Ugly to explore unexpected futures - background

- Future cannot be predicted, but alternative futures can be explored and preferred futures can be imagined
- Design experiment in the Textile teacher education at the University of Helsinki
  - to explore and strengthen skills that students will need in their future work
- Research aims
  1) How and in which ways ugly appears?
  2) How ugly has been refined during the process?
  3) What meanings and interpretations ugly receives?

Nuutinen, Räisänen, Fernström, 2017
1) How and in which ways ugly appears?

Ugly appears as unwanted and disliked, even ‘disgusting’ colours

Materials are ugly

Technique is ugly, I do not like the technique

Outcome is badly made / finished

Final outcome does not match the vision in mind / or in mouth

No meaning / I could not find meaning for the product

Nuutinen, Räisänen, Fernström, 2017

Ugly colours

Nuutinen, Räisänen, Fernström, 2017
Ugly materials

Nuutinen, Räisänen, Fernström, 2017

Ugly material behaviour

Nuutinen, Räisänen, Fernström, 2017
Ugly material behaviour

Ugly technique

Nuutinen, Räisänen, Fernström, 2017
Ugly made purposely

Ugly because there is no meaning
2) How ugly has been refined during the process?

Learning to see the final outcome in new ways

Students learned to see the ugly as beautiful

Beautiful nice products for satisfaction

Ugly allowed to break boundaries

Nuutinen, Räisänen, Fernström, 2017

Through the process

Nuutinen, Räisänen, Fernström, 2017
Material is refined by making

Nuutinen, Räisänen, Fernström, 2017

Initial choices

Nuutinen, Räisänen, Fernström, 2017
Refining colour and idea

Learning to see in new ways
I can / cannot refine

3) What meanings and interpretations ugly receives?

Much attention was paid to:

- technical solutions
- material properties
- quality of the experiments
- functionality
- clearly identifiable purpose
First impression

Nuutinen, Räisänen, Fernström, 2017

Resemblance

Nuutinen, Räisänen, Fernström, 2017
Resemblance

Empowerment

Nuutinen, Räisänen, Fernström, 2017
Taboos

Future cannot be predicted

Alternative futures can be explored

Preferred futures can be imagined

1) How and in which ways ugly appears?

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Conclusions
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Ugly was understood and defined in numerous ways.

Ugly experiments impacted on motivation to invent and discover, for example by empowering or discouraging.

Conclusions - students’ opinions

Working with something that is unpleasant can finally teach more because one must become acquainted with unfamiliar. Learning is much more than what we understand. (MV)

One must accept that as a beginner it is not possible to reach the same kind of results and achievements as one could hope to receive. Thus, I felt failure and frustration, which annoys me a lot, but I understand that this taught me to bear failure and to work in uncertainty. (EH)

I learned the freedom to do mistakes, and something unexpected could come out from mistakes. Pressure to make perfect disappeared. (JH)

Nuutinen, Räisänen, Fernström, 2017
Ugly result may promote the good. (MP)

Thank you!

Nuutinen, Räisänen, Fernström, 2017