The Olga Dress

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Keywords: Surface Design, Quilting, Laser Cutting

Design Mentor Statement. The purpose of this mentorship relationship was to assist Apparel Design and Manufacturing seniors explore and apply various surface design techniques to high-level design and construction garments. A studio-based class was offered where each student designed and constructed a garment incorporating two surface design techniques covered throughout the semester. The course encourages students to push their design skills beyond their previous experience and create engaging, marketable designs. The student designer in this study chose to focus their garment on surface design techniques of different eras. This student did not have previous experience with either technique chosen, hence the goal to push themselves outside of their previous experience was met. This design was chosen to be sponsored based on its high quality of construction and surface design techniques. This student successfully incorporated quilting and laser cutting into a functional and marketable ensemble, while bringing additional significance to the design through exploring modern and traditional techniques.

Statement of Purpose. The Olga dress is a representation of a juxtaposition between the ancient and the modern. This dress was a result of experimenting with two surface design techniques popularized in different eras: quilting and laser cutting. The inspiration for this garment came from the romantic period dresses of the 1800's and the curves found on the female anatomy. Through this garment, I wanted to investigate the possibilities of technological advances in surface design, while still implementing a classic technique. According to the psychology of color, the color white represents new beginnings, sophistication, simplicity, and optimism(Elliot, 2015). This was chosen to represent the modern aspect of this juxtaposition. Curved lines suggest comfort, safety, familiarity, and relaxation (Plaskett, 1969). This was chosen to represent the familiarity of the classic aspect of this juxtaposition. Even though there is not an exact date when quilting first started, there is evidence found in Egypt that reveal people wore quilted clothing from 5000 years ago (Edelson, 1973). In England, there is evidence that people wore quilted clothing as protection under or over armour and chainmail. On the other hand, laser cutting was first introduced by Western Electric in 1965 (Bromberg, 1991). That's only 56 years ago, making it a more modern and industrialized way of manufacturing.

Aesthetic Properties and Visual Impact. The Olga dress is best described as classic, modern, gentle, clean, and organic. The look of the dress has a classic silhouette, and it emphasizes the bodice and waist. The curved lines of the skirt are cohesive with the organic shapes accentuated on the vest. This look consists of two pieces, which can be worn separately if desired.

Process, Technique, and Execution. The steps that were involved in the creation of the Olga dress are: design development through a series of variations of this dress, selection of the look, fabric selection, surface design mock-ups, draping, pattern development, and assembly of the final look. The process started by selecting a base color for the dress, which was an all-cream look to follow the monochromatic style trend of 2020. Then, the design development started with 10 different sketches and after one consultation with my professor, a final look was selected. The next step was to develop a laser cut design on Adobe Illustrator and tested on sample velvet fabric. I ordered five different fabric swatches and a polyester silk faille fabric was selected to accomplish a voluminous and structured silhouette. Cotton backing and batting were used for the quilted portion of the skirt. A polyester silk fabric was used for the lining of the garment to prevent it from being see-through on the chest area. The front and back bodices were draped onto the mannequin using French darts. The vest was also draped by creating curved style lines and implementing darts to get rid of excess fabric. The skirt was draped using the A-line foundations and modified by using curved style lines. The puffed sleeves were drafted by hand for accuracy purposes. Once the final drape was completed, the next step was to flat pattern the toile onto paper. Necessary adjustments were made at this stage. Two surface design techniques were applied to this garment: quilting and laser cutting. After cutting out the fabric pieces in three different layers, the faille fabric, the cotton backing and the cotton batting, were pinned together to hold in place and curves were stitched using the free-motion technique. Once the quilted skirt panels were ready, they were assembled to the bodices. The final step was to fit the gown onto the mannequin and steam it to get rid of creases.

Cohesion. The cohesiveness of this gown is conveyed by a monochromatic look, organic shapes mixed with curved lines, and a balance between modern techniques with classic silhouettes. The overall silhouette of the gown is voluminous, but it is combined with a fitted bodice to create harmony.

Originality and Innovation. Inspired by the past and future concepts, the originality of this dress is conveyed by making a statement on how fashion is usually a reflection of the past but with a touch of the future by implementing innovative techniques or ideas. We can see this by looking at how cyclical trends are, we often see references from past decades being mixed with modern modifications. This design is unique because it reminds us that even though our past defines our roots and identity, we should always be willing to think about the future and the modern in order to grow.

References

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