The Mechanical Dancer

Keywords: surface design, ready-to-wear, sustainability

Rebecca Migdol, Katya Roelse, University of Delaware, USA

Mentor Statement

This design was created as part of a mini-collection for a senior capstone course for which I was the instructor. I chose to sponsor this student's design because of the attention to craft, the difficulty of creating the surface design, and the challenge of incorporating it into RTW.

Statement of Purpose

This was designed to find an innovative but graceful way to bring fabric waste back into the spotlight while also creating unique high-end wearable RTW separates. It serves to repurpose fabric waste and make it the focal point of a garment with increased quality and extended value. This was accomplished by patternmaking and constructing one portion of a garment while also strategically planning what the remains will become. Fabric scraps were donated from Tom's Sons International Pleating Company and then carefully reinvented into a fluting surface textile design on these newly designed garments. Fluting is the arrangement of cut overlapping layered bias strips that can be applied to garments during the design construction or draping process and allows for sculptural shaping manipulation in woven textiles. Historically, intricate fluting and pleating hand sewn techniques were used by couturier designer Madame Grès in the 1950s in her bias sculptural draping designs. She would use large whole pieces of fabric in her bias couture manipulations and tiny hand sewn pleats would shrink the fabric in desired areas or fluid curvatures around the body (Steele, Mears, & Sauro, 2007). Today, many small high-end designers such as TRMTAB and Zero Waste Daniel have utilized upcycling into their work as they step up to save scraps from other businesses or adopt deadstock fabrics as their own (Small, 2020), (Miniwiz, 2020). Simultaneously, these luxury designers aim to create beautiful textile surfaces for their designs. Their "up-valuing" of fabric waste inspired this design as well as having a desire to apply a method rarely seen in RTW.

Aesthetic Properties and Visual Impact

This design is made up of three cohesive separates that layer together to build the overall look. Contrast of color, texture, and placement play a main role in the designs visually and guide the story. A limited black and white color palette is used throughout in a variety of fabric that include silk charmeuse, a wool/cotton suiting blend, and a plaid lightweight faux leather. These fabrics differ in structure and texture, adding dimension and contrast when they are against each other. Placement is another key element in the design, and can be viewed in the locations where the fluting surface textile design covers the garments. Beginning with the top, it is a strapless black silk charmeuse cropped bustier with an angled neckline and is covered in fluting strips that overlap one another as they flow around the body's natural curves. Metal D-rings let the garment lace up in the back with a matching ribbon. A high-waisted black wool blend skirt with a center

© 2021 The author(s). Published under a Creative Commons Attribution License (https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/), which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited.

exposed metal zipper is worn just below the bustier top. Bold silver top stitching covers both sides of the seams and the fluting textile design is angled at the bottom and top in corresponding fabrics to the other garments. A long, black drop-shoulder, double breasted, shawl collar jacket lays over both pieces with silver silk charmeuse lining inside. Fluting surrounds the entire collar and collar facing and the silver topstitching mirrors all seams.

Process, Technique, and Execution

All the garments exhibit different types of fluting. This began with strategically planning the 2D layout with consideration of pattern placement and the shapes left over in the negative spaces. Bias strips approximately two inches wide then were cut up from the pattern placement remains and all the way out to the corner edges. The strips were folded in half, and pressed to create a defined fold and crease. These strips then were temporarily pinned to the upper portion of the bodice or other placement areas on the base of the garment. For shaped areas, this was accomplished while draping on a dressform. For flat areas such as a collar facing, this was handled while laid out flat before the main construction assembly. Pinning each strip individually before sewing allows for a preview of the potential arrangement and ideas for layering the next strip, as well as using the curves of the body to guide the outcomes. Before pinning the next strip down, the folded strip is left slightly open and then straight stitched down along or just below the crease line through the layer of the base fabric underneath. The next layer would then overlap the raw downward fabric edge with its clean fold line facing upward. This use of pinning the bias strips around the 3D form and stitching them down in an overlapping manner is then repeated to create the fluting surface textile design before the garment is lined or finished. Fluting selectively around a 3D form allows the garment to have an organic and natural look.

Cohesion

The concept of this design is to create a look that is unique and wearable out of fabric waste. This idea holds its aesthetic with the use of contrasting limited colors and selective placements that mix textures, uniting a powerful cohesive overall look. The process involved upcycling and utilizing fabric remains that could have been wasted. Instead, these scraps are put in the spotlight of a garment and the value of these scraps is then elevated. Deconstructing the fabric scraps into bias strips and transforming them into the fluting surface textile design during the garments' construction allow for this up-valuing process to take place. This process and technique result in newly designed RTW garments with a unique look and a sustainable solution,

Originality and Innovation

This design strives to honor aesthetics at an equal level of importance to sustainability. Often, people may assume sustainable fashion isn't visually appealing, which could be the case if the elements and principles of design are not acknowledged. By allowing aesthetics and sustainability to be united, a more powerful result is reached. Futher, fashion companies create a lot of waste when making their desired garments (Ozdamar & Atik, 2015). Holding intent to create something of great value, this look is uniquely one of a kind by utilizing color, texture, and placement.

© 2021 The author(s). Published under a Creative Commons Attribution License (https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/), which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited.

References

Miniwiz. (2020, September 2). 13 Fashion Brands Who Show That Upcycling Can Be Fabulous. https://miniwiz.medium.com/13-fashion-brands-who-show-that-upcycling-can-be-fabulous-6cbed4c09d58.

Ozdamar Ertekin, Z., & Atik, D. (2015). Sustainable Markets: Motivating Factors, Barriers, and Remedies for Mobilization of Slow Fashion. Journal of Macromarketing, 35(1), 53–69. https://doi.org/10.1177/0276146714535932

Small, D. (2020, December 18). 10 Luxury Fashion Brands That Upcycle. Eluxe Magazine. https://eluxemagazine.com/fashion/fashion-brands-that-upcycle/.

Steele, V., Mears, P., & Sauro, C. (2007). Ralph Rucci: The art of weightlessness. Yale University Press.

© 2021 The author(s). Published under a Creative Commons Attribution License (https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/), which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited.

© 2021 The author(s). Published under a Creative Commons Attribution License (https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/), which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited.