



## At What Price?

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Keywords: Historic Reference, Tech-Wear, Surface Design

Statement of Purpose: “At What Price?” represents a combination of elements of the past and the future in one design. It contains references from the 1960s seen in the futuristic silhouette, color palate, and application of surface design while also paying homage to wearable technology. The design has a layered, geometric, asymmetrical silhouette with cap sleeves and collar that are reminiscent of the popular shift dress silhouette and space age aesthetic of the ‘60s. I designed and applied block printing plates in sections of the dress consisting of repeated bar codes and a cluster of mushrooms. The bar codes are representative of our spending habits and the mushrooms represent nature, or the “cost” of our consumption. The barcodes plates were created using hard carved block printing methods, while the mushroom plates were created on pinewood with a laser cutter.

My target customer is an independent, adventurous, curious and stylish woman, with a small business. One thing this baby boomer valued is investing in fewer clothing items, but wanted unique, high quality items. This gave me the idea of using my design to communicate a message about over consumption. To include the required historical reference, I wanted to use a style of printing reminiscent of pop art to convey this message. Pop art often portrayed messages through an ironic and humorous way and could be viewed as the first wave of post-modernism. “It deliberately made use of mundane objects and used repetition. Meanwhile, whilst previous art had almost always had a moral message behind, Pop Art went against morality displaying emotional scenes with a sense of comical ambivalence,” (Termenón, 2021). The printed barcodes additionally introduced the theme of wearable technology, or the idea of scannable clothing. This ensemble takes historical references and carries them into the future of fashion in a stylish and functional way.

Aesthetic Properties and Visual Impact: At the beginning of my design process, I researched the fashions of the 1960s, specifically the “Space Age” aesthetic. I drew inspiration from the fashion, art, architecture, and political movements of the time. I wanted to create something that was reminiscent of this style while also pushing the boundaries of conventional design and that fitted my customer’s aesthetic. My customer expressed her love for “classic silhouettes with a twist,” which motivated me to experiment with unconventional silhouettes. “[Space Age] revolved around the idea of exploration — of pushing boundaries further than ever before, whether that meant with materials or silhouettes,” (Talreja, 2017).

Process, Technique and Execution: After finalizing my design sketch, I drafted a flat pattern of

seven different pieces for the main body of the dress and drafted patterns for the cap sleeves and facings. I manipulated the dart location, shape, flare, and proportion of each panel on the basic torso sloper to create the layered, asymmetric silhouette. The test muslin revealed I had to adjust the straight side of the dress that did not reach all the way to the sleeve on each panel because of the dart intake. The biggest problem I encountered involved the block printing. I experimented with different types of fabric ink and layers of fabric ink, causing some sections to take much longer to dry than others. I learned the importance of doing all of the printing at once and waiting for it to dry before putting the garment together.

This ensemble was constructed using a light-weight tan-colored, cotton polyester blend fabric. All the surface design work was done with oil-based, fabric block printing ink printed on top of the fabric. The dress has a straight, shift silhouette and is comprised of two layers on the front and back that connect and continue over until the mid-shoulder point. The under layer is the longer of the two layers, while the overlay is three inches shorter to create an asymmetrical visual imbalance. This imbalance speaks to the tension created by two of the themes portrayed in the design: the “cost” of our consumption and the future mode of consumption. The overlay back panel drapes over the underlay back that contains the zipper. The overlay back panel contains snaps at the shoulder, so the zipper is accessible. The dress has an angled cap sleeve and mock neck collar to further convey the theme of futurism. There is bright orange and navy-blue block printing applied with linoleum and wood plates in intermittent, blocked off sections of the dress. With some excess fabric I made a triangular headscarf as an accessory to further show the historical reference. In combination with the silhouette, color palette, and block printing, I wanted the dress to resemble a piece of pop art.

**Cohesion:** My design intentions were to create an unbalanced, unproportionate, geometric, asymmetric dress with printing that reflected those same elements of the silhouette. The cohesion of my dress is represented through the reflection of those elements in the printing and silhouette. The repeated colors, barcodes, and mushroom designs in each of the sections created cohesion throughout the print itself. The sections of printing were unproportionate and inconsistent; however, they all had a square or rectangular geometric shape to them and were blocked off so two sections of the same color of printing were not side by side on each panel. This made the dress reminiscent of a work of pop art since this was a popular technique that was used in the ‘60s.

**Originality and innovation:** The initial design inspiration stemmed from my customer and her independent and adventurous lifestyle. I wanted the garment to embody her bright spirit and open mind, this led to drawing inspiration from the ‘60s and the adventurous, experimental fashion choices made by many at the time. I used an art form of that period that was used to make statements in major movements to send a message about the harm of overconsumption to the environment. The barcodes in the printing connected the past with the present/future with the theme of wearable technology. Using elements of the past to move forward in the industry represents the future of fashion itself.

## References

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