Creative Design Thinking Process: *Fashion is Cyclical Then, Now, and Future*

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Fashion is cyclical in that fashion trends tend to repeat itself. Designers endeavor to find past eras' precedents that are relevant to the sociocultural context of present time and reinterpretate them to create new design messages for future fashion trends. Collection and analysis of certain past era's design elements such as silhouettes, colors, textiles, and details are one of the key parts of research to determine the design themes that, designers think, will inspire their readers and customers (Sorger & Udale, 2012).

In fashion design classes to learn design development process, one of the most challenging steps for students is "Research and Explore Design Precedents". In this step, students are asked to investigate fashion trends during specific time periods and analyze the key design elements of precedents, which will be translated into their own unique styles of design in the later steps of design development (Keiser et al., 2017). Practicing a holistic design process with focus on comparative analysis of design elements and principles of a fashion trend that repeated during two different eras would provide students a unique opportunity to learn how to develop their design based on the analysis of design precedents of certain eras. This project explored a collaborative work of design process as a pedagogical method in which students in Fashion Illustration and History of Costume classes teamed up for a design collection development through a comparative analysis of fashion trends that repeated in two different time periods.

The objectives of this project are: to provide students an opportunity to practice design thinking process, to enhance students' understanding of cyclical nature of fashion, and to expose students to a collaborative work process for creative design development.

The collaborative project was implemented between Fashion Illustration and History of Costume classes (hereinafter the "Design class" and the "History class", respectively) during the spring semester 2019. The Design class composed of 11 design major students and the History class consisted of 34 students, 12 of which were non-fashion majors. Prior to the spring semester, instructors from both classes met several times to discuss project overview and objectives, project format and activities, timelines for students' group discussion and final presentation, custom-made fashion trend analysis chart, grading criteria, and assessment method. The project started with a lecture that both instructors provided in each class discussing the cyclical nature of fashion, design process, analysis of design elements and principles with examples of recurrent fashion trends. Then the instructors composed 11 collaborative teams consisting of one Design class student and three or four History class students. Each team was assigned to develop a design collection based on the comparative analysis of fashion trends repeated in at least two different time periods during twentieth and twenty first centuries. The History class students of each team completed a chart developed by the instructors to analyze the design elements and

principles of a recurrent fashion trend as well as the impacts and influences of socio-cultural, political, and economic circumstances in given eras. Then the team had a meeting to discuss collected data with an image board and the completed analysis chart. Based on the research of History class students, the Design class students determined themes for their design collection and created a mood board to visualize themes. Considering the recurrent fashion trends that they wanted to recreate in their collection, Design class students created a mini-journal to collect and record inspiration, ideas, quotes, images, and rough sketches. Then Design class students developed their collection of seven ensembles, while History class students also completed their own mini-journal reflecting their collected data and analysis of time periods. Finally, each team's students from both classes presented analysis of the recurrent fashion trends, design development process, and final design collection together.

Instructors from both courses evaluated each team's design process and final collection with following criteria: design creativity and unity to design themes, quality of illustration, and participation of class activities. In addition, Design class students were asked to submit a self-reflective journal by answering four open-ended questions as well as a set of peer-evaluations of other students' design collections. The effectiveness of this project as a pedagogical method was qualitatively analyzed by examining the text for similar words and themes in self-reflective journals.

Students recognized that this project provided them a unique opportunity to enhance their understanding of design development process by practicing comparative analysis of recurrent fashion trends in different time periods. A student stated that "a designer must truly understand the concept of fashion being cyclical in order to fully develop a design or collection." Another student addressed "this project really helped me to understand exactly how fashion comes and goes as well as how it is modernized to accommodate the current market and consumer needs."

On the other hand, the Design class students responded that the collaboration with the History class students were less effective than expected for design idea generation due to time limitations for the discussion and differences in understanding of research team's role. A student explained that at the first meeting History class students in her team only presented the information that she already was aware of, while the research team could provide more historical data and detailed research during the follow-up meetings outside of class setting. In order for effective collaborative work with the research team, another student wished "to meet with my group members a little more frequently, as I think it could have kept the brainstorming process going and I would have had different perspectives and inputs to consider along the way."

Students' feedback evidenced that this project provided invaluable opportunity to practice creative design thinking process with focus on Research and Explore Design Precedents parts. A student remarked that "this project really was a good learning experience for me and it was honestly the first time that I had a really good understanding of how the design process works." With further refining of class activities for better collaboration between designer and research teams, design development based on the comparative analysis of fashion trend repeated during different time periods could be an effective pedagogical tool to learn design process.

References

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