

Pauline van Dongen, Kristina Andersen

### **Making, wearing, and thinking through uncut cloth: Material-aesthetics sensitivity as design strategy**

Technological mediation is a philosophical concept related to postphenomenology that describes how technologies shape humans and their worlds by transforming human perception and translating human behaviour. The theory of technological mediation offers opportunities for designers to anticipate the role and effects of their designs on people and the systems that surround us. In this paper, we present a method that evokes a material-aesthetics sensitivity. We propose that this sensitivity enables designers to practically link material considerations and embodied explorations to possible mediations during a design process. Our method is explored here through an exemplar textile object: a "kaftan/non-kaftan", which is designed to provide maximum versatility in interaction and interpretation. In doing this, we extend from Hauser et al's notion of table-non-table (2018). The kaftan/non-kaftan is made from a rectangular piece of woven textile with integrated flexible solar cells. By refraining from cutting into the woven material, we invite the wearer to give shape and meaning to the object in context. As a "thinking object" for designers, the kaftan/non-kaftan is metaphorical and real at once, thereby facilitating generative speculation and iterative making. We aim to show how a material-aesthetics sensitivity is manifested in the toleration of radical openness, allowing ongoing mediation to happen through making, wearing and using. Through annotations of the design process, including the application of a material-aesthetics framework, we provide guidelines for designers on how to develop a material-aesthetics sensitivity.