



Drowned Maiden, A Sustainable and Contemporary Take on 16th Century Scottish Fashion
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Design Statement

Statement of Purpose

This outfit is part of a five-look collection called “Rose and Thistle” that was inspired by Scottish history, culture, and folklore. The formulation of this idea came about from a study abroad trip to Scotland. As I learned about the historical hardship of the Scottish people from my personal research while living there, it drove me to want to create a collection that was a visual representation of the beauty and destruction that surrounds Scotland. I also performed research on sustainable apparel methods to ensure that I was educated enough to choose the best methods for my designs. This collection builds upon my past sustainable and couture collections by utilizing my love for detail, knowledge on sustainable methods, strong research skills, and hand sewing techniques. The purpose of this garment is to tell a cultural story while showcasing the techniques I have learned and illustrating the importance of sustainability and the possible applications for it in evening wear and couture applications.

Aesthetic Properties, Visual Impact, and Cohesion

This outfit applies the elements and principles of design throughout the garments to create a visual feast for the eyes. The overall design vision for this dress was to create a gown that had obvious historic cues but conveyed a sense of modernity while also showcasing a story. The dress was designed to be symmetrical and have an air of regality about it, popular traits in 16th century gowns, but be torn and distressed to communicate the story of a woman who had been tossed about by the sea. Symmetry in the shape of the skirt contrasts with the asymmetrical broken lines within. The form and scale of the skirt is emphasized with the asymmetrical tight-fitting top of the dress that creates movement with the drape and flow of the separated bodices and sleeve. Distressed edges and details on the garments starkly contrast with the cleanly finished half of the dress, creating a juxtaposition for the viewer. The texture of the ruffles combined with the use of pattern and differing colors creates intriguing and detailed lines throughout the skirt to bring the viewers eye to all parts of the garment. Emphasis is given to the lining of the dress through the use of a contrasting plaid fabric to denote the importance of the ripped detail in the narrative of the piece.

Process, Technique, and Execution

The overall design and creation process of this garment was extremely time consuming and done in an immaculate fashion to ensure the quality, longevity, and preservation of necessary design elements. Select edges were left raw and even further distressed to illustrate a tousled and disheveled look. Thin fabric was purposefully used for the outer bodice of the dress so when the darts were sewn in the sleeves and body they would be seen, mimicking the transparency of wet fabric. Boning and ribbon trim were strategically sewn in the bustier to allow the thin and fragile fabric to support the weight and stressors of being used in an undergarment. Handmade, fabric-covered buttons and rouleau loops fasten the back-bodice closure and the sleeve cuff closures (Figure 2 and 3). The loops, buttons, lining, and ruffles were all constructed with scrap fabric to implement zero-waste design. Sustainable fabrics were used throughout, along with minimal waste patterning and cutting methods.

The entirety of this outfit is meant to express an ethereal destruction that portrays a melancholy femininity. Each detail was chosen to aid in the progression of the narrative and work amongst themselves within the outfit and collection. Cohesive view on the design flows throughout the pieces, tying them together while also remaining individual. Repeated elements like the buttons, distressed edges, layering, and curved shapes of silhouettes continuously tie the outfit together. The theme, technique, level of execution, and attention-to-detail are apparent in all of the pieces. This outfit is original in its narrative and visual expression of that story. Textile surface designs, intricate details, and the sheer destruction and magnitude of the garment are unique aspects that make it novel and intriguing. This garment was fully constructed and then destroyed to mimic the destruction and damage that rocks can deliver in order to simulate the event that this outfit is portraying (Figure 1 and 3). The emotion and perturbing destruction of a fully-made, pristine garment creates an original and innovative piece.

Figure 1. Fully Constructed



Figure 2. Fabric Button



Figure 3. Back button and distressed

