



CONVERSATION

## Touché: A Mediterranean collection

Annagreta König Dansokho <sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup> Freelance artist, political scientist, psychotherapist, and supervisor  
Email address: [mail@annagreta-koenig.de](mailto:mail@annagreta-koenig.de)

### Information

Received 13 August 2025  
Online 16 December 2025

### Keywords

conceptual art  
post colonialism

### Abstract

Annagreta König Dansokho is a freelance artist, political scientist, and psychotherapist. Born in 1967, she studied political science and rhetoric in Germany and transcultural psychiatry in Paris. Her multicultural background led her towards her fields of expertise which range from artistic research and concept art to psychotherapy and the overcoming of traumatic events. Her art is interwoven with the topics of migration, identity, injustice, and power. The artistic project presented here, *Touché: A Mediterranean collection*, circles around a world driven by capitalism and profit-orientation. The tragic dimension of illegal migration unfolds here through a fictitious narrative, in which a fabric producer offers materials suited for the crossing of the sea. The clothes that make up the *Mediterranean collection* are something like a symbol bearer. They represent the interconnectedness between North and South, colonizers and colonized, abusive economic exploitation and hope for a better life. The clothes designed for an illegal crossing of the Mediterranean become, in Annagreta's project, a product shaped by marketing and branding—an idea behind, and therefore a parody of, our consumer-driven attitude: everything is for sale as long as there is a demand for it. Any product can be advertised for and sold, no matter how dark and immoral its origin or purpose is. This art project unveils this darkness and, at the same time, brings awareness to the possible processes, actors, and stories behind the "curtain." The project's connection to the degrowth movement is an implicit one. Annagreta's artwork triggers associations and emotions without being a direct critique of the hegemonic attitude of the "West" and its capitalist patterns of action. Being even playful at times, her project enables us to understand the paradoxes at stake in complex issues like migration and the mechanisms of the global market and thus indirectly contributes to imagining an alternative scenario.

The work consists of three exhibits:

**The first exhibit** is a display case containing a life jacket washed up on Lesbos, belonging to a person who had travelled by sea to reach Europe.

**The second exhibit** is a clothes rack. On the top bar hang samples from the Mediterranean collection. The narrative behind these clothes is: a textile manufacturer has tapped into the market for clothing suitable for the Mediterranean. He produces water-repellent, floating, recyclable—and in this sense—sustainable textiles. The individual patterns of the textile samples bear the names of places in the Mediterranean where refugees tend to land.

**The third exhibit** consists of two photos that illustrate how the samples from the Mediterranean collection can even turn into fashionable clothes.

Here the artist speaks to Lavinia Munteanu about this work.

**1. What is the 'link' between your biography and your artistic work and how would you describe your artistic practice?**

I would say that my background history, my migration experience as a member of a marginalised group, is the link to my artistic work. I would even say that these experiences and the resulting perspectives are the driving force behind my artistic work. Germany has always struggled to see itself as an immigration society. This fact both produces systemic conditions that disadvantage immigrants in many areas (for example, health, and education), and impacts peoples' attitudes. Since I was born in 1967, right up to the present day, everyday racist experiences have been part of my everyday life. I have a German passport, but I'm not one of them. As a child, I didn't understand why the other children weren't allowed to play with me, what was 'different' about me. I had to learn, I learnt to be 'foreign'. Experiences of foreignness and marginalisation are painful. Through my studies in politics and my multiple trainings as a psychotherapist, I have cognitively understood and learnt to categorise many things. Emotionally, I process my experiences in my artistic work.

## **2. How did the idea for the project come about, what inspired you and why?**

The Mediterranean Collection speculates that a textile manufacturer has tapped into the market for clothing suitable for the Mediterranean. He produces water-repellent, floating, recyclable—and in this sense—sustainable textiles. The individual patterns of the textile samples bear the names of places in the Mediterranean where refugees tend to land.

Various threads came together while developing the idea to design this ‘Mediterranean collection’: the news about the number of people who choose to take the route across the Mediterranean every year to get to Europe; how carefree tourists have been on holiday in places like Lesbos, where migrants (or their floating remains) are stranded after crossing the Mediterranean; the stories of my clients from the trauma-therapeutic treatment who had come across the Mediterranean by boat and through smuggler networks; and finally my own powerlessness in the face of tragedy. These strands gave rise to the idea for the project, which is a critical artistic response to the fact that hundreds of thousands of people take the sea route every year to reach Europe (over 180,000 in 2024).



Mediterranean Collection Catwalk, photograph taken by Wolfgang Schmidt



Mediterranean Collection Catwalk, photograph taken by Wolfgang Schmidt

### **3. The term ‘fabric’ is ambiguous. What associations did it evoke in you during the course of the project?**

Clothes are made of fabric. In the project, I identify myself with a fabric producer who intends to launch a product line on the market with materials that are particularly ‘suitable for the Mediterranean’. My fictive ‘fabric producer’ advertises that it offers fabrics that are suitable for the Mediterranean, with the following properties: floating, water-repellent, durable, and sustainable. This takes cynicism to its peak: the fabric manufacturer makes a business out of fabrics that are used to produce clothes for the deadly crossing of the Mediterranean. The ‘Mediterranean crossing’ should not even exist at all as a route to emigration, which is why it is absurd to produce garments specifically for this purpose. My intention was to use this paradox to expose the complicity of the capitalist Western world in (illegal) migration which is not only a problem, but also a resource for the West.

### **4. Stranded materials, stranded people: What stories do your garments tell?**

The materials I use to make the ‘fabric samples’ and the garments are plastic materials that have “washed up” on my doorstep in my everyday life in Germany as an “average consumer”: such as packaging material (for example potato sacks, onion sacks, wrappers from mangos and papayas), shopping bags, or other found objects. The link between these materials and the project idea is the following: migrants drown in the Mediterranean during the crossing and the sea itself is full of plastic waste. In a deeply cynical and dehumanising manner, the fictive ‘fabric producer’ praises its plastic materials suitable for the Mediterranean as if they were particularly sustainable, as if they were materials which disintegrate biologically in the sea, while they in fact do not. Actually plastic waste represents the greatest environmental damage in the Mediterranean, a fact which also shows the environmentally critical dimension of the ‘Mediterranean collection’.





Mediterranean collection on exhibition at Württembergischer Kunstverein Stuttgart, Germany, photograph taken by Annagreta König Dansokho



Mediterranean collection: samples, photograph taken by Annagreta König Dansokho





Mediterranean collection: samples, photograph taken by Annagreta König Dansokho



**5. Were there any surprises in the course of the project, or breaks and unexpected things?**

What was perhaps surprising was how lively and authentic the project idea felt while being further developed along the artistic process, and also how intriguing it was to deliver a “performance” which was to be as convincing as possible regarding the ‘fabric manufacturer’. There was something playful about the realization of the project, which was fun. I realized that the moment I put myself in the shoes of the fabric producer, the project idea suddenly seemed quite plausible and all the next steps made sense: conception, development of a brand, a logo, production of fabric samples, their presentation, production of sample collections, and advertising of the brand through photography. I suspect that there are some processes, especially in economic life, that only make sense from an internal perspective, for example when the brother of a now former head of state trades in drugs on a grand scale to bring in foreign currency for the country, which seems successful to me as an economic model, but morally paradoxical, as it harms his own people. I not only wanted to explore these internal (and often hidden) mechanisms of the free market, but also to actually take the steps they imply and “stage” them during the artistic process, so that they might become visible and easier to grasp.

**6. The persiflage of the fabric-producer marketing can be read as a criticism of the growth-based consumer society. How did this ‘reversal’ come about and are there other critical undertones in your work?**

The project idea is a criticism of a system that doesn't shy away from any business, however immoral it may be. As I have already indicated, there are a lot of dodgy deals between African countries and Germany in particular, I am referring to Germany because I live here. For example the business with the smugglers—my cousin in Senegal told me that fishermen quit their jobs because they earn much more when they transport people on their boats. Also, there is the electrical waste business, which is sold on a large scale from Germany to African countries, where it causes major health and environmental problems. Plastic waste is brought rather to South Eastern Asia. And there is the business with old clothes. Some African countries have signed agreements with Germany to buy old clothes. Our used clothes are flooding the local markets and destroying local textile production.



Mediterranean collection: samples, photograph taken by Annagreta König Dansokho

**7. The connection between the themes of migration, identity, and (dis)power runs like a thread through your artistic work. Why is this the case and will this theme continue in your next projects?**

That brings us back to the beginning: artistic expression is the way I have found to deal with my own migrant position in the white German majority society. Conceptual art in particular is a productive way of addressing it. I can stage scenes, situations, and processes that depict something that I want to make visible. I don't like to lose a lot of words on this, but I think that artistic work creates a space which is open to projections. By this I mean that not everything needs to be explained, the artwork triggers associations and emotions and this is the important thing, there is no right or wrong here. It is unclear to me how it could be possible as a migrant person living in Germany not to deal with such themes as identity, migration, and power. That's why my next works will once again revolve around these themes.

**8. Our Special Issue seeks to draw connections between artistic practices and the topic of Degrowth. We wondered if you had heard of this concept before now, and if you see alignments here.**

The term “degrowth” triggers associations in me. However, I find it difficult to find myself in predetermined concepts or to locate my work within them. However, I am happy to share my thoughts on “degrowth.” I am also a political scientist and have therefore studied political systems extensively. In doing so, I have come to understand that once systems have reached their zenith—which was usually characterized by power and prosperity—they can no longer grow and their importance soon declines. This was the case in ancient Rome, for example: the end of the Roman Empire was characterized by “decadence.” I wonder whether we are not currently observing something similar in the so-called “Western” systems, that limits to growth and limits of significance also are being reached. Perhaps we need a perspective that could understand the reduction of abundance, waste, and environmental pollution as a new paradigm, and with that a degrowth concept.

In 2021, I was able to visit the San-community in South Africa. The San are an indigenous people who were first pushed back into Southern Africa by other peoples from Central Africa and later by colonial powers. They are hunter-gatherers, characterized by the conviction that they should only possess as much as they need. This way of life had probably led to an inferior position of the San compared to more expansive powers. The visit to the San touched me. Today, they make their philosophy available to “Western” society as an inspiration to learn how less can be more.

My Mediterranean collection was made exclusively from materials that I did not buy or look for, materials which came into my home as packaging material or advertising stuff. In this respect, I follow the principle that my art should not create any new burden on the environment. In this respect, my work aligns with the idea of degrowth.



## **Conflict of interest**

The author has no conflicts of interest to disclose.

## **Funding**

The author did not receive any funding for this research.

## **Acknowledgements**

Concept: Annagreta König Dansokho

Design and production of the garments from packaging material: Annagreta König Dansokho

Photography: Wolfgang Schmidt, Ammerbuch

Photo models: Sabeth Muriel Rebekka König, Tübingen, and Bachir Moustafa Mbaye, Paris

## **The author**

Born in 1967 in Tübingen, Germany, Annagreta is an interdisciplinary artist, costume designer, and trauma therapist whose practice bridges art and social engagement. After completing a Master of Arts in Rhetoric and Political Science in 1992, she began working independently in costume design and communication training.

In 1994, Annagreta took on an internship at the United Nations in New York which deepened her interest in migration and cross-cultural themes—an experience that later influenced her art. She furthered her studies in Transcultural Psychiatry in Paris and completed an advanced trauma therapy training in 2015. Her artistic work has been featured in different exhibitions in Germany, reflecting her ongoing exploration of the links between psychological resilience, migration, and contemporary art.