

# A talk with Heleen Klopper

by Lisa Jacobs

I went to see Heleen at her studio in Amsterdam East. Since I had found next to nothing on her on the internet, I wasn't sure where the conversation would go. We just discussed everything as it came long. Here is what she had to say:

## On the textile department:

The Textile department only changed as recent as four years ago from a department focussed almost solely on handicraft to a department focusing on the communication aspects and the possibilities of textile as a medium. Heleen Klopper, having studied at the Rietveld Design Lab has worked for the department for the last year-and-a-half as a teacher. She is a product designer who uses textile in a conceptual manner. The department now not only uses textile as a medium, but as a subject as well. From a certain starting point the students are encouraged to do research into a field and relate it to textile. Not the technical aspects of textile making and designing are on the foreground, but the possibilities with it; the different ways it can be applied into the field of product design, fashion and many others.



in the end the entire barricade was clothed in felt that followed all the forms completely and seamlessly. We talked about her fascination for barricades and the social aspects of it and how she applied them in her work and I realized wasn't necessarily interested in her subjects or the work she is making. I did like the way of speaking about felt and other materials and how properties of a material can direct you towards a visual outcome. She has a very hands on approach that is usually very distant to me.

## On textile as a medium:

We had an interesting discussion on textile and if it is more than a medium, if it is a subject as well. When discussing this, I started noticing similarities between textile and photography – my field of interest. Both refer to the technical aspect of making something, much more maybe than other art forms and they might therefore be seen as limited only to that. But in choice of subject the medium itself often plays a big part as well. The formal aspects of weaving, knitting, framing, lighting and so on, are an essential of the subject as well. I remarked that in that sense the Textile department might fit the Fine Arts more than Design and Heleen thought the Textile department could go in that direction as well. I remember that early in the conversation I asked, a bit

## On her own background

Heleen started using textile in her end exam year at the Gerrit Rietveld Academie. The years before had been spent divided between the Fine Arts and the design department, before deciding to graduate in the last one. She made a 3d carpet using felt. She enthusiastically explains the possibilities with felt as a material. Because of the way it is made, the size of it is virtually endless, unlike a woven piece of textile, which is only as wide as your weaving equipment. Because of these properties, felt can also be used to cover 3d objects, without any kind of seam, as she did with a steel barricade. I agreed with Heleen that this was an interesting property, and one I had never considered before. Heleen used this for covering a barricade. She first covered it in foam and then worked on making the felt on it directly, so that



surprised, why Fashion and Textile are such separate departments, when they seem so close in nature. Heleen disagreed wholeheartedly with me on that, saying they were not as close in ideas as it might seem to the layman and that she would be much more interested in working with, for example, the Photography department. After this talk, I have to agree with her.