



Upcycle and Zero Waste Ensemble

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My creative scholarship contributes to the ongoing conversation regarding sustainable fashion. The purposeful consideration of sustainable design criteria and processes move sustainable design to the next level. This ensemble combines three sustainable design practices: a zero-waste silk kimono top, an upcycled sweater skirt with matching leg warmers, and a naturally dyed silk scarf.

Upcycling is a design process that adds value to and lengthens the life of a product. There are endless creative possibilities for reconstruction design. The first key to upcycling is the careful analysis of the garment to be used, as deconstruction of the existing garment must allow adequate materials for reconstructing a new garment (Redress, 2017; Gwilt, 2014).

In this ensemble, a lavender wool-blend v-neck, long sleeved sweater was upcycled to develop a sweater skirt and leg warmers. This sweater, while slightly worn, did not have obvious technical constraints such as stains or holes. Deconstruction of the original sweater began by separating the neckband and sleeves from the body of the sweater. To achieve the skirt shape, three to four inches of shoulder area of the sweater was unraveled and the yarn saved to use in the redesign. The remaining area from the front v-neck shape was filled in using crochet stitches. To form the skirt waistline, the upper edges were finished with single crochet and a ribbon stabilizer was attached inside. The lower armhole shape from the original sweater provided shaping across the waist to hip area of the skirt. Button plackets were crocheted and attached at each sideseam. The lower 12 inches of each sleeve was cut off and used to make boot-top leg warmers. Additional length and a decorative crochet “ruffle” border was added to the skirt by crocheting the remaining yarn along the lower edge of the skirt.

There are many creative approaches to pattern cutting that focus on sustainability. Zero waste design, or low waste design has as its goal to eliminate fabric waste in the design and/or construction process. Zero waste techniques may include draping on the body using cuts, pleats and folds to develop a design without cutting away much fabric, manufacturing garment pieces through weaving or knitting the specific shape needed, and working with geometric shapes (Gwilt, 2014; Redress, 2017).

The zero-waste, kimono-sleeved top was quilted with a fine layer of polyester batting between two 2-yard layers of grey silk shantung georgette. Parallel lines were stitched at 1-inch intervals across the width of the grey silk to develop a decorative surface design for the quilted fabric concept. Drafted geometric shapes provide the design for this top. The layout and size of each panel was carefully planned. Two rectangular panels make the body of the garment and two panels were used for the sleeves. Two squares quilted in a grid and folded in half diagonally form the shoulder insets. Lavender yarn remaining from the upcycled sweater skirt highlights the shoulder seams. The front and back were attached at the sleeve/sideseam intersection, providing an open effect at the sides.

The lavender silk crepe de chine scarf was hand dyed with black rice dye. The stitch resist method of nui shibori was used to provide decorative detail across each end of the scarf. Hand rolled hems were used on scarf edges.

With each of my designs I seek to challenge myself with new techniques in design and patternmaking. This design combines and expands my creative scholarship using quilting (Orzada, 2010) and zero waste techniques (Orzada, 2016). In particular, I challenged myself with the thoughtful deconstruction and creative transformation of a sweater into a new garment, teaching myself to crochet and discovering how to use that technique to reshape the knitted sweater into a fitted skirt.

References:

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