



Assembling Creativity

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Much literature on fashion design today centers around either sustainable, ethical making processes or advances in the incorporation of digital technologies into these processes. As a graduate student, I want to address these important discussions through the use of playful, open-minded process and material exploration, which can lead to inventive and resourceful solutions, innovations, and material use. My making process already incorporates curiosity and fascination with materials and methods, stemming from my childhood. I grew up in a family of modest means, so my parents taught me by example how to eliminate waste and fully use materials by transforming, repairing, or altering tired objects to make “new” useful things. This mindset has stayed with me, informing the lens through which I view the materials and tools at my disposal. Currently, I have access to a traditional sewing and design studio as well as a FabLab of digital fabrication tools, including 3D printers. Simultaneously, I have acquired an interesting collection of waste, remnant, and unwanted textile goods as my fashion design department and a retiring faculty member clear out storage spaces. While the intersection of these resources may appear disconnected, my plans to combine and re-work the textile goods into something fresh were developed while I was subverting scale by modeling over-sized bugle beads to print in the 3D printer. These creative explorations married and led to this look. A piece of remnant denim from an American mill combined beautifully with my cream and red remnant trims, inspiring an “All-American” aesthetic.

The combined gifted, reclaimed, 3D printed, and found materials were used to assemble an entirely “new” textile resembling plaid, which became the tunic top. The base material is an open-weave silk remnant given to me by a friend, while the fluffy cream treatment is wool mill end waste destined for the trash. The variegated red stripe is an un-cut fringe remnant also destined for the trash. These materials were layered to create texture, hand, drape, and visual interest through surface application. During development, machine application was discovered to create a stiff hand, so each layer of texture was hand-stitched to the base silk. Further weight was needed to enhance the fluidity of the new textile, and here my research into making 3-D printed apparel components married with handwork in assembling these materials. These digitally fabricated pieces were modeled in Rhino to resemble 2.5” long bugle beads with the words “transform” integrated into their surface. After printing in clear resin, the inside of each “bead” was hand-painted metallic gold. By stringing these beads through a cord

woven into the silk base, the necessary weight was added to make the tunic hang correctly. In this way, technology was used to further enhance the quality of the hand-made goods by adding visual interest and body. By combining waste goods and remnant fabric with digital technology, a high-end, visually interesting, and useful new textile was assembled. This assembled textile is aesthetically interesting and texturally stimulating. Therefore, the pattern work for the resulting garment is thoughtful but minimal, utilizing a bias cut to highlight the hand and drape while an asymmetrical, shaped hemline follows the textile design.

Complementing the look are jeans in a dark-wash cotton denim incorporating frayed panels and snaps at the lower leg. These panels remain polished but harken the worn-in quality of frayed denim in the angled panels at the lower leg. Each piece of the lower leg section is almost a complete rectangle making them nearly zero waste, while the breaking up of the pant legs allowed more efficient use of yardage. These panels were sewn together and pre-washed separately before being attached to the legs of the pant to create a naturally frayed appearance. The angle of the panels suggests a classic bell bottom, and the dark wash was left intact to provide a dressier look to match the tunic.

The making process was intuitive for both garments, with the design process being informed and developed through open-minded interaction with materials and processes. Key to this approach is remaining receptive to the use of every available resource along the way. This encourages “treating materials as an active source of design information to invite the making of tacit knowledge through direct material handling,” (Marr & Hoyes, 2016) which allows the maker to respond intuitively. Especially when combining new processes such as digital fabrication with traditional hand-worked techniques, this type of approach is critical to allowing the “mastery of the practitioner to integrate material information with the technological information.” (Loh, Burry, & Wagenfeld, 2016) This look represents and highlights the way this making process can be applied to textile and garment design to allow discovery. It allows for the open-minded, creative application of both traditional and new technologies, guided by the needs of materials, resources, and maker. It is a problem-solving approach that invites creative solutions.

References

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