

## Neo-Heritage Ensemble #1

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Bust: 36 ½, Waist: 28 ¼, Hip: 38”

**Introduction.** An important role of an academic historic clothing and textiles collection is to enhance the curricular programs of the Department. This is accomplished by the collection, preservation and exhibition of artifacts of historical significance in the area of fashion and apparel. While the artifacts are the result of practice, **they also inspire further iteration.** Dress studies, as object-based fashion scholarship, is an interdisciplinary approach to fashion research. The study of fashion artifacts provides insight into the cultural milieu or zeitgeist of a society during a particular point in time. (Prown, 1982). The study of design can as well be viewed as object-based fashion scholarship. Learning how the parts constitute the whole through active engagement with material is foundational to design practice, as is the aim of discovering and accessing material’s inherent design qualities towards the creation of new structures (Salentik, 2007). Collaboration is a purposeful opportunity to expand a creative and experimental process with more detailed complex design thinking and analysis than is possible with only one designer (Campbell & Parsons, 2005). Through collaborative practice, the authors (as designers) found an opportunity to mesh skills and expertise in textile creation, apparel design and fashion history, and shared design exploration. The collaborators worked jointly to generate a shared process that resulted in The Neo-Heritage Ensemble.

**Concept:** The Academic or “Class” blazer was historically an identifier of status. In this design scenario, a collaborative team looked at the past, to understand the present, shaping the future through creative scholarship. Our aim was to invigorate the Academic or “Class” blazer and to engage a new generation.

**We adopted the collection as our primary inspiration** as we conceptualized a wearable ensemble that exists simultaneously as an archive and innovation.

**Contextual Review:** Our contextual review included historic research of the blazer worn by student leaders at our university during the 1950s and 60s, and part of the Historic Costume and Textiles Collection at our university. The blazers were viewed as a symbol of equity on campus and as an emblem of the educated professional woman. Market analysis offered insight into the key trends that informed our design including (1) “Ath-Luxe”, a hybrid style meshing athletic, leisure and professional wear; (2) “The Thinker” textile trend calling for sartorial materials, historical references fused with modern finishes fostering a new appreciation of craft and collegiate, conservative patterns inspired by libraries and learning; and (3) “Oversize Blazer” was a key message in trend forecasting. The tailored blazer takes on a relaxed oversized form, blurring the line between a blazer and a long-line tailored jacket (WGSN, 2017). Visual analysis of our student body offers confirmation that the trend resonates with our target market. In terms of branding, we applied key messages trending to graphics by adopting a playful, doodle-like, customized font. Message placement in unexpected areas and small-scale cursive script were also synthesized into this design.

### **Aesthetic Properties Process, Technique, and Execution**

The tailored blazer is unlined navy constructed in wool melton jacket, created using flat pattern techniques. Design details include double stitched yellow-gold trim along collar, lapel, front, cuffs, and pocket edges and double stitched seamlines. The jacket has three patch pockets, updated with hip pockets are sized to fit a smart phone. University emblems representing each class, embroidered on the chest pockets of the historic blazers were used as inspiration for a custom textile design. As well, iterations of the classic embroidery are applied to sleeve and front pocket. Specifically, the left sleeve features the university's motto sewn using free-hand machine embroidery, a contemporary iteration of classic monogram. The University's letters were laser cut in the breast pocket, evolving the university emblems on the historic blazers with contemporary technologies.

A digital textile pattern was developed based on photographic documentation of blazer patch pockets (each with unique motif embroidery). Photographs were edited and a repeat pattern was generated using Adobe Photoshop. The print was digitally printed on a Polyester/Lycra blend power knit. A straight, calf-length knit pencil skirt with elastic waist and cropped bra top with contrast binding were designed and constructed in our custom printed textile. The resultant Neo-Heritage Ensemble is a visual, tactile and wearable connection between past and future.

### **Design Contribution and Innovation**

This design contributes to the academic collection provides a springboard towards new knowledge, looking at the past in order to understand the future. Paoletti notes "designers also use the past as an important resource. Not only do they also consider the recent development of styles and their performance in the marketplace; designers also find inspiration in the forgotten styles of earlier times" (1984, p. 34). Collections are not static repositories, we view the collection as a fluid and active space of discovery.

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Image A: Front view



Image B: Back view



Image C: Side view



Image D: Detail

