

## Untitled Incarnations of Art

Designer: Sarah Woods, Mentor: Melanie Carrico, University of North Carolina at Greensboro, USA

Keywords: minimalist, asymmetrical, pleats

### Faculty Mentor Statement

This dress was completed as part of a junior-level Advanced Patternmaking and Draping class that I taught. This course is a requirement for apparel design students. The students were given the assignment brief to research an apparel market and customer segment for which they designed garments. The inspiration for garment designs came from one of two exhibitions we visited at the university's art museum. The two exhibits were *Here we are: painting and sculpting the human form* and *Interwoven: natural and illusory textiles*. Students were encouraged to experiment with surface treatments and mixing fabrics. Each student and I discussed their design ideas in sketch form before deciding on one idea to create in fabric. Half muslin prototypes were followed by full muslin prototypes before executing the final garment in the chosen fabric. I guided and critiqued students through the process, assessing their fit, advising on construction techniques, and helping with patternmaking challenges among other things.

I selected this work for submission because the student did a thorough job of researching her concept and developing innovative and original design ideas. The student was diligent in perfecting her patterns and did an excellent job of constructing the garment.

### Designer Statement

This project started with a visit to a local art museum where students viewed a textile exhibit and a contemporary art exhibit about the human body. Our assignment was to select a piece within either exhibit that would inspire the design of our final project. That trip was very informative, and I saw so many ways that fabric could be used around the body and in other ways I had never seen before. It was also intriguing to see how unconventional items could be used to make works of art centered around the human form.

Out of all of the art pieces the main piece that I drew inspiration from was an untitled piece by Amanda Guest, a British artist born in 1964. Amanda Guest often works in the textile medium and this was one of her finest works (Rocco, 2004).

This minimalist piece used thread embedded in linen paper for a book-like feel. One side of the work is a slightly wrinkled piece of linen and the other side has vertical threads that were embedded in the linen in a way that they seemed to be pulled. The simplicity of this piece really spoke to me. I drew inspiration from its simple light design and its asymmetrical composition.

The vertical embedded threads also left an impression that I wanted to incorporate into my final design.

The target market that I chose for my design was one I felt I could relate to and that would be very receptive to the innovative design concept, so I focused on females aged 17-26. Within this age bracket I also wanted to target females living in an urban environment with careers or interest in social media and fashion. The ideal person I imagined this design for was someone like Yara Shahidi or Zendaya Coleman. Both of these women are successful celebrities and have extremely large followings on Instagram and other social media platforms. I envision this dress being worn as street style during an event like New York Fashion Week.

For this cotton dress the main aesthetic elements in my work are line, shape, and texture. Lines can be seen in the pleating of the left side and the opposing stripes on the right side of the shirt dress (Figure 1), this also calls back to the vertical embedded threads in Guest's untitled piece. The shape of the garment is largely asymmetrical with the large boxy pleats on one side and the more fitted collared shirt on the other. Texture is always relevant for any fashion piece and the texture of my garment was purposeful in recalling the inspiration piece. The rough almost wrinkled texture of the cotton shirt dress is in comparison to the bumpy wrinkled pages of the untitled work. The principles of design that guided my decisions were balance and contrast. When working with an asymmetrical piece balance is something that must be addressed. Though one side of my design is rather large, boxy and confrontational I wanted to add a calmer, smaller, and more conventional side to balance it out. The color choice of white for the pleats and blue for the shirt dress was also purposeful in balancing the boxy and more svelte shapes of the garment. The contrasting sides and lines also allude to the inspirational embedded threads and plain page of the untitled work by Amanda Guest.



Figure 1

Executing this garment was a learning process with challenges along the way. I made the dress body by manipulating basic bodice slopers to create a boxy and oversized fit. I drafted the sleeve to specifications allowing for the dropped armhole and fullness at the cuff. I also drafted the cuff and collar pieces to fit the top. I sewed the shirt dress pieces together with a sleeve only on one side.

For the pleats, I measured the full length of the shirt dress in the front and back multiplied those two measurements by three to give me a total length of 225 inches. From there I marked my box pleats, ironed them and sewed them to be stabilized. The plackets were attached to each side with buttonholes and buttons. One of the challenges was keeping the pleats in place, so each pleat was stabilized with an extra stitch and tacked down to the base. Lastly, I attached the collar and hemmed the garment.

Overall the work that I created gives a sense of spontaneity and uncertainty, while also being simple. Though the original inspiration for this garment came from the untitled work of Amanda Guest, throughout the process of creating the garment I started to see elements of ancient dinosaurs and even the human skeletal system. This ideology was intriguing to me as it brought about the sense of the normalcy of life through the shirt dress but also the eventuality of ancient things and the bones that lie within each of us.

This is a unique and original design. Though I have seen asymmetrical designs with pleats solely on one side, the all-encompassing pleats on one side and the basic oversized shirt dress on the other side adds something new, young, and fun. The novelty and complexity of the pleated side is made approachable by using a familiar shirt dress base. This garment is something I found much joy in designing and creating. Though it gave me several challenges, the final outcome is something that truly shows my aesthetic style.

#### References

Rocco, Ben La. (16 May 2004). *Amanda Guest*. The Brooklyn Rail, <https://brooklynrail.org/2004/05/artseen/amanda-guest>.

