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Wool Re-Fashioned

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ABSTRACT

This paper describes a collaborative project between the Yorkshire Fashion Archive and The Woolmark Company. The underlying principle of this project was to create modern garments using selected pieces, ranging from the 1940's to 1980's, from the Archive for inspiration and to relate dress to its historical, artistic, social and economic context. The overall approach was to create modern wearable pieces of clothing taking into consideration the history, shape and fit of the original archive garment.

The Yorkshire Fashion Archive (YFA) is a collection of fashion garments and everyday clothing. It provides a unique historical and cultural record of Yorkshire life and documents clothing produced, purchased and worn by Yorkshire folk throughout the 20th Century. The purpose of the archive is to collect, preserve and document garments and related items for the benefit of scholars, researchers and the general public. The archive pieces in YFA have a link to Yorkshire and cover the period from the 1940s to 1980s, a period when Yorkshire was at the forefront of woollen manufacture and the clothes that were made from it, including many from the top designers of the times such as Issey Miyake, Ossie Clark and Comme des Garçons. There is a belief that a garment is more than just the threads of its construction. A collection of beautiful, important and informative pieces was envisaged but more importantly the opportunity to develop an understanding of the reasons why changes have taken place and being able to contextualise these changes. The collection reflects changing social attitudes and influences, economic prosperity, global trends and the regional technical excellence in textiles and clothing over a 100 year period. It is also a period when century-old assumptions have been questioned, when social orders that many felt would continue forever have been overturned, a period during which entirely new – and at one time inconceivable – status has been conferred on women, as well as ethnic and sexual



minorities in a vast melting-pot of challenging new ideas, attitudes and priorities that affect us all.

The Woolmark Company has played an important role in the Yorkshire wool industry. Its Merino Wool. No Finer Feeling™ collection challenged preconceptions about wool being scratchy and old fashioned. It places a major focus on the story of the Merino wool fibre and commercial product by leading fashion apparel brands. Clothing designers can choose from a range of innovative treatments that allow them to create unique textures and finishes on Merino wool garments.

The collaborative project Wool Re-Fashioned between Yorkshire Fashion Archive and The Woolmark Company aimed to link in with the modern concept of recycling and saving clothes from the past, to allow more awareness of the recent historic past and to refresh selected archive clothings using fabric of choice for fine and contemporary fashion.

The work involved critical appraisals of the archive garments aiming to create modern wearable pieces of clothing taking into considerations the history, shape and fit of the original archive garment. The materials used include fabric from The Woolmark Company's Merino Wool. No Finer Feeling™ collection, neoprene and leather. The pieces were manipulated with a variety of techniques such as creative pattern cutting, laser cutting, fabric painting and spraying, sewing, draping and pleating and discussed the pattern cutter's ability and talent to interpret a garment in relation to its historical context.



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