

# WeAr Design

Fashion sustainability is complex and urgent, yet hard to tackle through the dominant ecological model that focuses on the rationalization of resources rather than on enabling wearers to reconnect on a personal level to their clothes. Finding new ways to engage consumers with clothes through strategies such as co-creation, where designers and customers establish a deeper connection than through the traditional fashion production process, are fundamental for re-kindling the connection to our clothes and rethinking fashion sustainability. The WeAr Design project addresses the rather new yet promising approach to co-creation and hyper-customization in fashion through the lens of action research.

Wear Design was conducted between May 2020 – March 2021 and was funded by the European Union through the WORTH Partnership programme. The core aim was to create a tailored, participatory process through which customers can be involved in the design process. This process strengthens the relationship between people and their clothes, which is getting less and less tangible due to the digitalization process. The project was implemented as a consortium of three partners with competencies in fashion, art, digital humanities and user-design, each contributing specific knowledge in addressing the project's core challenge.

WeAr Design was divided into three phases: the first phase mapped common interests of designers and customers in co-creation (e.g. storytelling); during the second phase partners developed a tailored co-creation process based on the concept of sharing personal stories and tested this process through 6 collaborative experiments; the last phase included an evaluation of the project outcome and the dissemination of the 6 created design items at events such as Milan Design Week 2021.

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The 6 generated design items (corset/harness/anorak/brooch/trench coat/paper crane) represent unique pieces not only as aesthetic objects, but first and foremost as conceptual designs which reflect the personal life stories of their owners in ways by which these have been apprehended and interpreted by designers.

Experiments provided a deeper insight into how we can open the design process and steer it into a more participatory direction, where clothes are produced according to a meaningful process that is rooted in stories, identities, and relationship with our clothes. Storytelling proved fundamental in this process, highlighting how personal stories as well as their sharing can bring people together to shape a more sustainable future for the fashion sector.

**Keywords:** co-creation, hyper-customization, collaborative practices, sustainability and abundance.

# WEAR DESIGN

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## Research aims and outcomes

WEAR Design (2020-2021) is an EU-funded project, aimed to push the boundaries of co-creation in fashion, understood as those practical approaches through which consumers are involved in the process of fashion creation, instead of buying already-made clothes. Led by three partners from Italy, Romania and the UK, with expertise in the arts, digital humanities, user-centric design and fashion, the project resulted in the generation of 6 experimental design items, created following a collaborative process that used an experimental co-design framework.

## Methodology and processes

Action research framed the three parts of the project: the first phase mapped common interests of designers and clients through co-creation experiments (e.g. storytelling); during the second phase partners developed a tailor-made co-creation process based on the concept of sharing personal stories and tested this process by conducting 6 collaborative experiments; the last phase included an evaluation of the project outcome and the dissemination of the 6 created design items at Milan Design Week 2021.

## Results and impact

Experiments provided a deeper insight into how we can open the design process towards a more participatory direction, where clothes are produced according to a meaningful process that is rooted in personal stories, identities, and relationship with our clothes. The process not only expanded the horizons of both co-creators, but we also observed the breaking down of invisible barriers and fears currently existing between the fashion designer and the client. Storytelling proved fundamental in this process, highlighting how personal stories, as well as their sharing can bring people together to shape a more sustainable future for the fashion sector.



### Trench coat

The trench coat as a partnership between the designers and the client (owner of memories), blends in the colours and the texture of the tree trunk. Both colours (brown) and patterns (cross section of tree trunks) stand for the wearer's deep connection to the times spent at the grandmother's house as a young child. The deep roots of a tree echoes the childhood memories imprinted in early life. Just like your family surrounds you with safety, security and love, the coat wraps around the body igniting the emotion of essential bonds to the origins.

Designers: Larisa Croitoru & Emilia Bosoi

### Harness

Born from an obsession to grow wings and fly, the harness embodies the deepest childhood wishes of the client. Made from leather, the harness is the highest artistic expression of the artist's and client's ideas and concepts distilled as geometrical



### Corset

The collaboration between the designer and client stemmed from the profound interest in the



### Anorak

An enchanted alliance was born between two friends (artist and client) who share the passion for clothes and art. The idea is based on giving a new life to clothes by adding an artistic touch as a sign of the wearers' personality. The anatomy of the heart breathing a rainbow of colours is an ad libitum depiction of the essence of the design. The fusion between different materials builds the character of the garment, underlying the upcycling process.

Designer: Dana Tanase

shapes that encapsulate the body. The green elements connecting parts of the design flow vertically like a lifeline.

Designer: Alexandru Avram



Designer: Oana Patrulea

the corset as a support for the body. Through redesign, the corset becomes a contemporary affirmation of female emancipation. The traditional use of the corset underneath clothes is also turned around; worn on top of clothes it becomes a statement of a woke, personality and self-trust. Adornments like visual elements and spikes underline its gender neutrality. The printed design on the etched leather surface recalls tattooed skin, alluding to the intimacy that such an accessory acquires.

## Paper Crane

Based on a Japanese legend, a person who folds one thousand origami cranes will be granted a wish by the gods. This paper crane was ideated as a gift from a grandmother to her grandchild and blends memories and colours into the fine craftsmanship of paper-folding. Its colours reflect ideas of non violence and strength, as the essence of martial arts, wishes to be bestowed upon the child as a sign of good luck and abundance.

Artist: Cristian Mariancuc



## Brooches

"Organized Serendipity" is a collaborative project consisting in seven jewellery pieces for which the input was the personal and corporate stories of the client. The series illustrates the key ingredients for successful collisions: passion, trust, patience, persistence, level playing field, the right agenda and energy, as a unit of measurement. The brooches are made from six neodymium disc magnets set in a handcrafted silver structure. Solely by magnetic forces, a variety of elements are put on top of this structure to create this jewellery as artwork. Only to be given and received, never to be sold or bought, the pieces will have their own journey and linked in order to connect, collide and surprise. There is no matter, only energy!

Designers: Vika Tonu



## Co-design framework process

1. The client thinks about a story they care deeply about and shares it with the designer

2. The designer uses the story as inspire action to imagine a product that follows the storyline.

3. The designer and client meet (virtually or physically) to unpack the story.

4. The designer makes product sketches and shares them with the client, then refines them.

5. The designer finalises the product and gets it to the client.