



The  
Response







ISSUE XV

**The moment you take off your shirt...**



## The Radical Moment

The moment I take off this shirt, I no longer feel possessed by an image...

The company logo that adorns this shirt engulfs my being to such an extent that I become a commodity.

During the day, I am a walking advertisement; portraying the identity of a business that I cannot relate to. This shirt comes to symbolise my alienation: carrying out mundane tasks on the minimum-wage, for a company that uses a loophole to avoid paying taxes.

So after work, when I take off this shirt, it truly is a revolutionary moment for me... as I am now free to define myself.

The possibilities are endless: Will I be a Mod or a Rocker tonight? Should I dress up as Sid Vicious or Patti Smith? Or maybe I could attempt to adopt a 'hipster' look for a change?

Whatever I choose to wear, it will be a chance for me to affirm my chosen identity, and reject the prevalence of 'thinghood' that emanates from the business attire.





“ This is the moment when I take off my shirt”  
Davide Di Taranto



## *Walking down memory lane*

*A contemplation on memory as a response to Kaarina Kaikkonen's sculptural installation at FABRICA  
(spring 2013)*

I have always found the concept of memory rather intriguing.

Smell, texture, touch, visual impressions, experiences and emotions all trigger our memories, deeply ingrained within us. We remember places, situations, time and feelings which are brought to life again and resurrected through our individual, collective and cultural memories.

Memory forms identities and cultures.

*My memory, your memory, our memory. Many memories. One memory. Memory is what makes us.*

As we walk down memory lane we notice that we often live in our memories. We live in bygone times.

*Made memories, my memories, mad memories, past memories, last memories.  
No more memories?*

Letting the installation resonate and have its effect on me.

I remembered a quote by Andreas Huyssen where he points to memory's progressive nature and creative potential for and in the here and now.

'The past is not simply there in memory, but must be articulated to become memory. The fissure that opens up between experiencing an event and remembering it in representation is unavoidable. Rather than lamenting or ignoring it, this split should be understood as a powerful stimulant for cultural and artistic creativity.... The temporal status of any act of memory is always the present ... . It is this tenuous fissure between past and present that constitutes memory, making it powerfully alive...'\*

Drawing on our memories we rebuilt and create the present.



*We live. We create. We remember.*

*350 shirts  
hung in the sky  
and strung to a tie  
Sometimes borrowed, sometimes blue, never new  
Memory sees us through.*

...

*Alas! Give up before it's too late! The words won't give justice to the installation.  
Instead let's take the time and honour our memories in vital celebration.*

...

*A textile landscape made from a blue dream  
(I doubt: are all of them clean?)  
The sea, the sky, the air.  
I remember.*

*It smells of my granddad's shirt.  
( And it was washing's worst nightmare! )  
Some memories they hurt.  
I remember.*

*The memories of family and country are coming with all their might.  
(And my heart is now on the sleeve of my shirt ).  
We stand together in past light.  
I remember.*

*For present, for past: I remember and regain  
The texture, the smell, the joy and the pain  
For our new walk on memory lane.*

\* Twilight Memories: marking time in a culture of amnesia, Andreas Huyssen 1995, p.3

Julia Harris







## Shirt tales

A shirt – white and crisp,  
Freshly laundered and smoothly ironed,  
For a busy day  
at the office.  
Morning, boss!

A shirt – warm and woolly,  
Checked in black and red,  
Drenched in the sweat  
of a Canadian lumberjack.  
Timber!

A shirt – smooth and black,  
Neat, slim fitting  
For a right wing activist or  
An elegant artiste,  
Encore, Maestro!

A shirt – striped blue and white,  
Enclosing the lithe,  
taut, fit frame  
Of a famous footballing  
Legend,  
Seagulls!

A shirt – blue, well pressed,  
Epaulettes tucked beneath  
A policeman's dark jacket,  
Protecting us from criminals,  
Stop thief!

A shirt – of thick, bright cotton,  
White collar and cuffs,  
Wrapped around the powerful muscles  
Of a rugby star,  
Scrum!

A shirt – short, pointy collar,  
A black bow tie,  
Ruffles down the front  
And cuff links at the wrist,  
Champers, anyone?

My shirt, checked and rather faded,  
Soft with wear and washing,  
Familiar and friendly,  
Frequently worn,  
Comfort!





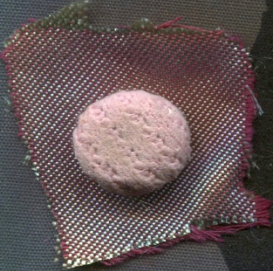




Print taken directly from a Chinese ancestral shirt, traditionally burnt to keep the dead clothed in their afterlife.

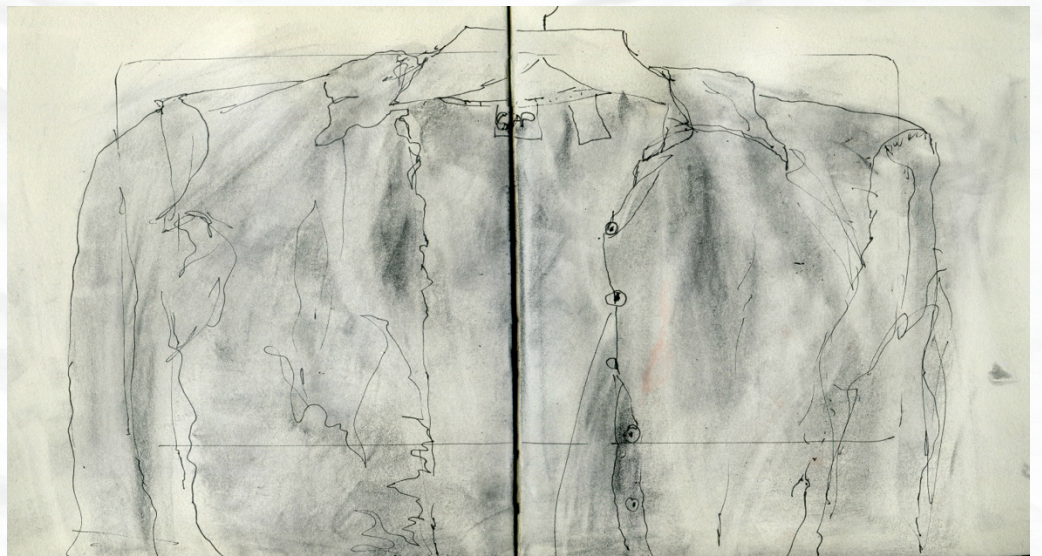
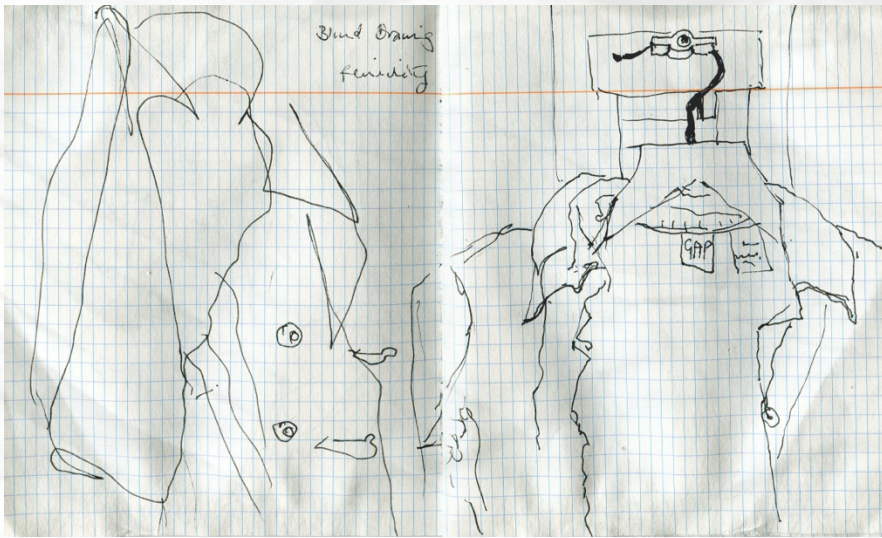
Helen  
Goodwin





DESTITUTE MOTHERS WOULD LEAVE THEIR BABIES AND CHILDREN AT THE FOUNDLING HOSPITAL LONDON. THEY WOULD ATTACH AN IDENTIFYING TOKEN FROM THEIR OWN SHIRTS IN THE HOPE THAT ONE DAY THEY WOULD BE IN A POSITION TO RECLAIM THEM. MOST NEVER COULD.







## A Call to Arms

I'd like to think of the old shirt as a metaphor for ideas. By this, I'm talking about the memories and meanings tied up in each and every shirt we've ever owned – or borrowed, or stolen, or lost.

I started writing this by asking friends and family to tell me about their shirts – they laughed at my question, protesting – “Why would I have any amusing anecdotes about *shirts?*” but no sooner than the words escaped their lips, stories poured forth. It seems that some items are so universal, they not only slip under the radar of everyday life, they also slip under your skin too. Which is ironic, for something that's meant to float comfortably on top of it.

So how do we imbue so much emotion in some striped cotton or crisp creamy linen? From the white collar to the blue collar to the ink-stained breast pocket, or the khaki to the sequined to the lacy little trim – even the cufflinks, the buttons, and the length of a sleeve that tells others whether you intend to wear your heart on it – shirts carry silent messages within their very fabric. I nearly laughed aloud last week when I witnessed a friend self-consciously studying his reflection, frowning as he did up his very top button, undid it again, did it up again, undid it again....

In trying to separate the physicality of a piece of clothing from the external concepts it embodies, I began to unravel (literally, at the seams) some of the ways in which shirts can echo our emotions without us even noticing – firstly, in language. To bet your shirt on something is an act of defiance – a will to risk everything for your convictions. Those who would sell the shirt off your back are, consequently, robbing you of the greatest talismans of belonging, identity, and dignity. Even to pay a price in shirt buttons conjures up images of hard times. The shirt, we believe, is a stoic and eternal friend, lying quietly unnoticed on the end of the bed (or crumpled in the corner if you prefer the easy-iron type).

So what do we feel at the moment we take off our shirt? Having just praised the connection between fabric and soul, I now firmly stand against that connection – after hearing a story from another friend, when she related the day her father stood up from the kitchen table and literally ripped the shirt from his chest after his family had ridiculed its tatty



state. It was once his most expensive, favourite, designer shirt, and he couldn't bear to part with it until it eventually fell from grace in his own eyes too, old and decrepit and no longer the glorious piece he thought it was.

Although the image of Hulk bursting through his buttons is amusing, it highlighted for me the sad fact that in spite of all the positive feelings we have for our favourite items, we are too soon to discard them once these feelings are no longer reciprocated. So much of the attachment we feel to objects comes from the abstract qualities they promise to share with us – the shape and style, colour and cut, relay to others our paths in life and we can fail to function once they cease to fulfil our expectations.

How meaningless *is* an empty shirt? According to the writer Charles Baudelaire, referring to long-forgotten costumes, "living flesh imparted a flowing movement to what seems to us too stiff." Somewhere in between the soulless rags of the past and the cherished pieces hanging proudly in the wardrobe, there must be a happy medium. By all means, love your shirt, but once you are ready to part with it, let it live on. The moment you take off your shirt, don't try to claim back some of the meanings you have planted in it during your shared lifetime. Instead, I urge you to look more closely. Tear the fabric, see the dye, unravel the threads and salvage the buttons, unstitch the label, turn it inside out and screw it up in a ball – or, slowly, surely, pull it taut across a line and hang it poignantly with its brothers from the ceiling of Fabrica.

So, if we think of the shirt as a metaphor for ideas, an 'unwearable' shirt might still have some life left in it. The powerful idea of our favourite shirt has gone forever – but the fabric lives on, the physical object still remains, and has potential to go on another journey. In the words of Baudelaire, "the past will recover the light and movement of life and will become present".

Rosie Clarke









Road to Santa Teresa  
Sacha Pratt



## LOSING MY SHIRTINESS

Written on the number 28 bus on 10<sup>th</sup> April 2013

I'm feeling shirty tonight mate  
Ranting on about Popes  
Washing delinquent feet  
Whilst joyful nuns  
His nuns  
Burn condoms in  
AIDS rich  
Africa  
(and IVF is still a sin).

I'm feeling shirty tonight mate  
Gagging on bankers  
Spawned in Thatcher's seas  
Finally beached but  
Bloated, still  
On other people's  
Futures.

I'm feeling shirty tonight mate  
Sick of toady Tories  
Eulogising on  
Endlessly  
About the  
Milk snatcher  
And her dastardly  
Doings.

I'm feeling shirty tonight mate  
Winging on about  
Brighton  
Moving to Trondheim  
Or Tromsø or  
Somewhere  
Bloody cold for the  
Spring.



I'm feeling shirty tonight mate...

But maybe just need to reframe  
The problem  
Exercise more  
Drink less  
Accentuate the positive  
(Hitler was a veggie who loved dogs after all)  
And leave the job of being a  
1. Miserable bastard  
To them as needs it  
Most.

Ken Barrett 11.4.13



Najat Zaari



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