



A Capsule Collection Based on the Juxtaposition of Two Exhibits: Collaborative Teaching Project

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Introduction. The Collaborative Teaching Project, a shared cohort of design courses intending to increase students' classroom focus and success, capitalized on student registration in concurrent partnership classes, (a) an advanced fashion design illustration course and (b) an advanced patternmaking course. Students were engaged in an integrated project with shared outcomes; experiential learning, design evolution and research focus, personal and group reflection, mind mapping and visualization exercises, critique, and networking through outside partnerships.

Student success in this approach began with registration in the two concurrent classes. Students final project benefited from additional classroom and studio time, the diversity of having two teacher perspectives, and as classmates working towards the same project goal in dual classes, students developed more intimate and effective peer review.

Students were assigned a capsule collection project, which evolved from their primary research prior, during, and post museum visits, and their own experience attending and reflecting upon the exhibits in three-dimension. The exhibits included the *Heavenly Bodies: Fashion and the Catholic Imagination*, Metropolitan Museum and The Cloisters, (primary inspiration) and *Fashion Unraveled*, Fashion Institute of Technology (secondary inspiration).

Purpose. The desired outcome of this approach was for the students to reach beyond their typical research that is conducted primarily through the Internet by visiting the museums to gain a unique, personal perspective to incorporate into their designs for their capsule collection. Before the fashion designer goes into creative action, he/she needs an inspiration that will motivate herself/himself. (Cinar, 2017) The students were encouraged to investigate the deeper connection and meanings presented in the exhibits. The *Heavenly Bodies* exhibit had pieces that were reverent homages to the Church; others, brash — some would say blasphemous — provocations. (Laneri, 2008)

Coordinating the project between the two courses strengthened the students' sequential process understanding and the connection between the illustration and digital work to the final garment outcome. Students were successful in visually and digitally communicating innovation concept and theme development into their capsule collection and carried it through to the patternmaking, construction and fabrication of a professionally executed, final garment.

Implementation and Outcomes. The capsule collection development was a cooperative endeavor between the fashion design illustration professor and the advanced patternmaking professor, inspired by the exhibits at the two museums.

- 1). Before the museum visits the students completed preliminary research on the exhibits.
- 2). After the visit to New York City, the fashion design illustration professor began the collection development process by directing the students in their research to establish their inspiration, concept, creating their customer profiles, and linking a color story and fabrication into a cohesive body of work.
- 3). The illustration professor then worked with the students to illustrate six “looks” for an initial critique. During the initial critique with both professors as the critics, students were guided in their choices to edit the illustrations down to the final three “looks”. The students then illustrate the three edited “looks” and create technical flats and line sheets for the final “look” that would be constructed in the advanced flat pattern course.
- 4). The advanced flat pattern professor facilitated the draping, pattern drafting, fittings, and the construction of the toiles and final garments.
- 5). Students were encouraged to experiment with zero waste patternmaking, upcycled post consumer textiles and to design and create woven and printed textiles that embodied the iconography exhibited in *Heavenly Bodies: Fashion and the Catholic Imagination*.
- 6). Fit and proportion corrections were made to the toiles. At this time, color stories and fabrics selections were reviewed and finalized. Students purchased their fabrics and notions. This step provided the students the confidence to move forward with the construction of their final garments. The final garment was produced.
- 7). Three professional designers were invited as critics to the final presentation. Students were eager for feedback throughout the complete collection process. One result of this process was that the students felt as though they had gained a practical insight into the real world of fashion design.

Students worked well under these guidelines. As the fashion industry has evolved, we have updated and expanded expectations. As an example, design work now needs to include technical samples. In conclusion, faculty and students need to be successful in meeting all the project expectations but also as an enjoyable and enriching design and teaching experience. In addition, the students’ ongoing engagement with the faculty design team and the outside critics exposed them to the practice of building collaborative working relationships.

Examples of students’ project themes:

Hanging by a Thread- The use of U.S. Postal service bags were used to represent the ever-moving Jewish population and how the faith is “hanging on by a thread.”

Hale Mary- Zero waste cloaks were featured.

Holy Grail- Inspired by the homeless in New York City. Denim garments were upcycled.

Down to Earth- Focus on the stain glass windows. A print was designed highlighting exhibit artifacts.

Eve- Temptations of Life of making mistakes, but growing from them.

Plan for Continuation. The collaborative teaching project was successful with all the positive reports from the students, faculty, and guest critics. One student's comment on a class survey about the project said, "This project allowed me to express a different side of creativity within myself." The students benefited from the synergy generated by visiting the exhibits, time, resources, and the camaraderie among their peers and with "plenty of help from the fashion faculty." The plan is to continue to create course collaborations by finding and attending exhibits that will provoke the student's imagination and continuing to invite industry partners as critics. The outcome of the project was greater than the sum of the two individual courses.

References

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