

## **HUTCHISON Andrew (Aus)**

### ***“What is she wearing!?” - Active Textiles and Garments - paper***

This paper/presentation will examine the probable and possible pitfalls offered to retail/everyday wear by the potential of textiles and garments that are responsive, active, interactive and aware, using technologies inherited from other craft fields such as medical sensing and information technology.

These developments present obvious, and much discussed, opportunities for the design of functional garments for applications in dangerous industries, sports, rescue and the military. However, the effect on the already complex dynamic between fashion and everyday wear is not been so well examined. Using the social effects of the uptake of other now ubiquitous technology devices such as mobile phones and the internet as a model for usage and uptake, this paper/presentation will take a look into the possible near future to see what can go wrong with active garment fashion.

This examination of information technologies in garment manufacture moves well beyond the current, often rather clumsy incorporation of wires, sensors and novelty 'glow in the dark' fibre optics into conventional clothes, and examines the maturing of a field in which revolutionary optical display technologies are merging with textiles to produce totally naturally feeling and looking fabrics that can not only change their overall colour, but can display complex patterns.

Aspects such as the effects on personal health, social conventions and economic costs will be considered. For example, an article of clothing capable of changing its colour and pattern by the addition of a 'downloadable' software instruction would release designers from limitations of manufacturing processes. However, it would also allow *anybody at all* to choose their own clothing colour and pattern, and for it animate. The effects on visual pollution of urban locations are enormous, especially if one considers the current problem of computer viruses and junk information.

Andrew Hutchison is a researcher in the impact of new technologies on art, narrative and garment design. He is a lecturer in new media design at Curtin University, and has produced award winning new media art works.

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