



Denim Lace

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In my current graduate design research, I am exploring the intersections of digital technologies with artisanal, craft, or bespoke methods of making. The incorporation of digital technologies allows me to push beyond the boundaries of what my hands alone can do. I approach these modern machines directed with computer programs as new tools- just as one would utilize a scissors or sewing machine- as they enable me to transform materials in innovative ways. By using both traditional and innovative processes I can develop processes and methods specific to my work. As Andrew Bolton discussed in the Manus X Machina exhibition statement, the intersection of technology and hand-work allows me to embrace that the hand and machine operate on a “spectrum or continuum of practice.” (Bolton, 2001, p. 12) My work here is the result of exploring what can be accomplished by combining what are often seen as disparate methods of making.

For this look, I focused first on experimenting with the laser cutter and the widely used textile denim. Transforming this sturdy, hardworking material into something delicate and elegant was the conceptual thought behind this piece. The denim was first machine-quilted with a cotton lawn to provide some stabilization, while I used my patternmaking skills and hand-draping knowledge to develop the circle flounce pattern shapes to create a soft flutter effect. The pattern pieces and lace cut outs were then digitized in Adobe Illustrator to direct the laser cutter, where the pattern pieces and lace detail were cut at once. In this way, the laser cutter enabled the denim to be transformed in way I could not do with my own hands and limited graduate student timeframe, while my hands-on understanding of cut and shape made the silhouette possible. After cutting, the flounces were used to form the sleeves of the paneled body of the jacket. The panels on the body of the jacket appear uniform, but are patterned to gently shape to the body. The result is a strong, protective jacket that retains an immensely soft, flattering aesthetic. Complementing the jacket is a lightly structured sleeveless shirtdress in a crinkle woven. Here, digital technology was not useful, as traditional patternmaking was best employed to strategically cut the fabric into loose skirt panels controlled by an attached half-belt. The dress is inspired by the act of folding oneself up in a blanket, and is layered between the outer jacket’s protection and the body.

Here I have embraced my fashion design patternmaking and draping skills and my understanding of textiles alongside digital fabrication to execute the look. Furthermore, the old and new intermingle fluidly in my thought process, with all methods of making used not for the appeal of prevailing popular

opinion but for their efficiency and appropriateness. Technology is often seen as innovative, but is not universally more efficient, cleaner, or better; conversely, traditional, hand-worked methods are not always natural and better (Fletcher, 2014). Instead of following what can be marketed for its trendiness, my approach is to find the possibilities that can be uncovered when we “liberate the handmade and the machine made from their usual confines of the haute couture and Pret-a-porter and release them into the hands of fashion designers for whom they serve as expressions of creative impulses rather than the exigencies of the fashion system.” (Bolton, 2014. p. 12)

#### References

- Bolton, A. (2001). *Manus-Machina: Fashion in an Age of Technology*. London: Yale University Press.
- Fletcher, Kate. (2014) *Sustainable Fashion and Textiles: Design Journeys*. London: Earthscan.

