

Transformative Textiles by Oldouz Moslemian: OCAD University

Warm Me, 2010. Cotton, and black Thermo-chromic dye, 145 cm x 75 cm, close up detail showing touch and memory of touch, Photo Credit: Taimaz Moslemian

Looking back to the beginning, my attraction to textiles can be traced to my cultural upbringing. Growing up in Iran, I was exposed to a diverse tradition of craft, fueled by centuries of trade on established routes between European and Asian continents. Years later, my academic background in Industrial Design and Fibre studies have further deepened my fascination with textiles, in particular, the poetic and intricate nature of woven structures. Human beings are organisms woven out of molecules. Cities are woven out of people, streets and buildings, and so on. Woven structures even exist in the in-tangible world: such as the abstract interwoven anatomy of our own society, or patterns of language and music. Some of these interwoven structures are static, some alive, yet others exist in a continuous state of transformation. The intelligence and sophistication of woven fabrics within our everyday life has inspired me to delve deeper into the study of performance textiles and examine their capacity to transform the way we live. Talk to Me, 2010, Cotton Tape, Fibre-optics, and Electronic components, 145 cm x 75 cm Photo Credit: Taimaz Moslemian

My personal approach throughout the development of my body of work took form of research and experimentation-based enquiry into alternative materials and methods. Using my understanding of established weaving processes I was compelled to push creative boundaries by focusing on exploring emerging technologies outside Fibre's traditional domain. Turning to nature and science for inspiration, I wanted to move past the established practices and applications of textile design. In doing so, I was amazed to discover the pervasiveness, diversity and ingenuity of interwoven fibre-based structures around us. After a phase of testing, sampling, trial and error with many unfamiliar materials I selected fibre-optics, light emitting diodes (LEDs), thermo-chromic dyes, electronics, touch and sound sensors as my responsive materials. I then combined them with traditional weaving, printing, and felting techniques to produce a series of enhanced interactive textiles. By juxtaposing traditional techniques of working with textile and advanced contemporary technologies, I intended to reveal the relationship between the textiles; past and their present: from static forms to multi-layered, digital environments and beyond.

Touch Me, 2010, Copper Taffeta, Foam, Electronic Components, Plastic, and Merino Fleece, 145 cm x 75 cm, Photo Credit: Taimaz Moslemian

The concept of my work focuses on facilitating human interaction within a specific environment embedded within the material. The result: a series of unique installations, featuring dynamic textiles, which absorb and convey information from their immediate environment. The pieces become alive when engaged and respond to environmental changes. The installations interact with the audience by the means of sound, touch and light, rather than through print, words or images. Three separate structures; "Talk to Me", "Warm Me", "Touch Me" embed the notions of communication and imagery into the very core of the fabric. At first glance one sees three flat surfaces of white, grey and black. It is the human contact and intimacy that transforms these seemingly inert objects into entities alive with movement, light and colour. As the human being becomes the maker of the meaning and imagery expressed by the piece, so does the textile go beyond the traditional canvas used to denote ideas of culture and class. Close up: Touch Me, Photo Credit: Taimaz Moslemian

The nature of human interaction is ever changing with new technologies upping the pace of everyday life and increasingly challenging traditional modes of communication. Since textiles can carry messages laden with cultural meanings, I want to continue to uncover hidden possibilities of fibre as an intelligent entity. Textiles are artifacts of human civilization symbolizing particular societies with the power to communicate and educate. It is especially important to realize the potential of textile as a medium when meeting new world challenges with a generation of materials and artifacts that are high performance, intelligent and responsive to human presence and their environment. As the boundaries of science, engineering, art, craft and design merge with accelerating pace I want to take advantage of newly opened possibilities expanding on my current body of work and broadening the scope and potential of such materials and applications in fibre.