Amsterdam, 6 June 2015

Regards: Motivation for the collection 'Der Mut zum Unsinn ist der Mut zum Sein.' (The Courage to Nonsense is the Courage to Being).

To whom it may concern,

Through this letter I would like to explain the concept behind, and the translation of this concept into, my collection 'Der Mut zum Unsinn ist der Mut zum Sein.'

My graduation collection is a response to the pressures of present day life. In western society we are nowadays forced to live our lives by the clock, doing as much as possible 24/7 to live up to the expectations of our bosses, friends, family and most of all ourselves. We do this because nowadays much of our self-worth is derived from all the things we do. But preoccupied with appointments, deadlines, calendars and keeping up appearances, we forgot how to go with the flow and let life surprise us.

During my research I came across a Youtube video of a little kid walking a dog. The kid was walking down a small country lane. In the middle of the lane there was a puddle of rainwater. At first the kid led the dog along the puddle to continue the walk. But then the kid changed his mind, let go of the leach, turned back and jumped in the puddle, splashing the water around and bursting into laughter (the dog all the time patiently waiting).

To me this video showed exactly how we are and how we ought to be. We are constantly concerned with carrying our tasks, with all the things we feel we need to do. Yet, just like this kid, we should let go of the leach and enjoy life, making the most of every wonderful surprise on the way.

In order to build on this idea for my collection, I turned to humour and Dadaism. Humour is perhaps the best antidote to the stresses of daily life, as laughter literally biochemically relaxes the body. Furthermore, through humour people from diverse backgrounds and cultures can communicate and come together. Dadaism as an art movement applied humour and the 'nonsensical' to the tremendous stresses of living through the First World War, providing a persuasive critique of the social conventions of the time. In my collection I use this powerful social critique and apply it to today's pressures to make my audience think critically about what is and what ought to be.

In building on humour and Dadaism for my concept, I started questioning the unaesthetic. What is beauty, what expectations do we have of it, and what surprises are possible if our expectations are not met? This led me to rediscover unfunctionality, for that which is not functional surprises us as it does not meet our expectations. I then took surprise through unfunctionality one step further and incorporated elements of the deformation of the human body in my collection. After all, there is nothing more familiar to us than the human body and therefore nothing more surprising than if that body is not the way we expect it to be.

Based on these ideas I developed the following concept:

Clocks ticking, agenda's, deadlines, expectations, expectations. Doing, doing, doing. Everyone is watching. Steadily the pressure builds, until our logic cracks and a bright ray of colourful nonsense breaks free. In the background a large silhouette asks: what makes nonsense
nonsensical? When is aesthetic not aesthetic? Unplanned, undefined but playful. Sometimes things are as simple as a kid's drawing.

Based on this concept, my collection uses indefinable garments to reach the audience with surprise, laughter and absurdity, and question fashion, modern society and our way of doing. The collection does so by deforming, adding, removing or exaggerating parts one would expect to see. Furthermore, I use unusual materials in unusual and contrasting combinations. I combine these weird materials with bright colours and vibrant prints to emphasise playfulness, and create outfits that are intended to be funny, upbeat and for all practical purposes unwearable, and precisely because of that intended to make my audience question what is and what could be.

Through this letter I hope you will have gained an insight into the concept behind my collection. I hope that my concept and the translation into the collection will surprise you, and make you laugh, and perhaps make you believe you could be that kid on the little country lane.

Yours sincerely,

Maria Wöstmann