



Coloured: A Well Deserved and Long-Awaited Seat at the Table

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Mentor Statement:

The mentorship process for this undergraduate student's design was implemented as part of a senior-level design course. The purpose of the mentorship was to help guide this student to ideate and create a cohesive collection grounded in research, develop their personal design aesthetic, advance their patternmaking, construction, and fit techniques, and provide guidance for the next chapter of their life. We viewed our role as a person that simply asked questions to help the student come to resolutions on their own and provide additional problem-solving guidance when needed. Mentorship of this student was met by their ability to work independently to successfully design and create garments inspired through research and inspiration. We highly recommend this student's design for showcase in the ITAA design exhibition as it is grounded in market research and executed to produce a unique design appropriate for the targeted market.

Designer Statement:

As a result of the global Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement that took place in summer 2020, many people of color were forced to look introspectively and bring attention to what their identity looks like to them and how that is reflected in today's society (Buchanan, 2020). For Black and mixed-race womxn¹, the society that we live in can be very oppressive, and we are often shown in a misrepresented light in the media. Therefore, *Coloured* was developed to give vibrant life and meaning to an outdated and offensive term that was meant to oppress. It is *Coloured's* overall mission to rewrite the narrative of how womxn of color are portrayed and represented in the media and society. This garment is made specifically for biracial womxn and all womxn of color. Most of the clothing seen in today's mainstream apparel brands are made to cater to European body types, causing fit issues for womxn of color. *Coloured* was developed to give these womxn an appropriate solution and updated sense of representation by offering a fashion look specifically developed to flatter natural curves and various skin tones. The target audience for *Coloured* is a womxn-identifying, person of color who is bold and confident and wants clothes to reflect that. Target consumer attitudes involve body positivity, promoting self-confidence, and staying up-to-date with social issues. *Coloured* is classified as Womenswear Bridge, but the consumer group will spend more to support causes, such as BLM.

The design elements encompassed in this piece were specifically chosen to bring a sense of luxury and regal refinement to the stereotypical image of 'the black woman', shifting the public perspective and shedding a new light on centuries old misconceptions. One main focus of

¹ Womxn- an intersectional term intended to signal the inclusion of those who have traditionally been excluded from white feminist discourse: Black women, women of color, and trans women.

this piece is to emphasize and cater to a more inclusive array of body types. Design elements such as silk fabric, hook and eye closures, and draped silhouettes were chosen to portray a sense of regality and grandeur that women of color are not often seen in. Contrasting fabrics were used symmetrically on the top piece to give the garment more visual appeal and added interest. The 100% Silk fabric used infuses a blend of fuchsia and orange metallic shine to stand out under different lighting, and is pre-pleated to add dimensional texture to the piece. The visual impact of *Coloured* represents inclusivity through art. It is meant to be eye-catching, fierce and bold- just like the womxn wearing it.

The key design elements used in this *Coloured* were inspired by Jacquemus Spring 2021 collection (Isaac-Goizé, 2020). The sculpted bust shapes, vertical lines, and detailed finishes present in the collection were all embodied during the initial conceptualizing and sketching for this piece. Interviews with the target consumer group were conducted to gather more research and buyer's insight from the perspective of mixed race and womxn. While gathering research, interviewees expressed a common fit issue that they collectively experienced was 'gapping in the back of pants, where the lower back transitions to the hips/derriere. In response, *Coloured's* pants were constructed to include a 1" elastic band along the center back waistband to combat the 'gapping' fit issue and allow the waistband to expand and contract, fitting perfectly on various body shapes. The fabric for these pants include an elastic property that allows them to stretch over natural body curves, so the wearer doesn't feel restricted in any area. The silk fabric used on the bodice top was selected to preserve natural body oils, instead of drying out the delicate skin and to drape in a flattering manner. The colors chosen for this ensemble were also based on interviewee feedback, as fuchsia and orange were collectively chosen as the most flattering shades on dark/tan skin. The printed fabric represents the brilliant differing shades of nude and browns that are custom to each person, promoting inclusivity. Based on the season's forecasted trends, along with interviewee feedback, a final design was selected to drape, pattern, and construct a fit sample. Construction elements included ¼" elastic casing along outer edges of back crossing straps to add tension and support, bra cups inserted to the front bust underlining, snaps inserted between layers of fabric on center front to ensure the bust cups stay in place, and hand finishes such as brass hook and eye closures. Complex patternmaking was used to attach the skirt back and front pieces to the bra cups, connecting at the underbust and side seams. Crossing back straps support the top structurally, connecting at the shoulders and side seam.

Coloured strives to be inclusive and celebratory. Making clothes that celebrate natural bodies and womxn with all ranges of backgrounds, sizes, and skin tones. Instead of feeling the need to water themselves down in predominantly white settings, this ensemble empowers womxn who wear it to go forth and claim their well-deserved and long awaited seat at the table. The design goal of *Coloured* was met and translated through construction and design details. The impact of this garment was affirmed when one of the fit models expressed that she often felt misplaced or misidentified and that wearing *Coloured* and hearing the mission statement behind it made her feel appreciated and seen for her ethnicity. She had felt alone in questioning her identity and place in society, and hearing about the development of *Coloured* gave her a sense of community and inclusion. Even beyond just the physical clothing, having a brand that brings together womxn of color and provides them with a space to feel unified, fairly represented and empowered is the real mission of *Coloured*.

References

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