



Be True

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The fashion industry is one of the leading causes of pollution in the world. Fast fashion or clothing that is low-cost, plentiful, and readily available to consumers unfortunately, comes at a high cost to the balance of nature (Joy et al., 2012). The Joy et al. (2012) study of thirty participants from Canada and Hong Kong found that there is a huge discrepancy between attitudes toward sustainability and fashion choices when purchasing clothing. Buyers who claim to support a green economy are nonetheless purchasing fast fashion in high quantities. Other studies, such as by Moisander and Personen (2002), have documented similar findings and notes that civic values are not synchronized with fashion purchases; sustainability is not a feature that most consumers consider when procuring clothing.

Joy et al. (2012) concluded that to maintain and advance the sustainability initiative, the fashion industry needs to “embody artisanship and emphasize authenticity.” This would have a positive impact on both environmental and public sustainability concerns (p. 289). “Since luxury brands create desire through innovative design, and influence consumption, they can become leaders in sustainability” (p. 290). Fundamentally, fashion fantasies can alter consumer behaviors. Clark (2008) argues for the idea of “slow fashion,” which reduces fashion hype. This would allow for a refocusing of values in favor of tactile and tangible experiences, which would strengthen the sale of couture garments. Esthetics play a key role in this evolution because they call upon the consumer’s ability to prioritize craftsmanship and quality. Leonardo Da Vinci emphasized this sentiment when he stated, “art is never finished, only abandoned” (Dover Publications, 1970).

My design embraces the idea that eco-fashion can be made more attractive by embracing the uniqueness of the design. One-of-a-kind artisanship can attract consumers who dream of owning a piece of artwork, especially one that is executed from sustainable components. Such an impact piece could redefine eco-fashion. Moreover, the design also has significant personal elements. Fifty percent of this garment contains recycled materials from The House of Bianchi Wedding Gown Company, where my grandmother worked for over 25 years. She rescued many useable, discarded, end of the run/bolt items and gifted them to me. Her determination not to waste goods was embodied in the World War II conservation motto that she loved to say with a laugh: “use it up, wear it out, make it do, or do without!” This garment is a labor of love dedicated to my grandmother and Mother Earth. This garment spans the decades due to its choices of materials, craftsmanship, and historical inspiration.

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This garment's underpinning textiles are comprised of natural fibers. The sheer corset textile was woven from pineapple leaf fibers. Pina cultivation of pineapple leaf fibers is an age-old tradition that has gained renewed interest in the past few years as designers explore sustainable options. These fibers have minimal impact on our eco system, as no chemicals are needed to grow pineapples and they require minimal water. Indeed, this fabric is a by-product textile because it is developed from the waste of the fruit cultivation (Steele, 2019).

Couture techniques are an ideal way to exhibit a one-of-a-kind quality piece of artwork. Each of the mini-flowers throughout the bodice front and back were hand-cut from felted wool and pineapple fiber. They were individually layered, beaded, and sewn on for a recognizable 3D tactile quality. The large flowers representing the exaggerated hip spring of the corset were created by folding and piecing together flat sheer lace appliques. These appliques are from the House of Bianchi which date back to 1985. The corset pattern was drafted and executed with additional room under the hip spring for padding. The padding was created with hem lace from Bianchi and assembled by using a macramé weaving knot, known as the larks head. The pattern was also designed to fit a larger size 14 model. The antique lace on the bust area and hem of the corset was pieced and applied back together from scraps recycled from Bianchi. The corset itself is supported with steel boning within boning channels. These channels were created from old bias binding and embellished on both sides with Bianchi's beaded bias trim. The skirt was designed as an understated separate, to offset the sheer, fanciful corset. It is constructed of 100% wool with beaded bias trim set in the front seams to continue the line from the corset down to the hem. A kick pleat and recycled zipper, also from Bianchi, finishes the skirt. In continuing with the eco-friendly theme, the sheer flowers around the neck were dyed to match the garment with fair trade coffee grounds.

The debate over waste in the fashion industry focuses on the 3Rs: reduce, reuse, and recycle. (Manufacturer of Certified Ethical Sustainable Fashion Clothing, n.d.). This garment addresses all three and in addition was executed to entice the next generation of consumers to see garments as works of art. A luxury item which incorporates age-old couture techniques to create a one-of-a-kind garment is forecasted to be the new sought-after wave of luxury. Designer Tamara Ralph, before her label Ralph & Russo's Spring/Summer 2020 Couture collection was introduced, stated, "we've witnessed emerging markets taking an interest in couture, and younger generations also taking notice. There has been a real resurgence in an appreciation for true craftsmanship, spanning all backgrounds and ages" (Bateman, 2020, para 2). Lebanese designer, Zuhair Murad concurs, "the focus of couture has moved to its exclusivity, to the fact that it is not easily replicable, because of how delicately

and intricately hand-crafted it is...the uniqueness” (Bateman, 2020, para.7). My design inspires viewers to reflect on their own wardrobes and aspire to owning high quality, one-of-a-kind sustainable luxury.



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