10 - 15 minutes is given. This interpretation of the word will represent the Product Language that is to be used in the next step.

A second time the numbered dice will be rolled to indicate which card within the given colour code to pick from the Product Language deck. Depending on the length of the workshop a time frame is given to interpret the word on the card in a smaller lump of clay, for a one hour workshop 10 - 15 minutes is given. This interpretation of the word will represent the Product Language that is to be used in the next step.

rolls and the Context will be requested to be implemented in the design as well. If the aspect of price and production is requested to be used, here could be a good time to implement this by a strike of the dice. After the 35 minutes have expired the work in clay is done. Next the designers are asked to describe who would be interested in buying or using this product. The four different pads with Personas are provided and the designers chose which face matched their idea of the user/buyer. They are now given 10 minutes to fill out the personas and drew an image of how they look. Lastly a brief presentation of the product and the persona is given by each designer to share what they have made. Here the game is finished and reflections and discussions of the topic is shared.

Along with performing workshops of the game, other ways to play has drawn on my and two more progressions to the game have come about. The second way to play came about when I found the joy and will to let go and just have fun with the game. It is a way to play where the outcome might be something rather silly but yet intriguing. In this progression the designer will have to express a Word and a Context in the first lump of clay, for this 15 minutes will be given. In the next step the Artefact will be selected and designed with the product language created by a Word and a Context. This task will have the time frame of about 25 minutes and will be followed by the Persona task and a small presentation of the creation. In this progression the aspect of price and production series is unfitting to use, when the aim is to escape the realities of design and play freely.

A third progression came to mind when I found that many bring awareness to the table when they start filling out the Personas. Regardless of how things have previously been designed in relation to the socially constructed norms the Personas brought out many Kim’s, Alex’s and Robin’s. I interpret this as a conation to act ‘correctly’ and would like to explore this further. Therefor the last way to play this game starts with the Personas. The designers are asked to select and describe who they will design for, very much like the target groups of real projects. After this a Context is given followed by a Product Language. The word on the Product Language card can here be understood as research for the upcoming product. Last the Artefact will be introduced and designed with the new bigger lump of clay. To summarize a presentation of the design and Persona will be performed.
I can not make these statements concerning the materials. I see these two aspects as linked, the prototype be more refined then the message might have come across clearer. But I also believe that there is an aspect of provocation in my statement which generates this opposition. I do not claim to make statements about essential gendered belongings of materials, but rather to air the question of how different materials by the preformative act of social constructions, can be understood as marked by gendered segmentations. The strong opposition of my display could therefore be understood as justification of the very statement.

By placing this drag action in the hands of the designers, would this make them realise their responsibilities of generating the performative outcome? This question stands in relation to the previous one where the designer were rather aware of how gender norms are expressed in product, but as mentioned felt it somewhat outside their power to assess the matter. An indication of felt responsibilities in the matter could be the suggestion of other possible participants for the workshop, but this could also be seen as shifting focus from the own liability. I judge the discussions that followed the workshops of the responsibilities of designers and how to address the topic as indications that designer do feel accountable for the designed outcomes. The importance of addressing the matter through workshops like mine or likewise was expressed and can also be understood as felt accountability.

If reconnecting to the questions in my aim - If I was to generate a position where the designer creates a drag outcome - the opposite of the socially expected, would this challenge the gender norms aesthetics within product design? the reflection of how to put focus in this question becomes relevant. It can be considered whether it has been the product language or the persona that has generated the most reflection among the designers. I would argue that it is the combination of the both. A persona without a form to weigh it against, and vice versa would not have caused the position for reflection in my game. This also refers to the design belief that a product need to be understood not only by its aesthetics but also in reference to its context and designated user. So is it the designed outcome (the opposite of the socially expected) or the process (generate a position) that is of relevance in my question, this is not clear. Early in my project much focus were on the drag outcome, but throughout the journey of refining this project more emphasis has come to the process of getting there. They both go hand in hand, but I believe that it is the generated position - the process which introduces a spot that challenges the norms - the performative act.
The card categories

Designer in action

PERSONAS

Designer in action

Personas results
The starting lump of clay

Designer in action

OTHER DESIGN NORMATIVES

The designed outcomes
A busy table during the exhibition

dr Ehrnbeger and Loove Broms playing during the exhibition

The exhibition space during the degree show
Me and two young participants

The tables for playing during the degree show

Wall for posting the Persona results at the exhibition
Further Questions

In close relation to the questions in this project of gender and performative actions, the topic of the designers origin, social and economic position in society becomes important. This has a close relation to the subject of taste and who gets to manifest what ‘good taste’ looks like. Is there a “We” as designers in Sweden - a homogeneous collective whom defines what is ‘good taste’ and how that is expressed?

Building on the previous question, the workshop has in this project been played with designers. I see it as highly possible to play this with other segments in the design chain as marketing, distributors, the directors but mostly the buyers. If I was to play with the public, the once that buy and use the products, could I start a wider discussion of gender in product aesthetics? With this focus shift from the arguably segmented and privileged group of swedish designers to a more multicultural public account to mirror for aspects such as cultural references and class - a more intersectional perspective?

A discussion that have been both in media and social media lately is the topic of cultural appropriation. Often in relation to halloween costumes, but also in the context of fashion design. Is there cultural appropriation in product design? And how is it manifested?

If assuming as I have in this project the socially constructed product languages of ‘male’ and ‘female’ the the question arises of what to ‘name’ the outcomes of my workshops, would they be assumed as ‘non-binary’ product languages? If so what would be the adjectives to describe their definition? Is such a classification relevant to make or does it merely positions something as outside the norm?
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