

Exercise

The ninth *tuta* was at first designed to be a type of suit for a real person, Thea Černigoj. Because she has passed on and I could only get to know her through indirect sources, I decided to make a garment for her according to the measurements of the professional fashion model Tjaša Stanić Gjorgjievska.

This decision was based on my reflections on a profession that could elucidate the interpretative challenge present when working with historical sources and figures. Especially women, who are not recognized as part of the canon despite the immense influence they have had on the circles they move in. This is an often overlooked form of coexistence and creative activity among married couples (in this case, Thea Černigoj's marriage to Avgust Černigoj during the constructivist period in Trieste). Too few *collabiographies* are written.¹

*"When I asked some of my older colleagues about Thea Černigoj, I usually got the response that she had not left enough works or was not influential enough."*²

The construction of the spirit of the time is of greater interest to me than the particular person. The "wearing of the uniform" of the time. The circumstances in which the work was created, the conditions of the (co-)creation; thus, we are discussing functions leading to forms.

With this approach, the main protagonist is the work suit intended for T. Č. What interests me is how such garb develops its "copoietic" life – what is required for this to happen?³ In other words, how do we change from puppets to puppeteers; more precisely, how do we change the string connecting the two?

The calling of a fashion model is to become a model. With her appearance, attitude, and expressiveness, she or he presents ideas and products. At the forefront is the attitude that models need to be successful – their relationship to what they are wearing, what they are posing in, and how they present themselves.

It is not insignificant that this profession also occurs in a fine art context – models pose for

¹ A "collabiography is a portrayal of an artist that stresses their relationship with another artist during the development of their life and work. A collabiography focuses on the creativity of an encounter. It differs from a portrayal of a professional collaboration in that it tells a story with a broader scope, one that also includes the manner in which the collaboration influenced the lives of those involved, and how these lives influenced it in turn. See Noland, Carrie Jaurès. "Love and Lessons in the Exactness and Urgency of Theatre: A Collabiography of Merce Cunningham and Robert Rauschenberg." *Five Friends. John Cage, Merce Cunningham, Jasper Johns, Robert Rauschenberg, Cy Twombly*, edited by Yilmaz Dziewior, Achim Hochdörfer, Artur Fink, Schirmer/Mosel, 2025, p. 191.

² From correspondence with Dr Kristina Pranjić, 3 June 2025.

³ Referencing the concept of autopoiesis of Francisco Varela – the ability of self-production inside a closed loop biological system – Bracha L. Ettinger develops a concept of "copoiesis" which refers to the mutual creation of mental effects in the matrixial unconscious borderspace. See Ettinger, Bracha L., Birgit M. Kaiser, Kathrin Thiele. "Sich verlieren und plötzlich eine Welt finden." *Materialität der Diagramme*, edited by Susanne Leeb, b_books, 2012, pp. 215–229.

artists.

Interpretation cannot be avoided. As a counterweight, I need a certain distance to the “legacy” of a person from the past. This time I chose the profession of a fashion model as an equivalent force. My purpose is not to examine or reinterpret the life and work of Thea Černigoj, but rather to search for construction as an operation in itself – through the protagonist T. Č.

Stories are entered with the strings of women protagonists. I do not consider them or us to be the content, but rather the *triggerettes*. They are the transitive flow. A flow that illuminates.

My starting point is construction as an artistic operation, perhaps a social connection, not the canonised style. In any case, a procedure, a protocol, perhaps an instrument. Increasingly, it seems that “construction” works best as just another model. Construction as realism that does not consider itself to be what things are, but rather what they ought to be. It is a matter of visions.

The profession of a fashion model is “on the edge” and often objectified. I dare say that it is considered to be frivolous and empty. A fashion model does not leave works behind, but a model can leave an impact. An attitude. An expression.

Without such an exposed, but still invisible, support for creators, their works would not exist or see the light of day. As with *collabiographies*, it is a matter of a supporting link, a hidden influence, and the invisible labour in which life and practice are never fully an expression of just one single artist.

The idea of collaborating with Tjaša as a model came from an already existing circle of producers – she had already done modelling work for the costume designer Gordana Bobojević, who is also a friend of hers. Such connections often enrich productions; it is a form of women (professional-private) networking. Tjaša is in her mature years professionally and wears such years incredibly beautifully.

In addition to the *tuta*, this time I am also including all of those “personal” things that accompany a uniform. These are the elements that deconstruct it. Think of a person in a uniform wearing their “own signifiers”. It is precisely this that is perhaps special in the context of this *tuta*: Tjaša (a fashion model) is wearing a *tuta* born out of reflections on the figure of Thea Černigoj.

Despite the fact that Tjaša is “only a model”, we cannot overlook her posture in the process. This is her work, and with it she has become the central link. An attitude is an invisible but felt movement. It is a function. In this *tuta*, “work and life” meet in a way of mutual remembering and guessing.