

## Scaffolding Fashion Design Sketchbook Practice in a Creative Design Process Class

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*Innovative strategy.* A series of assignments was developed to teach students skills to use a sketchbook for fashion design research. These assignments were developed in response to a survey of fashion research textbooks that revealed most books provide examples of fashion designers' sketchbooks but lack information about (a) the types and sources of content, (b) how it was created, or (c) how it could be used in the fashion design process. There was little explicit instruction for novice fashion designers (students) on how to do fashion design research to create sketchbook content, and in turn, to use that content as the basis for creative apparel design. There was also scant academic literature on the "how to" of sketchbooks. Green (2006), who studied fine artists' use of sketchbooks indicated that the sketchbook is a practical representation tool for artists to present ideas and research perceptions.

*Purpose and audience.* The purpose of developing the series of assignments was to address the identified gap in sketchbook instruction and, in turn, to support the students' creative design processes. The assignments were implemented in a 400-level class, in which students create three art-to-wear ensembles, based on three different design briefs. Students did not have previous classroom instruction on using sketchbooks for design research.

*Implementation.* The assignment series design was based on instructional scaffolding pedagogical principles. Instructional scaffolding is dividing new knowledge into smaller portions and then providing a tool, or structure, with each portion. Students learning new skills are provided with opportunities to practice the new skills in increasingly independent ways, eventually feeling confident to use the skills on their own (Caruana, 2012). This approach was selected as the goal was for the students to learn the skills, practice the skills, and then use them (with decreasing structure and increasing independence) in each art-to-wear ensemble.

To learn these skills, students were given lectures and completed readings in *Fashion Design Research* (Mbonu, 2014). This text was selected because it identifies the types of fashion design research (primary and secondary), sources for collecting information, methods for documenting the collected information (e.g. photography, sketching) and specific techniques to use the information collected within the sketchbook to generate novel design concepts. Methods included (a) juxtaposition and initial design responses (mixing unlike objects on a page and sketching a new design idea), (b) triangulation (using diverse sources to research a topic), (c) concept mapping with spider diagrams, and (d) editing or narrow research to a focus. To practice these skills, students completed a series of structured assignments: (a) using spider diagram to map concepts, (b) primary research, (c) secondary research, (d) triangulation and analysis, and (e) editing and mood boards. Each assignment had limitations and requirements, helping students to practice specific skills and methods. For example, in the primary research assignment: "[students will] collect research on two objects from an art exhibit on campus (information source), using five sketches (documentation type) drawn from a variety of vantage points". All

readings, lectures, and assignments were completed in the first two weeks of the course, prior to embarking on the art-to-wear ensembles. To use these skills, students design and created their original art-to-wear ensembles. For each ensemble, students conducted research for 20 new pages in the sketchbook and a mood board. Scaffolding in terms of specific research source or documentation type requirements was removed. However, scaffolding remained in terms of requirements for both primary and secondary research, research triangulation, juxtaposition of research, and initial design responses (sketches). The instructor checked-in with each student at the 10 pages and 20 pages due dates. At 10-pages, the instructor coached students on improvement opportunities (e.g. less secondary research, more primary research) and ways to achieve these goals (e.g. go take a picture of the Art Deco ironwork on the Physics building). The 20-page check-ins were used to help students select a focus from their research as a basis for their mood board.

*Effectiveness and future plans.* Students' development of sketchbook design research skills was evident to the instructor and graduate teaching assistant through the quality of their completed sketchbooks, mood boards, and original art-to-wear ensembles, in comparison to work produced in prior semesters, when the assignment series was not used. Students evaluated their learning and use of these skills in the first art-to-wear ensemble through an online survey. All the students indicated positive attitudes toward using sketchbooks, think sketchbooks should be required throughout the fashion design curriculum, and would like to use them more. They found text spider diagrams to be useful in "help[ing] me layout all of my ideas and brainstorm new ones.", with 64.71% using them. Students' top three sources for primary research were fabric manipulation experiments (88.24%), museums (58.82%) and art galleries (47.06%). For 94.72% of the students, photography was their favorite way to document primary research as it can represent perspective and helps transition things that the students like into real, possible designs. The most used secondary research sources were: the Internet (88.24%), online magazines, blogs and social media sites (82.35%) and books (76.47%). Students felt that social media sites and videos were effective for creative process as the combination allowed them to triangulate a variety of interpretations into a single concept. The favored documentation types for secondary research were: sketching (94.12%), photography (82.35%) and creating a collage (52.94%). Sketching allowed them to think through all the ideas and create something more innovative. Students' responses indicated that they have learned to use and value in their fashion design process a range of primary and secondary research sources and documentation methods.

Students also demonstrated positive impacts from learning specific ways of using their collected research: for example, "[Triangulation] really helped me bring all my research together", "Juxtaposition helped me learn how to channel my ideas and how to expand on them successfully", "[Editing and mood board skills learned] helped me narrow down my idea to a single aesthetic and keep things cohesive as I reference it in designing", "Pulling the strongest excerpts, images, and colors from everything else helped me to form a very strong theme". Given these positive outcomes in the students' work and self-assessments, we plan to continue this fashion design sketchbook research assignment series. We are also considering implementing similar assignments at lower levels in the fashion design curriculum.

## References

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