



Scottish Punk

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Measurements: Sporrان, 8” tall x 6” wide x 2” deep
Kilt, 36” waist and 22” length
T-shirt, 19” width and 20” length

Design Statement

The inspiration for the ensemble was derived from an interaction with a participant in a study on kilt making currently being conducted. Scotland has always had a strong sense of heritage, and kilts and tartan are iconic components of the culture (Loranger, 2014). During the difficult economic times that typified the 1970s and part of the 1980s in the United Kingdom (U.K.), punk was a counter-culture movement born out of disenfranchised youths’ frustrations (Cartlidge, n.d.). In Scotland and beyond, the kilt and punk rock iconography was a semiotic vehicle to convey feelings of discontent. The purpose of the three pieces created in this ensemble, *Scottish Punk*, is an attempt to encapsulate some of the visual imagery and messages of the punk time period.

The first piece, which is a sporran (a small bag tied around the waist of a kilt wearer) entitled *Yes Vote* is composed of Royal Stuart tartan wool Melton, cotton poplin, cotton bias tape, metal studs and cotton denim. The free-form machine embroidery that is on top of a roughly cut piece of black denim is an attempt to mimic the graphic imagery of popular bands’ album covers of the time, such as the *Sex Pistols’ Never Mind the Bullocks*, and the *Yes* symbolizes the recent decision of Yes or No that Scottish citizens had to make to succeed from the U.K. The fabric manipulation technique on the end of the sporran flap is derived from the selvage of the wool Melton, and symbolizes the deconstructionism of the punk movement and the value of distressed looks to the punk aesthetic.

The second piece, which is a kilt entitled *Sheba Punk*, is constructed from 6 yards of black cotton denim, Royal Stuart tartan wool Melton, Keith tartan wool twill, and black cotton poplin, and encapsulates the kilt’s usage in punk rock circles to symbolize individuality, counter-culture, virility, and war-like nature. The designer constructed this kilt as part of their dissertation research, and travelled to Scotland to interview and observe kiltmakers in Edinburgh, Keith, and Inverness. These interviews were used in conjunction with Tewksbury & Stuehmeyer’s (2001) text entitled *The art of kiltmaking* to guide the kiltmaking process. The designer used his experience creating the kilt to contrast with methods observed while in Scotland. A quilting stitch in neon yellow states “No Future 4 (Scotland)” and is used to convey the message that many of the punk scene felt at the time—that there was no future for their generation. The stitching color is typical of the palette of neon colors used at the time that would become the springboard for the New Wave look. The horn kilt pin is symbolic of a return to a savage hunter-gatherer lifestyle that meant “kill or be killed.” The *Up Yer Kilt* and Scottish flag patches are messages of anti-authority and national/cultural identity. Fabric manipulation techniques include pleating and fringing (which is a hallmark of kilt making) and customized waistbands & lining in Royal Stuart and Keith tartans.

The third piece, which is a vintage, up-cycled, t-shirt entitled *Buzzed*, is black cotton jersey. Up-cycling is the re-purposing of materials or garments that have been worn and discarded, McDonough & Braungart (2008). The band name across the front is of English punk group The Buzzcocks, who were a very influential band contemporary to the Sex Pistols and The Ramones. The lettering is in neon pink, which was very common in the palette of the day. The shirt was customized by adding a knitted pocket in blue wool yarn, with metal studs to resemble the Scottish flag. The pocket is affixed to the shirt by stitching with neon yellow cotton floss ½ of the way around, then a safety pin anchors one corner, much like a punker would who only had access to a limited amount of materials. The neckline is slashed and then the distressed selvage of wool cotton Royal Stuart tartan Melton was used to line the neckline, emphasizing the use of limited and left over materials that would have been thrown out by someone else. The body of the shirt was slashed twice, and pins were affixed to the holes; this was very typical of punkers who had gone to shows, slam danced, got their shirt ripped, and had to fix it. A cotton & plastic zipper in neon green with a cheetah print was glued to the shirt—a motif that was very popular in punk circles at the time.

Summary

The process of creating the kilted ensemble informed the designer's research on two levels. (1) The construction of the kilt enabled the researcher to understand differences that occur in various kiltmakers' pleating techniques, and construction elements that all Scottish kilts have in common. (2) The designer was able to utilize the information obtained about Scottish punk culture within their discussion on kilt evolution in their dissertation. This created a much richer narrative for the reader to contextualize how the kilt morphed over time, and continues to evolve.

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