



Critiquing Design Aesthetics in Collaborative Fashion Creation: Design Conversations with a Fashion Designer, an Architect, and Art Director

Kendra Lapolla, Kent State University, Kent, OH, USA

Jaelyn Gordyan, Associate Creative Director, Leo Burnett, Chicago, IL, USA

Brian Lapolla, Registered Architect & AIA, Bostwick Design Partnership, Cleveland, OH, USA

Keywords: Critique, aesthetics, collaboration, interdisciplinary

Justification:

Conversation is an essential component in the design process. Design as a noun refers to the tangible object created, but design as a verb reflects a series of communications, problem solving and decisions made throughout the process. The interactions between designers help to define the broader view of professional design activity, and through these conversations designers are able to leave evidence of the activities that take place in the design industry (Oak, 2000). Design language is apparent throughout the entire design process in research, inquiry, group problem-solving, decision-making, and evaluation, yet it is easily overlooked and undervalued (Flemming, 1998). This design study helps to fill this gap by building on the research of conversations within design critique and evaluation. The specific aim of this study focuses on the commonalities and differences amongst written design evaluation of fashion design ideas by an interdisciplinary group comprised of a fashion designer, architect and creative director with a background in graphic design.

Project Design:

Inspiration for the design in this project came from a photograph taken by the fashion designer of the Disney Concert Hall in Los Angeles by the architect, Frank Gehry. After examining the photograph, the fashion designer, architect and creative director each separately came up with words they felt connected with the image. This was the starting point of the design process. Collectively the group researched and explored design ideas based loosely on their professions. The fashion designer sketched, the architect created paper model studies and the creative director with a graphic design background came up with initial print design ideas. These ideas were grouped with the words and sent through email to all members participating. A discussion was held to communicate the most interesting ideas that could be translated into a three dimensional garment based on the aesthetics of the original photograph.

Based on the ideas from the research and exploration, the fashion designer started creating flat illustrations of garment ideas. The fashion designer finalized the front and back flat illustrations for the group to evaluate. There were four main design concepts with four different design variations for a total of the sixteen design ideas. The design ideas were sent via email to each group member. Based on the initial photograph and design exploration in the beginning of the design process, each group member was to write a short critique of each design idea. These written critiques were meant to address overall aesthetics and reflection of the original photograph. Within each set of four, each group member rated the designs from most successful

to least successful. After finishing the written critique, the members of the group were asked to select the best four out of the total sixteen design ideas. The written critiques and ratings were sent through email to each member of the group to analyze the commonalities and differences in the design feedback.

The most highly rated garment was selected by the group to be made in final fabric. Based on the design of the flat illustration, four digital print ideas were created by manipulating the original photograph of Frank Gehry's Disney Concert Hall. These four digital print ideas were sent via email to all members of the group to critique and decide on a finalized print. Again, the members of the group analyzed the commonalities and differences in the design feedback. The fabric was digitally printed and the fashion designer constructed the garment in silk charmeuse. The final design reflected the aesthetics of the inspirational image of Frank Gehry's Disney Concert Hall through a combination of a dynamic digital print on silk and a silhouette that plays with positive and negative space on the body.

Outcomes:

Although each designer came from a different field, the overall perceptions of design aesthetics were similar. The evaluation of designs by all members of the group illustrated similar opinions of the most and least successful design ideas. Although communication with some of the least successful designs might have differed, in most cases the group members were still agreeing on a similar issue. Differences among the designers' critiques were evident in the designs that were in between the most and least successful. These differences were due to more subjective opinions and personal preferences while being less tied to direct aesthetics. The different styles of communication in the written critiques included emotional, observational and technical responses to the design work. These approaches of critique are parallel with Oak's (2000) analysis of critique talk as personal, conventional and vocational. This presentation would include visual imagery of the design process, written feedback from the critique in the design conversations and images of the final constructed garment. A further continuation of this project could include evaluation of additional 3-D draping of design ideas and would be a valuable addition to the design process. Other research could build on the research project by addressing aesthetics in the design process with evaluations from non-designers to see if those without a design background have a similar perception of aesthetics.

Fleming, D. (1998). Design talk: Constructing the object in studio conversations. *Design Issues*, (14)2, 41-62.

Oak, A. (2000). It's a nice idea, but it's not actually real: Assessing the objects and activities of design. *Journal of Art & Design Education*, 19(1), 86-95.