

Reflective practice for fashion designers

Last week I facilitated a session with Fashion Design & Technology students at RMIT University. The topic was reflective practice. For a number of their assessments, and as a critical life skill, they are required to reflect on their designs and the design process.

I gave them an outline of a structured reflective practice based on the ORID method which takes you through four stages of questioning:

- **Objective** – collecting facts, asking what happened
- **Reflective** – questioning your emotional response and the responses of others
- **Interpretative** – asking about the significance and meaning; seeking to understand
- **Decisional** – deciding what you will do now as a result of your answers to these questions.

I provided the students with ORID reflective practice questions customised for the fashion industry: <http://www.learningedges.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/critical-reflective-practice-for-fashion-design-students.pdf>

The students seemed to appreciate this teaching from me, but did not appear to be all that excited. It was useful, that's all!

It was when I suggested that reflective practice begins with self-knowledge as does branding, that they sat up. Branding is their kind of language and taps into dreams of having their own brand.

We then did an exercise which asked them to identify their values.

What is important for me or what do I value as a practitioner in the fields of fashion, design and technologyWhat constitutes my particular approach...my signature...my brand

I supplied them with a lot of words from which they could choose and then narrow down to the top five.

Then they used these value words as a basis for coming up with their mission which I divided into three segments.

As a fashion designer...

I will(something for yourself)

I will(something for the fashion industry)

I will(something altruistic – for humanity, for the planet, for women, for a particular group etc)

We listened as each student read out their mission, making it a public statement, and I was so impressed to hear the altruism from all of them – bringing manufacturing back to Australia, contributing to an environmentally sustainable fashion industry, creating something truly Australian and ensuring ethical practice.

I reminded them of the connection between reflective practice and brand:

What you design, create and develop will reflect your values and your mission. Your signature. Your brand. And you will be able to articulate these to others. And critically reflect on what you do in relation to these values. And your values can shift and change, as will your mission, your signature and your brand.

For more about the ORID process:

Brian Stanfield R, (2008) *The Art of Focused Conversation: 100 ways to Access Group Wisdom in the Workplace*. Canadian Institute for Cultural Affairs. Can be sourced through <http://icabookstore.mybigcommerce.com/>