

Mine forever: Promoting long-term attachment to apparel through transformational design.

Keywords: Sustainability, Ready-to-wear, Textile innovation

Measurements: Bust: 35” Waist 30” Hips 38” Length from shoulder to hem 42”

Design Statement:

Contextual review and concept:

Overall, the intent of this piece was to push the designer’s boundaries in terms of *Leadership Creativity*, or the ability to produce a garment that is directional, meaning that it is intended to be produced in small quantities but contains characteristics that could inspire others to emulate and reproduce adapted versions. Products with *Leadership Creativity* also demonstrate an elevated level of research and development, draw inspiration from primary, non-fashion sources and appeal to a sophisticated taste level, and are regarded as an investment that will endure over time (Ruppert-Stroescu & Hawley, 2014). The research and discovery phase of the design process led the designer to theoretical concepts related to sustainability and experimentation with textile design.

Because the postconsumer textile and apparel industry waste negatively impacts the environment by contributing toxic chemicals and non-biodegradable products to landfills (Chen & Burns, 2006), it is imperative for apparel designers to incorporate sustainable design principles into both the design process and the end product. Studies have shown that when consumers build a relationship with their clothing, they are more likely to maintain vibrant use of such clothing. Building on this component of empathic design (Niinimäki, & Koskinen, 2011), this piece provides the user with a variety of styling options, reflecting the concept of transformational design. Zero waste is another important sustainable design principle was incorporated into this garment (Carrico & Kim, 2014). No fabric was cut away or otherwise discarded in the making of this garment. To the contrary, yarn and fabric scraps were felted onto the surface of the design.

Serendipity was also an important part of the design process (Douglas & Coessens, 2012). Finding inspiration from places traveled, discussing possibilities with colleagues, and applying unrelated concepts were all unplanned events that converged to result in the design of this piece.

Process, technique, and execution

Meeting with colleagues for a fiber workshop, the designer began gathering inspiration to develop the color story and visual language by channeling impressions from recent trips to Paris: tree bark, the canal locks, bridges, and water along the Canal St. Martin. Working in a studio

with other designers, we discussed various techniques, and the designer was intrigued by the idea of nuno felting a dress in-the-round. The designer chose to design and felt this piece, using a technique that resulted in a zero-waste garment. The silk tulle netting was an uncut rectangle, and as evidenced on the dark side of the dress, the extra tulle gives a wing-like, graceful detail to the entire side seam. The silk gauze, dyed for this project, was a rectangle as well, and the version of the dress with the surface detailing has scraps of fabric and yarns felted into the tulle. The no-seam dress was accomplished by felting around a resist in the shape of the body between layers of tulle covered with wool roving. The bandeau top is habotai silk dyed, discharged, and over dyed with the fold-and-clamp method.

After drying the nuno felted piece, the designer cut out the neck and armholes, and explored the dress from its technical face and back. Somehow needing to discover another option for this piece, after having participated in a design forum where Inversion was the theme the designer decided to see what the dress would look like upside down, and in so doing found that it works as a jumpsuit. By turning the dress upside down, and using the armholes as leg openings, the designer serendipitously discovered another way to wear this garment that changes the silhouette, and most intriguingly the aura, while providing a multitude of options for styling this jumpsuit.

Design contribution and innovation

While nuno felting is practiced by fiber artists around the world, this particular method of seamless felting for sustainable and transformational design has not been found in the literature. This piece demonstrates that it is possible to combine zero waste garment development with textile innovation and silhouette exploration to provide a product that has the potential to maintain a vibrant place in the owner's wardrobe for an extended period of time.

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