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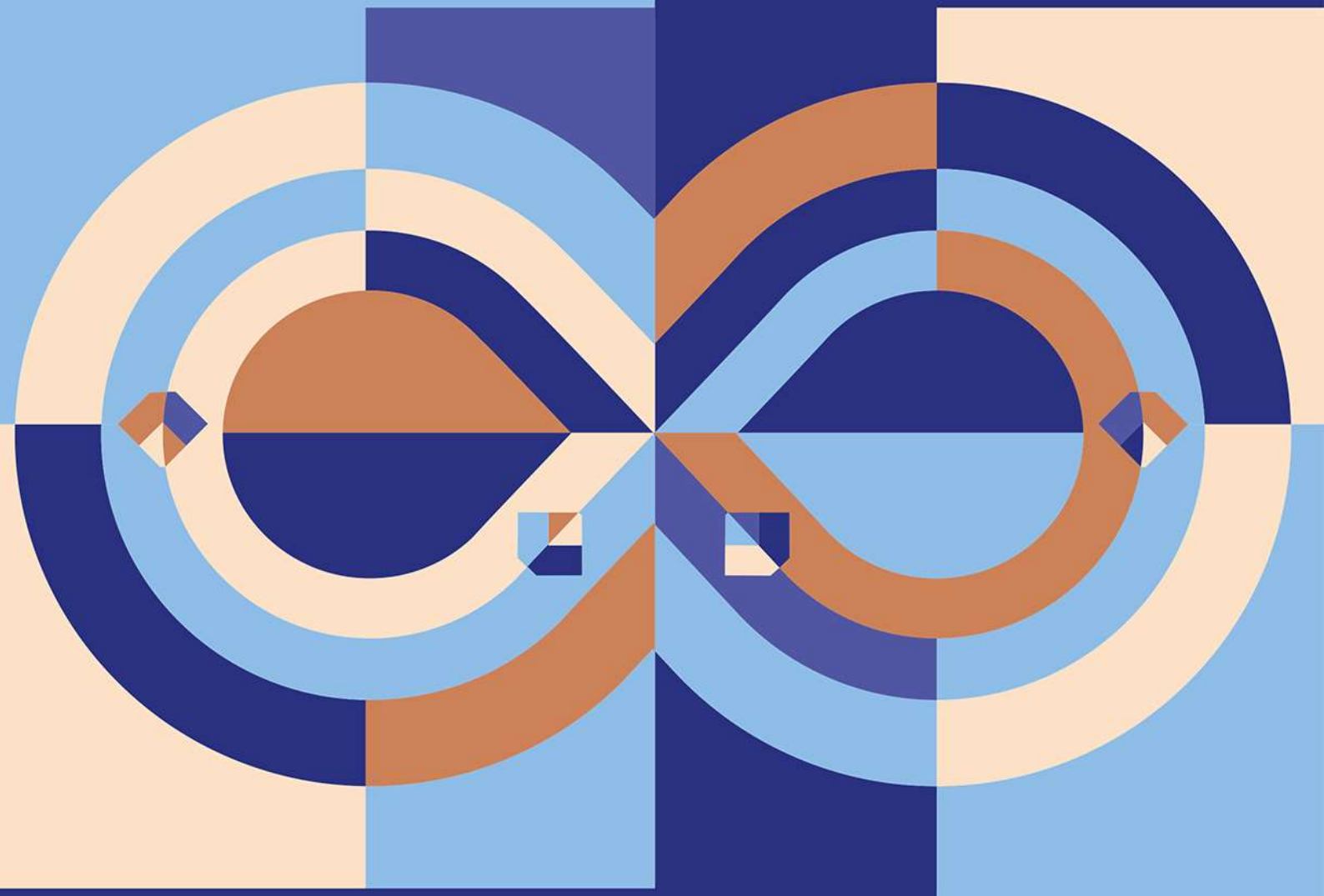

Dossiê 8

Práticas interacionais na construção de práticas docentes: estudos do discurso e o ensino e as pesquisas em artes, moda e design

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THE CONSTRUCTION OF IDENTITY THROUGH THE FASHION PORTFOLIO: AN INTERNATIONAL EXPERIENCE OF FIELD RESEARCH

A construção da identidade por meio do portfólio de moda: uma experiência de investigação de campo em âmbito internacional

La costruzione dell'identità attraverso il fashion portfolio: una esperienza internazionale di ricerca sul campo

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ABSTRACT

In the fashion system the portfolio is an essential tool, required at every application, presented at every interview, and it is often the only element available to the evaluators for selection among different subjects. However the theoretical reflection developed in academic research around this object is still very limited and this contribution aims to fill at least part of the gap. The paper presents the results of a field research carried out in three international fashion schools - Politecnico di Milano (Italy), Università Iuav di Venezia (Italy) and Escola d'Art i Superior de Disseny of Alcoi (Spain) - to investigate the fashion portfolio as a tool to build the identity of its author. A workshop has been designed and carried out, which the paper describes and analyses in its different phases, with the aim of simulating a part of the process of portfolio realisation and carrying out an exploratory investigation, documenting the students' considerations, their perception of this tool, the problems encountered, the methods of realisation, the influence of the context and the relationship with the author's identity.

Keywords: fashion portfolio; identity; workshop

Resumo

No sistema da moda, o portfólio é um instrumento essencial, exigido em oportunidades de emprego, apresentado em entrevistas, e é frequentemente o único elemento disponível para os avaliadores no processo de seleção entre diferentes candidatos. Contudo, a reflexão teórica desenvolvida na área acadêmica em relação ao portfólio é ainda muito limitada. Esta contribuição visa, então preencher pelo menos em parte essa lacuna.
O artigo apresenta os resultados de um trabalho de investigação de campo realizado em três escolas de moda internacionais: Politecnico di Milano (Itália), Università Iuav di Venezia (Itália) e Escola d'Art i Superior de Disseny de Alcoi (Espanha) - para investigar o portfólio de moda como instrumento de exploração do processo de design e construção da identidade de seu autor. O artigo descreve e analisa um workshop concebido e realizado nessas instituições, que nas suas diferentes fases, teve o objetivo de simular uma parte do processo de realização do portfólio e efetuar um levantamento exploratório, documentando as considerações dos estudantes, suas impressões sobre essa ferramenta, dificuldades encontradas, formas de realização, influência do contexto e a sua relação com a identidade do autor.

***Palavras-chaves**: portfólio de moda; identidade; workshop*

Abstract

Nel sistema della moda il portfolio è uno strumento essenziale, richiesto a ogni candidatura, presentato a ogni colloquio e spesso è l'unico elemento a disposizione dei valutatori per la selezione tra diversi soggetti. Tuttavia la riflessione teorica sviluppata in ambito accademico intorno a questo oggetto è ancora molto limitata e questo contributo mira a colmare almeno in parte la lacuna. L'articolo presenta i risultati di una ricerca sul campo condotta in tre scuole di moda internazionali - Politecnico di Milano (Italia), Università Iuav di Venezia (Italia) e Escola d'Art i Superior de Disseny di Alcoi (Spagna) - per indagare il portfolio di moda come strumento di costruzione dell'identità del suo autore. Il contributo descrive e analizza nelle sue diverse fasi un workshop che è stato progettato e realizzato con l'obiettivo di simulare una parte del processo di realizzazione del portfolio e di effettuare una indagine esplorativa, documentando le considerazioni degli studenti, la loro percezione di questo strumento, le problematiche incontrate, le modalità di realizzazione, l'influenza del contesto e il rapporto con l'identità dell’autore.

***Parole chiave**: portfolio di moda; identità; workshop*

1 INTRODUCTION

The portfolio of fashion design student is an artifact that collects, selects, and tells about the projects developed by them during a training course. Despite its importance in embarking on an educational or professional pathway, the theoretical reflection developed in academic research around the portfolio is still very limited.

In the last decade some works have been published, but they focus exclusively on the material dimension of the portfolio (ATKINSON, 2012; CIRESI BARRETT, 2012; FAERM, 2012; KIPER, 2014; TAIN, 2010). These manuals provide guidance on graphics and visual communication. Too often there is a lack of reflection on the immaterial dimension, on the link between the portfolio and the identity of its author, on the process of self-awareness that it activates. These cues, at least in part, emerge in the work of some researchers on the educational portfolio, not specific to fashion. These works show the complexity more clearly: the artifact is described both as a collection of materials developed during a training course, as a tool of communication and narration, and as a training device for the author, who is both subject and object of the portfolio (PAULSON, PAULSON and MEYER, 1991; HOPKINS, 2012; MICHELSON and MANDEL, 2004). It also emerges the idea that the portfolio does not limit its action to the author, but conditions all the interlocutors involved both during the phases of realisation and in the comparison of the finished work (PORTER and CLELAND, 1994); for this reason the constant evolution does not belong only to the portfolio, but also to its author and the context in which it acts, through the interactions and memories of previous contacts. Some scholars emphasise how much the temporal dimension conditions the student's action: the portfolio is the place where to operate an action on the traces of the past, with the awareness of the present, building a narrative that outlines the promise of what one wants to become (ROSSI, GIANNANDREA and MAGNOLER, 2011).

2 PORTFOLIO AND IDENTITY

This contribution aims to bring the fashion portfolio back to the center of academic research, investigating its complexity and its relationship with the student's identity. This identity is not only deposited in the portfolio, but the portfolio itself allows its birth and definition; a birth understood both as discovery and, above all, as invention, taking up the idea of identity proposed by Zygmunt Bauman (2004). The

Polish philosopher proposes the similarity between the construction of identity and the composition of a puzzle, which also perfectly describes the action that the student carries out during the design of his portfolio: the individual pieces available - the images of the projects previously carried out - are juxtaposed and set in an attempt to compose a convincing picture, for himself and for others. The composition of the fragments produces images that are always different and new, with the consequent consideration that the identity that emerges from the portfolio cannot be unique.

According to the research hypothesis, it is not possible to consider the portfolio as a synthesis tool, a collection of completed projects; on the contrary, it should be understood and, therefore, analysed as an opportunity to explore and build the identity. This investigation focuses on the ways in which a student relates to projects carried out at different times; he or she collects the materials produced during his or her training (reference images, sketches, texts, technical drawings, fabrics, textures, details, patterns, prototypes, still life and photo shoots of the garments made); he or she decides which ones to include and which ones to exclude; he or she arranges them in a sequence and structures a narrative. For this reason it was decided to develop a fieldwork able to document the action carried out by the students in the elaboration of their portfolio and to verify the connections with the identity of the author and the educational context.

3 METHODOLOGY

The research was developed with a qualitative approach, through a fieldwork that allowed to document and analyse the reflections of the subjects involved and their actions related to the object of investigation (PLOWMAN, 2003, 32), the dynamics with which a student structures a visual storytelling and the way in which the relationships with the context settle in the portfolio and modify the action of the individual (FRANZO, 2018, p. 214).

The fieldwork was carried out from September 2017 to May 2018 through the participating observation of a group of 5 students within three case studies, three international universities with degree courses in fashion design. A workshop was designed and carried out with the aim of simulating the process of the portfolio development.

The fieldwork enables the documentation and analysis of the reflections produced by the students within their design practice (SCHÖN, 1983). It represents an exploration on the portfolio, documenting the considerations of the subjects involved, their perception of this tool, the problems encountered, the modalities of realisation, the influence of the context and the role of the author's identity.

3.1 CASE STUDIES

In the design of the field research, one of the first decisions concerned the identification of the three case studies and the choice fell on Politecnico di Milano (Italy), Università Iuav di Venezia (Italy) and Escola d'Art i Superior de Disseny of Alcoi (Spain).[2] In the Italian context it was decided to involve two public universities with active degree courses in fashion design (LUPANO and VACCARI, 2014). In addition to the two Italian case studies, it was considered important to identify a foreign one where to carry out the workshop and which could represent a first response to the Italian situation.

The choice of the case studies has been facilitated and made possible by direct knowledge of the three situations: I have been collaborating with Iuav for some years in fashion design workshops; at PoliMi the teacher of portfolio's course for third year BA students has shown a particular interest in dealing with a different point of view than her own approach, more focused on issues of graphics and visual communication; at EASD a teacher, who knows the Italian context and in particular the Iuav, where she did a PhD in fashion design, has long been interested in developing relationships with other universities to reflect on the teaching of fashion design and this research has proved to be a valuable opportunity for comparison.

Proposing a fieldwork within a course of study, involving a group of students and working around an object like the portfolio, requires an act of trust by the schools involved. I believe that the portfolio can give back not only the image of the author but also, indirectly, of the school in which he or she is studying; an approach to the fashion project is communicated, stating which aspects of the design process are considered more relevant in the narrative. The research on the portfolio has, therefore, also turned

[2] In the following pages the abbreviation "PoliMi" will sometimes be used to indicate Politecnico di Milano, "Iuav" to Università Iuav di Venezia, "EASD" for the Escola d'Art i Superior de Disseny of Alcoi.

into an exploration of the three selected universities and, consequently, of different approaches to fashion, different teaching models and different identities.

3.2 THE PROJECT OF THE WORKSHOP

The workshop was designed to observe students' actions during the process of making their own portfolio, the way they narrate visually and the influence of context in the process of self-awareness and identity building. The workshop involved a group of five students in each of the three universities identified as case studies; the subjects were selected by the course coordinators, who were asked - whenever possible - to compose a group of students of different years and who had carried out at least three projects during their training. The request to compose a mixed group is due to the desire to relate students who know little about each other, who do not already have a pre-established idea of the others but who have the possibility to know them through their portfolio. In the case of Iuav, three students from the third year BA and two from the second year MA were involved; at EASD two students were in the third year of the degree course and three in the fourth; at PoliMi the five students attended the third year BA.

The workshop took place in September 2017 at Iuav, in December 2017 at EASD and in May 2018 at PoliMi. During the workshop there were no other people present apart from myself and the five students; only in the case of the EASD there was a teacher for any translation needs. In each location the meetings took place in a classroom provided by the university; during the workshop each student had a whole table to manage as a personal space, on which to arrange the selected images and keywords in order to create a visual map, a menabò that could then be translated into a portfolio. This led some students to design the final portfolio with new formats and new layouts compared to the more common A4 presented by everyone at the beginning of the workshop. The meetings of the workshop were audiorecorded and photographically documented to allow a subsequent analysis of the actions taken and reflections that emerged. The subjects were not informed in advance about the way the workshop was held, but they received a request by e-mail to present their portfolio at the first meeting, also in draft, in digital, or paper format.

The workshop was structured in three meetings. During the first one, the students presented their portfolio by developing a reflection on the process followed,

the difficulties encountered, the aims for which it was realised; they highlighted the order in which the projects were presented, the materials included, the most relevant aspects of their work. This was followed by a discussion with the other students to see if, what they wanted to communicate through the portfolio, was correctly understood or if the message conveyed was different. At the end of the first meeting, students were asked to arrive at the next one with pictures, drawings and photos related to three projects, trying to document the whole process followed. It was specified that all the materials should have been printed; in fact, considering the portfolio as a place where the students analyse their own project path, searching for elements of continuity and recurring themes, it becomes fundamental to be able to simultaneously visualise the works made, the traces deposited over time. The second meeting focused on the way in which the portfolio was created, starting from the individual images that document the design process carried out during the various experiences. Classroom work made it possible to analyse: the subjects' selection of images to include and to exclude; the choice of key words; the perception of the other subjects in relation to the individual's action; the influence of other people's points of view in the process of self-awareness. During the third meeting, about three weeks later, the students presented a new version of their portfolio, which allowed them to verify how much and in what way it had differed from the initial version, how much the activities of the second meeting had influenced it, if and how the structure of the portfolio had changed. The details of the workshop activities are presented below; it was not provided to the students but served as a track to follow during the course, so as to develop the same observation methods in each university and try to dedicate a similar amount of time.

FIRST MEETING

Subjects are asked by e-mail to arrive at the first meeting with their own portfolio (also in draft, paper or digital format) including three projects. This allows to verify their initial point of view and their approach to the portfolio.

Each one presents their portfolio, analysing the way it has been realised; a debate with the other subjects follows on the correspondence between the described objective and the result, between the material object and its immaterial dimension.

Students are asked to arrive at the second meeting with the printed materials related to three projects included in the portfolio, considering all the available materials that tell the project process (mood, sketches, technical drawings, fabrics, shooting, still life).

SECOND METTING

1. Each student places the materials on the table, in a sequence that describes their approach and identity. Images that they do not consider significant should be kept aside. Each student is asked to describe the process followed, the order in which the materials were arranged, the themes he or she wanted to highlight, the most significant aspects of the design approach. (20 min)

2. Each student writes five key words on a post-it that summarise the themes characterising their own path. The post-it must remain hidden. (10 min)

3. Everyone observes other subject's projects, including images that are not on the table. He or she writes five key words on a post-it summarising the themes perceived by others' work; the post-it remains hidden. The action is repeated for all four students participating in the workshop. For each, he or she selects the three images considered most significant to summarise the student's identity. (30 min)

4. Each student lists the words that have emerged, from themselves and others, verifying common words and terms that are not shared; the images selected by the other subjects are also highlighted and a debate is initiated around the perception of others of their own identity. (30 min)

5. After the point of view of others and the subsequent debate, students write five key words that can summarise their own path, confirming those written initially or modifying them with the suggestions of others; each one then selects a group of significant images for each word, also considering the images not initially placed on the table. (30 min)

6. Each student analyses the final words and images selected to support them, trying to highlight the influence of the context on the choices made. (30 min)

A new version of the portfolio is asked to be prepared for the next meeting, also thanks to the considerations emerged during the second meeting and the discussion developed with the group.

THIRD MEETING

Students present their final portfolio highlighting the order in which the projects and related materials were arranged, the design phases that were privileged and those considered less important, the changes made from the initial version, the importance of comparison with the working group.

The first and third meeting, therefore, were designed to document the way in which the students narrated themselves and the work on their own project archive carried out at the beginning and at the end of the workshop. The didactic action in the classroom was more evident during the second meeting and made it possible to observe the process according to which a student's project archive becomes a territory to explore, a space in which to know themselves, discover or invent one's own identity, also thanks to the comparison with others and the awareness of other people's vision of oneself; the comments take place instantly and condition the author live, as in a social network.[3]

3.3 LIMITS

One of the data recorded during the workshop was the difficulty with which the students managed to detach themselves from their own projects and from the images produced over time. During the second meeting many participants questioned the relationship between images, story and identity; this attitude was often not found in the portfolio produced later, which sometimes appeared to be a replica of the one presented at the beginning, with few changes and a sense of partial dissatisfaction of the author, as some comments have shown. This may be motivated by several factors, such as the lack of willingness or possibility to work on a totally new work, the greater ease in starting from the existing version and making some modifications, but risking that the structure would harness any attempt at modification, the difficulty of translating the reflections developed during the workshop and the free arrangement of images and keywords into an effective and convincing graphic design.

4 RESULTS

The outcomes of the workshop are presented below, analysing the three working phases: the presentation of the initial portfolio during the first meeting; the classroom activity carried out during the second meeting; the presentation of the final portfolio at the end of the workshop. The research interweaves the visual analysis of the works, the observation of the actions carried out and the students' statements during the work phases. It was decided to keep the anonymity of the subjects involved

[3] On relationship between portfolio and social networks see: FRANZO, 2019.

in the fieldwork to avoid that reflections and all other data can be traced back to their respective authors. The 15 students are named with a code that distinguishes them: S01, S02, S03, S04 and S05 are students of Iuav; S06, S07, S08, S09 and S10 of EASD; S11, S12, S13, S14 and S15 of PoliMi.

It was decided not to include any images of the portfolios analysed to avoid the focus on the graphic design. We want to leave space for the analysis of their complexity and their relationship with the students' identity.

4.1 INITIAL PORTFOLIO

The presentation of the portfolio during the first meeting of the workshop allowed to see 15 examples made by students coming from different educational paths and with different degrees of awareness of their own identity. The works are very diversified, both in the graphic design and, above all, in the narrative structure and in the links with identity aspects.

Various attitudes are already evident from the cover: it can be totally white (S02), with the addition of only the name (S04), the university where the author is studying (S07), his or her contacts (S06), the years in which the projects were carried out (S05); some also include a sketch (S11) or a reference image (S06, S07); many write the word "portfolio" (S09, S12, S14, S15), sometimes accompanied by the adjective "artistic" (S10) or "personal" (S08). Some people treat the portfolio cover as an Instagram post, in which the student's name, a profile photo and a reference image appear (S01).

From each university emerges more or less clearly a specific idea of portfolio, some characteristics are common to the students, even if each one tries to identify a personal tool to tell his or her own path and identity. The idea of a shared portfolio model is more evident at PoliMi, where the course followed by the students produces quite similar results, especially in the overall approach; a balance is observed between the different phases of the design process with particular attention to the technical aspects of the garments. The introductory page of each project consists of the title, a short concept and, sometimes, reference images, followed by sketches, photos of fabrics and knitwear samples, technical details (flat patterns, knitted stitches, product sheets) and photos of the products made. Particular attention is paid to the overall graphic design, from which a clear layout, the careful use of colours and the

search for a balance between the images emerge. Many PoliMi students introduce a presentation of themselves at the beginning: a statement (S11), a photo and a few lines with year of birth, languages spoken and current course of studies (S14), illustrations and descriptions of their educational path and design attitudes (S12).

At EASD a greater diversity emerges among the works presented by the students involved in the workshop. Both S06 and S07 create a portfolio similar to a fanzine, already showing on the cover a precise design attitude through a reference image that well summarises the overall aesthetics of the works that follow; the projects are described with different degrees of depth, some more synthetically and others in a more detailed and extended way with moodboards, sketchbook, drawings of the collection and, above all, photo shoots, of which the photographer and the models involved are specified to wear the outfits made. The students present themselves as designers and creative directors; they try to convey, through the portfolio, a precise identity. S08 develops an artifact quite similar to that of the two previous students, but stands out for an initial text that tells the educational path, the designers of reference, the aesthetics of her own projects, the themes she is interested in, trying to summarise - as it states - her "academic trajectory and the objectives set". S09 and S10 present the projects in a very concise way, reducing the portfolio to about ten pages; each work is narrated by a text and a few images related to the photographic service; only in a few cases photos of design references, drawings and details of materials and processes are included.

The differences observed at EASD are even more evident at Iuav, where the differences concern both the formats and the sequence of contents and the development of the narrative. S02 conceives the initial portfolio as a set of five brochures of the same format, each one dedicated to a single project; the covers are white, inside there is the title of the project and, sometimes, a brief description of the concept. The images document above all the initial phases of the project, following one another without respecting the process followed, but in dialogue with each other on an aesthetic level. S04, on the other hand, highlights almost exclusively the photographic shots, taken in the studio or outdoors, reducing the presence of reference images and sketches to a minimum; she divides the projects between BA and MA, underlining the evolution made during the training course. S05 seeks a balance between reference images and photos of the project results, photographed in the studio; the index is created as a scheme in which the types of collection (fabric, knitwear and product) and

the themes of inspiration (organic elements, architecture) intersect. In the case of S01 there is a big difference between the first part of the portfolio and the second; the first two projects are presented with a couple of mood images, colour charts with descriptions of the fabrics, digitally drawn sketches, technical drawings, all arranged on the page with order and rigour; the other two projects immediately appear more colourful and free in the layout, with screenshots from Instagram that act as mood images, many freehand illustrations with a comic-strip flavour and photos of the garments made. S03 inserts images relating to each design phase into the portfolio and arranges them on the entire page, without following the design sequence but searching for a narrative through similarities, contrasts, specularity, and repetitions; when, on the other hand, the image does not occupy the entire page, there is a great density of contents placed side by side and superimposed that simultaneously describe the project from different points of view.

4.2 CLASSROOM WORK

The workshop has been designed to observe how the students perceive themselves, their work and how they confront themselves with an external view. In the classroom the students selected the images to be placed on the table and wrote the keywords. In the first step the students' gaze was turned towards themselves, then it was turned towards others and, finally, it returned to self-perception; these steps highlighted the self-awareness process carried out by the student, guided also by the observations of the other participants and the relationships activated. The request to place a sequence of significant images on the table to define a visual story forced the student to visualise all the materials produced, to reflect on the possible connections, the path taken and the themes that characterise it, in order to compose an iconographic atlas of their design attitudes.

4.2.1 IMAGES

Despite the request to print for the second meeting all the materials of three projects - single images, related to the entire project process - some students (S01, S06, S07) have brought a selection, almost entirely included in the initial portfolio. While considering the possibility that this might be due to a lazy attitude or an incorrect understanding of the request, it was observed that some types of materials were not

even taken into consideration and that some phases of the design process were never documented. This seems to respond to the idea that some students have a pre-constituted idea of portfolio, from which they do not want to stray. In these cases, no attempt or curiosity has been observed to reconsider their own path, introducing different keys of interpretation; these students are characterised by a very clear imagination which, however, does not seem to be able to be discussed or re-read. Other students with equally clear identities, on the other hand, have tried to question the certainties acquired and have reviewed their own path in order to discover new nuances. The same is true for those who initially stated that they did not have a precise idea of portfolio and that they had just approached this tool, sometimes just to participate in the workshop (S09, S10, S13); in these subjects there was a need to discover their own identity, to understand how to tell it and how to recognise themselves in the final work, despite the difficulty of linking different projects, since each of them has its own autonomy. In general, therefore, two problems have emerged: those who already demonstrate an awareness of their identity, find it difficult to question it and look for new ways of narrating themselves; those who are looking for their own identity, find it difficult to detach themselves from the narrative of individual projects in order to identify an overall narrative.

The research developed in the classrooms has shown how much the relationships involving a student can condition him/her in his/her identity definition path, helping him/her to grasp the most characteristic aspects of his/her own project approach and the recurring themes in the works developed. This also emerges from the words of some participants who, during the final table, reflect on the work done during the meeting; S05 for example states: "The images chosen by the others are an excellent summary of my previous selection, which was chaotic and confusing". S04 also considers his initial selection confused and recognises the importance of other people's point of view: "Now I see some images that I had not considered, perhaps because I am linked to a different way of seeing these materials in relation to each other: it is a new way of observing them".

The work done during the workshop can also help to consolidate initial convictions and in this regard S03 declares: "I do not like some images chosen by others, I do not feel they belong to me and they do not represent my identity". The external vision in her case does not correspond to the perception of herself and, by not sharing it, the author reinforces the idea of her own identity.

4.2.2 KEYWORDS

In addition to the images, the workshop focused on the identification of key words able to synthesise the identity characteristics of the author. The subjects were asked a transversal reading of the selected images, recognising themes and attitudes that characterise the different works and translating them into words; it is a synthesis that highlights the significant aspects and the most developed skills, also going so far as to update pre-established or outdated ideas of self. In this regard, S05 declares: "The idea of finding words to identify one's own work and reading those identified by others is very stimulating, especially to get out of the labels that we help ourselves to describe and carry out our design approach".

The exercise on keywords is certainly conditioned by reflections - more or less explicit and conscious - on one's own work; therefore, they probably tend to derive not only from the observation of one's own table, but from a pre-established idea of oneself. Also the operation of identifying key words for other students is partly conditioned by previous knowledge; very strong among course colleagues, certainly more nuanced when it comes to reflecting on the materials of lesser known students.

As in the case of the work on images, the comparison of the keywords written by the author before and after those identified by the other participants made it possible to observe the degree of correspondence or distance between the perception of self and the external gaze. The first list drawn up by some students appears uncertain and vague, ineffective with respect to the required objective; the comparison with the words written by the others helps to define some points and focus attention on aspects that prove to be decisive and which are fixed in the final list (S09, S10, S11, S12). In many cases a homogeneity is observed between what is written by the student and the group, even if the author often prefers to use terms written by others to better express some nuances of his own approach (S02, S04); sometimes words focus more on the overall imagination, the design references and the aesthetics that emerge (S01, S03, S05), others more on the message conveyed (S06, S07, S08). In other situations there is a harmony between the words initially written by the student and those subsequently identified by the group, but in the final selection there is a radical change or the introduction of terms that seem to anticipate the desire to experiment new ways of narrating the self.

The final writing of the keywords takes place in the light of the discussion and the contribution of the other participants and, in many cases, these terms translate the degree of greater awareness achieved also thanks to the external look at oneself. Interesting, for example, the reflection of S02: "Reading the words written by others, I find interesting terms that I would probably never have been able to identify on my own and that summarise nuances of my identity".

The relationships activated during the classroom work, which simulate and intensify how much a student lives during the design of his or her portfolio within a training environment, help the development of processes of self-awareness and criticism of pre-constituted or openly provided portfolio models. The context allows the individual to read themselves in a different way, to interpret their work in a new way through the eyes of others, to consolidate or question fragments of their own identity.

4.3 FINAL PORTFOLIO

The classroom work was followed by a period of about three weeks during which students worked on a new version of the portfolio, with the aim of developing an artifact that was an expression of their identity. The new portfolio was conditioned by the activity carried out in the classroom, the reflections developed through the input provided and the indications that emerged from the other participants in the workshop. In some cases there were no significant changes between the initial and final portfolio, the structure remained almost identical and the contents very similar, sometimes implemented to describe the project process in more detail; in other cases, however, there was a desire to change one's own idea of portfolio or even to revolutionise it in order to find the right expression of one's identity.

A first element that is observed during the analysis of the final portfolios is their length. Many students, in fact, significantly reduce the number of pages, arriving even at a single sheet as in the case of S13; while in some cases it may be justified by the desire to carry out the workshop requests quickly, in others it may be interpreted as the need to synthesise one's own identity, to identify the foundations, the pillars on which to base one's approach to the project. Another aspect that emerges concerns the type of content inserted and the weight dedicated to the different project phases. In the initial portfolio many images were related to the photographic shooting that presented the results of the projects, to the detriment of materials related to the process

followed to achieve them. On the one hand, the classroom work on images and keywords and, on the other hand, shifts much more to the initial references and work in progress, perhaps because it does not require a finished product but something open that represents the identity of the students; the documentation of the creative process seems to be more intimate, more personal and this is also reflected in the keywords identified.

Among the most stable examples during the whole duration of the workshop appears the work of S06, who decides not to change the setting of the initial portfolio and to propose the same narrative mode; the identity is immediately very clear, precise and defined, but there is also the willingness not to try to discuss it: for the classroom work, in fact, few images are brought, all included in the previous portfolio, not allowing himself and others to identify new themes characterising his own identity. Even S10 and S07 do not develop significant variations between the initial and final portfolio, even if they decide to include some introductory texts to the projects and technical drawings that document the design process more. S08 and S09 seek a better balance between the different elements of the project: the initial portfolio focused on the project outcomes, while during the classroom work the attention shifted to the process, described by reference images, sketches, collages, fabric samples and short slogans; in the final portfolio a synthesis is sought, a balance between the different phases, telling the projects through the process followed and dedicating the right attention to the photo shoots of the outfits made. Similar is the approach of S04 who, unlike the initial portfolio and the work in the classroom where the focus was almost entirely on the shooting of the projects, in the final portfolio includes many images of moods, sketches, colour charts, fabrics, processes, technical drawings; these different types of material are placed side by side on the page and related as in a Warburg atlas. S05 also introduces more elements of the design process into the final portfolio, which strengthen the link between the research phase and the results; the key words that emerged during the classroom work are transformed into short captions and comments. This attention is confirmed by the student: "I wanted to emphasise the creative process, which was not very evident before. I then found myself reconstructing the phases of the design process a posteriori starting from the outcome; it was a sort of reverse design". Particularly important, in this case, is the statement that some materials were made ex-novo for the portfolio, so as to enhance the creative process.

Contrary to what has been analysed so far, S01 presents a completely different version of the initial portfolio; despite the fact that the classroom work appeared limited due to the scarcity of images carried and their little variety, the subsequent portfolio represents an attempt to give shape to what the student declares: "I totally changed the idea I had about the portfolio after the classroom work. I used to think of the portfolio as a synthesis of all my aesthetics, of my whole world, but I think it doesn't always have to be like that: it can be conceived as a palimpsest to be filled in, a more neutral document describing some skills". The portfolio presents almost exclusively images of the final shoot of some projects, accompanied by a few mood images and sketches. Even more evident is the evolution made by S02, not so much on the contents - which describe above all the initial phases of the project - but on their sequence: in the initial portfolio the projects are separated into independent brochures, in the final one they merge into a unitary narrative, a macro project in which the images are placed side by side to describe the approach of the author in the different phases of the process. Looking towards the future, she says: "I consider it an open document, which can be integrated with the new materials I will produce. This result is not only the collection of past design experiences, but also the input for the next ones". It is important to underline the openness towards future experiences: the portfolio is not only conceived as a collection of completed projects, but also as an input to develop the next ones. The elimination of any division between projects also occurs in the case of S03, who works on the synthesis by reducing the portfolio to just six pages; although unexplained, each page seems to express a precise concept and appears as the iconographic translation of one of the key words identified during the work in the classroom. The importance of this exercise is stated by the student: "Analysing all the material simultaneously forces me to take note of connections that I have ignored before. It was a work on my obsessions, on my references, on my identity".

The major evolutions, however, are registered among the students of PoliMi; almost all of them structure the new portfolio around the five keywords written at the end of the work in the classroom, demonstrating the importance of that exercise for their evolution. S12 presents a portfolio consisting of five double pages, each dedicated to a keyword, in which appear hand-drawn faces of friends and colleagues, knitwear samples, sketches, mood images, colour proofs; it is presented in a paper version, with different supports and manual interventions directly on the sheets. The student acknowledges the importance of the reflection carried out to identify the

keywords: "I started with the keywords because they proved to be a very effective way to clarify my ideas and better understand my identity. I think that these terms can become themes to be developed in future projects". Keywords become a moment of synthesis but, at the same time, new project inputs. S11 also starts from the results of the work in the classroom and structures a portfolio consisting of a sequence of five tables in A3 format plus an introductory one, which tell the keywords identified through images of different projects no longer distinct from each other. The pages are printed, folded to an A6 format and held together by an elastic band; a small brochure is formed which appears as a random sequence of images that everyone can interpret freely but, by removing the elastic band and opening the sheets, the meaning identified by the author manifests itself. The work of S14 clearly focuses on his own identity. The portfolio is a sequence of five pages, one for each word of the phrase "Hi! My name is Andrea". The first page is "Hi!", written in yellow on a red background. The next three words are placed on top of collages of images taken from different projects: one page with sketches, one with textures, the third with shooting photos. The last page shows the student's name on top of a photo depicting him. The student declares: "I needed a short and compact tool. I wanted to show what I can do, my personality, my identity. I would like to include it in the first pages of the portfolio, a synthesis between index and personal presentation". S14 appears to be aware that the presented artefact cannot be fully considered a portfolio, but underlines his need to produce an extract of his own identity and fix it on paper.

An even more extreme synthesis is obtained by S13; as anticipated by the question mark between the keywords written at the end of the work in the classroom, the student reflects on the way she narrates herself and the subsequent portfolio is transformed into a design identity card, an attempt at extreme synthesis to better define the fundamentals that distinguish her. It is a single sheet, on the one hand only the name is indicated, on the other a short statement accompanied by a collage of sixteen images relating to iconographic references, textures, knitwear samples, work in progress, sketches and shooting. The portfolio is then transformed into a table of references that helps the author to progress in the process of self-awareness and condense her imagination into a few images. The last work belongs to S15, who presents it with these words: "I tried to be totally free during this exercise. The portfolio is a selfish and totally self-referential but necessary tool. I didn't want to communicate only the fashion project, but my overall design approach". The operation carried out by

the student is radical: she creates a portfolio without images, transforming it into a textual narrative, a sequence of statements and short rhyming sonnets entitled with the five key words written at the end of the workshop. The words maintain, however, an aesthetic role, as in visual poetry, through a work on the font and the arrangement within the page.

5 CONCLUSIONS

The fieldwork made it possible to verify the thesis according to which the fashion students portfolio is not a synthesis tool, but an opportunity to build the identity of its author. Through the workshop it was possible to observe a considerable variety of approaches to the portfolio and important evolutions, during the different phases of the work, also thanks to the comparison with the other participants. It was thus possible to observe the way in which the identity of the students emerged and evolved, merging into the portfolio. Some students were characterised by a greater stability between the initial portfolio, the classroom work and the final portfolio. Others have tried to manipulate the materials of their projects more decisively, looking for a transversal reading of the recurring themes and, in some cases, arriving at merging the different works into a macro narrative. Even more surprising results came from students who completely rethought the portfolio, reducing it to a single page, creating it through iconographic tables focused on the keywords identified during the classroom work or eliminating all the images and replacing them with rhyming sonnets.[4]

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REVISTA DE ENSINO EM ARTES, MODA E DESIGN

Dossiê 8
Práticas interacionais na construção de práticas docentes: estudos do discurso e o ensino e as pesquisas em artes, moda e design

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EXTENDED SUMMARY

A CONSTRUÇÃO DA IDENTIDADE POR MEIO DO PORTFÓLIO DE MODA: UMA EXPERIÊNCIA DE INVESTIGAÇÃO EM ÂMBITO INTERNACIONAL

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1 INTRODUÇÃO

O portfólio do estudante de design de moda é um artefato que coleta, seleciona e transmite os projetos desenvolvidos durante um curso de treinamento. Apesar de sua importância para o início de um caminho educacional ou profissional, a reflexão teórica desenvolvida na área acadêmica em torno do portfólio é ainda muito limitada.

Na última década foram publicados alguns trabalhos, mas eles se concentram exclusivamente na dimensão material do portfólio (ATKINSON, 2012; CIRESI BARRETT, 2012; FAERM, 2012; KIPER, 2014; TAIN, 2010). Estes manuais fornecem orientações sobre gráfica e comunicação visual. Com demasiada frequência, se nota, portanto, a falta de reflexão sobre a dimensão imaterial do portfólio, sobre a sua ligação com a identidade de seu autor, no processo de autoconscientização que ele ativa.

2 DESENVOLVIMENTO

Esta contribuição visa trazer o portfólio de moda de volta ao centro da pesquisa acadêmica, investigando sua complexidade e sua relação com a identidade do estudante. Esta identidade não é apenas depositada no portfólio, mas o próprio portfólio permite seu nascimento e definição; um nascimento entendido tanto como descoberta quanto, sobretudo, como invenção, retomando a ideia de identidade proposta por Zygmunt Bauman (2004).

Segundo a hipótese de pesquisa, não é possível considerar o portfólio como uma ferramenta de síntese, ou seja, um conjunto de projetos concluídos; pelo contrário, ele deve ser entendido e, portanto, analisado como uma oportunidade para explorar e construir a identidade. Esta investigação se concentra nas formas em que um estudante se relaciona com projetos realizados em diferentes momentos: ele coleta os materiais produzidos durante sua formação (imagens de referência, esboços, textos, desenhos técnicos, tecidos, texturas, detalhes, modelagens, protótipos, e fotografias das peças de vestuário feitas); ele decide quais incluir e quais excluir; ele os organiza em uma sequência e estrutura uma narrativa. Por esta razão, foi decidido desenvolver um trabalho de campo capaz de documentar a ação realizada pelos estudantes na elaboração de seu portfólio e verificar as conexões com a identidade do autor e o contexto educativo.

O trabalho de campo foi realizado de setembro de 2017 a maio de 2018 por meio da observação participante de um grupo de 5 estudantes dentro de três estudos de caso, três universidades internacionais com cursos de graduação em design de moda: Politecnico di Milano (Itália), Università Iuav di Venezia (Itália) e Escola d'Art i Superior de Disseny de Alcoi (Espanha).

Um workshop foi concebido e realizado para observar as ações dos estudantes durante o processo de elaboração de seu próprio portfólio, a forma como esses narram visualmente e a influência do contexto no processo de autoconscientização e construção da identidade.

O workshop foi estruturado em três encontros. Durante o primeiro, os estudantes apresentaram seu portfólio desenvolvendo uma reflexão sobre o processo seguido, as dificuldades encontradas, os objetivos para os quais foi realizado, destacando a ordem na qual os projetos foram apresentados, os materiais incluídos e os aspectos mais relevantes de seu trabalho. O segundo encontro concentrou-se na forma como o portfólio foi criado, partindo das imagens individuais que documentam o processo de design realizado durante as diversas experiências. O trabalho em sala de aula permitiu analisar: a seleção de imagens a incluir e excluir; a escolha das palavras-chave; a percepção dos outros em relação à ação do indivíduo; a influência dos pontos de vista de outras pessoas no processo de autoconscientização. Durante o terceiro encontro, os estudantes apresentaram uma nova versão de seu portfólio, o que lhes permitiu verificar o quanto e de que forma ele diferia da versão inicial, o quanto as atividades da segunda reunião o haviam influenciado e se e como a estrutura do portfólio havia mudado.

A apresentação do portfólio durante o primeiro encontro do workshop permitiu ver 15 exemplos feitos por estudantes vindos de diferentes caminhos educacionais e com diferentes graus de consciência de sua própria identidade. Os trabalhos são muito diversificados, tanto no projeto gráfico quanto, sobretudo, na estrutura narrativa e nas ligações com aspectos de identidade.

A pesquisa desenvolvida nas salas de aula, durante o segundo encontro, mostrou o quanto as relações que envolvem um estudante podem condicioná-lo em seu caminho de definição de identidade, ajudando-o a compreender os aspectos mais característicos de sua própria abordagem de projeto e os temas recorrentes nos trabalhos desenvolvidos.

O trabalho em sala de aula foi seguido por um período de cerca de três semanas durante o qual os estudantes trabalharam em uma nova versão do portfólio, com o objetivo de desenvolver um artefato que fosse uma expressão de sua identidade. O novo portfólio foi condicionado pela atividade realizada em sala de aula, pelas reflexões desenvolvidas por meio das contribuições fornecidas e pelas indicações que surgiram dos outros participantes do workshop. Em alguns casos, não houve mudanças significativas entre o portfólio inicial e final, a estrutura permaneceu quase idêntica e o conteúdo muito semelhante, algumas vezes implementado para descrever o processo do projeto em mais detalhes; em outros casos, entretanto, houve o desejo de mudar a própria ideia de portfólio ou mesmo de revolucioná-la a fim de encontrar a expressão correta de sua identidade.

3 CONCLUSÃO

O trabalho de campo permitiu verificar a tese segundo a qual o portfólio de estudantes de moda não é uma ferramenta de síntese, mas uma oportunidade para construir a identidade de seu autor. Através do workshop foi possível observar uma considerável variedade de abordagens do portfólio e evoluções importantes, durante as diferentes fases do trabalho, também graças à comparação com os outros participantes. Assim, foi possível observar a forma como a identidade dos estudantes emergiu e evoluiu, fundindo-se no portfólio. Alguns estudantes se caracterizaram por uma maior estabilidade entre o portfólio inicial, o trabalho em sala de aula e o portfólio final. Outros tentaram manipular os materiais de seus projetos de forma mais decisiva, buscando uma leitura transversal dos temas recorrentes e, em alguns casos, chegando a fundir os diferentes trabalhos em uma narrativa macro. Resultados ainda mais surpreendentes vieram de alunos que repensaram completamente o portfólio, reduzindo-o a uma única página, criando-o por meio de tabelas iconográficas focalizadas nas palavras-chave identificadas durante o trabalho em sala de aula ou ainda, eliminando todas as imagens e substituindo-as por sonetos rimados.

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