/ˈfluːɪd/ Design

Towards an inclusive fashion retail

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ABSTRACT

/ˈfluːɪd/ is a project that explores the retail part of the fashion world. By creating an inclusive shopping experience, this project aims to escape the binary world of clothing stores. Working with second-hand pieces, the goal is not to create new garments, but to give everyone access to the full spectrum of clothes. In that way, /ˈfluːɪd/ aspires to provide a safe place which inspires self-expression and stimulates individuality as well as a sense of togetherness.

Fluidity being the core concept, the proposal addresses different matters, such as gender, size and audacity. To implement gender fluidity, there will not be any gender categorization, but the clothes will be sorted by colors only. Getting rid of the existing labels and producing a new flexible size chart will initiate a personalized experience and harmonized the systems between the different brands. Designing /ˈfluːɪd/ is designing both an experience and a physical space, to provide a place which encourages anyone to express themself in public.

You can check Konstfack's 2020 graduation website for updates about /ˈfluːɪd/

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INTRODUCTION

As long as I remember I loved to help my mother shop for new clothes. I was not so much interested in fashion, but I loved how the women's department was always so generous and diverse. However, I never considered once trying on any of those clothes, because they were meant for women, and I was a man, a boy. I always saw this division as an ultimate rule. Why would someone ever go against it?
I have always thought than women's clothes were more interesting than the men's clothes, more colours, more patterns, more textures, more choices. I just accepted things as they were and never thought about defying the binary fashion division.

But the perception of gender as evolved since. We know now that gender is not in fact binary, but there is a range of genders in between woman and man.[1] We also know that gender is not a fixed thing but it's a fluid concept which is bend to evolve. But somehow, the fashion retail world hasn't broken free from it's binary categorization. There is some initiatives like unisex brands which create genderless clothes. To me this is not the solution to promote self expression. Because I do not think the problem comes from the lack of clothes, I think it comes from how the clothes are sold and presented in gender sections. I believe that if everyone would have access to all the clothes, then it would be easier to express ourselves freely. But how does one express gender fluidity?

I am aware that this comes from a very personal experience, but it happens that I am not the only one that shares this thoughts and believe that clothing stores could benefit from a more fluid approach. And again, the rise of unisex clothing is a prove that there is a need for change in the clothing world, but creating something new is not always the solution, sometimes you need to change the system, not the product. And that is my goal.
I want to rethink the way clothes are sold and displayed. I want to create a fluid clothing store experience. I want to create a safe environment which promotes self expression and encourages people to dare to wear things which are outside of what is expected for them to wear. This is why I am focusing on physical retail. The experience of trying on the clothes, and appreciating the benefits of an inclusive environment are the key elements to my project.

I want to introduce a term which I will use all along my thesis: gender disruption. This is a term which I chose to describe a moment when ones expression does not match the society's expectations. Because gender is a social construct, there are expectation on how gender should be expressed. But there is an increasing will to break free of those expectations and have a more fluid appearance. Expressing gender in a non-conforming way is what I call gender disruption. The term gender fluid will also be prefered in this text instead of non-binary or gender neutral, because it asserts the fact that gender is not a fix concept.

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[1] Hines Sally, *Is Gender Fluid?: A Primer for the 21st Century*, 2018.

Coming back to my project, I want to work on a gender fluid environment, and I want to work on a more inclusive and fluid size chart. Fluidity being the main concept throughout the entire project. Fluid age, fluid style, fluid expression.. It's an experience based on individuality. However this project is meant to bring people together towards a common goal, make fashion more fluid and inclusive, promote self expression. As I wrote earlier, I don't want to create new clothes, I want to work with existing clothes as I believe that there is enough garments to allow oneself to express if one have access to all the options. So I will work with second hand clothes, to focus more on the setting in which they are sold.

As my entry point for this project was gender, and most specifically gender expression, I want to get a closer look at gender expression, under two different lights. But as I am mostly interested now in the non-conventional way to express gender, this will be my main thread all along this text. So first I want to look at non conforming gender expression from a performative point of view and look at how it was used in the origin of theatre to the mainstream scene of RuPaul Drag Race.

Secondly, I want to look at gender expression in our daily life. Looking at the past and how gender signifiers have drastically shifted throughout the history. I also want to get a closer look at the unisex clothes and the gender-neutral phenomenon.

Then I want to describe my project and the points I will try to focus on. I will explain my choices and try to present this as a solution to inspire others to build safer shopping environments. I will focus on labels, sizes and display but I do not want to diminish other parts, such as the changing rooms for example. I will try to go through my entire process so people can discuss what could be relevant for them to create a more inclusive space to sell clothes.

GENDER DISRUPTION
Gender Disruption and Performance

"The view that gender is performative sought to show that what we take to be an internal essence of gender is manufactured through a sustained set of acts, posited through the gendered stylization of the body."[2]

Judith Butler affirms that gender is a performance, that it is a social construct which should be seen as unrelated to sexuality. I do agree and I think that it's important to understand not only the difference between sexuality and gender but also the different layers of gender.

Indeed, gender identity and gender expression are two different concepts that should not be seen as one. Your identity is how you feel and your expression is what you express. And if those two things often relate to each other, sometimes they differ and that should not be a problem. This is what I call gender disruption, when identity and expression does not match. We can see this phenomenon of gender disruption being used for comedic purposes in the performative world, in theatre and cinema, but before having a look at how it is used now, I want to dive in the origins of gender disruption.

Originally, it was used for very practical reason in the birth of theatre. And to understand where this phenomenon comes from we must look at the origin of the concept of gender. Indeed there are two main influences that constructed gender, religion and medicine. During the classical greece, philosophers like Plato or Hippocrates paved the way we looked at medicine for a very long time. To them, women were unfinished men. A weaker version in need of supervision. And religion saw two distinct gender Adam and Eve, but also depicted women as less than men.

They were rites to share the greek mythologies carried out mostly by woman, but when those rites were transferred on to a proper stage and became theatre, women were not allowed to perform.[3] They were banished from the stage because it was seen as dangerous to have a woman on stage. Indeed they fear that the men from the audience would be too tempted by this evil attractions women represented on stage. So, to counter this evilness, all the women roles were played by men. And this rule remain throughout time, the first official actress seen on stage was in the mid 16th century in Italy for the first know *commedia dell'arte*. And if by the end of the 16th century, the ban against women on stage was lifted in Italy, it was still active in the rest of Europe.

France and Spain saw their first woman on stage in the early 17th century, but England had to wait until 1660. Indeed, Shakespeare had complex female role that disguised themselves as men. Those roles being written to be played by men, resulting in a amount of gender layers too complex for the audience to follow… Parallely, the forbiddance of castra in the

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[2] Butler Judith,*Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, 1999, (page xv).
[3] Degaine André, *Histoire du théâtre dessinée: de la préhistoire à nos jours, tous les temps et tous les pays*, 2000.

opera called for woman to start performing as singer on stage. Which slowly spread to actresses in the theatre.[4]

Of course this is an very brief summary of the history of female depiction in theatre, but I just want to show that for a long time only men were allowed to play women on stage. However, outside of the official performing sphere, cross-dressing was severely punished as it was seen as a perversion of masculinity and a sign of degeneration. It was only allowed to play with gender on stage and only by men…

If it is not as extreme today, there is still a difference of perception of gender disruption between performance and the daily life. Indeed, there are countless of movies that are using gender disruption as a comedic tool. I separate movies that plays with gender for comedic purposes and movies that depict the life of people exploring their gender identity as they relate more to daily life than performance. So, If we look at movie such as *Some like it hot* (1959), *Hairspray* (1988 & 2007), *Ms Doubtfire* (1993)*,* or *Big Momma's House* (2000).[5] First we notice that those are only movies about men impersonating woman. There are many other movies based on the very same concept for comedic purposes. However when it comes to women playing male role as the main concept for a movie, there is as far as I know of *Girls Will Be Boys* (1934) or *She's the Man* (2006).[6] We can also consider the animated disney movie *Mulan* (1998), and the movie *Victor/Victoria* (1982) worth mentioning as it is about a woman impersonating a man who is impersonating a woman.[7]

There are other movies where you can see woman impersonating men but it's only for a short period of time and often for other than comedic purposes, for example when it's used as a disguise by a spy like in the movie *Salt* (2010).[8] Sometimes, gender disruption is used in movie as a way to depict some real life situation, I will come to those one at the end of this chapter. I am not sure why a men crossdressing as a woman is more popular in the performing arts. There is definitely the power structures to blame. A man disguised as a woman is seen as funny because it's demeaning and humiliating. But a woman disguised as a man is empowering and gives more credibility to the character.

However, the drag scene will tell you otherwise. Because the art of gender-bending is best represented by the art of drag. Unfortunately, drag is still a male dominated art form, but ask any drag performer and they will tell you how empowering it is to perform as an amplified woman or any amplified gender. This gender-bending art that is drag is very interesting as it opens up about ways to express gender. And if drag started as a very rigorous art where a man has to perform as a woman, it has evolve today and the rules are blurred.[9] There is today as many definitions of drag as drag artists, and I tend to believe that drag is only about

[4] Fairchilds Cissie, *Women in Early Modern Europe , 1500-1700*, 2007.
[5] Some like it hot (1959), Wilder Billy, Mirisch Company.
  Hairspray (1988), Waters John, Stanley F. Buchthal, Robert Shaye Production.
  Ms Doubtfire (1993), Columbus Chris, 20th Century Fox.
  Big Momma's House (2000), Gosnell Raja, 20th Century Fox.
[6] Girls Will Be Boys (1934), Varnel Marcel, British International Pictures (BIP).
  She's the Man (2006), Fickman Andy, DreamWorks Pictures.
[7] Mulan (1998), Cook Barry and Bancroft Tony, Walt Disney Pictures.
  Victor/Victoria (1982), Edwards Blake, Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.
[8] Salt (2010), Noyce Philip, Columbia Pictures.
[9] Doonan Simon, *Drag: The Complete Story (A Look at the History and Culture of Drag)*, 2019.

accentuating features to build a character. Some drag performers do not even use gender identifier and become genderfluid creatures.

Drag today is to me a good representation of the fluidity of gender. And even on mainstream drag platforms such as RuPaul Drag Race, there is an improvement in the understanding of what drag is, and what it can be.[10] From a very conservative way to see drag as a man dressing up as a woman to a more fluid take on drag, with for example trans woman being praised drag queen or man changing from girly drag to boyish drag during a performance. This platform has turned Drag into a very popularized and acclaimed performing art. And it is nice to see the definition of this art evolving, and hopefully that will have repercussions on how people perceive gender expression in the daily life. Because that would, in the end, help to break free from our current power structures.

I don't want to enter the details of the power structure of gender, because it is not the core matter of my exploration and it is an extensive question. But my goal was to point out how the performing scene is the exact opposite of the daily life when it comes to gender disruption. Indeed, men performing as women are praised and used as main characters, when women performing as men are overlooked and only make side characters. In the daily life, it's the complete opposite. Indeed, a woman who dresses manly is generally well received, worst case scenario people might make assumptions on her sexuality. Now, a man dressing femininely is far from accepted, his sexuality will definitely be questioned, and he will be considered as weak. This is another result from the power structure in place, putting men above women. And if this power structure affect both the performance world and the daily life, maybe the shift from the performative world will result in a shift in the daily life.

And, the performative world plays its part in educating people about gender disruption, using real life situation as inspiration for dramatic movies. Indeed, looking at movies like *The Danish Girl* (2015), we see a man dressing as a woman, not for comedic purposes, but because we wants to become a woman.[11] The are other movies portraying transgender characters, such as *Boys don't cry* (1999), *Transamerica* (2005) or *Tomboy* (2011).[12] In any of those movies you can see the struggles that every transgender person have to go through to live their truth. I am aware that being transgender is a gender identity, not a gender expression, therefore not the context of my project, but I believe that more acceptance towards one will affect the entire aspect of gender. There are however only few movies showing characters playing with gender expression without having sexuality as a core, such as *The Rocky Horror Picture Show* (1975) or *Freak Show* (2018).[13]

But now I want to show how irrational this fear of gender expression is by looking at how the norms of gender identifier has change all over time in the daily life.

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[10] Rupaul's Drag Race (2009-present), Murray Nick, World of Wonder.
[11] The Danish Girl (2015), Hooper Tom, Working Title.
[12] Boys don't cry (1999), Peirce Kimberly, Hart-Sharp Entertainment.
  Transamerica (2005), Tucker Duncan, The Weinstein Company.
  Tomboy (2011), Sciamma Céline, Pyramide Distribution.
[13] The Rocky Horror Picture Show (1975), Sharman Jim, Michael White Productions.
  Freak Show (2018), Styler Trudie, Flower Films.

Gender Disruption and Daily Life

"Mixing and matching, let alone switching, the signs a culture uses to distinguish gender spells danger. If essence of gender can be simulated through wigs, props, gestures, costumes, cross-dressing implies that it is not an essence at all, but an unstable construct."[14]

The concepts of masculinity and femininity are not as fixed as they seem. Indeed, today those notions refer to specific images but they are not as stable as people tend to believe.
Looking at the past we will see how the images and symbols of gender have changed.
A perfect example is the story of high heels.[15] Surprisingly, heels were first design for both men and women. We can see traces of heels in the ancient Egypt, when the nobility, both men and women, wore leather heels to appear taller than the people which were barefoot. Later, during the classical greece, platform shoes were used by actors to differentiate the social classes they were impersonating on stage. The taller the shoe, the higher the status.

Then, back in the 15th century in Persia, cavalier wore heels to secure their feet in the stirrups. As the migrants brought the trend to Europe, the male aristocrats started to wear them to look taller and more magnificent. Then came the chopine, a very high platform-like shoes that were wear by European women. Of course the impracticality of those shoes made then wearable only by the non working upper-class women. However, men did not stop to wear heels yet. Indeed, in the late 17th century, the french king Louis XIV, introduced the red heels with red soles to his court.

As the heels were popularized and wore by the people in general, a differentiation between men's heels and women's hells appeared. Men's one being large and women's one thin. But during the Enlightenment period, men stopped wearing heels in Europe as the fashion trend went for a more comfortable and practical style. So as time pass, heels started to get associated with femininity and then less associated with men or status. But by the end of the 18th century women followed men's trend and stopped wearing heels as well. Heels only came back in the mid 19th century, when photography emerged and high heels were wore by women for fashion pictures, but also pornographic images. And then after world war two, stiletto became trendy as heels became more sturdy and stable. Heels then were seen as a symbol of femininity and not as much pornography. Today, heels are mainly wore by women, however we can see some men wear heels as fashion statements. Maybe trying to reclaim something that was once their.

This shows how unstable and changeable gender identifiers are. Heels had had different significances throughout time and were once only wear by men. I chose heels because it is one of the most gendered piece of fashion today and its history is quite complex and interesting. Of course it is just a summary but the goal was to highlight the way society can change the meaning of fashion. And it is just one example out of many others like how pants

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[14] Senelick Laurence, *The Changing Room: Sex, Drag and Theatre*, 2002 (page 18).
[15] BBC Radio, "The curious origin of the high heel" (published Nov 5 2019), from:
https://www.bbc.co.uk/ideas/videos/the-curious-origin-of-the-high-heel/p07sqgpy (02.15.2020)

were exclusively a masculine garment, or how pink clothing was once used to identify boys, then became a girly color and how it was recently trendy in menswear…

There are a lot of examples that show how fashion changes and gender identifiers are unstable. This last century, many fashion designers have played with those identifiers and pushed the boundaries of binary clothing, however it hasn't been caught yet by the high street fashion brands. We do see a lot of celebrities wearing extravagant gender-bender styles. Those statements are maybe a first step towards a more fluid fashion. However maybe this time changes have to come from within the fashion industry and not from a trend that have difficulty to catch on partially due to a lack of inclusivity and safety in the clothing store's environment. However there as been some initiatives, such as unisex clothing or genderless stores, and that is what we are gonna explore now.

So let's dive in this unisex fashion concept. This part is a more personal reflection that might not be shared by everyone, but I will try to be as objective as possible. Because I don't think unisex fashion is the solution to make this industry more inclusive. Some brands have now a unisex section added from the men and women ones, and some brands are entirely unisex.

Indeed, unisex is another label, another section that conduct our choice. It is clearly stated with this exemple from Stockmann in Copenhagen. This clothing store launched at the end of 2018 a gender-neutral pop-up section, symbolically place on the 1.5 floor, in between the women and the men sections.[16] It does not feel appropriate. Being gender-neutral does not mean that you are neither a man nor a woman, it might be that you don't identify as either, but it could also be that you identify as both, at the same time or fluctuating between the two. And adding another label does not help blurring the ones that already exist.

Now, looking at brands such as Agender in Korea, 69 in the US or Appeltrees in Sweden which are three exclusively gender-neutral clothing store, with mostly online platforms, we can see that their style is quite neutral.[17] They took gender-neutral literally and created a range of clothes that are very sober. Not that it is not appealing or that I don't like this kind of clothing, but to me there is a difference with being gender-neutral and wearing sober clothing. Indeed, wearing oversize, unicolor clothes makes you more gender-less looking than gender-neutral.

Being genderless looking and/or wearing oversize sober clothes is a fashion choice, but it does not make the fashion industry more inclusive. And I don't think that creating a new collection of clothes will ever solve the gender issues within the clothing industry. To me the obvious solution is to break the boundaries and blend men and women clothes together in the store. No more distinction. By doing so, people can just decide how they want to express themself and chose how they feel like dressing up. Because even if I don't believe in men and women's clothing I do believe in masculine and/or feminine expression. By that I mean that you can decide to express yourself masculinely, femininely, both or neither.

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[16] Larsen Nicoline, "I Tried on 'Genderless' Clothes and Was Extremely Disappointed" (published Jan 28 2019) from: https://www.vice.com/en_us/article/bj43d8/gender-neutral-clothing-store-stockmann-finland (12.13.2019).
[17] Agender, agender.co.kr (02.19.2020).
  69, sixty-nine.us (02.19.2020).
  Appletrees, appletrees.se (02.19.2020).

Changing this way of sorting clothes in the store to make it not Men/Women would be acting at the source of the problem. If people don't see clothes as either for men or for women, then they will probably be more inclined to express themself the way they want and daring to go against what is expected for them to wear. Many men believe that the women section is more interesting than the men's one but do not not dare to cross that line. I think that the only way to actually blur the labels is to erase them. I hope that it can slowly open some minds about the irrationality of clothing stereotypes and bring awareness on the fact that you can be masculine wearing feminine clothes and vise-versa, without it affecting your identity. The distinction between gender identity and gender expression have to be made clearer. Allowing and encouraging people to dress how they feel and opening their choices to the full range of clothes seems to be a way towards inclusive fashion.

A similar initiative has been brought to life by Rob Smith. He is the founder of the Phluid Project in New York.[18] This is the first ever gender-fluid clothing store. This project has been a great inspiration for me, as I believe it actually is a step forward towards inclusive fashion. It is both an online shop and a physical one, but I want to focus my project on the physicality as the environment of the shop itself is what my project is about. The Phluid Project is actually more than a store as it is also a gathering place where you can grab a coffee and sit down. I like that there is a sense of community and a will to actually bring people together.

Now for the store part, they are selling different brands, not only unisex ones, but those are not sorted by gender. However I personally feel that there is a lack in the staging. It seems that the store does look like any other clothing store. And I believe that this projects are opportunities to make statement and use a strong visual identity to advocate the fluidity of gender expression. And I want to go further with this concept of fluidity that I believe is the perfect word to describe an inclusive fashion. Fluidity of gender, yes, but also fluidity of sizes, fluidity of styles, fluidity of age, fluidity of ethnicities and fluidity of audacity.
This bring us to our last part, my degree project, the /ˈfluːɪd/ pop-up store.

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[18] Bernard Katherine, " Breaking the Binary" (published July 11 2018), from:
https://www.nytimes.com/2018/07/11/style/phluid-project-nonbinary-fashion.html (12.13.2019)

MY DESIGN PROPOSAL
A Fluid Concept

The Merriam-Webster dictionary defines fluid as:

*having particles that easily **move and change** their relative position **without a separation of the mass** and that easily yield to pressure : **capable of flowing*** [19]

      Even though this is the scientific definition, most of it applies to what fluid means in relation to my project. Indeed, the concept of fluidity is the core of my design proposal. Looking closer at this definition, there is the idea of moving and changing, something that is not fixed. Which is on point regarding gender, size and age. None of them are permanent, they change throughout our lives. Size and age are already accepted as evolving, but by acknowledging it I want to break the harmful relation that exist towards the evolution of both of those numbers. Replacing the numbers by gradient colors is my way of having a more fluid approach of the size chart.

Not only our size changes but also the way we want the garment to fit our body varies from person to person. If we imagine two people having the same size, one might want a tight fit and the other might be looking for a looser shape. So by using gradients, the color that represent your current size can match different gradients on the clothes new label and you can more easily identify how the garment will fit you.

Regarding the age, I focus now on adults and I want to create a space where everyone feel welcome to express themselves. Using a video I want to create a clip, showing different bodies wearing different clothes, by focusing on certain part of the body and not the face, I want the bodies to be ageless so everyone can relate to it.

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[19] Merriam-Webster, merriam-webster.com (03.18.2020)

Now to highlight the fluidity of gender, I will simply mix all the clothes together to erase the men/women categories. That way everyone if free to go through the closes and decide on the way they want to express themselves. Indeed, masculinity and femininity is embedded in our society but there is also a part of subjectivity and interpretation that I want to emphasize on. This will also be showed in the video where the same body will wear outfit that will tend to be considered masculine and some outfit that will tend to be seen as feminine, and some less obviously gendered. Of course, this is subjected to interpretation and is suppose to be emphasizing the fluidity of gender expression.

The part from the definition **without a separation of the mass** also spoke to me. I see it as a way to say that even if I want this project to be an advocate for self expression and individuality, I also want to do it in a way that brings people together. I don't want to only target queer people but also sensibilize people outside of the queer community. I want to promote respect and acceptance, create a sense of togetherness using something as universal as fashion. Especially since you do communicate through the outfit you are wearing so you are connected to the mass even if you dress for yourself. This part is also why creating a physical environment is the foundation of my project. Creating a safe space to be daring is not only to work on self respect or self love, it is also to encourage everyone to be brave enough to show their true self to others. And if the starting point is a properly closed changing room, the end goal is to invite everyone to share their daring, or not so daring outfit with the world, and for the world to accept this outfit without judgments.

To implement this in my concept, I designed a tag for customers to wear, showing if they want to explore the store by themself or if they want to share thoughts and advices about fashion with other customers or with the staff. Exploring one's gender expression can be intimidating and it is something that people might want to start by themselves. But some might need guidance and support. Those tags provide a way to clearly state how you want your shopping experience to be. You can switch the side of the tag any moment if you want, and of course, wearing this tag is optional.

There is however a part of the definition that doesn't fit the ideology of my project, and even goes against it. Indeed, *easily yield to pressure*, has no place in my project. It might be the

part of the scientific definition of fluid, but it is the opposite of what I am trying to establish. Nevertheless, it is a great opportunity to mention social pressure, as it exactly what I am fighting against. Nowadays yielding to pressure is what some are already subjected to. There are people that only dress accordingly to what is expected of them to wear. I understand that unfortunately some professions do not allow self expression but it also affect the way people dress outside from work.

Because there is a risk in dressing outside of the box. Going from looks, judgments and small comments to discriminations and verbal and/or physical aggressions. I tend to see the best in people and believe that it will not come to those worst case scenarios, unfortunately it has been a reality and it might still be. So I do get why people might be scared of how others might react to an unusual way to dress, but that is why I also encourage people to change their outfits progressively. The fluidity also exist in the level of uniqueness you are willing to display. Some people might like and want to dress exactly as it is expected, and some might go for a totally unconventional look. And this is how I want to fight social pressure, by having people deciding on the way they want to appear and not let anything or anyone do it for them. From the exception of professional circumstance, which seems to be another battle.

This brings us to the last part of the scientific definition of fluid, **capable of flowing**. I see this part as a contradiction to the preceding statement about yielding to pressure. Because the goal of having people dressing as they want is to bring pride, dignity and self-esteem. And I picture the capability of flowing as walking proudly while exposing yourself to the world. The point is that people should feel empowered and grown from expressing their true self.

/ˈfluːɪd/

Now that we went over the goals and concepts of my project, I want to go further into the details. My proposal is a second-hand fluid pop-up clothing store called /ˈfluːɪd/. I will create a functioning shop that I intend to open during the Degree Exhibition at Konstfack. And I have the chance to be supported by Emmaus Stockholm, a humanitarian organization and second hand shop. They will provide me with second-hand clothes and let me use their name. I will then sell their clothes for them in this fluid environment. Having such a big organization interested in my project gives some credit and shows that there is a concern for a more inclusive and accepting environment when it comes to clothes retailing.

Concretely my project have three main points on which I am working. The two first elements I wanted to work on are the labels and the size chart. I will explain them together as they are heavily connected. Indeed, if not all the brands indicates on their garments the gender they were meant for, they all have the size. And this is why it is important to remove the labels. Because a more inclusive place means no more gender category and a more flexible way to work with sizes.

If the gender issues is easily fixed by changing how the clothes are sorted, the size issue takes a little more thinking. As I say earlier, using gradients seems to be a good solution. People will have measuring belts with the gradient available in the store and be able to measure themself and identify their colors, one from the shoulder for the tops garments and one from the hips for the bottoms garments. Of course I understand that measuring oneself might be triggering for some people this is why it will not be required. It is totally possible, and recommended anyhow, to feel the clothes and try the ones you think might fit, regardless of the new size chart. This new size chart is here to facilitate your shopping experience. If one clothe fit, then you can check its label to identify your color. Once you identified your two colors for tops garment and bottoms ones, then you can check the labels on the next clothes. However, the measuring tape will give a more accurate color.

Those new labels are also part of the graphic identity as they are very visible on the outside of the clothes. On each of the clothes there is a gradient, which is a sample from the original gradient. That way, the color you have will correspond to different gradients and show if the clothes will be a tight or looser fit. And in order to harmonized all the different size charts from the different brands, I created seven gradients from the original measuring gradient that match all the clothes.
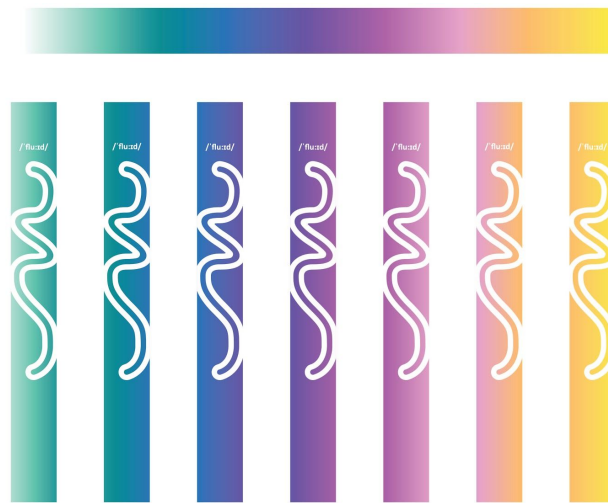

As for the visual identity and branding of the store, the logos is a fluid line that can be seen as M or a W, it is one, the other, both or neither. This line was created by joining the dots created by the translation of fluid in international Braille language.
In a ideal word I want to make this store accessible for blind people as well, by adding the size and color in relief on the tag. Unfortunately I don't have a solution to efficiently implement this yet.

Those new labels will be placed on the outside of the clothes. Looking like oversize regular labels, they act like statements on the clothe. Each person can decide if they want to keep this label or remove it as it is just sewed on. By keeping it, you can start a discussion and promote the concept. The main goal being to bring awareness on gender fluid fashion. You can also decide to remove it and use it as a bracelet or a keychain for example, those could also be great conversation starters.
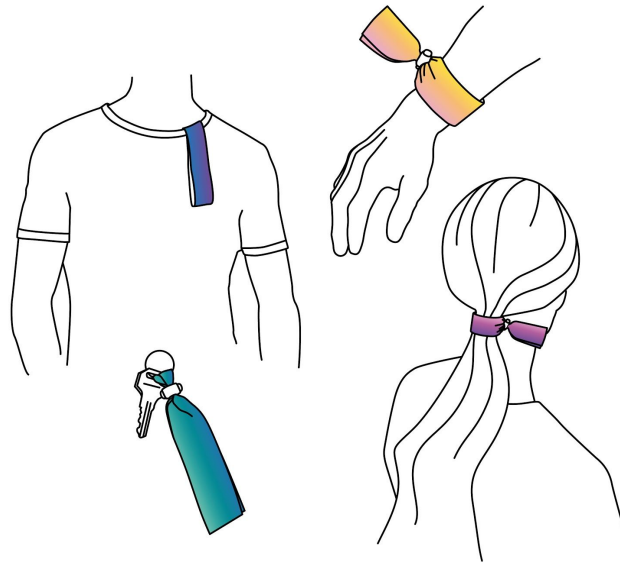
The third main element I am working with is the display of the store itself. The goal is to use a strong visual identity, so this store can be easily identified. By looking different, people will understand that it is a different concept. Of course the goal is to make it appealing and inviting. Since the best way to sort the clothes, if not by gender or size, is by color, the graphical approach of the display will be colorful.

I am picturing the logo of the store painted in giant size on the floor and walls. That way you can identify the brand and it really accentuate the concept of fluidity. The racks are also painted. Using those strong color will help creating a recognizable visual identity, which helps to communicate a strong concept. Having the clothes sorted by colors also create a comforting sense that their is still some sense and guidance in the way the garments are sorted. It gives something relatable to grasp on and also create an esthetically pleasing display.
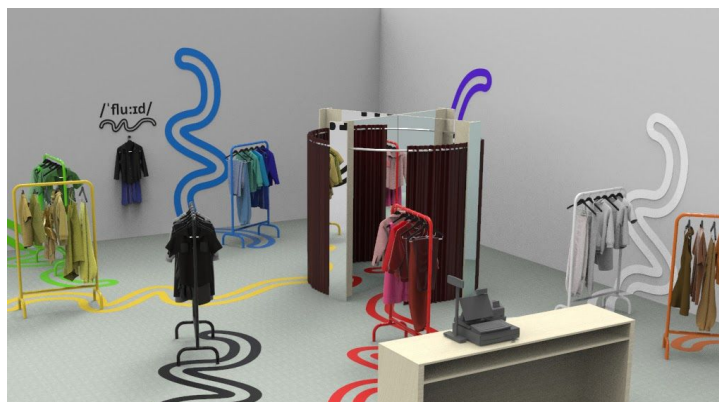
Now I want to mention some parts that were not my main focuses but that are also important to consider for an inclusive store. Those are specific thing I thought about during the design of this project and this is of course a non-exhaustive list. First of all, the name. I was looking for a name that convey the idea. Fluidity being the core concept, it just fit perfectly. But to accentuate the inclusivity, I wanted to write in phonetic so that everybody can read and pronounce this name. Another important point I mentioned previously is the changing room. This is an important part because it is where the clothes are tried on. This needs to be thought in consideration with the store itself, as the store is the transition between the changing room and the outside world.

In my proposal, the changing rooms are situated in the center of the store, to emphasize about the importance to try and feel the clothes on. By adding mirror all around, people can try and check garments if they do not need full intimacy. The exterior mirrors also cover any gaps that might exists between the curtain and the side of the changing room, providing a totally private environment in the changing room. The mirrors inside are placed in a 90° angled corner, the double reflection can show you how others will see you, and you can also see yourself from different angles. This mirror gives you a really honest idea of how the garments fit.

There is also the video I explained before that will be displayed in the store. It will inspire people and accentuate the fluid concept. Another way to inspire people and help them to get a grasp of fluid fashion is to create fluid outfits. I want to create on the wall some space to display examples of fluid outfits. Combinations of masculine and feminine garments that people can try one or get inspired from. The goal being to break the fashion stereotypes we all suffer from.

Connect to this last idea, I imagine another way to promote this concept. Using a social media exceedingly used for fashion purposes, Instagram, I want to create a contest. Imagine an empty space on the wall, dedicated for an outfit, clearly indicated by the graphics. There, people can place an outfit to take a picture of it and share it on the Instagram account, with for example #fluidstore.
Then, the picture with the most like wins a discount. This is an example on how to help the promotion of the brand and the concept through social media. There is many other way to use those as cheap advertising tools.

This is my vision of a second-hand fluid pop-up clothing store for Konstfack's Degree Exhibition. Again, those are some of the solutions to create a inclusive and safe environment and to be an advocate for fluid fashion. It is meant as a library of intention that anyone who is looking to create a genderfluid place can chose from.

CONCLUSION

Gender is still a very confusing thing for a lot of people who are unaware of the difference between gender identity and gender expression. A lot of people continue to fuel the stereotypes towards gender expression. Fashion is a powerful tool of expression, I think it is time to work on making this industry more inclusive. My project aims at the roots of the problem, retail. Indeed, the goal of my project is to change the way clothes are sold by making it fluid. No more binary thinking, no more strict sizes, but a new experience based on self-expression, individuality and tolerance.

Gender disruption is praised when it's seen as a performing art, but why is there still such a gap between performance and reality? Especially since this contradiction exist since the classical greece. There is, however, improvement with the extensive growth of the Drag scene and how it's glorified today. How can we also encourage gender disruption in our daily life?

Looking at the past we point out how gender is a very unstable construct when the same item can be used to express masculinity, then femininity, then both and neither. So it is time to understand that gender is a social product that isn't anchor in anything permanent. Furthermore, we noticed a will for the fashion world to expand and become more inclusive when we looked at the unisex clothing or the Phluid project. Those initiatives are proofs that people are ready for change, but to me this change needs to start from the ground, the retail environment.

By creating a second-hand fluid pop-up clothing store that is inclusive and encourage self-expression, I intend to show that a better way to retail fashion is possible. I also want to show that people are in fact ready for it and ready to change their approach towards masculinity and femininity, to understand that they are not fix concepts but fluid notions. Through new labels with an original size system based on a gradient for more fluidity, no more gender categorization and a strong visual display to create an inclusive, safe and inspirational environnement, I want to demonstrate tangible actions to change the fashion retail industry efficiently.

My ultimate goal is that people from the fashion industry see my project and are able to pick and chose to translate some points in their own brands. And maybe, we can slowly change this binary environment into a new fluid industry that welcomes everyone and inspire all.

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