

Tell Us About Your Clothes

Kay Politowicz

Short Description: This workshop is about the environmental impact of the fashion system and the close connection our clothes have with our emotional selves. If up to 80% of a product's environmental costs are determined at the design stage, then the challenge facing designers is to invent new approaches, including slowing down the accelerating stream of garments going to landfill.

By acting upon the information gathered through this informal survey about the 'emotional durability' of clothing, designers can also learn how to play a radical and innovative part in bringing about more sustainable fashion consumption.

Audience and Space: An event, set-up as a market stall, invites reflection from a passing audience about their emotional attachment to the various items of clothing in their wardrobe. A corridor (or outside space) creates a 'market thoroughfare' or a circulation space, with room to set up a stall and a group of at least 3 people, who are willing to approach a passing audience and ask questions from a short script. The audience comprises individuals, passing by as a 'market' crowd at lunchtime or after work.

Duration: 2 hour market / 12 minute individual participation (Followed by 2 hour analysis & mapping by team)

What happens?: Willing participants stop to talk, answering questions about what they are wearing, why they have chosen to wear it and what part it plays in their wardrobe overall. By being encouraged to confess the provenance and personal significance of their clothes, they become more aware of their emotional attachment to their clothing and its environmental consequences.

Participants are asked if they agree to be

photographed to record their outfit and responses as part of a mapping exercise.

Equipment Needed: table, large pin-able board, access to environmental research information, android tablet, instant camera, placards, printed templates, clipboard, pins, pens.

Suggested Timings:

2 mins: Team member explains the reason for the research enquiry

5 mins: Participants answer the workshop questions verbally

5 mins: Participants are helped to record their responses as note and image.

2 hrs : Team share and map responses to formulate design interventions for greater sustainability in fashion.

Pre Workshop Questions:

What does your garment mean to you?

Where does it come from and what did it cost?

How long have you had it?

Where was it made and what is it made of?

What would improve its performance?

Why would you get rid of it?

How will you dispose of it when the day comes?

What additional garment could enhance your life?

What has been your lifetime's favourite garment?

Post Workshop Questions:

Answers to each question are grouped under emerging themes.

Reflection on the significance of each theme to a sustainable fashion system is mapped to enable design improvements.

Feedback: Please feedback to the TED team, ted@chelsea.arts.ac.uk