



SPARKLING REFRESHMENT

Susan T. Avila, UC Davis

wearable art, recycled, surface design, sustainability

The design challenges for this garment include: the repurposing of waste; use of non-traditional materials for fashion design; engineering the surface design and garment structure simultaneously; creating something functional/wearable; and utilizing historical inspiration for the garment silhouette.

There are several artists and costume designers who repurpose trash to create fashion statements about the environment and/or consumer culture. In the early 1990s, Estelle Akamine was creating woven textiles from recycled materials; this interest led her to a Recology artist residency at the San Francisco dump (Recology). Akamine's work resonated with me because at that time I had also begun the practice of recycling and repurposing materials to create new textile structures. More recent examples include Nancy Judd, the creator of Recycle Runway who creates "eco-events" combining "art, fashion and eco-consciousness" (Judd, n.d.) and the Trashion Fashion events in Sonoma County, California (alas they have recently taken a hiatus from putting on larger events) (Shubin, 2017). Many exhibitions of wearable art now include a special "sustainability" section that encourages this type of material repurposing, including the largest of these, World of Wearable Art in New Zealand.

An addiction to La Croix sparkling water with their colorful graphic cans, led me to experiment with the aluminum can material. Two artists who have previously used aluminum cans are Ingrid Goldbloom Bloch, in her Red Hot Trashy Lingerie collection (Bloch, n.d.) and Nikos Floros in his sculptural Maria Callas opera gowns (Floros, n.d.). Both of these artists cut the cans into strips to create new fabrics—Floros weaves the strips together while Bloch weaves hers in and out of hardware cloth. The resulting stiff forms of their garments however are identified as sculptures and are not intended as actual wearable objects. Nancy Judd, mentioned earlier, has cut cans into circles and teardrops which were applied to wearable garment forms as embellishments. In contrast to these two approaches—sculptural object vs embellishment—my use of aluminum cans is to create a new fabric structure that is stitched together while incorporating the graphic designs on the surface of these cans as a surface embellishment on the garment—developing both the structure and the surface at the same time.

This methodology is most closely reminiscent of Paco Rabanne, who experimented with many non-traditional materials outside of classic couture structures in the 1960s. He is best known for his metal garments that resemble chain mail and are created through linking metal plates together (Kamitsis, 2010). Rabanne's work is cited in Diane Crane's essay connecting art and fashion within a theoretical cultural studies framework especially because of the use of unconventional materials (Crane, 2012).

Rabanne's garments generally maintained simple silhouettes which lent themselves to his unique construction methods and avoided traditional seams. Likewise my garment is formed into a basic T-shape tunic without traditional seams. The large sleeved tunic is historically referred to as a dalmatic and was popular during the Byzantine era. The colorful patterns created by the graphic can elements reminded me of Byzantine mosaics and as well as the highly decorated Byzantine clothing. I added some

bold colored squares into the overall pattern as a nod to the decorative *segmentae* familiar on Byzantine costume.

In addition to these color blocked areas, the aesthetic properties include abstract designs created from dissecting the original graphics on the can labels to create a surface design with dynamic markings. The overall garment is highly light reflective for a strong visual impact but is also semi-transparent because of the net construction that allows light to pass through the garment revealing the body.

The aluminum and net fabric was created by sewing hand punched circles onto a water soluble polyvinyl substrate (PVA, commercially known as Solvy) using an industrial lockstitch machine and number 16 needle in rows of parallel lines. Perpendicular lines were then sewn to create a grid structure that could hold its own as a fabric once the PVA was dissolved in water. The garment was engineered to avoid any seams. The needle punctures created a slightly scratchy surface on the inside of the garment so soft knit cut waste from the garment industry was laser cut into circles and glued to the back of each circle that maintains direct contact with the front and back of the body to add comfort during wearing as well as donning and doffing. Waste materials from the punched circles were then manipulated to form abstract flower forms; these were used to cover a headdress made from a repurposed drop cloth. A red can was cut and formed into a remembrance poppy as an additional embellishment for the headdress.

Both the surface and the structure of this garment were developed simultaneously allowing for greater cohesion of visual design and engineering. The outfit is an example of no waste design.

An innovation here is in examining the potential for the development of new fabric structures using small modules attached through a stitching process. Other garments that repurpose aluminum cans incorporate typical textile construction methods such as weaving or simply applying the material to another surface as an embellishment. This garment contributes to the existing knowledge that places importance in thinking about new ways of repurposing waste as well as developing no waste garments.

Reference list

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