

What's Left Over

Kelsie N. Doty, Cornell University

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Contextual Review

Our university's costume collection houses over 10,000 items, one of them is a weirdly crinkly, shiny paper dress. It was manufactured in the late 1960s and the inside label reads "Waste Basket Boutique." From 1966-68, paper garments took the US by storm (Palmer, 1991). They were made to be worn once or twice and then discarded so it was easy to amass a large collection of cheap throwaway dresses. These paper garments are credited as being some of the first examples of ready-to-wear fast fashion items (Palmer, 1991).

What's Left Over complicates the idea of the paper dress and the dizzying cycle of production, consumption, and discard. This project builds on previous creative design work that uses waste materials. Instead of creating a garment *for* the waste basket, I made a garment *from* the waste basket. The concept of reuse is a relatively well investigated topic in the field of Apparel and Textile Design. Upcycling and zero waste designs have explored ways of using second-hand textiles or patternmaking methods to extend the usefulness of unwanted fabrics (Andrus & Suh, 2014; Doty, 2017; Orzada, 2017; Perry, 2017).

Concept

Continuing into this line of inquiry, the purpose of this project was to create a non-woven paper-like textile from my weaving and garment construction remnants. *What's Left Over* is part of a collection that explored my personal history and temporary existence. These concepts were materialized in garments that are similarly biodegradable and ephemeral.

Process and Aesthetics

Over the span of a year, I collected the yarn and fabric waste from my creative design work. I was able to amass linen yarn, onion dyed cotton, avocado dyed silk, and white silk organza scrap pieces. The fabrics and yarns were then cut down with a rotary cutter into one inch square pieces until there was a pound of shredded textiles. To aid in breaking down the fibers, I soaked the textiles and yarns in water for 30 minutes, then boiled in a solution of water and eight ounces of soda ash (see Figure 1). After the fibers cooled, I achieved a neutral pH by rinsing the mixture in a strainer. While the fibers were still damp, they were placed in a



Figure 1. Boiling fibers in soda ash.

Hollander paper beater with water and beat for approximately 1.5 hours (see Figure 2). The slurry was pulled in a mesh frame to create a non-woven composite 1/8" thick and 30"x30" wide and tall. I then sprinkled seeds and petals from a natural dye garden onto the composite while it was still damp to add texture and color. After the fibers had dried, organic shaped pieces were torn away and hand sewn with silk thread onto a silk organza dress. I created the double layer silk organza dress as a base to support the paper pieces and extend the life of the composite material.



Figure 2. Hollander paper beater.

Contribution and Innovation

What's Left Over contributes to work surrounding textile waste and reuse, by collecting and utilizing even the smallest pieces left over from garment creation. This garment explored the use of textile scraps to create a non-woven textile. Future creative research will explore textile composites from various types of fibers and the use of natural dyes as a metamorphic colorant that can change and shift over time.

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