



MALIN BOBECK / YANN HOULBERG ANDERSEN,
THOSE WHO AFFECTED ME



APPAREL / DESIGNER SPOTLIGHT

THE FABRIC OF LIGHT

ANURIMA DAS speaks to Malin Bobeck, a textile designer with a difference, based in Stockholm, Sweden, and comes back incredibly impressed.



MALIN BOBECK, TEXTILE DESIGNER.

MALIN BOBECK / JAN BERG, FLOW



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Ablaze with creativity, radiant with ideas and spirited with positivity, 29 year old Malin Bobeck, a textile designer and artist, based in Stockholm, Sweden, is a designer with a difference. The only word that fits as a descriptor for Malin Bobeck's work is magic. Weaving light into textiles, the designer has given birth to an illusion that is futuristic in terms of the technology used. There is fluidity in her art and concrete determination in every theme, backed by a long heart-warming background story. Her recent work 'Those Who Affected Me' is a stunning interactive light emitting textile art installation, and was exhibited at the Gothenburg Museum of Art. Amidst making textiles interactive and making them glow on touch, the young designer spoke straight from her heart, about her craft and turned the pages of her life too. Read on...





Textile and art, how and when did it all start?

MALIN BOBECK: I guess it all started when I was a kid; crafting was one of my favourite hobbies. Creating new things out of random materials was always exciting for me. But if you ask my mum, she would say it started when I was in her tummy. While she was pregnant with me, she had a big handloom on which she crafted textiles. In high school, I studied industrial design but I felt that it was too much computer work and too little hands-on work, so after high school, I chose to focus on textiles. Since then I have studied in different textile schools for seven years and have been working with fashion, theatre costumes and textile puppets, amongst other things.

Light emitting fabrics, what inspired you to fuse the two media?

MALIN BOBECK: I was studying at The Swedish School of Textiles and we had a weaving course that encouraged us to use new materials. There I found that optical fibre could be used in weaving and it was a perfect match for me. I got to really work on the weave bindings, the patterns and the materials to create just the effect I wanted. It also sparked my fascination for lights, and triggered a curiosity in me of what could be done.

I enjoy doing things I have never done before, sometimes it seems hopeless but all of a sudden, it works, and that brings happiness and satisfaction.

Tell us a little about your recent textile installation exhibition.

MALIN BOBECK: The idea of that project was the hypothesis that I could craft interactive textiles. The project got

funding from a foundation and I worked with it for about a year. I started trying out different materials in handloom to see how they worked out when you make a textile out of them. Some materials that I use are not at all made for weaving so sometimes they can behave totally different when I use them in the loom.

The final textile for the art piece is woven on a huge two-story-high jacquard loom in a weaving mill in Sweden. The textile is woven in three layers with a combination of optical fibre, conductive copper threads, cotton, polyester and shrinking yarn. The copper threads are connected to touch sensors and create touch-sensitive areas inside the fabric.

The optical fibre is mounted to 500 addressable colour LEDs connected to a microcomputer. The fabric is mounted with steel rods around a cylinder and suspended in mid-air. When the viewer stands underneath it and touches the textile, it sends out colourful ripples up and down the fabric. It's named 'Those Who Affected Me' because, I think of it as a self-portrait, a tribute to those who affect me as touch affects the piece. The piece is right now on view at the Gothenburg Museum of Art, Sweden.

How has the show been received?

MALIN BOBECK: Really well! It was a big opening, and I invited all my friends and encouraged them to put on their best costume with LED lights. It was a success. And now the museum tells me that there are a lot of people appreciating and interacting with it every day.

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MALIN BOBECK / JAN BERG, DROPLET



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A QUICK RAPID FIRE

YOUR FAVOURITE FABRIC?

Difficult, if I have to pick one,
I would say wool jersey.

**IF NOT TEXTILE, WHICH DESIGNER
WOULD YOU HAVE BEEN?**

Jewellery, I also do silversmith work.

YOUR DESIGN INSPIRATION?

Creepy underwater animals.

WHAT/WHO LIGHTS UP YOUR DAY?

Coffee.

When you plan your projects, what inspires or nudges you to choose your next?

MALIN BOBECK: Usually what inspires me is the idea of creating something that I have never done before, and do not know if it will work or not. I really like the problem-solving that comes with working like that. It also creates some anxiety when I hit a bump on the road but that is part of the process.

Take us through this journey, what is the path you tread?

MALIN BOBECK: I see myself as a mix between a designer, an artist and a maker, and I am hoping my work will inspire others to create things themselves. I believe that you should follow your heart and give room to your imagination, and then magical things can happen.

You have fought a personal battle too.

How far has the same influenced your art?

MALIN BOBECK: Quite a bit, I would say, if I hadn't gone through that tough

period in my life, I wouldn't have dared to work the way I do. Going through Cancer made me quite daring, and today, I don't fear my failures anymore. That goes for the work of creating art but also of running my own business.

Tell us about a work of yours that you are too proud of.

MALIN BOBECK: I designed a light emitting fabric for Volvo a couple of years ago. They did a conceptual car with a focus on lights. They placed the fabric between the driver and the passage seat and it started to glow when the car accelerated.

Can you shed some light on the awards and accolades that have come your way till now?

MALIN BOBECK: I have received funding for my project from Innovativ Kultur which is a Swedish foundation that supports innovative cultural projects. Last year, I also got awarded with the 'Encouragement of Culture' from Sten A Olssons Foundation.

What is your new project? Give us a sneak peek into what's in store for us.

MALIN BOBECK: I am working on making my art mobile, to be able to put it on the human body and have people walking around as moving art pieces.

Any plans to bring your work to India?

MALIN BOBECK: I haven't got anything planned yet, but if there is an opening I would love to show my work in India. In 2014, I had spent five months in Rishikesh, Uttarakhand, working with a NGO called Bhartiya Gramotthan Sanstha; they teach textile techniques to women in rural areas. So, I have a lot of friends in India and have also thought about possible production when I get bigger orders. ■