



Acceptance, Invisible Threads

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Mentor Statement

The purpose of the mentorship was to guide the student through the successful completion of an innovative capstone project. The scope of the mentorship included ideation, pattern making, prototype construction, fit alterations, material selection, final garment creation, and project dissemination to the public. The goal of the mentorship was successfully met by communicating with the mentee throughout the design, development, and marketing processes. This outfit was selected for submission because it clearly depicted the chosen project theme of the acceptance stage of the grieving process model. The use of light-emitting diode (LED) materials conveyed the dynamic and unpredictable progression of the acceptance state.

Design Statement

Statement of Purpose

This outfit was part of a five-look collection called “Invisible Thread”. This title represented the memories and emotions that connected us to loved ones who passed away. The collection theme came from my personal experience of losing my twelve-year-old sister a few years ago. It was based on the five stages of the grief model (Kübler-Ross, 1969). The model stated that individuals coping with bereavement went through the stages of denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance. The outfit, Acceptance, was the last look of the collection.

The purpose of this collection was to honor my sister’s memory and connected with viewers who had also lost a loved one. This collection was created using various art and craft techniques that both my sister and I enjoyed together. The collection featured a lot of symbolism and references personal to her and my family. This project reflected my pursuit of education in creative garment design and development. Since my sister’s passing was the reason, I decided to go back to school and finish my education, “Invisible Thread” was a meaningful way to honor her memory.

Aesthetic Properties and Visual Impact

The design vision for this dress was to convey my experience of the “Acceptance” state of loss, inspired by my sister’s last football jersey. My sister loved playing football, her team, and her jersey. I personally enjoyed designing eveningwear and wanted the final look of the collection to represent the last outfit she was proud to wear. I used something that she loved and interpreted it in a way that added a piece of myself, as well. In Kübler-Ross’s model (1969), acceptance was the last stage of the grieving process, in which individuals embraced the

mortality of a loved one. This stage was described as nearly void of feelings (1969) and emotionally stable.

However, in reality, the last stage of grief did not magically finish as the model claimed. Grieving was not a sequential process, but one that was repetitive and went through the different stages all over again. I wanted this final dress to light up as a symbolization of the presentations of grief that popped up even after enduring the stages. The dress' LED materials represented the continuous changing of emotional and cognitive states after loss. Different colors of LED fabrics and strips represented the different states of grief. The bodice of the dress lit up with LED fabric and the skirt structure lit up using LED light strips. The first denial state was represented by yellow, anger by red, bargaining by purple, depression by blue, and acceptance by green; the colors of the LED lights alternated. Finally, the off-white color represented an individual before a devastating event and the champagne color represented the same individual engulfed in grief.

The initial idea for the skirt structure was a circular shape based on the globe, which represented an individual's world. This shape was transformed into a divided and pointed look, as the perceived world was no longer a perfect sphere after losing a loved one. The three-dimensional panels of the skirt were filled with polyester batting, representing clouds from the idea of a loved one in heaven looking down upon us. Finally, the number two of my sister's football jersey was featured at the neck of the garment. The league that she played for retired her number after she passed away. Whenever my family saw that number two, we were reminded of my sister. The number was painted, and Swarovski crystals were glued to the grooves of the number two charm. The design process took a considerable amount of time to plan and prototype. Each element of the design was thought and worked through with my professor for maximum impact.

Process, Technique, and Execution

The entire creation process of this garment was done deliberately to ensure the vision of the design was communicated. A battery pack was attached to each piece of the bodice panels. The pattern pieces had to be cut in a specific way for the lights to travel through the polyester tubes. If the tubes were accidentally cut, the light did not travel up to that part of the bodice panels. The panel edges with the battery packs had to be at the bottom of the pattern pieces. Due to this technical design, I had to be creative with which pattern pieces are close to each other and how I cut them. The bodice had three layers: a satin lining, an LED layer, and the outer organza layer.

The skirt was constructed with wires so that each bodice panel held its place. I drafted three pattern pieces that needed to fit together. I then sewed forty-five French seams and used them as channels for the wires. To maintain the skirt structure, the outer shell of the skirt was attached to a lining skirt and a boning hoop on the bottom. The entire process was exciting, emotional, and challenging. This collection was designed to show and capture emotion in a time of loss. The designs showed various emotions at different stages of one's grief, with embedded pieces of my story and memory of my sister's life and work.

References

Kübler-Ross, E. (1969). *“On Death and Dying”*. New York: Macmillan.

