



Recuerdo

Melissa Rosales

Mentor: Ashley Rougeaux-Burnes, Texas Tech University

Keywords: Tailoring, Cultural Influence, Wearable Art

Design Mentor Statement. The purpose of this mentorship relationship was to assist Apparel Design and Manufacturing seniors in exploring and attaining the high-level design and construction skills required to become successful professionals in the apparel industry. Each student in a studio-based class was challenged to design and construct a 4-look collection of clothing centered around their selected theme or problem. The department 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 collection on memories of their upbringing in an immigrant family. The student pushed themselves outside their previous experience by incorporating tailoring techniques into their collection. This design was chosen to be sponsored based on its high quality of construction and the exemplary problem-solving skills the student displayed throughout the design and construction process. This student successfully incorporated cultural influences and tailoring techniques into a wearable art piece.

Statement of Purpose. The *Recuerdo* dress is part of a collection named Saudade. *Saudade* is usually translated into English as “longing,” “homesickness,” and “nostalgia,” encompassing the idea of melancholy (Silva, 2012). Melancholy is quite a complex concept because it involves sweetness and bitterness at the same time. This feeling lives within the designer’s memories of being part of a divorced family, moving to a new country, and experiencing the grief of losing her grandmother as a child. As a hypersensitive person and designer, the designer has a strong emotional attachment to clothes due to their attachment to memory, meaning, and intimacy. When she was a child, her grandmother first introduced her to second-hand shopping, which fascinated her. Later in life, she realized this fascination stemmed from the significant meaning found in secondhand clothing and now appreciated the impact of practicing recycling in the second largest industry polluter in the world. The designer always imagined the story behind the garments she acquired, and noticed she selected garments to match her mood. This was her first encounter with nostalgia in relation to garments. Clothing evokes feeling.

Aesthetic Properties and Visual Impact. The *Recuerdo* dress has a back opening in the suit jacket that represents the past and the act of remembering. The parts that are missing and never coming back. The suit jacket’s sleeves, on the other hand, are curved and sculptural. Curved lines suggest comfort, safety, familiarity, and relaxation (Plaskett, 1969). The sleeves represent childhood and the sweet aspect of melancholy. The *Saudade* collection is also inspired by influential designers and artists such as Cristobal Balenciaga, Issey Miyake, Isamu Noguchi, and Ruth Asawa. In this collection, the designer also wanted to honor the work of other artists and thank them for their brutal inspiration. The skirt in the *Recuerdo* dress is inspired by Noguchi’s paper lamps.

The *Recuerdo* dress is best described as sculptural, modern, avant-garde, elegant, and organic. The look of the dress has a sculptural silhouette, and it emphasizes the back, arms, shoulders, and hips.

Page 1 of 4

The rounded shape of the skirt is cohesive with the curved shapes accentuated on the suit jacket's sleeves. This look was constructed as one ensemble but could be manufactured and worn separately to lend to marketability.

Process, Technique, and Execution. The designer took a journey through her past as she designed this collection. She listened to all the songs from her past and kept a journal to document memories, sensations, and define the meaning of nostalgia for her. She revised drawings she made as a child and took shapes found in these to manipulate into sculptural pieces. The shapes found in the *Recuerdo* dress were taken from a childhood drawing the designer made when she was about 6 years old (Figure 1). The *Recuerdo* suit jacket's sleeves came from the organic and curved mountains. The skirt in *Recuerdo* was drawn from Noguchi's paper lamps shapes that the designer manipulated in Photoshop to create new silhouettes. Since this look was part of a collection, once she had several sketches using this same technique, she used the "paper-doll" method to cut and paste different variations of the look. This method was inspired by another piece the designer made in kinder garden, where she created a paper doll.

Once the conceptual process was complete, the following steps that were involved in the creation of the *Recuerdo* dress are: design development, selection of the look, fabric selection, draping, pattern development, model fitting, pattern alterations, and assembly of the final look. Once the designer had her model measurements, she started draping the suit jacket with muslin fabric to achieve the desired fit and silhouette. The skirt was also draped onto the mannequin using the micro-pleated self-fabric since it had stretch. She then transferred the draped pieces onto paper to develop patterns of the garment. Since this was a tailored jacket, the designer referenced several pattern and sewing tailoring books to make correct alterations (Powell, 2010 & Plaskett, 1969).

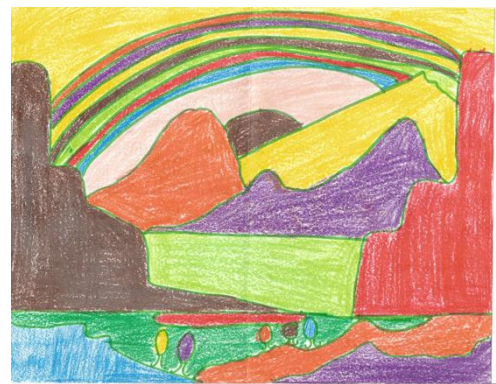


Figure 1. Childhood Drawing

Once the patterns were finished, a muslin fitting was conducted with the model for needed alterations. After the fitting, patterns were fixed, and the final fabric was cut. The suit jacket fabric was fused with medium weight woven interfacing and horsehair canvas to provide structure. Shoulder pads were hand-made using the raglan shoulder pad technique (Powell, 2010) to pronounce the shoulders. To accomplish the sculptural curvy sleeves, horsehair braid was sewn to the seam allowance of the sleeves. The jacket was fully lined and top-stitched along the lapel, collar, and back squared opening. The skirt was attached to the shell and the jump hem of the suit jacket covered any visible seams on the interior of the garments. Finally, a ceramic button was hand made for the jacket.

Cohesion. The cohesiveness of this dress is conveyed by a sculptural look, organic shapes mixed with volume, and a balance between elegance with an avant-garde silhouette. The overall silhouette of the dress is structured, but it is combined with a circular skirt to create harmony.

Originality and Innovation. Inspired by personal experiences, the designer sees fashion as a form of art; she believes clothes can provide refuge, acting as a canopy under which people shelter their most secret agonies (Bari, 2020). We are in clothes. Perhaps we are most ourselves in the things we wear. The *Recuerdo* dress portrays these beliefs in its full potential because the designer has sewn personal memories, experiences, agonies, and secrets in every stitch of the garment. This makes the piece a very meaningful object that narrates a story in the hopes that the wearer can feel and understand it.

References

Bari, S. K. (2020). *Dressed: A philosophy of clothes*. Basic Books.

Editors of Creative Publishing International. (2011). *Tailoring: The classic guide to sewing the perfect jacket*. Creative Publishing International.

Plaskett, E. J. (1969). The meaning of straight and curved line geometrical designs.

Powell, P. (2010). *Tailored fashion design*. A & C Black Publishers Ltd.

Silva, Z. B. (2012). Saudade – A key Portuguese emotion. *Emotion Review*, 4(2), 203–211.

