
COD

Fashion, textile art and material studies

at the University of Lapland, Finland

Ana Nuutinen and Jenni-Liisa Yliniva

The *University of Lapland* launched a new study program in 2021, called the *Fashion, textile art and material studies*. The education reform answers to the challenges stemming from the transformation of working life. For example, the digitalization and the environmental aspects related to the textile and clothing industry are changing the professional practices of design. Digital competence is important in the north, where long distances, sparse population and changing conditions make the operating environment special. The change has created demand for new areas of expertise. Along with new openings, so-called traditional experts in the field are needed for the growing small-scale clothing and textile production in Finland. Practical competence requirements include a versatile understanding of concrete products and user needs, a sense of form, materials and surface design, control of clothing structures and details, without forgetting extensive life cycle thinking. In addition to these, becoming familiar with digital skills significantly expands the so-called traditional way of working by drawing by hand or working with materials.

The new study program includes creative, innovative and exploratory research and artistic activity of various material and non-material products, emphasizing the northern design perspective. Fashion-related research deals with aesthetic, cultural or digital themes of forecasting, design and manufacturing processes, as well as consumption. *Textile art* is a material-based, traditional field of art, which in our study programme emphasizes contemporary approaches, for example research of artistic processes, design of material experiences, and bioart. Artistic experiments are carried out in both digital and actual studio environments, as well as other living cultural environments and nature. *Material studies* is an experimental and interdisciplinary field of *fashion and textile art* that focuses on developing material expertise. The research focus is on studying, developing, prototyping and testing the aesthetic, functional and new properties of materials.

In the learning content of *fashion, textile art and material studies*, close cooperation with local companies and organizations is of great importance. The goal is to develop concrete new services and products for a positive impact on the environment and society. The efficiency of sustainable development and the circular economy can only be achieved by developing internal company processes and being involved in multidisciplinary cooperation and expert groups. Cooperation offers students versatile experiences in real-life work situations and opportunities for networking. It also brings insight into entrepreneurs´ needs for expertise and research. We also participate in research projects where the goal is to create sustainable and ecological products, and to conduct pilot studies for the digitization of sustainable business and new services.

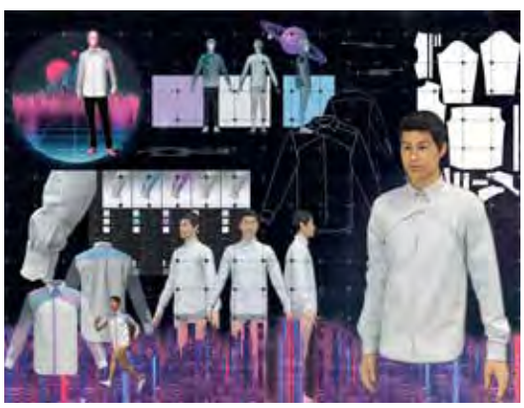
One of the cooperation projects aiming at these goals is the *Future Bio Arctic Design project*. It is a joint multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary working group of the *Natural Resources Center*, the *University of Lapland* and the *Lapland University of Applied Sciences*, which is looking for new uses for Arctic raw materials. Textile and clothing artists and researchers, agrologists, chemists and engineers work side by side in a multidisciplinary working group that combines science and art. The specific goal is to find plants in the northern nature, the compounds that could replace the harmful and dangerous chemicals currently used in anti-mold, insect repellent and UV protection treatments for textiles.

Among the special features at the *Faculty of Art and Design of the University of Lapland* are the *arctic design laboratories and galleries*. The laboratories provide tools and development and testing environments for prototypes both in the university studies and in cooperation with companies. There are two laboratories in our education program, the new *BioARTech Laboratory* and the *MUTElab*. The *BioARTech Laboratory* is focusing on developing new knowledge about bioart. This laboratory seeks to develop activities that combine bioart, fashion and textile art, creative research, biotechnology and science. The technologies used include biotechnological methods, biomaterials, smart textiles and new materialist approach. In the *MUTElab*, it is possible to experiment, develop and research various ideas related to fashion (e. g. form and structure design), textile design (e. g. printed fabrics and jacquard weaving) and material research (e. g. materials in clothing and textile art).

The faculty has eleven official gallery spaces and the possibility to use also other spaces for organizing pop-up exhibitions. The exhibitions in the official galleries change every three weeks, and present both traditional types of fine

< Ana Nuutinen, *Jätemateriaalikengät/Jedes Material geht, University of Lapland,* Staff Exhibition, *Arktikum*, Rovaniemi. Photo: Lucia Schwalenberg.

The main hall and canteen at the *Faculty of Art and Design* in *University of Lapland*. Photo: Lucia Schwalenberg.



Student projects: Tuija Erholm, digital design of fashion and structures and virtual modeling. Photo: Tuija Erholm.

art, and design, environmental, media and photographic art as well as artistic research. The exhibits include students' art productions included in their studies and art productions made by the staff, as well as exhibitions by visiting artists.

The studies leading to the Bachelor of Arts degree include art, design and culture studies, language and communication studies, research studies and minor studies common to all design programs at the *Faculty of Art and Design*. In the main subject studies, the students first familiarize with the meanings of fashion, textile art and material studies, exploratory and experimental material research, digital design and artistic experiments. Furthermore the students deepen their knowledge of the basics of design, production and artistic experiments, understand the meanings of northern fashion and textile art, the research targets and environments of sustainable development, user-oriented and digital design, and learn about the application of research methods in the bachelor's thesis. After the Bachelor of Arts degree, the student can continue to complete the Master of Arts degree.

The studies leading to the Master of Arts degree deepens students´ skills to act as a fashion and textile art expert in working life. The studies, combined with the development of innovative fashion and textile solutions, international networking and cooperation with business life make the student a strong and multidisciplinary expert in the design field. A student who has completed a master's degree can apply for the PhD studies in art and design.

The minor studies support major studies and expand students´ understanding of the interaction of art, design, culture and society. The education program in *fashion, textile art and material studies* offers minors in *textile art* and *fashion*. These minors give students opportunities to develop, for example, professional expression and communication skills, to increase their understanding of the work tasks and professional roles in the field, and to delve into a content area that is important to them. In the textile art minor, the focus is on the development of artistic expression with the means and methods of *surface design* and *textile art*. In the minor subject of *fashion*, students can deepen their expertise, direct their professional knowledge to a special area in *fashion and clothing*.

Our graduates can work as independent designers, artists and entrepreneurs, in various design and product development projects, in design and art education, information and management positions, trade expert positions and research positions. Their job titles have included e. g. product designer, interior and exhibition designer, business salesperson, pattern designer, costume designer, project coordinator, journalist, crafts teacher, researcher, professor, executive director and entrepreneur.

Students working in the dye laboratory. Photo: Jenni-Liisa Yliniva.

Students Lisa Schreiber and Adi Matan building a textile art exhibition. Photo: Jenni-Liisa Yliniva. >