



Ellis Raincoat

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Mentor Statement. For this senior-level course, the student was tasked with creating a collection of clothing for a defined target market and evaluate production constraints. The student had to demonstrate understanding and ability in both the conceptual and technical aspects of apparel design by developing the concept, selecting materials, creating patterns, fitting models, and producing the garments. The apparel design program committee and industry mentors juried the student's work at three points in the semester to encourage the development of the collection in terms of concept, aesthetics, and to improve technical merit. This garment represents impeccable craftsmanship blended with a personal cultural connection and function.

Statement of Purpose. The *Ellis Raincoat* was created as part of my final senior collection entitled *Rainflower*. Designed for spring, *Rainflower* draws inspiration from the styles of ancient China: loose fits, layering, and pleats, with decorative as well as functional ties, reminiscent of the past. The collection was designed with the intention of layering as a key component, so pieces could be added or removed for versatility as the weather changes. In creating the collection, a theme of nostalgia and never growing up was a key influence, with a storybook aesthetic being the style.

Being born in the U.S. from Chinese parents, growing up was a mixture of American life at school and Chinese culture at home. I let my upbringing inspire the research and design of my collection, through historically Chinese garment elements made to be wearable today. My goal was to focus on unique everyday wear with both functionality and aesthetic appeal along with the ability to mix and match within the line itself. Adding a raincoat as the final look completed the collection as a piece which could be worn with any other piece and also tied in the pale green and bright melon present in small amounts throughout the collection.

Aesthetics & Visual Impact. Whimsical, playful, soft and sweetly detailed are the words that best describe the *Rainflower* collection as a whole. The raincoat itself also embodies each of these things through its pleating, extra wide sleeves, oversized hood, pop of color in the silky lining and bow detailing at the neckline. It was paired with a simple ruffle hem midi shift dress with a muted floral print to really make the raincoat stand out. Because my target audience expresses individuality through playful styles that break away from current trends, I chose to find inspiration through history—specifically the Tang Dynasty of ancient China.

The general silhouette follows the oversized trends of the Tang Dynasty, including the placement of breaks in the garment—however, this raincoat is a single piece while historical garments consisted of a short sleeved “vest” on top of a long-sleeved garment, often with various skirts attached. It has pockets which are perfectly hidden among the pleats at the side seam, so as to be

functional without distracting from the overall look. A simple snap closure storm flap keeps water out of the zipper underneath, while also providing a clean finish to the center front that blends in with the pleating.

Visually, the pleating around the hood, sleeve hems and body of the raincoat draw attention throughout the garment and back to the face as the focal point, where two half-bows sit on either side of the center front storm flap. As the wearer moves, the body pleats open and close with an accordion effect that adds a unique and interesting movement to the visual that coordinates with the soft rustle of the water-repellent fabric.

Use of a solid color as the shell highlights each of the individual pleats and the other layering details at the shoulders, bodice and hood. Although the collection as a whole exudes the calm mood of gentle spring rain, I brought playfulness into the look with the pop of bright melon colored lining like a freshly bloomed flower in a field of green. With the hood up, this halo of color also helps to draw attention to the wearer's face.

Process, Technique & Execution. The *Ellis Raincoat* was entirely drafted within Optitex, with several 3D modelings before printing for a test garment and first fitting. Edits were made to the Optitex pattern and then everything was re-printed for cutting the final fabrics. The fabrics chosen were a water-repellent nylon Supplex® for the shell and a lightweight acetate lining.

Once hand-pleating was completed, the shell was constructed with rip-stop seam tape applied to further improve the raincoat function. This particular tape by R.E.I. is made for repairing clothing and tents for the outdoor customer but also worked well as a seam tape that did not need ironing. After the shell was finished, the hood, lining and zipper were sewn in, with the storm flap snaps being the last step of the process. Each snap was also covered with Supplex® so it would blend in for a non-distracting front panel.

Cohesion. Overall, the *Ellis Raincoat* draws its cohesion from repetition of elements (pleating), while guiding the eye to the focal point at the neckline/face. It fits into the *Rainflower* collection with the help of its color scheme and the dress worn underneath, whose floral pattern and black background echoes the floral patterns mixed and matched throughout the other garments in the line. As a look on its own, the raincoat can complement any existing rainy-day outfit as a versatile piece for the wardrobe.

Design Contribution & Innovation. The *Ellis Raincoat* really highlights the goal of my collection: to create a something that is aesthetically unique, inspired by ancient Chinese dress and also functional. Quality raincoats currently on the market are mainly function over fashion, using the same basic silhouettes with zippered pockets, Velcro storm flaps or waterproof zippers. On the other hand, fashionable raincoats usually sacrifice some of the function for aesthetics such as less coverage, impermeable/non-breathable fabrics, or seams that are not taped to prevent water leakage into the garment. Combining the technical fabrics with a whimsical garment design and utilizing techniques such as a storm flap and seam taping help to make this raincoat a good combination of function and aesthetics that is just right for everyday wear.

