

'TEXTILE HERITAGE INSPIRING  
CREATIVES-CREATEX'  
EUROPEAN PROJECT

OPEN CALL

ANDREA SEBASTIANELLI\_  
DESIGN PRESENTATION

# *Preface*

It is important to always keep in mind that while the verb “to archive” resembles the action of collecting records, the noun “archive” defines the physical place or object which contains those records. We can therefore argue that an archive is both the action of documenting the history and also the translation of it into a new object.

I have been questioning myself for some time now on how archives can be more easily experienced by everyone and therefore transformed into an object that would reinvent its original identity. An object which will bring the archive out from the museums and turn it into new forms and functions. This double dimension has been my starting point for the following design research.

A ground breaking initiatives in making archives more accessible is the digitalization that Museums and Private collectors have been doing in the past years. By creating online databases, it became much easier for everybody to have access to their stored material.

When it comes to textiles, and specifically to textile museums, the creation of online databases with textiles and fabrics make easier for researchers to study and conduct research on the field. Therefore, it can be argued that the digitalization of the archives promotes reproducibility and inspires new developments and applications on the field.

But how can a collection of objects can turn into a vehicle for the promotion of a museums's online archive?

# Creative Inspiration

The development of my concept was inspired by three main projects: The new Acropolis Museum in Athens, 'Formafantasma's' textile designs for Tilburg museum and the work of Hella Jongerius.

*"A contextual approach that synthesizes culture across place and time is most successful if it is closely connected to an actual site."*(Claire Lyons)

In 2010, the new museum of Acropolis in Athens was inaugurated. A great museum in the heart of Athens designed by Bernard Tschumi Architects, house to some of the finest classical, archeological treasures of Acropolis. The architectural plan of the museum is evolving in three different levels. Entering the museum, at the ground level, the first thing you see are the late Roman and Byzantine foundations of the ancient city of Athens. Entering the main hall whereas evidence of an early human presence in the area are on display. The space is dominated by marble sculptures among structural columns as a reference, both to the ancient temples they were initially found as well as a reference to the way they were once presented in the city. Lastly, arriving on the last floor of the museum, you are confronted with a breath-taking experience. You are suddenly surrounded by an amazing, panoramic view of the city of Athens whilst you can admire the sacred rock of Acropolis with Parthenon at its top. Parthenon's sculptures are mounted in direct visual alignment with the great temple, creating an imaginary connection. A sort of a physical reattachment of the sculptures with the facade where they were originally placed. In this way the marbles of Parthenon are as close in situ as possible.

It is widely known that some of Parthenon's sculptures were transferred in England years ago, with a non very legal process, and now are being presented in the British museum. The exhibition designed in the new museum of Acropolis is taking these marbles under consideration. Even though are hundred of miles away, the pieces have their designated place in the museum, empty, waiting for them to come back home. The architecture of the museum and the exhibition installation is a remarkable work connecting the past with the present, preserving and at the same time promoting the greek cultural heritage.

*"Objects demand a certain way of being, a certain way of moving and a certain way of doing."* (Claire Lyons)

Our social identity is defined by the objects we are surrounded. Objects determine who we are. So how do we capture these webs of meaning in which objects are completely emerged? How do we bridge the gap between then and now, between them and us?

In 2013, the Textile Museum of Tilburg commissioned five designers to create a new body of work inspired by the collection of the Museum. Drawing inspiration both from the Driessen collection and the history of Turkish red, the design studio 'Formafantasma' designed a series of seventeen silk textiles dyed with madder roots, in collaboration with a German colorist. The silks featured patterns derived from Driessen's books and other visual elements as a reference to the history of Turkish red. The collection of dyed textiles can be imagined as an itinerary to the social, economical and political aspects of madder red.

The ornament, or *parergon* (supplement, accessory; from the Greek *para+ergon*= next to the work), is an added beauty that is not necessary, a decoration. Accordingly to the French philosopher Jacques Derridas this supplementary beauty is perhaps more important than we suspect (*La verity en peinture*, 1978). Maybe the *parergon* says more than the *ergon*, the painting's frame more than the painting itself.

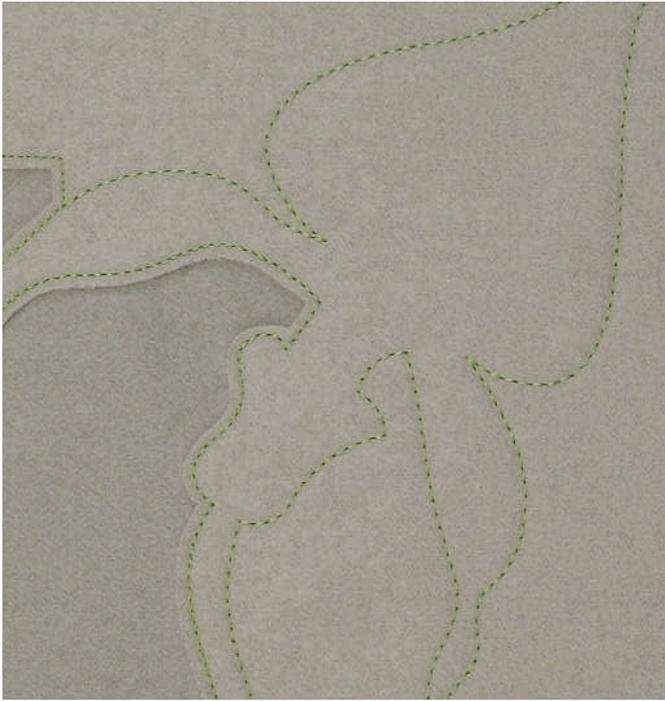
In 2005 the Dutch designer Hella Jongerius, collaborate with IKEA to the Jonsberg Project. The work involves a series of vases to challenge the way we preserve traces of the craft process within a mass-production product. The same archetypal forms are made in four ceramic technique and their decorations refer to specific parts of the world, the Soviet Union, Africa, Asia and Europe. The figurative floral pattern pierced in one of her vases reminds the technique of needlepoint.

More than the object itself the ornament carries the meaning of the project. What used to be a timeconsuming craftsmanship is nowadays only possible at affordable prices when commissioned by manufactures who can produce and distribute the objects in large quantities.

Coming to a conclusion, in the margin, in unintended slips, in the framing and between the lines of the text, there is sometimes more to be discovered than in the work of the text itself. It is possible that the decorations on the wallpaper betray more about the inhabitant than the furniture, the works of art on the wall, the choice of the partner or the book on the shelves.



*Image above: Turkish Red, Forma Fantasma. Client Textiel Museum Tilburg. Year 2013. Printed silk H75 x W50cm.*



*Image above: Layers, Hella Jongerius. Client Maharam New York. Year 2006. Wool, polyester yarn, laser cutting.*

*Right image: IKEA PS Jonsberg, Hella Jongerius. Client IKEA, Sweden. Year 2005. Stoneware, earthenware, porcelain and bone china, glaze and various decorations.*



## *Creative elements*

For the development of my design proposal, I started with an in-depth analysis of the existing digital archive provided to us from the 'Textile Heritage Inspiring Creatives - Createx'. I studied it trying to underline what was for me the most relevant latent meanings I wanted to reveal. Studying the fragments and reframing them layer by layer evoked new narratives. Starting from the most recent samples, dated in the present century and working the way down to the oldest, dated back to the 15th century, it became clear to me how the uses of colors, motifs and materials, are highly defined by the time there were made. From all the samples of the database I was particularly attracted by the velvet. A precious fabric I wanted to analyze deeper and ripropose it in a different way and in a different context, creating from it a new collection of objects.

Even though velvet has been always denoted as an expensive, luxurious and exclusive material, with the appearance of machine powered looms and the development of synthetic material became accessible to everyone. More recently, velvet has been featured by fashion and interior designers, from Alexander Wang to Oscar de la Renta and its popularity is steadily increasing.

Through my historical research on velvet I have noticed a beautiful creation, entirely made from 'velluto Genovese', 'lit'Effiat'. Built for Antoine Coëffier de Ruzé, this bed, which still has its original tapestry, is one of the rare surviving examples of 17th century bedchamber furnishings. The bed is composed of four bedposts with square profiles holding up a canopy whose angles are adorned with finials, fabric vases and braids. When the curtains are drawn, it has the aspect of a cube entirely covered with Genoa velvet. By looking at this example, it is important to underline the role that luxurious fabrics played during the Renaissance as an expression of power, wealth, and taste both for individuals and the Church. Especially woven fabrics incorporating a family coat-of-arms or other motifs associated with the family's reputation were particularly valuable.

Staring from this remarkable work it came to my mind

another textile piece I had recently seen in the Victoria and Albert museum in London. A beautiful piece of furniture that visualized power and symbolism at the same time, the Tristan Quilt is one of the earliest surviving quilts in the world. Depicting scenes from the story of Tristan and Isolde, an influential romance and tragedy, it was made in Sicily during the second half of the 14th century (Wikipedia).

The astonishing aspect of this quilt is the way both craftsmanship and aesthetic are blended together in one masterpiece. Indeed the quilt is made from two layers of linen, stitched together with wadding in between. Backstich in cream and brown linen thread defines a series of pictures with captions that have been brought into relief by inserting rolls of cotton stuffing to raise sections of the design, a technique known as trapunto. What particularly interested me in the Tristan Quilt is the way the technique, called trapunto, was used to visualize a certain story and symbolism. In this case is remarkable how the decoration is translated into a function aspect.

Both velvet fabrics and quilts were used in similar ways and wanted to communicate similar meanings. They were either to present popular tales, novellas, or they would present the shields and symbols of the families they were created for.

I felt the need to further understand both techniques and use them as a method to repurpose velvet in a new way.

As a metaphor of a historical journey through the archive of velvet samples, I imagined to make a series of quilts using velvet fabric.

By considering the Tristan Quilt, I decided to make the stitching process not only a technical aspect (of needle working together front and the back fabrics) but a way to display the online motifs.

I would therefore use 'trapunto' as the technique to digitally reinterpret velvet motifs on quilts

# Concept

Whilst exploring the online archive, I was attracted to the rich velvet collection presented in all five museum catalogues. The collection consists of samples, fragments and objects collected by various museums from Italy, Spain, Portugal, Sweden and Poland. The number of the collected samples of velvet demonstrate the transition from the craft production (15th century) to the industrial (late 20th century).

In this respect, the investigation of Velvet textiles is particularly relevant for the analysis of historical motifs, colors and symbolism.

During the Renaissance, velvet counted among the most valuable possessions of an individual, expressing power, wealth, and taste. Distinct by its soft feel, wonderful sheen and depth of color it represented the most precious material in the history of textile.

It was first developed in India and expanded later to Egypt and Italy. Its softness and its quality intrigued different cultures, making it one of the first examples of globalization.

Drawing inspiration both from the online collection and the history of velvet, my project consists of three velvet quilts using trapunto as embroidering technique. The colors and the motifs differ per quilt and refer to a prominent time of the history of velvet: 15/17th century, 18/19th century and 20/21 century.

The velvets feature patterns derived from the online archive and other visual elements as a reference to the history of velvet. Traditional design elements such as color and texture are used as tools to both testify to the work of the five na-

tional textile museums and to evoke the symbolic, economic and social impact of velvet textile in history: from the Maritme Republics through the kingdom of Richard II of England until the technological development of the Jaquard Loom.

The individual patterns of Trapunto recall various time frame in the history of velvet. For instance, 'ferronneries' and 'pomegranates' were among the most used motifs during the 15th and 17th century.

The online motifs are brought together in a sort of grid, chronologically framed. Other symbols of that period can be distinguished in the grid, like the Genoa or Amalfi's flag, or the rope resembling the Maritme Republics.

The overall project is a visual research based on stratification of motifs through time. The project intends to create an analog framework from within the user would be able to experience the archive in its daily life.

## *Production characteristics*

'Embroidered history', as the project is named, consists of three embroidered patterns for three velvet quilts: 15/17th century, 18/19th century, 20/21st century.

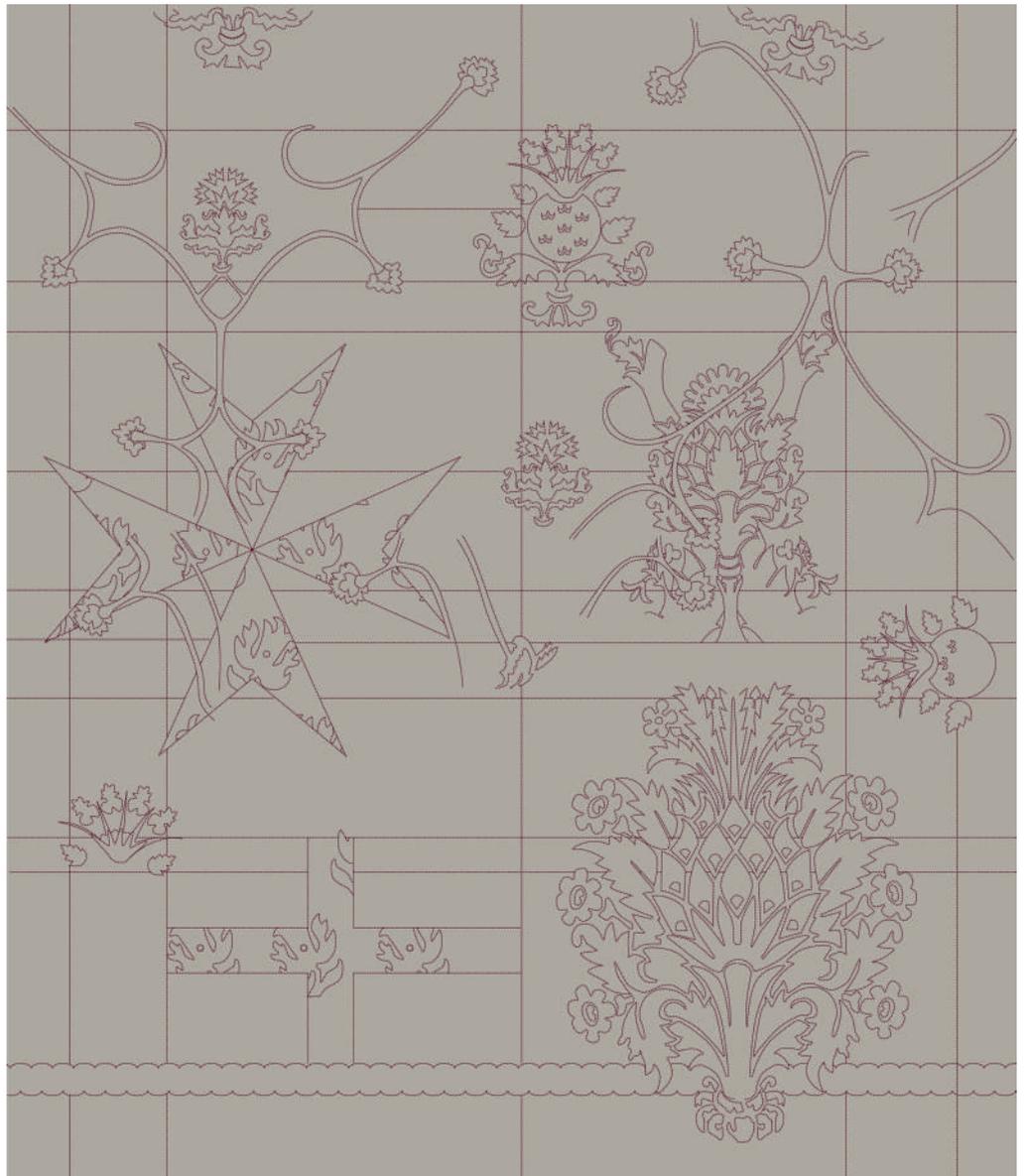
Cotton velvet, the front and the back of the quilts, provides a neutral textural complement to the intricate needlework, representing the archived motifs 'long arm' quilted.

The digitalization of the online motifs led the use of computerized controlled machines. Indeed the reproduction of patterns is the most central aspect of the project, solved by using a computer numerical controlled 'long arm' quilting machine.



*Left Image: A moku of the composition developpt for the open call.*

*Right Image: In here I made a first example of how each velvet quilt will look like. The following image present the quilt of the 15/17th century, where indeed motifs of that time are layered together with cut out with in simbolic icons that characterized that period as Maritime republic's flag.*



# *Business model and marketability*

## *Key partner*

As first step to properly define my business model, I need to highlight all the partners involved in my project.

In this specific case the engaged subjects are two. Me as designer, accomplishing the role of designing a mini collection of objects for the Museo del Tessuto di Prato. Secondly the producer, who is going to be chosen by the same Museum. Sustainability, Made in Italy and the promotion of culture through the market are gonna be the driving aspects of this choice.

## *Key activity and resources*

The main activity of this business model is to pursue the commerciability of velvet quilts.

Because of the combination of high quality materials, velvet is well known for its softens and wonderful sheen, and the warm performances of the quilt, this particular object is highly demanded from the market. As an added value of this business, the stitching process of the quilt has been researched and re-invented to reproduce motifs of velvet present in the online archives of several museums.

The key resources are three. The investor is the first important figure needed, who is going to make available a certain amount of capital, later invested in all the activity. Secondly the producer who is going to be involved in the production of the object from the moment it will receive the design until the product is ready to be on the market. From weaving the velvet textile, quilting it together, tailoring it and labeling it.

Lastly is the figure of the advertisement, who will promote the product through out the all possible channels available, online and off-line.

## *Value propositions*

After the analysis of the relevant market and the potential competitors, I able to say that the offers of this product is very high. To better explain the picture I present here a summary of the market offer mainly based on price and material used.

In the lower price we find H&M and Zara Home, which offer velvet quilts between 80/130€. This product is composed of 59% cotton and 41% viscose.

Moving on a higher price zone we find Aura Home and Helen Dealtry with an offer of velvet quilt between 209€ and 248/298€. These two brand propose a polystyrene back and 100% cotton in front, digitally printed both sides.

As top offer on the market and therefore with a higher price we find Linum Design. Active since 1966 this Sweden design company focused on textile and collaborating with international designers. Their quilts 260x270cm are designed to be 100% cotton with a price of 439€. So far this represent for me the best product on the market for its relation between the price, quality of material and design.

Because of my research made on the design of the stitching and its function as reproduction of unique motifs, my goal would be to place my velvet quilts with the same price of Linum, aiming at the same target but competing on the design level. What represents a plus in this product is underlined by the close collaboration between textile archives and design, resulting in a unique aesthetic.

This will therefore differentiate this mini collection from the competitors.

## *Customer relation and channels*

This business model aims at capture the attention of design oriented consumers, usually seeking at products that are aesthetically pleasant, long lasting, and culturally positioned.

This target is used to a detailed cost-benefit analysis, usually visit museums and galleries and is able to understand the historical value of an archive research.

To purchase power on new viewers/consumers there are many channels possible. Most traditionally are interior design magazines and art related publishings. New channel spreading more widely adverts are social media like Instagram, Facebook or Pinterest.

These can eventually be on the Museo del Tessuto di Prato's page.

### *Cost structure*

Considering the project of making a collection of three quilts:

- 220 x 200cm;
- front: 100% cotton velvet;
- reverse: 100% cotton in the same colour;
- Filling: Polyester wadding.

Here I present a very general estimation of a costs.

By doing so I try to frame what are the expenses during the production of each quilt, and to classify more clearly the product on the market. Because my main sources of prices have been online sellers and services the estimation will probably be are inflated.

Based on prices found on "fabric.com", a velvet Fabric 100% Cotton, / Backing: 80% Cotton / 20% Polyester, very heavy weight, optimal for bed-covering = 12-25 oz/ yd<sup>2</sup> that considering the lowest density, transformed in g/m<sup>2</sup> is 284.445743, costs between 30/60 € per meter squared.

Based on "Global Sources Polyester", staple fiber 7d x 64mm Polyester Hollow Conjugated Siliconised Virgin 'A' Grade Fiber, costs US\$ 1.12 - 1.23 / Kilogram. Considering that each quilt will contain 800gr. of polyester wadding, we can assume the filling to cost around  $(1,23 \times 0,8) = 0,984\$$ .

Considering an online service of Long arm quilting called "heavenlystitchesquilts.com": all all-over patterns cost \$0.02 per square inch.

A quick way to estimate what quilting costs would be: quilt length x quilt width x .02.

In my example the quilt is 78' x 86' and has 6,708 square inches. Multiplied by .02 equals a cost of approximately \$ 134.16.

As a conclusion I can say that:

- a ready made velvet fabric 220x200cm would costs  $30€ \times 4.2 = 132€$ ;
- 800gr. of polyester wadding would costs 0.87€;
- 220x200cm long arm quilting would costs 134.16€.

The final cost of production of each quilt would therefore be 267.03€.