

Everyday Aesthetics: An Inquiry into Wearable Basketry

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The philosophical standpoint of *everyday aesthetics* posits that ordinary objects and mundane activities can be viewed thoughtfully to appreciate the aesthetic experiences that are involved in everyday life (Saito, 2015). Contemporary “scholars have treated everyday aesthetics as something of a catch-all, a default third basket for what is not comfortably categorized as fine art or natural beauty” (Melchionne, 2013, para 1.). The development of everyday aesthetics has been global. One book entitled, *Aesthetics of Everyday Life: East and West* edited by Carter and Yuedi (2014) explored how scholars in both Eastern countries such as Japan and those in Western countries like the US have worked to define and develop this new subdiscipline of aesthetic philosophy. Everyday aesthetics and its global development served as the theoretical foundation for the present design.

Apparel design scholars have long emphasized the importance of aesthetics in the design process (e.g. Lamb & Kallal, 1992; Yang & Baytar, 2024). And yet, to the designer’s knowledge, no apparel design researchers have utilized everyday aesthetics as a lens for the creation of wearable art. Thus, the purpose of the present design was to create wearable art from an everyday aesthetics standpoint using both Japanese and US design cues. A secondary goal was to incorporate woven basketry elements in the design as this area has been a focus for the designer over the last few years (Stannard, 2022; Stannard & Bernardoni, 2024). Baskets, much like other traditional handcrafts, are often overlooked and undervalued by society (Stalp & Winge, 2008) and thus relate heavily to the everyday aesthetics philosophy in which the ordinary and disregarded can be reevaluated for their simplistic beauty and functionality (Saito, 2015).

Aesthetics

The designer began with a simple basket form that related to the inspiration, called a Japanese leaf scoop basket. The Japanese leaf scoop basket described by master basket weaver, Flo Hoppe, was originally used in Japanese society as a food serving basket or flower holder (Schaeffer, 2016). It features a twill weave, an oblique (45-degree angle) weaving direction, and a butterfly knot at the top. Both oblique weaving and twill weaves are commonplace within Japanese basketry (Barnes, 1993).

Next, the designer began to think about everyday aesthetics within the context of US fashion. One of the most frequently worn fabrics in the US is blue denim. Therefore, the designer adopted this fabric. When thinking about mundane garments that are often overlooked and undervalued, the designer settled on the denim overall. The denim overall was then utilized to

inspire the dress's aesthetics including the silhouette of the design. The designer also incorporated shoulder straps with button closures to emulate overalls. Japanese design was brought into the overall dress by creating seams on the bodice and skirt that wrapped across the body similar to traditional Japanese kimono. To create unity between the basket elements and dress, the same 3 by 3 twill weave with a 45-degree angle was adopted to create a large woven denim band on the skirt hem.

Process

The designer began by weaving two smaller leaf scoop baskets for the pockets. The baskets were woven with ½" flat reed that had been wet to make it pliable. The reeds were tied together with elastic thread in the middle and then the ends were interwoven to create the leaf-shaped basket. Each reed was trimmed and clothespinned into place once woven to keep the design together as it was formed. Once all the reeds were woven, the basket was allowed to dry. The ends of the reeds were glued down instead of using a lashed rim, which would have created undesirable extra bulk at the diagonal ends of the basket. With the two smaller baskets complete the designer began to flat pattern denim overalls with US and Japanese aesthetics in mind.

A cotton muslin was sewn to check the fit of the pattern and changes were made to improve the fit, particularly in the bodice. Additionally, the pockets were placed by pinning the baskets onto the muslin to locate the optimal placement and determine how large the pocket opening should be. The pocket baskets did not sit flush on the overall pants and so the designer chose to do an overall dress to provide a flatter space on the skirt for the pocket baskets. Once the second overalls muslin was assembled, the designer determined that a larger scoop basket should be added to create interest on the back of the design and incorporate the overall straps in a new and interesting manner.

Next, the designer began to assemble the final design using upcycled blue jeans for the fabric. Upcycled materials related to everyday aesthetics as these were castoff, unvalued garments that could be reappreciated to create something beautiful. Five pairs of jeans in varying colors were used to create visual interest and highlight the upcycled nature of the piece. The jeans were assembled using an industrial sewing machine and gold top stitching was added to emphasize key seams. The dress was fully lined using printed cotton muslin.

The basket elements were added after sewing the dress. The two smaller scoops were utilized on the front to embellish the pockets of the dress. Instead of using the traditional butterfly knot to secure the reeds together, the scoops were held together and anchored to the skirt using repurposed belt loops. The larger leaf scoop basket was hand-tacked to the back bodice. This basket was created to perfectly nestle along a wearer's back and was held together at the top by the overall straps which were created from jean waistbands.

The design still appeared to be missing an element to fully unit the baskets with the overall dress. The designer determined that adding a large 3 by 3 twill woven hem band made from the remaining scraps of the jeans would create more cohesion in the piece. To create the

band, the designer drew out a 45-degree angle for the woven strips on tissue paper. Then 1” wide denim strips were hand-woven and pinned to the tissue paper. The designer stitched the woven band along the top and bottom and then seamed the hem band to the dress.

Cohesion and Contribution

The present design was developed to incorporate everyday aesthetics principles into a wearable art piece while celebrating aesthetics associated with both Japanese and US design cultures. Furthermore, this design explored new applications for basketry techniques within wearable art. Future designers should continue to reflect on how everyday aesthetics can be applied to create new approaches to wearable art. Basketry should also be further explored for its potential to be worn on the body. It would be valuable to see how technology such as 3D printing could aid in the creation of new wearable basket forms.

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