TRASH - THE NEW LUXURY

Transforming trash into beauty
Due to modern capitalism, the consumer society and the way of using and producing products, we are now plundering the earth of vital resources such as water, air, food, fertile soil. As Valérie Gramond of WWF Global Footprint Network partner explained “the movement has accelerated because of overconsumption and waste …. we undermine the ability of the planet to regenerate” (LExpress.fr 2018).

Unfortunately, the fashion industry is one of the most polluting industries on the planet and according to the World Bank, twenty percent of water pollution globally is caused by the textile and fashion industry, making it the second biggest polluter of freshwater resources on the planet and as a full quarter of the chemicals produced in the world, are used in textiles it is also highly resource-intensive (Changing Markets n.d.).

The “disposable” culture, fast-changing trends and cheap manufacturing mean people can throw things away without a second thought, the result is a waste crisis. The pollution and the climate changes that the society are creating have a bad impact on nature and animals. Some species evolve or try to adapt their way of living, but lot of species are harmed, suffer and die despite their willingness to adapt (albatross the film 2010). And recent studies warn that by 2050 there could be more plastic in the oceans than fish. Plastic waste continues to rise and each year we produce three percent more than the year before (Sims 2016).

It is time for the future fashion designers to rethink the whole fashion and textile industry, and make it more sustainable for the sake of nature and living beings.

With the interest of diving into sustainable alternatives for the fashion industry, this paper researches how plastic can be turned into fashionable textiles. Right now, the world is waking up to a crisis of plastic pollution and our resources become ever-more scarce. What will be the future of textile and fashion? A combination or a hybridization of trash and textile? That is why, at first consumers need to understand what is the plastic issue and its impact on the eco-system; in the second part, I will talk about DNA as fashion designer. And finally, I will explain the concept of my graduation project at Amsterdam Fashion Institute, Trash the New Luxury, the solution and creative possibilities it offers?

1 - PLASTIC POLLUTION, this global menace

To understand the problems related to plastic and its impact on the environment, consumers must understand what plastics are and where they come from?

Originally, plastic means “pliable and easily shaped”. It has only recently become a name for a category of materials called polymers. The first synthetic polymer was invented in 1869 by John Wesley Hyatt. He discovered a material, the plastic that could be crafted into different shapes and made to imitate natural substances like tortoiseshell, horn, linen, and ivory. From the 1950s, mass consumption and diversification created an explosion of demands and
supported the growth of this new industry. Plastics are mainly manufactured from petrochemicals, a chemical substance obtained from petroleum or natural gas (Science History Institute n.d.). The early 2000s, our output of plastic waste rose more in a single decade than it had in the previous 40 years. Nowadays, “we produce about 300 million tonnes of plastic waste every year … and more than 8 million tons of plastic is dumped into our oceans every year” according to Plastic Ocean Foundation (Unenvironment.org n.d.). However, even if plastic has interesting qualities, it has become an environmental issue.

The excessive increase in its consumption has been accompanied by growing environmental pollution at global level and has even led to the appearance of a seventh continent. This seventh continent is a place in the ocean between Hawaii and California, where all plastics from lands and oceans have agglomerated and formed a monstrous mass that continues to expand every year. This “seventh continent” of plastic occupies 1.6 million km² in the Pacific Ocean. That represents an area equivalent to three times that of France”.

In addition to this, World Environment and Ocean Days in June 2018 focused on this global menace and the need for action. Synthetic plastics are largely non-biodegradable, they tend to persist in natural environments. And right now, only nine percent of all plastic waste ever produced has been recycled, about twelve percent has been incinerated, while the rest about seventy-nine percent has accumulated in landfills, dumps on the natural environment.” (Unenvironment.org n.d.). And a plastic bag can take about four hundred fifty years before disappearing (e.g image 1).

![The life cycle of a plastic bag, Beyond Plastic Med](http://en.oceancampus.eu/cours/7Hh/no-to-plastic-bags (image 1))

It is true that some plastics can be recycled but this does not seem to be a priority for most countries. Plastics are a menace because they are not biodegradable and they will never really disappear, they will just break down into smaller and smaller pieces under the action of sun, cold, rain or water until they will become invisible to the naked eye (Plastic-pollution.org n.d.).

The causes and effects of plastic pollution are truly worldwide. The problem is now the accumulation of all these plastics in the environment to the point where they create problems for wildlife, nature and humans. “Plastic is composed of major toxic pollutants, it has the potential to cause great harm to the environment in the form of air, water and land pollution”. The consequences of plastic pollution are (Conserve Energy Future n.d.) (e.g image 2):

- The food chain: it can even affect the world’s tiniest organisms such as plankton. When these organisms become poisoned due to plastic ingestion, this causes problems for the larger animals that depend on them for food. This causes a whole new range of problems at each step along the food chain. That’s also means there is also a risk for people who eat food as shown in the image below (e.g image 3).
- Groundwater Pollution: Plastic leachate is full of toxic chemicals, it seeps into the groundwater and flows downstream into lakes and rivers.

- Air Pollution: Burning of plastic in the open air, leads to environmental pollution due to the release of poisonous chemicals. The polluted air when inhaled by humans and animals affects their health and can cause respiratory problems.

- It Kills Animals: Because of this pollution many animals are injured, harmed or die and now lots of species are in danger. Birds, whales or turtles can ingest plastic because they don’t see the difference between litter and food, it damages their internal organs and then they will die in agony (albatross the film 2010) (e.g image 4).

- It is Poisonous: Plastic is made by using toxic chemicals. Exposure to them is linked to diseases such as cancer, birth defects, pulmonary diseases.

All in all, everything suffers: tourism, animals, recreation, humans, and health. It costs millions of dollars each year to clean affected areas after exposure to plastic pollution, not to mention the loss of life among plants, animals and people, and the financial damage (Conserve Energy Future n.d.).
Theconversation.com, Déchets plastiques : la dangereuse illusion du tout-recyclage (image 5)
However, this plastic invasion continues. But what are the benefits of this material? Why plastic has been so popular?

As plastics are much less expensive than other materials and considering there are many benefits, it is not surprising that they have stolen the spotlight from many other materials; glass, steel, metal and wood can all be replaced by plastics today. They are deformable at a temperature below 200 ° Celsius so they can be easily moulded in desired shapes, they can be also cast, spun, or applied as a coating. They can have different shapes or colours and they are also lightweight, flexible and strong. They also have excellent thermal and electrical insulation properties and good resistance. Plastics are also very cheap and incredibly versatile (Plastic Oceans International n.d.). All those properties make plastics ideal for many applications. They have literally invaded our lives: pens, toys, bottles, chairs, tables, game consoles, computers, televisions, bikes and so much more that it seems impossible to live without them today. Plastics are considered by many people as disposable and low-end substitute materials (e.g. image 5). And the majority are for a single use or have a very short life span. The Story of Stuff (an organisation preventing plastic pollution) even said this about the packaging that goes along with those endless purchases: “... we buy produce, take it out of the unnecessary plastic wrap, then throw its permanent packaging away. The cycle is endless, and it happens countless times every single day.” (Leonard 2018).

However, the awareness of people and governments is beginning to show. Some people are trying to reach “zero waste” and the European Parliament has shown support for a ban on some plastic products for single use, a decision that could take place as early as 2022. But, governments and industries still have a long way to go before they stop using plastics, so they must find solutions to clean the planet. But what fashion and textile designer can do? What are the solutions that fashion can offer?
There are already some brands or designers such as Adidas, Stella McCartney, G-star and ECOALF that are trying to reduce their impact on the environment by using waste. ECOALF is a brand that uses the highest quality recycled fabrics to create a new generation of sustainable products and his creator Javier Goyeneche explained that “to make fabrics from discarded fishing nets takes seven chemical steps. Traditional fabric-making methods using raw, virgin materials require 17 steps (e.g. image 6). There’s a lot of water savings and fewer emissions too” (Leaders, 2018). Furthermore, ECOALF and Adidas also use new technical yarns called Bionic Yarns composed by a synthetic core, PET recycled yarns (from plastic bottles) and cotton helix outer wrap (StartUp FASHION, 2014). The mix of materials in these yarns makes them very resistant, but this blend makes them not recyclable (e.g. image 7). As a fashion designer, it is an interesting way of reusing waste but unfortunately they are still using lots of chemicals, energy and water to create new outfits.
The approach for this graduation collection is different and better because it reuses plastic waste but in this case there is no use of chemicals or water. The work adapts to the findings. These plastic wastes are transformed by cutting, stitching, embroidering them. And everything is made by hand and none of these steps are going to have an impact on the environment. Every time the textiles of this collection can be unravelling or unmaking so, plastics and yarns can be separate and recycled.

All the pollution generated by this sector is unnecessary and irresponsible. I have been developing this method since the project of the minor textile, *Hybrid Animal Skins*. In this concept, the challenge was to develop an alternative of the leather from fruit waste and design a new material completely sustainable and biodegradable without creating new problems and pollution (e.g. image 9). Furthermore, being passionate by textile techniques and craftsmanship (a symbol of know-how and quality), I always use handworking techniques such as knitting, embroidery, weaving or English smocking for enriching and beautifying my outfits in each of my projects (e.g. image 10 and 11).

For this collection *Trash the New Luxury*, I will combine my passion for textile and my interest for sustainability in fashion, with an important subject: the reuse of plastics in fashion.
Embroiderie, 2018, Chloé JOURDET
(image 10)
Wavy Knit (double bed machine), 2018, Chloé JOURDET
(image 11).
III – TRASH THE NEW LUXURY, 
transforming trash into beauty

My graduation project, Trash the New Luxury has arisen from my tiredness and disgust of our way of over-consuming and also the amount of waste that we are throwing away every day without even caring or thinking. The core concept of Trash the New Luxury is to show all the possibilities that offer recycling, upcycling and sustainability in fashion today and demonstrate that they can be luxury too. The goal is to create a new mind-set and to change the vision that people have about plastic waste and about recycling in particular. As described in part I (Plastic Pollution), it’s a necessity to stop producing plastic and also to remove all traces of plastic in the nature and to make changes for a better future. I am trying do this, by collecting and reusing it and thus it is cleaning oceans, lands and landfills and the ecosystem through fashion. In Trash the New Luxury, plastic is seen as a valuable resource and interesting raw material instead of a polluting and unsustainable material. It will become something special as they have an added value when turned into unique pieces. Furthermore, this method is an answer to this plastic crisis, moreover the nature resources become ever-more scarce, so the need to recycle existing materials is right now increasingly pertinent. In short, in this project plastic is not only a waste anymore, or a very cheap disposable material but it becomes a very refined and “precious” raw material, wearable and usable for decades.

The result will be a textile collection very tactile with an unexpected textures and touch. The goal is to create an aesthetically pleasing and comfortable textile collection that people would love to buy and wear. It is a combination of plastic waste such as plastic bottle, plastic containers, pipes, straws, cutlery and also more “fashionable materials” such as second hand or leftover yarns and fabrics. The plastic will be used as a decorative element (e.g. image 12) but also be transformed into fabrics (e.g. image 13). The challenge is to design high quality, innovative, refined, handmade and beautiful fabrics out of waste. The refinement of the fabrics needs to be of such as quality that consumers will not even will suspect at all that it is plastic waste. Because what they see is not what they think, and they maybe will never guess what is it?

PROCESS and TECHNIQUES
This project will follow three design rules: Collecting, Redesigning, Informing (e.g. schema 1).

Collecting, plastic waste was collected in different ways: in the street, by reusing personal plastic waste and it also came from different stores or companies such as food stores, garment stores. Yarns and fabrics as well come from old stock and second hand shops.

Redesigning, the fabrics are developed by making experiments on plastic: by cutting, laser cutting, punching or melting it and it will come out in a hybrid
Weaving, garbage bag, Trash the New Luxury 2018, Chloé JOURDET (image 13)

3D embroidery, plastic spoons, Trash the New Luxury 2018, Chloé JOURDET (image 12)
The excessive increase in the consumption of plastics has been accompanied by a growing environmental pollution at global level. Moreover, 50% of produced plastic are single-use plastic products or packaging. Plastics are a scourge because they are not biodegradable at all. Some plastics can be recycled, but in nature, they will never really disappear. The problem now is this accumulation of all these plastics in the environment to the point where they create problems for wildlife, nature and humans.

**Goals**
- Reducing waste and pollution
- Not creating new pollution (saving water, no more chemical...)
- Reducing step of manufacturing (less than 5)
- Not single use anymore (more durable)
- Don't see that is plastic
- Give a new purpose: adding value to the material
- Not creating new pollution

**Process**

**The "3 Rules"**

1. **Collecting**
   - Plastic waste
   - Own plastic waste
   - Street
   - Second hand
   - Companies & stores

2. **Redesigning**
   - High quality
   - Redesigning plastic inspired by the evening wear
   - Cutting
   - Transforming
   - Combining elements
   - Handworking: embroideries, knit, weave

3. **Informing**
   - Labels per fabrics:
     - Fabric name
     - Technique
     - Composition and origin
     - Embellishments
     - Coloration
     - Description (look and feel)
     - Impact

**Goals**
- Giving a new purpose + adding value to the material
- Reducing step of manufacturing (less than 5)
- Not single use anymore (more durable)
- High quality handworking
  - Embroideries
  - Knit
  - Weave

**People**
People are also an important part to reduce waste and change their way of consuming. Thanks to labels on the textile collection, explaining the process, the composition and the impact, people will be more aware of this problem of waste and they maybe will change their habits and will be more responsible.

Plastics is not only a waste anymore, or a very cheap single use material but, it becomes a very refined and "precious" raw material, wearable and usable for decades.
combination of materials and textures. This textile collection will combine with different techniques such as: embroidery, knitting and weaving. The interesting part of this project is to play with the subtleties of the plastic. It has different properties and aspects, it can be very shiny, transparent, very flexible or more rigid, so it offers lot of possibilities and variations.

The colour card consists of a dominance of black, white and punctuate with softer colours like light purple and pink as well as shiny details inspired by evening wear. But in addition to that, it is also influenced by the materials that were collected such as plastic bags, bottles, bottles caps, pipes, thus the collection is spiced up with brighter colour from trash (green, blue, red…) (e.g. image 5).

**Informing** people, is also an important part to reduce waste and change their way of consuming, thanks to labels on the textile samples explaining: the process, the composition and the impact. As the result people will be more aware of this problem of waste and hopefully will change their habits and will be more responsible (e.g image 14).

To conclude, in this project, there is not specific target group, the main idea of this concept is to develop a new mind-set and to launch a new vision of recycling and give inspiration as *Premier vision* or forecasting textile magazine like *Textile View* do it. By showing refined and precious textiles made out of waste, I want to create awareness in the luxury sector and the fashion industry. The goal is to see recycling and sustainability as the new fun, sexy and as a cool trend. This new mood is the first step to create awareness and make sustainability the norm of the future of fashion and to influence change within the fashion system.
CONCLUSION

It could be concluded that plastic reflects today’s society. This material has benefits and is very popular, it is pliable, very cheap and can be easily shaped and use for many applications (packaging, toys, pens, computer, bikes, plastic bottles...). It can replace almost every material such as glass, steel, metal and wood. Plastic is everywhere, it invades beaches, lands and pollutes streets; but it seems impossible to live without it. The excessive consumption of plastic become an environmental issue at global level. Plastic is composed of toxic pollutants and it is largely non-biodegradable, it tends to persist in the nature and never goes away. Right now, it is causing great harm to the environment and everything suffers: nature, animals, humans, and health.

Some brands or designers that are trying to reduce their impact on the environment and are reusing waste to clean landfills, lands and oceans. Despite the awareness, nothing is solved yet, the society of consumption continues to create more and more plastic every year.

The concept, Trash the New Luxury offers solutions to this plastic crisis. The plastic appears without any quality and perceived as something cheap without any interests but by transforming it and integrating it in a textile, it become refined and it reveals unsuspected qualities. As a fashion designer, the main goal of this concept is to redefine the meaning of luxury and opening up new way of thinking about recycling, fashion and sustainability. Textile design gives endless creativity and allows to create innovative, refined, original and unique pieces.
References

Online articles:


Unenvironment.org. (n.d.). Our planet is drowning in plastic pollution. This World Environment Day, it’s time for a change. [online] Available at: https://www.unenvironment.org/interactive/beat-plastic-pollution/ [Accessed 18 Nov. 2018].

Videos:
Images/ Schemas:


Wavy Knit (double bed machine). (2018). Chloé JOURDET.

**Orientation and research (researching, collecting, recording)**

I made a lot of research about pollution and its impact on nature and animals, more precisely about plastic pollution. It was very helpful for my concept and my research paper. I used different types of information: pictures, videos, movies, and articles (online or magazines). I also made research about upcycling and recycling in fashion today, to see if my concept is relevant.

**Decision-making (organising, analysing, concluding, making choices, making concept)**

I think my concept now is quite clear. But I had some difficulties to write my paper. I repeated too much the same information in different parts of the paper, but I really tried to explain the plastic crisis that we have right now. I tried to be honest and objective. I really want in this paper to show my concern about the future and I want to wake up people or at least that people are aware of this problem. Now my concept is clear. The link between my story and my textile development are consistent, but I still need to keep going my work and my experiments.

**Materialisation (designing, making, producing)**

The paper is still a bit longer than I would like it to be. I want to make it more compact. I made a lot of research about pollution and its impact on nature and animals, more precisely about plastic pollution. It was very helpful for my concept and my research paper. I used different types of information: pictures, videos, movies, and articles (online or magazines). I also made research about upcycling and recycling in fashion today, to see if my concept is relevant.

**Presentation (reporting, communicating, persuading)**

I’m not really a good writer, but I really tried to explain the plastic crisis that we have right now. I tried to be honest and objective. I really want in this paper to show my concern about the future and I want to wake up people or at least that people are aware of this problem. I also use some pictures of my textile to underpin my text and my concept.

**Self-reflection (checking, monitoring, testing, reflecting)**

I always check my sources before using it and for example if I found the same information on different articles then I couldn’t use it. I always check my sources before using it and for example if I found the same information on different articles then I couldn’t use it. I always check my sources before using it and for example if I found the same information on different articles then I couldn’t use it. I always check my sources before using it and for example if I found the same information on different articles then I couldn’t use it.

**Recommendations/Feed forward:**

- Being organised (planning, collaborating, being professional)
- Repetition (testing, reflecting)
- Curriculum, monitoring, evaluating (self-evaluation)
- Production (designing, making, revising)
- Conceptualising, making, concluding, making (conceptualising, making, concluding, making)
- Researching, collecting, orientating, and evaluating (researching, collecting, orientating, and evaluating)