

Dystopian

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Mentor Statement

The aim of the mentorship relationship was to assist junior and senior students majoring in Apparel Design and Production in developing and acquiring advanced design skills needed to excel as professionals in the fashion industry. This course offered a studio-style class where each student could choose their individual topic to work on independently. To address the global issue of environmental pollution, students were encouraged to create a garment using discarded materials. The student designer in this study successfully created a minimized waste design from recycled clothing to present design ideas inspired by historical garments. The design was chosen to be sponsored for its high-quality construction and technique. It showcases a unique approach to design by incorporating various design elements across different disciplines.

Design Statement

The apparel and textile industry has experienced significant growth in recent years, leading to the rise of low-quality, mass-produced fast fashion that dominates the market. This trend has resulted in clothing with a short lifespan, which typically gets about seven wears before being discarded (Thomas, 2019). In light of this, there has been a growing interest in historical fashion that can be reimagined to fit modern trends, taking into account construction quality, reducing waste during production, and promoting sustainability. This research draws inspiration from the historical influence of "Dystopian" fashion, specifically the Augusta stays found in the years 1775-1789 (Dreamstress, 2019), and the designs of Hayley Dingle's denim dress for Britney Spears. The aim of this research is to explore how historical fashion can be adapted to contemporary trends while still maintaining quality construction and sustainability principles.



Figure 1. An Augusta stay crafted in 1780

Artistically, Figure 1 shows the structural make up of an Augusta stay crafted in 1780 (*Corset | American | the Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1780*). Though this is one example of a boning layout out, no two stays are patterned the same way. Stays were worn to help conform one's body to fit the periods trending silhouette, they were meant to be worn everyday even while performing day to day tasks. Unlike common belief stays were meant to be comfortable to wear, each one was handmade and modified to best fit the wearer.

The objective of this design project was to raise awareness about how the fast fashion industry has impacted the ecosystem over time. The project showcased the evolution of fashion, from the handmade garments of the past to the rise of fast fashion represented by a denim dress. The materials used in the project aimed to inspire a positive change towards a better future. The project had three main goals: 1) to interpret historical construction methods, 2) to upcycle thrifted clothing, and 3) to reduce the waste generated during the project.



Figure 2. Inside out of the top before adding boning

The implementation process started by exploring the use of deconstructed garments as a basis for creating new designs. Two pairs of jeans were employed as the shell material, while a blouse was utilized for the lining. The patterns were meticulously arranged to optimize material usage and to leverage the unique attributes of the jeans. Each piece was surged to obviate stretching and unraveling. The stay was fabricated by cutting and sewing together two layers of jean and a layer of interfacing for the lace-up fronts, then inserting six grommets into each panel. The front button panels were subsequently folded over and stitched down with double stitches in a contrasting color. Double-folded bias tape was employed to finish the bottom edges of the front button panels, which were then folded up and double-stitched down in a contrasting color. The rest of the shell, including the side loops and front lining pieces, were sewn together using a contrasting color to initiate the boning channels. Once the shell was finalized, it was pinned inside out to the mannequin, and the channeling pattern was chalked out (see Figure 2). Boning casings were then sewn onto the outer layer and the boning was inserted into the casings (see Figure 3). The lining pieces were then sewn together along the sides and the top. Finally, the waistband was then attached to the top and topstitched down in a contrasting color.

Then, the skirt part was created. The first step involved the insertion of an invisible zipper into the center front seam. The top of the center front panels was then finished with double-folded bias tape and top-stitched down. The next stage involved sewing together the front and back panels. The cowls were then sewn together and flipped right-side out before being pressed and surged. The cowls were then pinned and sewn into the side seams of the skirt. The hem was stay-stitched and hand-frayed by snipping small sections and beating them with a micro-grater against a wooden block. The center back seams of the skirt were aligned to the outer shell and attached. The seam allowance was then pressed up and top-stitched down using a contrasting



Figure 3. Boning placement

color. The lining was hand-stitched down to cover the raw edges, and buttonholes were created, buttons attached, and a chain and ribbon were added. The challenges faced during the process included the need to trim down allowances and channels to reduce bulk, given that the jean material created thick seams. Despite breaking a needle or two while stitching them down with boning, the end garment was completely worth it. This study provides a valuable resource for those interested in constructing skirts from scratch, highlighting the techniques and challenges involved in the process. The final product best fits a Female medium dress form (size 6-8) 34”26”35”.

In conclusion, the fashion industry has undergone significant changes over the years, with the rise of fast fashion dominating the market. However, this trend has resulted in a negative impact on the environment, with clothing having a short lifespan before being discarded. As such, there has been a growing interest in historical fashion that can be reimaged to fit modern trends, while still maintaining quality construction and promoting sustainability. This research project aimed to raise awareness of the impact of fast fashion on the ecosystem and showcase the evolution of fashion, from handmade garments to upcycling thrifted clothing. By interpreting historical construction methods and reducing waste during the project, this research demonstrates the potential for fashion to be both sustainable and stylish.

References

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