

## DORITH SJARDIJN'S VISION OF FUTURE

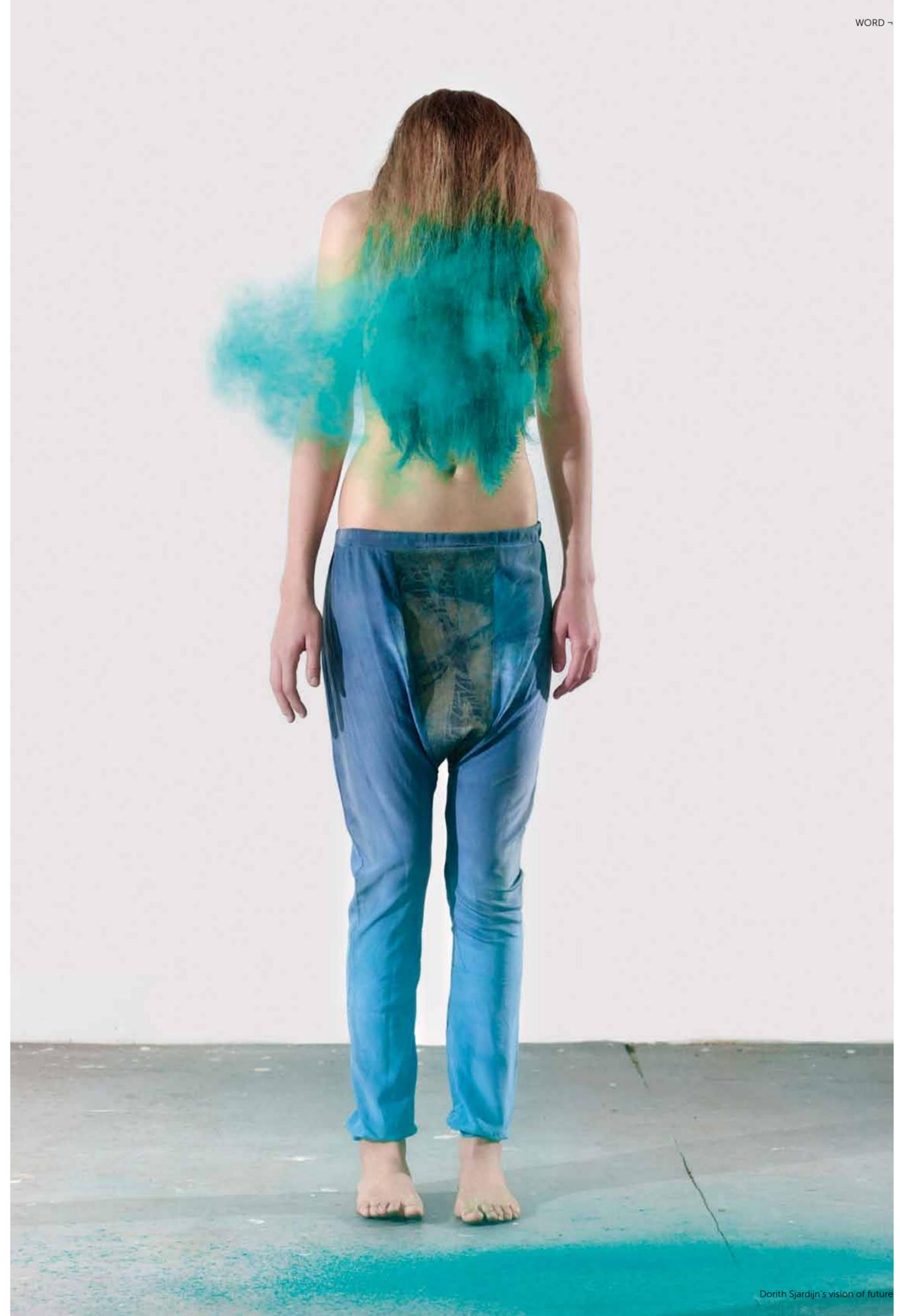


With capacious experience in e-textile design, Dutch fashion designer and artist Dorith Sjardijn (30) is a carcajou when it comes to merging fashion and technology. Similarly fascinated by traditional crafts, she is avid on reinventing new and old fashion aesthetics. Often combining the two, the experimental factor of trial and error is paramount in her work.

Pioneering the up to then rather untilled world of electronic textiles, it has been well over a decade that she began pushing the boundaries of fabric design. She hasn't stopped since, as she continues to strive for new conceptual ways and techniques.

While born and raised in The Hague in the Netherlands, Dorith is today residing in Amsterdam with her ultimate beau. We sit down in their lush, crisp white, spacious menage to chat the eve away.

*by Claire van den Berg*



**Diymanifest**  
Dorith Sjardijn

## Your work is very much pointed at combining technology and fashion. What got you into this?

In 2003, before I attended the art academy (the KABK in the Hague, Netherlands), I had just begun to delve into the possibilities of virtual fashion. By use of a technology developed by Phillips, the Liquid Crystal Display (LCD) paint, I began to employ this technique onto fabrics. Similarly, applying 3D programming, I started developing clothes with moving VRML (Virtual Reality Modelling Language) images. I for instance made a skirt with grain moving images of a Laurel & Hardy movie.

## How would you describe your individual style?

In short I would say: visionary but messy. I love manually made clothes or items that look used, damaged and torn. They have a certain natural and authentic aesthetic to them, which I try to infuse with more contemporary innovations and techniques.

## What methods and tools do you commonly use in your work?

For starters, I always do extensive research on material developments, through testing and developing samples. I'm always on the look out for new materials and technologies and how these are combinable. Similarly, I also do a lot of visual research by making moodboards. For ancillary inspiration, I browse the Internet profusely and zealously watch documentaries and movies.

## What obstacles and challenges would you say you encounter?

Having to propel between different worlds, it can be hard to juggle between the creative industry, the universities and knowledge centres as well as the commercial industry. While the creative, aesthetic outcome is most pivotal to me, their focus is often different than mine, making it a tacky challenge to please all parties, let alone, that I always get it my way.

## What would you say is your leitmotif?

The apotheosis that every textile can be potentially 'smart' and subject to technological innovation. Thus, combining 3D technology with say, shape memory alloy (SMA), LED coated materials or using conductive fabrics to make a soft sensor, creates ample opportunities for a wide array of applications. Even more so, I daresay that this receptive way of looking at things has deeply altered my way of perceiving everyday reality.

## Coming from an artistic family, what would you say is the personal motivation behind your work?

With my father being an abstract as well as conceptual painter with an infatuation for all things tech, particularly in the field of Virtual Reality, this has been a huge frame of reference for me ever since I was a child. In fact, this not so self-evident combo of technology and art, particularly ten, twenty years ago, has I believe made me think more freely and liberally. So yeah, I've certainly benefited from growing up in such an environment.

## Your most recent project is the body data suit. What's the idea behind this suit?

Well, starting point of this suit is merging sensor technology with fashion, through comprising soft, knitted sensors. Consequently, these conductive fibres then operate as various soft sensors by which body data can be communicated via wi-fi, and through means of pattern recognition software, this can be translated into e.g the wearer's current position or his or hers emotional state (presupposing different physical postures and other comparative data expose different states of mental wellbeing). Accordingly, an avatar version of the suit-wearer is created. Almost like a simulacrum adaptation of you, you can personalize the garment to your tastes, devolving the physical reality into a more virtual world. And not unimportantly, the suit looks stylish and not at all tech or sporty.

## You are currently also exploring the possibilities of developing solar ink with the use of 3D printing. Why so?

The thing is that 3D technology allows you to print virtually anything today. I therefore decided to put this technique to use to print solar ink (=a chemical solution with a light absorbing quality to it, so it can store solar energy as an energy power source). As we speak, it is still in the conceptual phase, but the possibilities of this powder form might just be infinite, resulting possibly in all sorts of ready-made objects that can generate solar energy.

## In 2010 you curated and took part in the Pretty Smart Textiles exhibition. Could you tell more about that?

Back then, besides a few blogs in the Do It Yourself community, there was no actual platform for designers in the e-textiles business. So I decided to take matters into my own hands by organizing an exhibition that would be premised on the intersection of fashion, art and technology. Together with Daan Roosegaarde and Melissa Coleman, among others, and in collaboration

with the Institute for Smart Textiles, we directed this expo that travelled through the Netherlands, Denmark and Austria.

## What fascinates you in blending fashion and technology?

Fashion in and of itself is a bit flat and one-dimensional to me. Yet electronic, interactive textiles intrigue me. Why should we stick with the old, when smart textiles give rise to so much more perspective? For me, it feels only natural to experiment with technology.

## How do you foresee the future of fashion in relation to the tech-department? What do you think we can expect in that regard?

The futurition of fashion will increasingly coalesce with technology. It's already happening as we speak! And it will only expand in the future. Correspondingly, printed with our own 3D printer at home, I expect to see clothing on demand democratize, resulting in less over-production, less waste and a decrease in poor labour conditions as is still to be seen in low wage countries. The whole production chain will as such shorten.

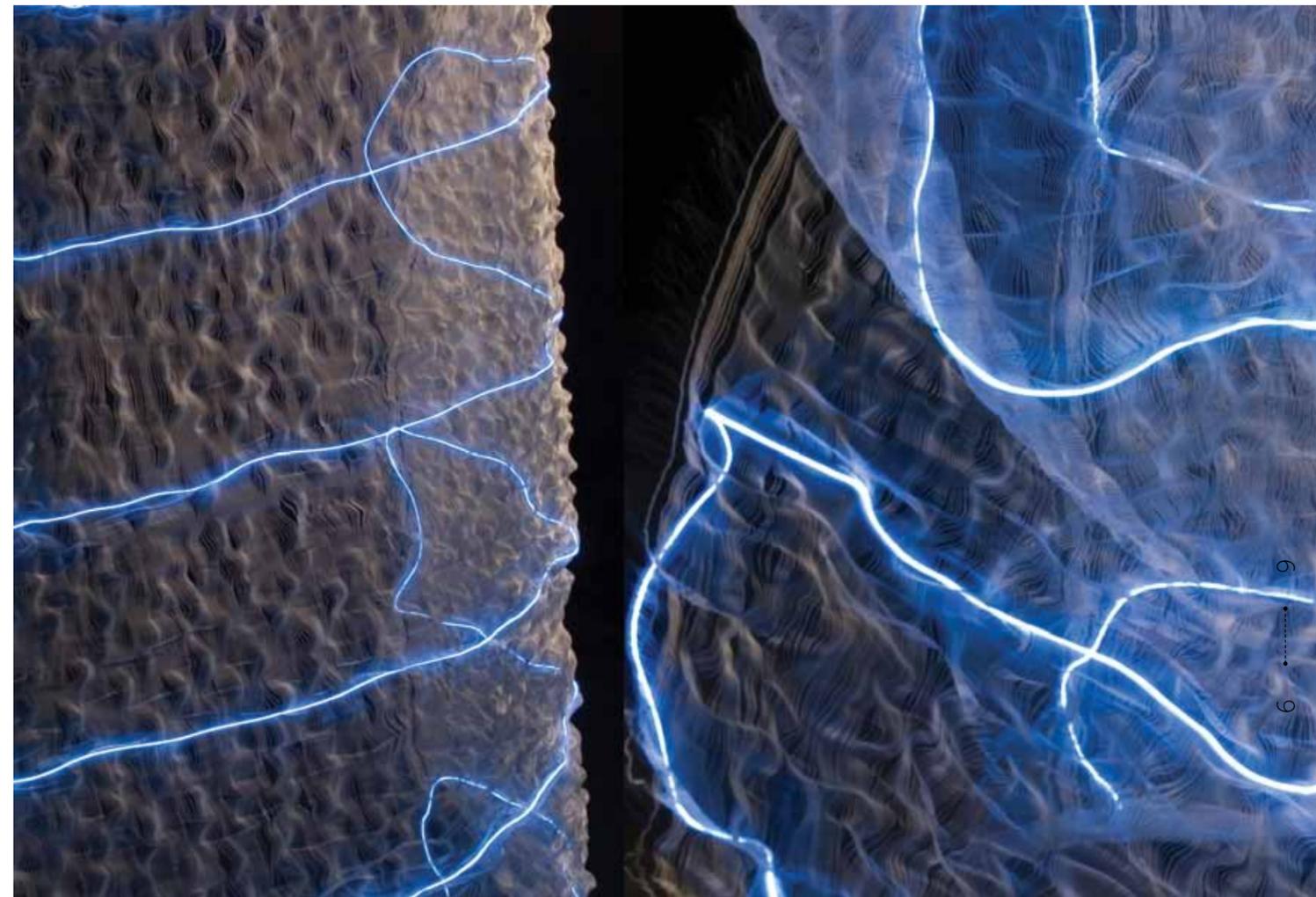
I don't believe this will imply' the end of the fashion designer' as some claim. The role of the designer will more likely shift to a more knowledge-based service, in which designers sell their aesthetic vision that customers in turn can print out themselves.

Akin to this, I think we can expect to see much more order-on-demand websites. Software can be uploaded on these sites that assist with creating the desired, custom-made outfit. A designer can then advice you on what fabrics, colours and shapes to choose. And I foresee a huge rise in 3D printed fabrics, which will localize the textile market and minimize overseas labour.

If anything, clean tech will become a prime force in fashion. Technologies that once exploited the environment can now actually help us in battling these pending issues. I really believe we can only go upwards from here.

## How do you believe "tech-fashion" relates to the current boom in Do-it-Yourself initiatives, as well as the rise in manual craftsmanship? Do you see these two developments collide or merge in one way or the other?

Ordinarily tech fashion looks quite smooth, not exactly manual and authentic. Interestingly today with the current developments, technology and traditional artistry increasingly conjoin. As such, more designers hand-weave say, conductive yarns into clothes, incorporating the old with the new.



Light emitting weave / 2009  
Dorith Sjardijn

Dorith Sjardijn calls herself an e-textile fashion designer, where she explores the frontier between fashion and technology.

In 2013 she founded the Prettysmarttextiles Institute, with projects like anLED coated Fabric Collection or a fully Fashioned Body Data Suit in collaboration with the Technical University Delft.

Her work has been featured widely, e.g. in: Wired magazine, ITEMS, Design.nl, Ecouterre, Dagblad van het Noorden, Fashioning Technology, designboom, Nieuwe Revu, SICA, Talk to my Shirt, Fashionunited, Architectuur interieur magazine, Textilia, Verloop innovatie, Fashion Future, Textiel Plus.

prettysmarttextilesinstitute.com  
prettysmarttextiles@gmail.com