

RE-DIY Duvet Coat and Cover

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How can garments bridge the divide designers and consumers experience in the face of climate change and rising inequality? The RE-DIY duvet coat and its cover is a case study that aims to address sustainability by combatting obsolescence, often embedded in the fashion system, and reducing waste, while seeking ways to reduce economic discrepancies. This case study is guided by two theoretical frameworks that can enhance emotional attachment to an object and, in so doing, extend its use and reduce material consumption: 1) RE-DIY design practices that focus on “repairing, reusing and in general practices prolonging product lifespan” (Salvia, 2015, p. 1) and 2) “User Modifiable Zero Waste Fashion” that explores form and construction and the ability of a garment to be made and modified by users (McQuillan et al., 2018, pp. 7-8). The identical pattern (see Figure 1) for the full-length coat and cover is grounded in a geometric, aged-old historic pattern (Priest-Dorman, 1997) and uses a second-hand, twin-sized duvet (see Figure 2).” The design’s pattern and DIY nature leads to ease of alterations, future recreations of worn-out covers, and reduces “material waste in both production *and* use” (McQuillan et al., 2018, p. 8).” The ensemble addresses thermal comfort (length), ease of maintenance (laundry of cover only),” ongoing use (changing the cover only can optimize resources and renew interest in the” ensemble), and lowers costs (RE-DIY) while catering to different skill levels.

Drawn from simple geometrical garments of the past, the aesthetics of the design fits minimalist mindsets and can be changed through the cover’s textile design. The need for comfortable coats has affected dress practices for centuries and has led to numerous instances of geometric patterns that optimized fabric use by talented designers. From Madeleine Vionnet’s 1921 rectangular-shaped “Envelope” coat (Kirke, 1998, pp. 203-204) to Martin Margiela’s 1999-2000 integral use of a flat duvet with inserted and detachable set-in sleeves and multiple covers (Tietze, 2012, pp. 253-254), such high-end coats have been popular with fashionistas for years (Cunningham, 2000). A lower-priced reused and re-imagined duvet coat and its cover can have broad appeal as other quilted items filled with eiderdown have graced couture and ready-to-wear markets over time with items such as Charles James’ 1937 white satin evening coat (V&A) and Norma Kamali’s 1973 to now “Sleeping Bag” coat series (MoMA). The density of the repurposed duvet can be selected according to one’s climatic needs making it more personalized as well as adjusting the puffiness. The extended sleeve is meant to be folded over to accommodate different arm lengths, to lessen the sleeve’s opening to trap warm air, and to reduce fabric abrasion at a set hem location to prolong use. The long duvet coat can be worn by itself with or without a belt or, to improve its function, inserted directly into the cover, protecting

it from soilage. The easily washable cover can provide day or evening alternatives, as in the current version of white cotton sateen with high sheen that pays homage to James' evening coat. Washing only the cover and repairing or changing it over time optimizes resources in the long term. The interchangeable cover can provide a canvas for creativity, utilize different fabrics (new or old, like bed sheets), colours, and textile design schemes, and be reversible. It can refresh a person's wardrobe and can be worn without the duvet insert as a spring coat, thus eliminating seasonal attire. The current cover makes the design far more polished and versatile than most puffy coats offered to the public. The RE-DYI design can appeal to the masses, be worn to show the cover's outer or inner layer, tackle old and new, cooler or warmer, shorter or longer-limbed, and bridge economic and seasonal divides.

The inspiration for the garments' cut, construction, and current cover design mixed old and new, yet draws heavily from the medieval period and a time when "an extreme economy of material was practised in the cutting of traditional garments" (Burnham, 1973, p. 3). In Figure 1, we see the pattern pieces on the cover's outer layer where a 13th-century Saljuq-period bowl is featured (Smithsonian). A cross-shaped pattern piece (#6), once folded, creates the T-shaped body of the coat to which are sewn underarm gussets (#2-#3) and side gussets (#13-#16)—a leitmotif from Viking tunics (Priest-Dorman, 1997) to 19th-century chemises (Burnham, 1973, p. 15), and thus a form proven over time to function. The remainder of the fabric is used for trim (#1), pockets (#4-#5), collar (#7), hem panels (#8, #11, #12), and sleeve extensions (#9-#10). In the current cover, the center-front opening can be placed over the bowl's close-up (current outer layer) or over the smaller bowl visual (current inner layer) on this reversible coat. The inner and outer layers are buttoned at the sleeves and, like many duvet covers, along an opening at the hem. The reversible scheme provides users with greater changeability and, with the buttoned closures, may further extend the life of the garment.

The geometric nature of the pattern enables people to cut and straight-stitch all pieces of the repurposed duvet coat and its cover simply, either by hand or machine. The cover uses the selvedge, as was the case in ancient times (Burnham, 1973, p. 3). The selvedge is called upon to create a strong narrow loop at the end of which is sewn a button (see Figure 3: loop over white band). This was devised to insure the reversibility of the cover. It also prevents tearing of the band if buttons were sewn on the fold (single layer of cloth) of the band over which these loops are sewn. Instead of using machine-made buttonholes or requiring advanced hand skills to achieve a polished finish, segments of cloth are left unconnected to create openings for buttons (see Figure 3 top and bottom). Care was given that all assembly seams and buttonholes can be mastered by the DIYer and result in a polished finish that will increase their maker's pride and emotional attachment to the garment, thus extending its use and reducing consumption.



The repurposed duvet coat and its cover are more than separate parts: they work together to extend the life of a store-bought, mass-produced object (duvet) into a versatile, hand-made ensemble. While the design can be mass-marketed, the aim of this design was to provide a successful RE-DIY experience that merges fashion and function, addresses sustainability and economic divides, while providing inspiration and instructions for other DIYers.

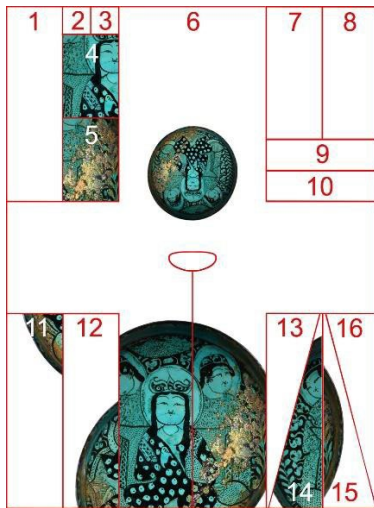


Figure 1



Figure 2



Figure 3

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