
Conceptual Costume Design: Utilizing Recyclable Materials to Help Sustain the Environment

Nooshin Dadmarz^a, Abolfazl Davodiroknabadi^{a*}, Salar Zohoori^b

*a*Department of Design and Clothing, Yazd Branch, Islamic Azad University, Yazd, Iran

*b*Department of Textile Engineering, Yazd Branch, Islamic Azad University, Yazd, Iran

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Abstract

Dress reflects people's perceptions, yet it is sometimes vague and uncertain. What will be added or subtracted from dress will help to extend our future. Materials produced or removed from clothing will help to sustain our environment. Materials unsuitable with the environment constitute the bulk of the objects we re-use. This study integrates costume design and materials incompatible with the environment in creative ways. Art, with its various and special characteristics, can create conceptual clothing as a new form of art. This project conveys conceptual costume design using materials incompatible with the environment in order to send an environmentally sustainable message. Hopefully, with public-awareness, the recycling of incompatible materials can be used in many ways such as 'costume design'. The main focus and goal of this study is to address this issue.

Keywords: Conceptual clothes; Trashion; Environment; Dress designing

* Corresponding author. Tel: +98-3531872495; fax: +983538215200.

E-mail address: davodi@iauyazd.ac.ir.

1. Introduction

Within the several past decades, developed countries have quantitatively and qualitatively promoted recycling and environmental protection as one of the main components of ‘preservation and development of natural resources’. In the present era, neglecting such an approach will lead to the waste of financial resources as well as environmental damages. It is important to pay attention to recycling and the environment (Biron, 2017; Majlesi & Khoshnevisan, 2009).

A considerable part of the wasted materials is compatible with environment and therefore can be easily recycled. However, major problems are concerned with materials incompatible with the environment. In this regard, re-using a part of these materials in various industries will significantly contribute to this issue (Merrington, 2017).

One of the fields that can address this important trend is ‘costume design’ which can, through its special delicacies, creatively integrate these materials with art and represent the outcome as an outstanding work of art. Conceptual art can be one of the best approaches to do so, which is accompanied with various issues (Delgado & Albuquerque, 2015; Azad Aramaki & Chavoshian, 2001).

With regards to the considerable abundance of materials incompatible with the environment in our daily use, it seems that returning these materials to the consumption cycle helps the environment. Mass production of materials incompatible with the environment can be considered as a great threat to the survival of the environment that can ultimately cause serious damage to the survival of the species. It is clear that considering the importance of related issues can result in new approaches to recycle changes in consumption of wastage and material incompatible with the environment. The irreparable consequences of the continued presence of such materials in vicinity of plants and animals can easily be predicted. There are several methods to recycle these items including recycled dissociative materials submerged in buried tanks (Javadi Yeganeh & Kashfi, 2007).

One applicable method can be reusing these materials in designing conceptual dress. The current study is an attempt to re-use objects that have been discarded. The function of such an attempt is to design conceptual clothes to highlight the applicability of wasted materials. Therefore, we have tried here to raise public awareness through designing conceptual dress using the materials incompatible with the environment. As such, the main goal of this paper is to create conceptual dresses by using recyclable materials in order to help sustain the environment.

2. Conceptual Dress

Conceptual dress refers to clothes designs that intend to highlight human traits, emotions and thoughts rather than simply covering human body. In fact, conceptual clothing considers human body as a means to convey a thought or known characteristics within him,

not necessarily to cover all or part of his body (which of course is the most important goal of costume design) and this is exactly what Conceptual Art is seeking. This shows, the pre-required action showing the nature of the artwork and the artist's idea and any work or substantiality, which is only the first expression of a general conclusion that the artist has achieved (Cakiroglu & Ince, 2015; Majlesi & Khoshnevisan, 2009).

After the emergence of conceptual art in the world, various art works were gradually affected by it and the composed forms, the most important component of which was the idea. Like other divisions of art, costume design was influenced and developed by the conceptual art; in other words, the events that took place in the 1960s influenced the art styles leaving a big impact on attitudes to dressing. Before this era, clothing was a means to protect against environmental factors such as cold, heat, and insects, and also to add beauty, distinctness and even exaggeration to the individual. Nevertheless, conceptual art represents clothing with a performance beyond what is mentioned above. By reconciliation of these two concepts in contemporary age, art has spread in all domains of life such as clothing, and a clear relationship between the world of art and clothing was manifested. Many artists have used the power of provocative clothing in the creation of art works; on the other hand, designers are seeking a source of inspiration in the art world (Rijkens-Klomp, Baerten, & Rossi, 2016; Azad Aramaki & Chavoshian, 2001).

Thus, the human body as a personal domain and a sign of identity of each individual has highly been considered by artists because the body is a vehicle of the self and identity (Azad Aramaki & Chavoshian, 2001: 57). Using clothing concept as a work of visual art has its own attitude; this releases the applied attitude and emphasizes the function. Regarding the fact that dress comes from public culture and communicates well with the audience, one can introduce and establish it as a means of artistic expression; tools by which a conceptualist artist tries to express his ideology, social criticism, and cultural orientations or other issues around him, and in general, his inner concerns (Javadi Yeganeh & Kashfi, 2007: 38).

In the 1960s, conceptualist artists such as Christo turned to innovations on the clothes so that clothes were worn as a work of art. Their clothes were key components of performance art in the 1960s and included the diversity of many new materials and unusual categories made alongside clothes and coats. Therefore, fluctuations in the 1960s in New York, Paris and London by artists such as Rudy Gemreich, Paco Rabanne and Mary Quant in the field of traditional costume design were unusual and different from what was common at that time (Majlesi & Khoshnevisan, 2009: 60).

Art clothing or wearable art is a branch of costume design which has highly been regarded in recent years. This refers to unique and often handmade clothes known as luxurious and non-transactional art. When making any part of the clothing wearable by the size of the objects to be associated with aesthetic considerations, these works are considered as a particular product (Pakbaz, 2010).

In many cultures and ancient civilizations, particular clothing meant wealth, prosperity and nobleness and also was used for religious occasions. An example of such clothing style can be seen in ancient Egyptian or Indian tribes. Use of jewelries and various coverings has been common in order to express religious beliefs, protect against unknown objects, or connect to the gods. Through ages, wearable art become a non-verbal coverage for an individual to communicate with the society, which would enable him to express a unique individuality.

Today, wearable art can be seen in different forms, media and expressions. Modern ideas in the art of costume design beyond a level emerge in various forms. These clothes are produced as a work of art and may not be practical. This type of work may be sold, but are often produced only for display purposes. Most artistic clothing items are made with fabric or synthetic materials. Various materials such as silk, velvet, leather, metal, plastic and bamboo, and different techniques such as stitching, staining, casting metal, grinding, painting textiles are among the primary facilities in the creation of this type of clothing. Like other artistic fields, the artist's talents and skills are also very important. An advanced artist has to be familiar with principles such as color theory, chemistry, sewing, and costume design computer programs (Osborne, 2012).

Artistic dress can be considered as a branch of conceptual art. The works produced by the artists are exciting performance art and conceptual works that transmit various concepts. In fact, the artist considers the human body areas to create a work of art. The important point is not considering human and his covering but the body shape to create the work of art. Artist's creativity permits him to use colored lamps and a network of electrical wires to create electric clothes. Elsewhere, a designer uses waste and discarded materials to create clothing items that may sometimes be protesting against something and may sometimes be even disgusting. Since 1987, with regards to the importance of this field of art, an annual show is held in New Zealand called Wearable Art Award where various artists from around the world exhibit their works. In this show, amateur designers exhibit their works along with famous artists, and many people come to see the different works (www.hautetrash.org).

Wearable art, according to its unique nature, is difficult to explain because often extremely personal and aesthetic criteria are generally opposed to unification. This art takes many forms like sculpted or flat that employ different techniques such as knitting, weaving, painting and sewing, and also makes use of imagination, skill and commitment to personal views.

A wearable art can be called art work but in this definition; it cannot yet demonstrate clearly its complex relationship with the world of art, fashion (fashion is not only clothes but it also includes decorations, jewelry, hair and face, as well as perfume and the like) and industry. Wearable art is separate from the main path of fashion; however, it remains relevant. Using the clothing concept as a work of visual art releases it from the applied attitude and emphasizes on the function. Regarding the fact that dress comes from public

culture and communicates well with the audience, one can introduce and establish it as a means of artistic expression. i.e., tools by which the conceptualist artist tries to express his internal and mental concerns. Here, the aesthetic aspect of clothing is completely ignored while the message embodied in it is highlighted. This style of clothing is indicative of deep understanding of the surrounding and even within individuals, leading the audience to think deeply (Zare et al., 2014).

2.1. Trashion

Trashion refers to the set of materials resulting from human and animals' activities which are usually solid and are called waste as a result of being thrown away as unwanted or being unusable. However, trash is said to be incorruptible junk (except ash). Trash in the waste usually includes paper, plastic, metal, glass, wood and materials like these (Majlesi & Khoshnevisan, 2009). According to this definition, when the ingredients and the materials composing a work of art are found to be trash, they are expected to have lost their usual efficiency (Bramston & Maycroft, 2013).

3. Method

Implementation will mostly be done in the field of junk art because trashion is often done via traditional sewing so that wearing is rather a normal characteristic of the dress. However, junk art can be manifested in all fields of surreal art form, even though it carries a special message instead of being solely functional. Therefore, by putting together the clothing concept that suggests a particular message and junk art which carries the message of protecting the Earth, we are seeking to provide a new type of coverage. This is solely done for awakening public awareness in this regard concerning a threat to nature. As we provided an explanation on the integration of costume design and wastes materials, for dress designing, the materials used in dress designing should be of maximum resistance to long term decomposition.

3.1. Anti U.V Clothing

As mentioned before, we come across with certain plastics which, in addition to the fact that their composition in the nature takes millions of years, they are also deliberately coated with a layer of anti-UV materials. Due to its stability against UV rays of the sun, this layer greatly slows down the decomposition of plastics in nature to the extent that the life of this type of plastic will be several times higher than ordinary plastics. Therefore, reminding the need to return such materials to the consumption cycle is a priority of this work. Joining all the big pieces of the dress has been carried out using a broad tape which is, in turn, considered destructive to the environment.



Fig 1 Final work clothing

3.2. Bumper Clothing

Bumper plastics are commonly used in various industries. Based on the expected application, they are expected to have maximum impact resistance. Because of this, they are composed of several layers of plastic materials with small bubbles being embedded in the outer layer. This feature prevents damage to the objects inside plastic. Moreover, the considerable thickness of the plastic makes it durable in the environment and hinders its analysis. This dress has been decorated with plastic threads which are commonly used in packaging. Although these tapes have a small volume and thickness, they can have adverse effects on a lot of living organisms as well as the environment.



Fig 2 Final work of bumper clothes

3.3. Foil-like Clothing

This dress is designed using advertising banners which could be seen in the city for a period of short time for various reasons. The base of the dress is sewn with décolletage pattern. Certain decoration has been done over the banner using plastic foil which serves as a cover for fast foods like sandwiches and burgers. Finally, table linens were used as belt.



Fig 3 Final work of foil-like dress

3.4. Trash Bag Clothing

Regarding the fact that trash bags are consumed to collect trash, while they unfortunately pose a major threat to the nature, a dress was designed using trash bags. Trash bags are incompatible with the nature and they are never decomposed in the environment.

Disposable gloves have been used in the lumbar of these clothes because despite their use in industry and services, they cannot be decomposed. With regards to the type of their usage, one can guess what a huge amount of such gloves is thrown away.

For this purpose, an old and unused dress was used as liners and trash bags were sewed on it. A piece of thick cellophane was used as the buffer for the skirt being cut with a gored pattern. For tuning up the skirts, plastic threads were sewed on the bag. And ultimately disposable gloves were used for decorating the waist.



Fig 4 Final work of trash bags clothes

3.5. Polyethylene Foam Cloth

Polyethylene foam is a derivative of polyethylene with small bubbles of air, which increase its insulating properties. This foam is commonly used for insulating various buildings and is highly resistant against chemicals and environmental agents. Since the main argument is conceptual, this dress is designed with a comprehensive approach in human life, in a way that it also surrounds a human and is even more outstanding.



Fig 5 Final work of Polyethylene foam clothing

4. Conclusion

Having analyzed the previous discussions and implementation of costume designs containing the theme of protecting the environment, we reached to the conclusion that in addition to the possibility of using the waste materials in the costume design and in the creation of conceptual and thought provoking works, this study can be regarded as a starting point for artists' thinking and innovation. Hence, once again it would be proved that art can enter different fields such as the environment and help with maintaining and developing it.

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