



Contemporary Utilitarianism

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Measurements: T-Shirt - Chest 38", Waist 40", Length 31", Shoulder Width 19", Overalls - Chest 13", Waist 38", Outseam 37 ½", Inseam: 18"

Mentor Statement

I mentored this design student during this past 2016 spring semester in my Apparel Line Development class. This is a capstone course for our Fashion Design and Development major students. The purpose of this course is for students to develop a cohesive apparel line. The students go through the design and development process starting from conceptualization to final product, creating a minimum of 3 looks. The design student and I met twice a week both in and outside regular class hours. I am sponsoring this student's design work due to the attention of detail given, innovative design concept, and quality construction exhibited. The student showed dedication to the design process and explored several techniques and ran sample tests before finalizing the design details. The student considered every finish, stitching detail, and fabrication as it related to their design concept and consumer market. This student focused on the quality of their design work and executed a marketable line for a contemporary consumer market. The student has a passion for design and has developed a unique menswear design aesthetic.

Design Statement

Overalls have primarily been known for their workwear purpose; however in recent years fashion designers have found an aesthetic use for the classic utilitarian garment. This look was meant to update and contemporize the appearance of overalls. To contemporize this utilitarian garment, different fabrications were used and the fit was exaggerated. Inspiration for the overalls was drawn from Yohji Yamamoto's early menswear work in the 1980sⁱ and Junya Watanabe's many different takes on the utilitarian garment throughout his time with Comme Des Garçons. His versions of overalls that were most influential were his militaristic take on strapped overalls for his Spring 2003 collectionⁱⁱ, as well as his Spring Summer 2012 collectionⁱⁱⁱ in which he turned classic workwear into high fashion by adding color, stylizing overalls and contemporizing the fit.

Through updating and stylizing the design based on historical and modern trends, the overalls have become a post-modernized garment with various functional and aesthetic qualities which are hard to achieve with traditional trousers. Exaggerating the fit and styling of the garment gives it an urban look, but the utilitarian purpose is retained since the basic functions aren't altered. The straps and chest piece which are used as closures when worn up, can also be worn down, hanging in the front and back of the pants, while still retaining the 5 pocket functionality. The exaggerated drop crotch provides a unique contemporary twist on the traditional fit of trousers. Cuffing the ankle of the pants with elastic helped to contemporize the garment and allowed for a sleek and modern fit. The overall's silhouette creates an androgynous effect, in which both men and women could wear.

The design process began with creating the patterns from basic slopers. Flat pattern making techniques were used to manipulate the basic slopers based on fit model measurements, which allowed for the desired fit to be achieved. A muslin test garment was made to check the fit and accuracy of execution in drafting the overalls. After making the necessary changes in order for the overalls to function properly, construction on the final garment began. The rough, unrefined look of the linen gave the overalls a very rugged look; therefore, to compensate, finishing details such as topstitching pockets and welt stitching on seams were necessary. They were used to give the garment a finished look, while retaining the unconventional and unrefined qualities of the fit of the overalls. The blended linen fabric

used for the overalls allowed the drop crotch silhouette to create supple folds, which effected the drape and hang of the garment. This gave the overalls a softer effect than traditional denim overalls.

By keeping the garment details simplistic, a contemporary minimalistic look is achieved. The jersey knit t-shirt was designed to be elongated and slightly oversized to accompany the overalls without taking away attention. The final design involved drafting the shirt with a slightly raised mock collar, flared side seams to create the oversized effect, and by only elongating bodice slightly. The shirt was constructed by serging the pieces together with clear elastic within the sleeve caps and collar. The seams were finished off with welt stitches, and the sleeve and shirt hem were double top stitched.

To create cohesion throughout this look, it was important that the dimensions remained exaggerated on each piece. Due to the oversized, baggy nature of the overalls, it was critical that the t-shirt incorporated the same characteristics. To retain the oversized look, the pockets, straps, and other details on the overalls were also made larger. Keeping consistent widths and locations of topstitching also affected the cohesiveness of the garment. Traditional overall antique brass screw in button closures were used, which complement the traditional overall appearance. A metal zipper was used for the fly closure.

The standard utilitarian design of overalls has remained relatively unchanged in its history; however, in a contemporary sense, the design & purpose of overalls have been updated and manipulated countless times by fashion designers. By focusing on aesthetics rather than utilitarian function, a postmodern silhouette is created which embodies what modern fashion design is able to do when contemporizing historic fashion staples. This particular take on overalls is unique, and embodies an aesthetic that contemporizes historic motifs into a postmodernist look on androgynous fashions. By combining past trends with the trends of tomorrow create an innovative look into what potential future fashion styles might look like.

References

ⁱ Yohji Yamamoto 1987 Spring Summer Menswear, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vOo1K5ueFos>

ⁱⁱ Junya Watanabe Spring 2003 Ready to Wear, <http://www.vogue.com/fashion-shows/spring-2003-ready-to-wear/junya-watanabe/slideshow/collection#27>

ⁱⁱⁱ Junya Watanabe Man Spring Summer 2012 <http://www.vogue.co.uk/fashion/spring-summer-2012/mens/junya-watanabe-man>

