

What is Fashion education – real/unreal?

**Natalie McCreesh and Jamie Huckbody**

Abstract for Risky Business 2: discourse of the (un)real

*You're still trying to protect me. Real or not real,' he whispers.*

*'Real,' I answer. It seems to require more explanation. 'Because that's what you and I do. Protect each other.' After a minute or so, he drifts off to sleep.*

—*Mockingjay*, chapter 21

In the popular fiction trilogy 'The Hunger Games' the character Peta suffers from torture, brainwashing and false memory implantation, leaving him to question the reality of events, memories and the intentions of the people around him. To aid his understanding he questions whether things are 'real or not real'.

Teaching and researching in the discipline of fashion often throws up similar predicaments, with the mainstream fashion media image controlled and manipulated and where photoshop is rife we are presented with an 'unreal' perception of fashion and beauty. Social media, first championed for its 'realness' is now easily manipulated too. With the rise of virtual reality technology, especially in the fashion industry again we are left to question what is real and what is not real, indeed what can we construct as 'real' when versions of reality differ from person to person.

For Millennial's and generation Z, the generations we are currently teaching, we must understand that their reality is not the same as it for those of us in older generations. We have the distinction between the off and online worlds, whereas they do not. With an increase in mental health issues and anxiety in generation Z we must try and understand the world they inhabit even though it is alien in

many ways to our own. The question is how do we prepare students for the 'real world' when it is a world we are merely spectators too – how do we understand what the 'real world' is to them?