

No Borders

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Keywords: Immigration, 1950s, color-blocking, flat patternmaking

Purpose and context. No Borders was inspired by an exhibition in Cornell University’s Herbert F. Johnson Museum of Art called “How the Light Gets In” as well as 1950s style jackets. “How the Light Gets In” was a very moving exhibit about immigration, and the (often hidden) struggle that immigrants face when traveling and acclimating to their new land. Throughout the exhibit, water was a fundamental symbol that represented the journey to one’s new land and the source of survival upon arrival. Many immigrants take huge risks when traveling, and others, such as in times of slavery, faced death when being carried by boat. The ocean, despite all its magnificence, represents the vast struggle, loss, and displacement surrounding immigration. Alongside the pain, however, comes hope: people take such great risks because they have hope for a better future. The exhibit also featured many depictions of boats. Boats are obviously the way one transports across the ocean, and for this reason, are very symbolic of all the themes surrounding water. The work that inspired my coat was an installation by Lucy and Jorge Orta. It featured a color blocked canoe and oars, photographs, and the belongings of refugees. It was intended to portray a “world without borders,” where humans should be able to go freely wherever they wish, and no land has an inferior status. The installation was very colorful and beautiful, and made to represent hope. The coat, in the spirit of the installation by the Ortas, represents a utopian ideal of a world where we are not limited by our own borders.

Aesthetic properties and visual impact. I designed this coat by following the same design lines as the canoe in Lucy and Jorge Orta’s installation, maintaining the structured yet smooth feel of the boat. I also stayed true to the color palette, for color was very important in setting the mood of the piece. For the silhouette, I took influence from 1950s fashion, and exaggerated and modernized that style. The color blocking forms strong sections of color, and the eye follows the lines of color across the body. While the name, No Borders, may seem contradictory to a color-blocked piece, it is actually quite intentional. Despite the separation of the colors, each color flows together in a way that relies on all the other colors for completion, and together, they form a more impactful whole. By welcoming immigration, we allow for diversity that leads to a more exciting, informed, and creative population as a whole.

Process, technique, and execution. To create this coat, I used flat patternmaking techniques. I measured my fit model, and translated her measurements into dimensions on the coat. Along with my shell patterns, I created lining patterns. Then, I cut all the fabric by hand, and sewed the majority of it on the sewing machine. I chose wool coating fabric for the shell, and silk charmeuse for the lining. To finish the hem and sleeve cuffs and secure the front plackets, I used the catch stitch hand sewing method. It was

quite a long, yet rewarding, process that involved very tedious matching of pattern pieces to execute correctly.

Cohesion. The symmetry of the two halves of the coat create a strong sense of cohesion. Also, the lines lead the eye upward, bringing attention up to the wearer's face. The colors used in the upper section are balanced by pops of color at the hem, sleeve cuffs, and belt, so that the weight looks well distributed around the body. While emphasis is created by the design lines, there is a sense of proportionality and unity throughout. In sum, there is a sense of harmony among all the elements of the garment, and an overall sense of completeness.

Design originality and innovation. This coat is intended for someone who truly wants to make a statement. It is quite loud, but sleek enough that it does not appear overdone. It is unlike many other coats in the market, therefore, it adds something new to the fashion world. Given the utilization of the elements and principles of design, it is also a very timeless piece. It draws upon old-fashioned styles while appearing very modern, giving it the feel that it could belong in many different periods of time. Its durability, timelessness, and agelessness make it an investment piece that would serve well to have within the fashion market.

