

Materials of Fashion

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Principles
to
Hybrid
Practices

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Textile Patterns: Exploring Identity, Culture, and Design

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Introduction

When discussing identity, our initial thoughts often gravitate towards one's place of origin. However, delving deeper into the subject reveals that cultural and individual identities encompass much more than mere geographic roots. To comprehend one's identity on a design level and incorporate it into the development of textile materials and designs, it is essential to engage with the individual layers that shape us throughout different stages of life. With this in mind, we conducted a workshop focusing on participants' own identities and how they influence their preferences and approaches to textiles. The task was to weave something on a small loom that would reflect their personal identity. We approached this theme in three steps.

Step 1: Personal Information and Social Environment

In the initial step, participants spontaneously shared details about themselves, such as their name, education, place of origin, and social environment. These standard pieces of information—name, education, origin, and family—provide insights that are relevant for understanding oneself and establishing a sense of order in a community. They reflect what the community deems important to know about a new member to facilitate successful communication. While these descriptions may seem trivial, they implicitly reveal certain criteria for design and our roles within the group.

Step 2: Personal Aspirations and Inspirations

The second step focused on exploring what participants aspire to embody and the influences that have shaped their development. This exploration often brought forth specific moments or experiences that have had a profound impact on their lives. General topics like music genres, political or sexual affiliations also played a significant role, introducing new nuances in the portrayal of their personalities. Terms such as a cozy living room, a view of the sea, traveling, relationships, or even the summer heat or cold emerged during these discussions.

Step 3: Reflection and Implementation

In the final step, we attempted to incorporate the identified parameters into the woven patterns and material choices. The goal was to find a connection between personal identity and the design process. However, when translating personal identity into design criteria, individuals often opted for more abstract, socially readable, or seemingly relevant state-

ments, abandoning the uniqueness of their own identity. Discussions about personal appearance and the desired perception of oneself revealed different motivations than those considered relevant for their own work. Despite the clear focus on adjusting self-presentation to fit societal expectations, there were still individual factors influenced by previous experiences that shaped their approach. Statements suggesting adherence to societal norms of body aesthetics, such as “I wear black to conceal” or “I only wear second-hand for the environment’s sake,” were common. However, the definition of inconspicuousness varied greatly depending on one’s social environment.

The Importance of Understanding Identity for Designers

By engaging with their own identity, designers gain a clearer understanding of their design criteria. They can explain why certain aspects of the creative process feel natural while others may be challenging or unappealing. Aesthetic judgments of right/wrong, novelty, or unremarkable qualities change with life phases, origins, and societal contexts. Moreover, a deep understanding of personal background allows designers to better control and comprehend the political and cultural implications of their work. Often, we assume certain things to be universally applicable or representative of a zeitgeist without questioning why. It is important to recognize that these assumptions hold validity only within specific cultural and contextual frameworks, which can differ significantly due to personal backgrounds and associated emotions. Understanding these levels of identity enables patterns to convey an identity and cultural identification, effectively reaching and resonating with their intended audience.

Conclusion

In this exploration of identity, culture, and design through textile patterns, we have highlighted the significance of understanding and incorporating identity within the design process. The workshop conducted at University of the Arts Bremen provided valuable insights into the layers that shape personal and cultural identities. By engaging with personal information and social environments, participants gained a deeper understanding of the factors that influence their design choices. The exploration of personal aspirations and inspirations shed light on the transformative experiences and preferences that shape individuals’ creative expressions. Through reflection and implementation, participants attempted to bridge the gap between personal identity and design criteria, sometimes conforming to societal expectations, but also challenging conventional norms.

IMAGE-94

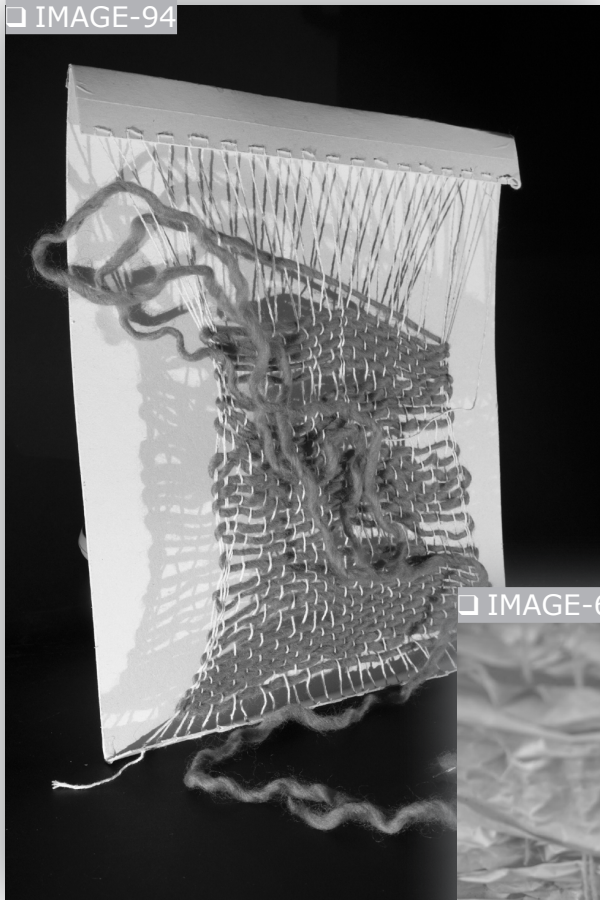


IMAGE-6



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IMAGE-9

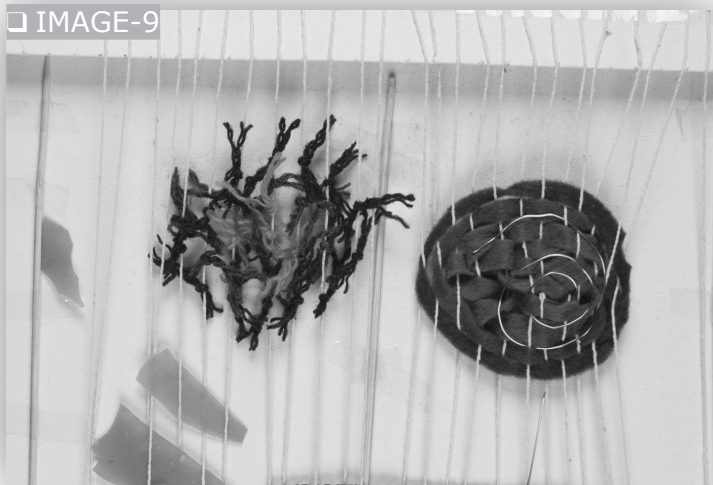
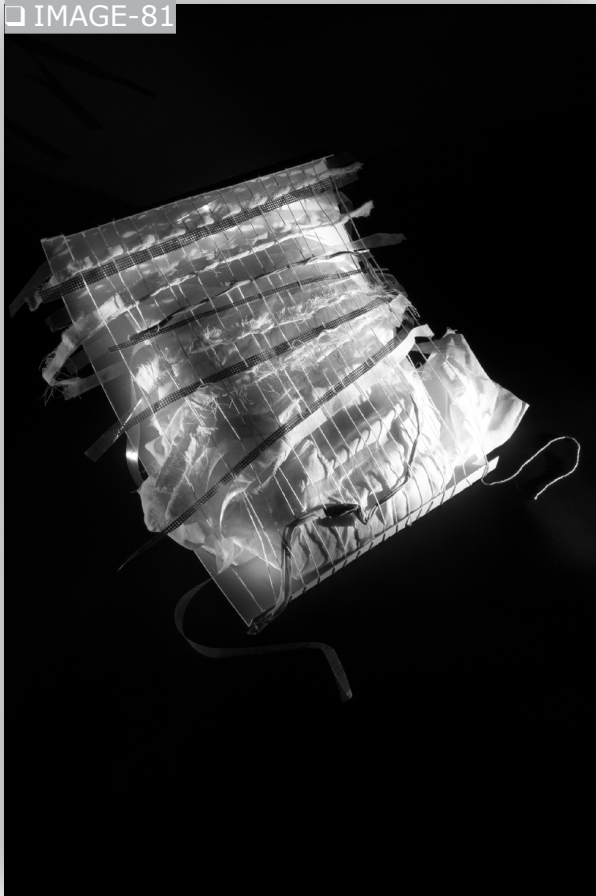


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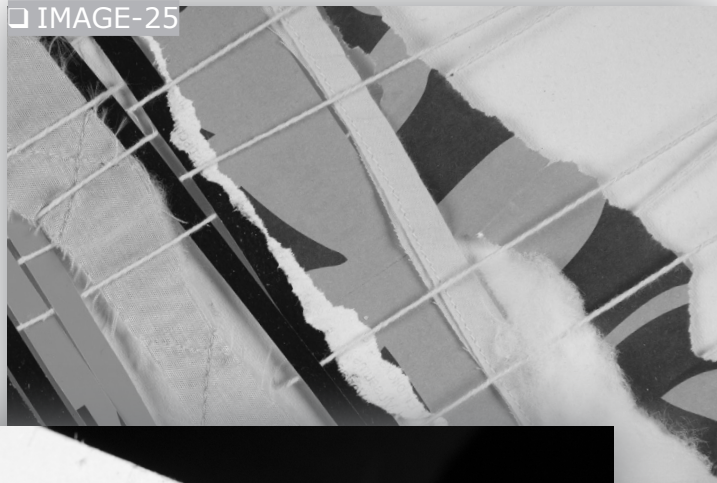


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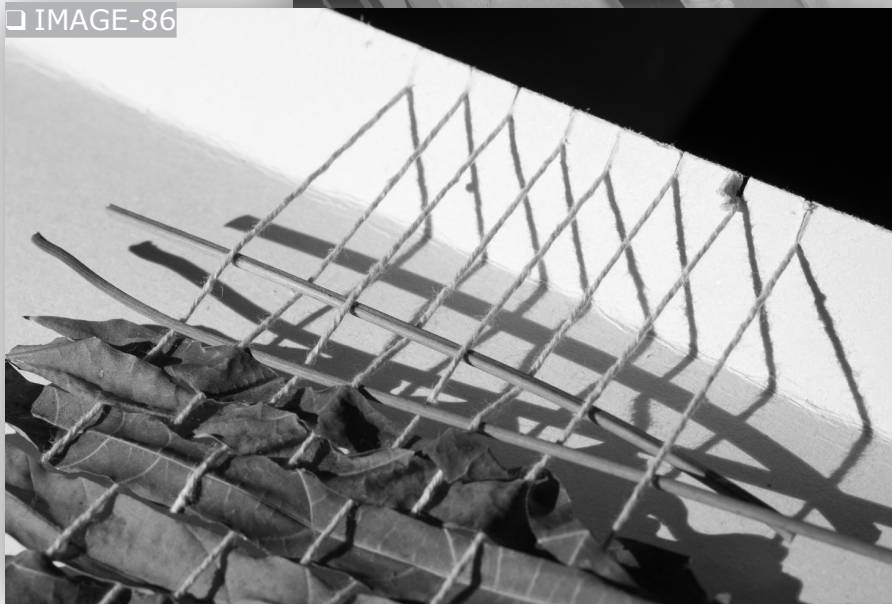
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IMAGE-22

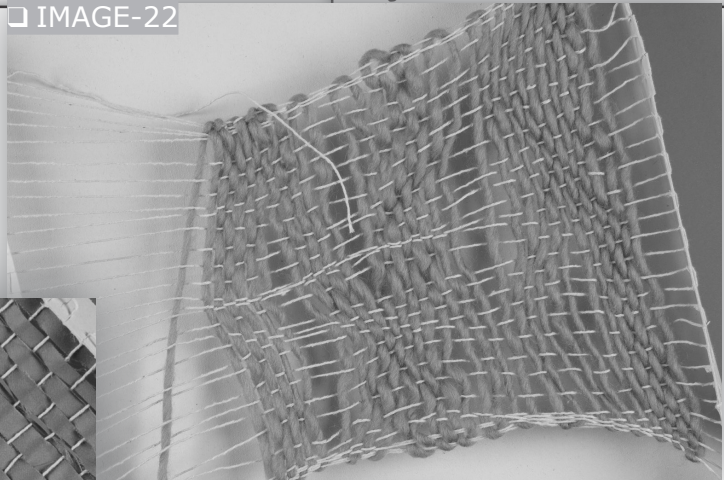
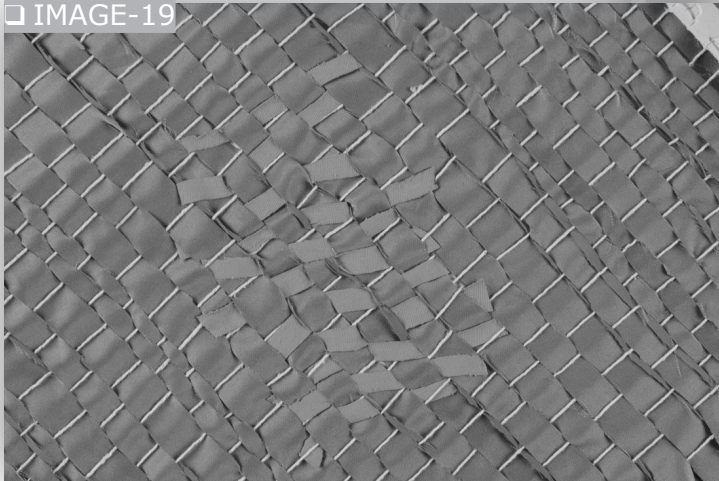


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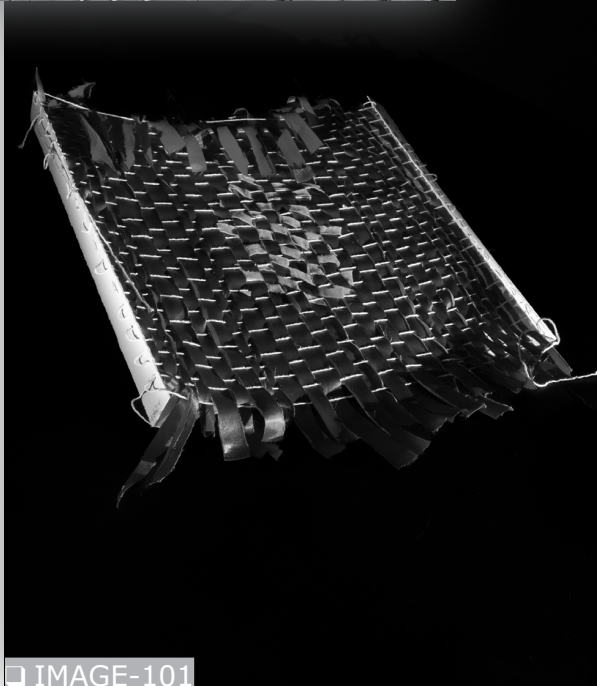


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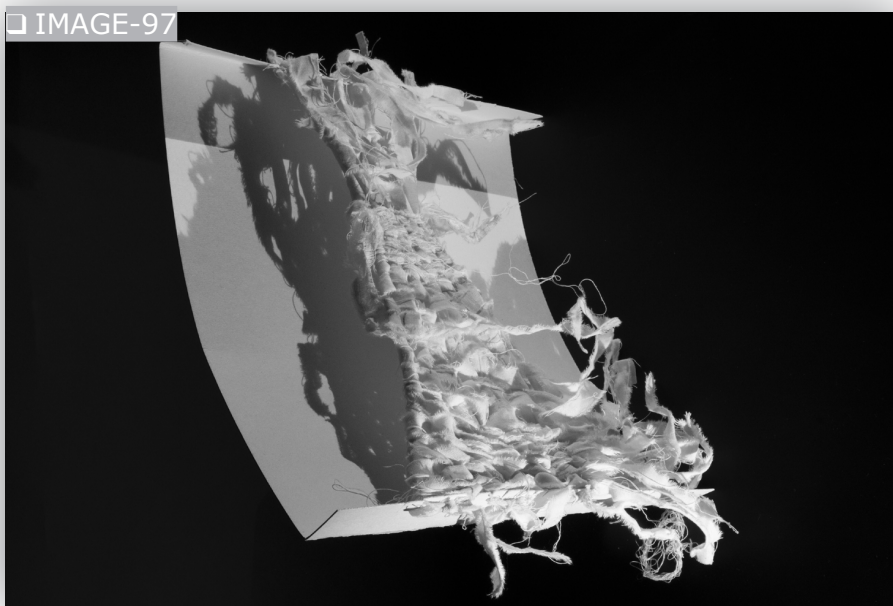
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