IJCRT.ORG ISSN : 2320-2882

INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF CREATIVE RESEARCH THOUGHTS (IJCRT)

An International Open Access, Peer-reviewed, Refereed Journal

A Reflexive Ideation Approach To Generative Application Paradox: Swaflow

Swadish S A

Faculty, Department of Fashion Design

JD School of Design, Bengaluru, India

ABSTRACT

This study presents a practice-based methodological framework designed to overcome the error in dynamic communication (Generative application paradox) in design ideation and application. The process of creativity is often misunderstood, with many equating it to mere knowledge or technical skill during the time of academic evaluation. The intent of being spontaneous has been generalized as one of the major eyes of creativity. An act of unpredictability causes the mind to think of something very interesting and be able to create something new (an unexplored set of combinations). But creativity comes over the top of this combination, where the elemental particles have transformed themselves to create something brightly ominous.

In the field of fashion illustration, creativity is frequently constrained by rigid educational systems that prioritize technique over subconscious, fluid ideation. This paper explores the stages of creative thought, highlighting how patterns, which initially serve as guides, can hinder progress once they become ingrained. The nonexistence of a practical design application method creates a paradox of path. As Trying to find an act of impossible elemental transformation, which is continually repeatable in any sort of creative problem is absurd. The SwaFlow method is proposed as a solution, fostering oscillation between the Executive Control Network (ECN) and Default Mode Network (DMN), which enhances cognitive flexibility and helps break through mental barriers (especially for Avante Garde deigning). By bridging the gap between chaotic and structured thinking, the SwaFlow method encourages designers to move beyond traditional approaches and unlock deeper creative potential. Ultimately, this framework offers a fresh approach to overcoming mental blocks and facilitating innovative, original design solutions in fashion illustration.

KEYWORDS: Mental block, creativity, cognitive flexibility, Default mode network (DMN), Executive control network (ECN), Generative Application Paradox, Reflexive Ideation, Subconscious Design Process, Fashion Illustration.

I. INTRODUCTION

Creativity is often regarded as one of the fundamental aspects of human nature; however, we don't acknowledge it as an action of nature. This unique quality is increasingly being demanded across all fields, including those that are traditionally associated with creative tasks. However, the widespread use of knowledge and information has created an illusion of creativity as easily understood and attainable, leading to an overgeneralization. As a result, many individuals view creativity as a simple, linear process, without fully appreciating its chaotic and unpredictable nature. The intent of being spontaneous has been generalized as one of the major eyes of creativity. An act of unpredictability causes the mind to think of something very interesting and be able to create something new (an unexplored set of combinations). But creativity comes over the top of this combination, where the elemental particles have transformed themselves to create something brightly ominous.

Rigid structures in fashion illustration prioritize realism over fluid imagination, preventing students from tapping into more abstract realms of thought. Traditional mind-mapping and sketching methods overlook how fleeting visual memory and individual cognitive differences impact ideation. The result is a mental block—a stagnation of original thought.

To address this gap, the SwaFlow (structural weaving associative flow) method was developed. It introduces randomness as a deliberate strategy, activating a reflexive dialogue between the Executive Control Network (ECN) and the Default Mode Network (DMN)—a neural dance of chaos and structure. This allows designers to bypass rigid norms and explore their subconscious creative impulses. Rather than relying on external references, SwaFlow encourages a return to internal originality, especially crucial for avant-garde practices in fashion.

II. METHODOLOGY

The SwaFlow method was developed to address the growing challenge of creative stagnation observed among fashion design students, particularly due to the overuse of visual references from digital platforms. In the beginning of the study, the problem was first noticed in December 2022, further on continuation observation it was evidently observed that students producing repetitive design outputs are shaped by pre-existing online elements and design principles (EOD and POD). This was especially apparent in their silhouettes, which lacked originality and intuitive exploration. While referencing can support ideation, its overuse diluted the individuality of design thinking and constrained the subconscious potential of students.

SwaFlow (structural weaving associative flow) is conceptually grounded in the aim to generate diverse silhouette variations, emerging from an observed need to overcome repetitive ideation patterns in fashion design. An unexpected disconnection from digital stimuli during a period of isolation led to the emergence of an intuitive design rhythm, which later informed the initial development of the SwaFlow method. This phase revealed the potential of subconscious engagement in enhancing silhouette innovation. Following initial experimentation, the method was further refined through self-directed trials incorporating random line-

making with closed eyes, later interpreted into fashion silhouettes. Upon returning to the academic environment, the process was introduced to a peer. The application of the method yielded notable results, with both participants achieving top academic ranks, first and second in Bangalore University's design evaluations. These outcomes serve as a preliminary validation of the method's capacity to enhance creative originality and design performance.

Through continued refinement, distinct variations of the SwaFlow method emerged. In October 2023, during the development of an ideation portfolio, the integration of dream-derived imagery immediately upon waking led to the formulation of the 'Dream Outcome' variation. In 2024, the method was implemented with selected students experiencing creative stagnation or design fatigue. Observations revealed that many students were unaware of repetitive patterns in their work, often shaped by external references rather than intrinsic innovation. Positive engagement and outcomes among these students further reinforced the method's relevance within both academic and professional design contexts. In August 2024, the SwaFlow process was formalized into a structured framework, incorporating clearly defined conditions for application, optimal environmental settings, a detailed procedural guide, and supporting psychological principles. Through iterative reflection and controlled classroom trials, the method evolved into a validated system positioned for both academic research and practical implementation.

III. PRACTICE PARAMETERS

The method is most effective under two primary conditions. First, it should be used following a short rest period of approximately 10 to 15 minutes after experiencing a creative block. During this period, the mind is more receptive to novel ideas. Second, SwaFlow can be applied immediately upon waking, as part of a dream-based ideation approach. Dreams offer an unfiltered stream of consciousness and visual stimuli that can help foster innovative thinking. In both cases, the environment should be calm, quiet, and free from visual or auditory distractions to encourage full engagement with the process.

3.1 Procedure For Implementing

To initiate the SwaFlow method, participants begin by sitting in a quiet, distraction-free environment with a blank illustration surface. They close their eyes for two seconds to disengage from the surrounding stimuli. Then, they make quick, random strokes across the fashion figure template. These strokes are not intended to represent any predetermined design but to introduce an element of randomness into the process. After opening their eyes, participants observe the configuration of lines and begin connecting them into a cohesive design, utilizing principles of body proportions, garment anatomy, and silhouette construction. No external references are used during this process to ensure that all ideation is internally generated.

There are several variations of the SwaFlow method that can be used depending on the desired outcome. The "Dream Outcome" variation incorporates dream-based ideation, encouraging participants to use imagery or themes from their dreams to guide the random strokes. The "Restrictive Outcome" introduces self-imposed

limitations, such as restricting the number of strokes or choosing a specific color palette, in order to encourage more focused creativity. The "Random Outcome" variation emphasizes spontaneity by having an external party create the initial random strokes, which the participant must then interpret.

3.2 Elucidation Of Core Cognitive And Psychological Principles

The effectiveness of the SwaFlow method is grounded in several well-established cognitive and psychological principles. Divergent thinking, which involves generating multiple, varied solutions to a problem, is a key aspect of the method. By introducing random, unpredictable elements into the design process, SwaFlow encourages participants to break free from linear thinking and consider alternative possibilities, thus promoting creative flexibility.

Additionally, the method taps into the concept of functional fixedness, which refers to the cognitive bias that limits individuals to thinking of an object or concept in a fixed, traditional way. By encouraging randomness and subconscious ideation, SwaFlow allows designers to transcend preconceived notions of what a garment "should" look like, fostering a more open-ended approach to design. This shift from a fixed mindset to one of creative fluidity enables designers to break free from the constraints of repetition and engage in more original, innovative thinking. Studies have shown that the subconscious is capable of generating novel ideas without the interference of conscious filtering, enabling more associative and divergent thinking that fuels creativity (Dijksterhuis & Meurs, 2006; Sio & Ormerod, 2009; Cai et al., 2009). By incorporating random strokes or dream imagery, SwaFlow utilizes this subconscious processing, tapping into a deeper well of creativity that might otherwise be inaccessible through structured, deliberate thought.

3.3 Shortcomings Of The Method

While the SwaFlow method offers a promising approach to overcoming creative blocks and encouraging originality, it is not without limitations. One key limitation is that the method relies heavily on the participant's ability to engage with the process in a fluid, intuitive way. This may pose challenges for individuals who are more accustomed to structured or formulaic design processes. The method’s reliance on randomness and subconscious input may be uncomfortable for designers who prefer to have more control over their creative process or who are working on highly specific, targeted designs. Moreover, the abstract nature of the method may not always be suitable for every design challenge. While SwaFlow is effective in encouraging the generation of original silhouettes, it may not be as effective when precise, technical design elements or strict functional requirements are needed. Additionally, the method may require significant practice for designers to feel comfortable with the level of unpredictability it introduces into their workflow. As such, it may not be a quick solution for all creative blocks, particularly for those who struggle with accepting the initial randomness or who are accustomed to more conventional design practices.

Finally, although the method fosters creativity through a focus on randomness and the subconscious, it may not be as effective for everyone. Individual differences in cognitive processing, openness to new experiences,

and comfort with abstract thinking may influence how well participants engage with the process. Some individuals may experience frustration or a lack of direction if the random strokes do not lead to immediate, recognizable design outcomes.

IV. EVALUATION AND POTENTIAL EFFECTIVENESS

While this methodological paper does not present empirical data on the effectiveness of the SwaFlow method, the theoretical framework established offers a foundation for understanding its potential to enhance creativity and overcome design blocks. In this section, potential evaluation criteria for assessing the SwaFlow method are proposed, as well as practical applications.

The SwaFlow method is grounded in cognitive and psychological principles that suggest it has the potential to significantly enhance creative thinking and overcome design stagnation. By fostering divergent thinking and encouraging the subconscious mind's involvement in the design process, the method aims to stimulate original, non-repetitive thinking. Cognitive theories related to functional fixedness and creative fluidity support the expectation that this method will lead to novel and unique designs, particularly in overcoming the constraints of habitual design patterns. Furthermore, the use of random, unpredictable strokes during the design process is consistent with principles of incubation in creativity research, which suggests that stepping away from structured thought patterns and engaging with spontaneous ideation can unlock new creative pathways (Wallas, 1926). Therefore, it is hypothesized that the SwaFlow method can significantly contribute to breaking creative blocks and generating more original design outputs.

4.1 Hypothetical Evaluation Criteria

The effectiveness of the SwaFlow method can be evaluated using both subjective and objective criteria. A combination of expert assessments and self-reported participant feedback would provide valuable insights into its impact.

- Expert Assessments: To assess the originality and creativity of the designs produced, trained fashion designers or design educators could rate the uniqueness of the garments before and after the application of the SwaFlow method. These assessments could focus on factors such as silhouette innovation, overall creativity, and departure from traditional design patterns.
- Self-Reported Feedback: Participants can also provide self-reported evaluations, assessing their perceived creativity, satisfaction with the design process, and how effectively they feel the method helped them overcome creative blocks. Surveys and interviews could be used to collect this data.
- Design Evaluation: A comparison of designs produced with and without the use of SwaFlow could also provide an objective measure of the method’s effectiveness. Participants could create initial designs using conventional methods, followed by designs created using SwaFlow, and the resulting garments could be assessed for creativity, originality, and the presence of new design elements.

V. REAL-WORLD APPLICATION

The SwaFlow method could be implemented in various design environments, from educational settings to professional fashion houses. In design education, instructors could introduce the method as a tool for students experiencing creative blocks during early concept development. Workshops could also be organized where fashion designers apply the method to generate innovative designs in a short period, offering an experiential opportunity for creative exploration.

In the professional context, SwaFlow may prove useful in breaking design stagnation when teams are tasked with creating collections or working on innovative fashion projects. By engaging designers in a more intuitive and subconscious process, it could serve as a catalyst for new ideas and concepts that challenge existing trends and conventional design practices.

This evaluation suggests that while empirical testing is necessary to fully validate the SwaFlow method, the proposed evaluation criteria offer a strong basis for future research and practical application. By leveraging principles of cognitive psychology and subconscious ideation, SwaFlow has the potential to foster creativity, overcome mental roadblocks, and generate innovative designs in both educational and professional design contexts.

VI. DISCUSSION

The SwaFlow method, as presented, holds significant potential to address creative blocks that fashion designers and illustrators often face during the design process. By incorporating random strokes and subconscious ideation, the method encourages designers to step away from their habitual thought patterns, fostering more spontaneous and original design solutions. This approach is rooted in cognitive and psychological principles that support the idea that incubation and divergence are key to unlocking creativity. The method's focus on subconscious engagement is aligned with research on creativity, which suggests that allowing the subconscious to influence design can lead to unique and innovative outcomes. When compared to existing creative problem-solving methods, such as brainstorming or freeform sketching, the SwaFlow method offers a structured yet flexible way to access creative potential. Traditional approaches often rely on external references or predefined rules, which can lead to repetition and limit originality. In contrast, SwaFlow encourages designers to break free from these constraints by incorporating randomness and allowing unconscious thought to shape the design. This could make it a valuable tool for overcoming creative stagnation, especially in fashion, where trends often cycle back into repetition. Designers who frequently struggle with predictable or formulaic designs could benefit from integrating this method into their creative workflow.

The practical applications of the SwaFlow method are far-reaching, particularly within educational settings and professional design environments. In a classroom setting, instructors could introduce the method as a means to help students break free from rigid design conventions, encouraging them to explore new, innovative silhouettes that they might not have considered otherwise. Workshops that incorporate the SwaFlow method

could also offer designers an opportunity to experiment with unconventional design strategies, allowing for the development of unique collections that challenge established trends. In professional contexts, fashion houses or independent designers could use SwaFlow as a tool for refreshing their design process, especially when faced with creative blocks during important collection development phases.

However, it is important to acknowledge certain limitations of the SwaFlow method. One of the primary challenges may be ensuring that designers can effectively engage with the method, particularly if they are accustomed to working with more structured approaches. The method's reliance on randomness and subconscious influence might not be intuitive for everyone, and some designers may find it difficult to break free from their established habits. Additionally, the method's success may vary depending on the individual's ability to engage with their subconscious and their willingness to embrace non-traditional design methods. Further research and testing will be needed to determine how these factors affect the method's overall effectiveness in real-world design environments. In a nutshell, the SwaFlow method offers an innovative approach to overcoming creative blocks in fashion design, providing designers with an opportunity to explore new pathways of ideation that move beyond conventional design patterns. While further empirical testing is necessary to fully assess its effectiveness, the method's potential to inspire originality and break repetitive design cycles makes it a promising addition to the toolkit of modern fashion designers. By encouraging subconscious ideation and embracing randomness, SwaFlow offers a new way to approach the creative process, potentially transforming how fashion designs are conceptualized and executed.

VII. CONCLUSION

The SwaFlow method transcends conventional ideation approaches by inviting designers to engage in a deeper conversation with their subconscious mind. Through randomness and reflexive interpretation, it allows the intuitive and the analytical to coexist—an oscillation between chaos and control. This duality reflects the very core of creative cognition, echoing current findings in neuroscience about the dynamic interplay between the DMN and ECN. What makes SwaFlow distinct is not only its conceptual foundation but its applicability in real-world scenarios—from classrooms to design studios. It creates space for the emergence of silhouette innovation, freeing designers from the subconscious grip of habitual visual memory and digital reference dependency. Rather than prescribing a formula, it offers a ritual—one that honors unpredictability, welcomes error, and turns randomness into potential. Yet, as with any transformative process, SwaFlow demands a willingness to unlearn. For designers accustomed to rigid workflows, embracing this intuitive method might initially feel disorienting. However, that very discomfort is where growth lies. It challenges the designer to surrender control, trust the abstract, and recognize creativity not as a linear function, but as a fluid process shaped by oscillating mental states.

Future research could integrate biometric feedback or neuroimaging to further validate SwaFlow's cognitive claims. It also holds promise for interdisciplinary applications—beyond fashion—wherever creative

blocks manifest. In a world that often rewards precision over process, SwaFlow reclaims creativity as a living, breathing force—chaotic, subconscious, and yet entirely human.

REFERENCES

[1] Baddeley, A. (2003). Working memory: Looking back and looking forward. Nature Reviews Neuroscience, 4(10), 829-839.

[2] Baer, J. (2012). The relationship between creativity and intelligence. Personality and Individual Differences, 53(2), 138-144.

[3] Baer, J. (2016). Domain specificity of creativity. Academic Press.

[4] Brown, T. (2009). Change by design: How design thinking creates new alternatives for business and society. Harvard Business Press.

[5] Beaty, R. E., Benedek, M., Kaufman, S. B., & Silvia, P. J. (2015). Default and executive network coupling supports creative idea production. Scientific Reports, 5, 10964.

[6] Candy, L., & Edmonds, E. (2018). Practice-based research in the creative arts: Foundations and futures from the front line. Leonardo, 51(1), 63–69.

[7] Chen, Q., Kenett, Y. N., Benedek, M., Kawashima, R., Zeitlen, D. C., Qiu, J., Cui, Z., Takeuchi, H., Zhuang, K., Fink, A., Lloyd-Cox, J., & Beaty, R. E. (2023). Dynamic switching between brain networks predicts creative ability. Nature Communications, 14, Article 2231. https://doi.org/10.1038/s41467-023-37892-2.

[8] Csikszentmihalyi, M. (1996). Creativity: Flow and the psychology of discovery and invention. Harper Perennial.

[9] Jonsson, H. (2015). Constraints and freedom in the creative process: A study of student designers. Design Studies, 41, 25–48.

[10] Jung, R. E., & Vartanian, O. (Eds.). (2018). The Cambridge handbook of the neuroscience of creativity. Cambridge University Press.

[11] Nimkulrat, N. (2012). Hands-on intellect: Integrating craft practice into design research. International Journal of Design, 6(3), 1–14.

[12] Guilford, J. P. (1950). Creativity and its measurement. Psychological Bulletin, 47(5), 479–495. https://doi.org/10.1037/h0058475.

[13] Jackson, N. (2012). Designing creativity: Developing innovative approaches to fashion design. Fashion Press.

[14] Kaufman, J. C., & Sternberg, R. J. (2010). The Cambridge handbook of creativity. Cambridge University Press.

[15] Mayer, R. E. (2011). Applying the science of learning to multimedia instruction. Cambridge Handbook of Multimedia Learning, 3–25. https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9781139027611.003

[16] Wallas, G. (1926). The art of thought. Harcourt, Brace.

[17] Dijksterhuis, A., & Meurs, T. (2006). Unconscious processes, intelligence, and creativity: A new perspective. Consciousness and Cognition, 15(1), 135–146. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.concog.2005.04.007

[18] Sio, U. N., & Ormerod, T. C. (2009). Does incubation enhance problem solving? A meta-analytic review. Psychological Bulletin, 135(1), 94–120. https://doi.org/10.1037/a0014212

[19] Cai, D. J., Mednick, S. A., Harrison, E. M., Kanady, J. C., & Mednick, S. C. (2009). REM, not incubation, improves creativity by priming associative networks. Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences, 106(25), 10130–10134. https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.0900271106