

The Elegance in the War

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Keywords: Chinese Qipao, Apparel Design, Culture, Heritage

Contextual Review and Concept: This ensemble aims to revolutionize the traditional Chinese Qipao dress by infusing it with contemporary fashion elements, bridging the gap between historical styles and modern design features. The Qipao, originating in the 1920s, stands as one of the most iconic symbols of traditional Chinese attire (Chew, 2007). This form-fitting, one-piece garment, characterized by a stand collar and typically adorned with buttons on the right side, accentuates the wearer's elegant curves. Previous studies on the Chinese Qipao have focused on its historical significance and evolutionary journey. For instance, Tibberts (2021) delved into the intricate connections between the Qipao and Chinese history and traditions. Han (2019), on the other hand, explored Qipao's associations with body individuality, modernity, personal and national identity, and sociocultural practices. Wang and Zhou (2016) investigated the contemporary Chinese consumers' cognition, attitudes, and purchase behavior regarding traditional Chinese clothing, such as Qipao and Tang suits. However, few studies have explored how current fashion trends can be integrated into modern Qipao designs. This ensemble incorporates innovative designs that retain the traditional elements of the Qipao while reflecting the aesthetic values and demands of the current generation. By incorporating 2023 fashion trends, this redesigned ensemble aims to rejuvenate the modern Qipao, making it relevant and appealing to contemporary sensibilities and target consumers, particularly Generation Z.

Process, Techniques, and Execution: Design ideation, color and material selection, draping, pattern development, prototyping, and binding were all integral parts of the design and development process of "*The Elegance in the War*". Throughout the design process, comprehensive research was conducted on Qipao to understand its silhouette, color, and fabric print. Subsequently, the designer sourced the fabric and hand-sketched the garment's silhouette. Utilizing the traditional drape technique, the designer then draped the bodice and sleeves based on the sketch and chosen fabric. The sleeves, cut on the bias for their free-flowing outline, were designed to move in harmony with the wearer. The draped muslin pieces were then transferred onto paper to create the pattern pieces. Flat pattern drafting methods were applied for the Mandarin collar, with the collar height set to four centimeters. A 45-degree bias-cut satin fabric was used to bind the upper edge of the collar and the curvy edges of the sleeves and collar (Figure 1). Achieving the perfect fit required the creation and refinement of multiple muslin prototypes. With the aid of a transparent corset, the traditional Qipao has been transformed into a contemporary and fashionable piece. Dresses of this nature add interest and create vivid visual effects. Polyester boning was employed within the organza and plaid fabric corset to achieve the desired silhouette.

Aesthetics Properties and Visual Impact: “*The Elegance in the War*” reimagines the classic Chinese Qipao, melding historical design elements with contemporary aesthetics. Asymmetrical kimono sleeves and a modern corset enrich the traditional form. While the dress and corset were designed to be worn in tandem, each piece can also stand alone. This look was inspired by the historical Chinese war film “*The Flowers of War*,” which portrayed a group of prostitutes who nobly sacrificed themselves to protect students during the Second Sino-Japanese War. Maintaining iconic traditional details, such as the Mandarin collar and the panko knot, the dress offers a shorter hemline than the conventional Qipao, providing the wearer greater freedom of movement. The dress features brocade fabrics adorned with traditional Chinese red dragons and vibrant cloud prints (Figure 2). In Chinese culture, the red dragon, a symbol of good fortune and happiness, is frequently associated with luck, passion, and vitality. The auspicious clouds, or Xiangyun, are typical Chinese stylized cloud decorative patterns that embody Chinese aesthetic and cultural values. A transparent corset, one of Fall 2022’s top fashion trends (WWD, 2022), enhances the outfit's modernity. The corset, an embodiment of timelessness, femininity, and power, celebrates women’s beauty. By blending traditional and modern elements, an eye-catching ensemble is created that is likely to appeal to the fashion-forward consumer. This fusion of classic and contemporary aesthetics results in a timeless and versatile piece of fashion.



Figure 2. The pattern of red dragons and Xiangyun.

Design Contribution and Innovation: Cultures worldwide find expression and form identity through fashion. The creation of “*The Elegance in the War*” required a delicate balance between contemporary and classic interpretations of the modern Qipao. This design translates the heritage and identity of Chinese culture into a contemporary and fashionable style, integrating ethnic and modern design elements. Crafted for fashion-conscious women, this versatile piece can be worn at any time for any occasion. It innovatively communicates historical values and encapsulates cultural significance through creative, fashionable expressions. The design carries a rich cultural heritage, reflecting contemporary societal values and aesthetics by incorporating a Qipao dress

with wavy sleeves. The designer has put forth an original interpretation of Qipao fashion, featuring a double slits design and a transparent corset. The importance of traditional Chinese Qipao and iconic traditional details, such as the binding technique and the incorporation of the panko element, is underscored in this piece. At the same time, the designer explores the evolving possibilities of Qipao, reconsidering how the conventional Qipao adapts to the new century by shortening the dress length. This adjustment is designed to meet the needs and expectations of new generations, aligned with fashion trends like the Y2K style.





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