

Beauty and Legacy of War

Youngjoo Lee, Georgia Southern University, USA

Keywords: Slashing, Renaissance, war, fashion trend

One of the interesting and significant design features evident in costume history in Northern Europe is slashing along with various ornamentations on the garment. In this creative design research, the origin of slashing as a design detail that trended during the Renaissance period was investigated and interpreted to explore this creative design process. The term *slashing* is defined as “slits of varying length cut in a garment and arranged in a pattern” (Ashelford, 1983, p.144). Many portraits painted during this period in Northern Europe depict men wearing their garments slashed, with stuffed fabric pulled out through this slashing. These decorative slashes on the garment presumably originated from returning the Swiss army’s clothing that had been ripped and slashed on the battlefield, and the garment was simply stuffed with fabric underneath to prevent cold weather (Tortora & Marcketti, 2015). Within this historical background of war, it is interesting to investigate how society accepted this feature as a new design element and adopted it as well as how it spread to the majority of people of that era. As a scholar in the apparel and textile field, I have always found it challenging and exciting when an inspirational source leads me to explore it further, generating understanding that enable me to create an interpretation for executing the creative design.

The main characteristic of this design creation that I intended to deliver was a contemporary look that also conveys a strong concept of the bitter legacy of the era because, during the Renaissance, slashing was in fashion as an unintentional development after returning from the battlefield. I used an abundant slash decoration, along with a silver crinkle surface texture, glittering silver powdered surface, and silver and black transparent surface to express the spirit of the Renaissance fashion, which was considered an impressive display of luxury. Furthermore, a great amount of slashing over the jacket’s bodice was created in a traditional way, but the horizontal slashes with ribbon interlacing over the sleeves and skirts was intended to convey a contemporary look. The idea that war wounds were transformed into a fashion trend during the Renaissance was a key point delivered in this interpretation through this creation activity.

The flat pattern drafting technique and draping technique were both applied for this design, and a great amount of time and labor was invested in the execution. Armstrong’s (2010) formula was used to create a basic pattern set that was then manipulated to develop the jacket and skirt pattern as follows: front bodice, front side bodice, back bodice, side back bodice, two pieces of the sleeve, skirt front, and skirt back along with facing and lining patterns. After assembling the bodice (except the shoulder seam), the bodice front part was slashed at regular intervals and the underlying layer of organza was pulled through the slash (see Figures 1–3). The sleeves’ fabric was horizontally slashed at regular intervals, and the black and silver ribbon was interlaced through the slashing in a vertical direction (see Figure 4). To create ruff-like shape around the

neckline, which is another fashion style of the age, ribbons were cut, folded, aligned, and stitched (see Figure 5). After repeating this step six more times, each row of ribbon was delicately aligned and stitched together so that seven total rows were gradually stacked. This collar was then attached to the jacket neckline. Similarly, the sleeve opening and hemlines were decorated with a folding ribbon border. The skirt was embellished with ribbon interlacing through slashes using the same method as with the jacket and ribbon border at the hemline. The over-layer skirt, consisting of six panels, was created using a draping technique. This part was designed to be detachable so that this apparel can be worn as both evening wear and day wear as well.



Figure 1.
Organza fabric is pulled through the slashes.



Figure 2.
Wrong side of Figure 1.



Figure 3.
Process of pulling fabric through the slashes.



Figure 4.
Sleeve was slashed and interlaced with ribbon.



Figure 5. By aligning the folded ribbon, the ruff look was created.

In presenting this design process for the “Beauty and Legacy of War” concept inspired by the Renaissance slashing decoration along with the meaning of the clothes of the age, the logical result of this study may influence other academia hoping to contribute to this apparel and textile discipline. Transforming a historic reference into a contemporary design feature by focusing on slashing was a valuable experiment as a designer because I could explore the story behind the origin of the slashing decoration. However, viewers may have different perspectives of the same inspirational historical source, providing additional directions for future discussions of this creative research result.

References

- Armstrong, H. J. (2010). *Patternmaking for fashion design* (5th ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- Ashelford, J. (1983). *A visual history of costume: The sixteenth century*. London: B T Batsford Ltd.
- Tortora, P.G., & Marcketti, S. B. (2015). *Survey of historic costume* (6th ed.). New York: Bloomsbury Publishing Inc.



Image A- Front



Image B- Back
Over skirt is detached.



Image C- Side



Image D- Detail