***Revisiting Pattern-Making***

After an 8-week pattern-making internship this past summer, this winter I revisited the art of pattern-making. I was relieved to see that the skills I had accumulated throughout the summer were not lost. Simultaneously, I embraced the unknown that excited me, brought me challenges, and pushed me to solve problems on my own.

Pattern-making essentially boils down to two main parts — drafting and draping. For the first week, we focused on drafting patterns based on instructions from books of professional pattern-makers. When one does not have special pattern-making tools such as a dress form, drafting makes making a pattern based on a given measurement possible. Draping, on the other hand, requires the pattern-maker to manipulate a piece of fabric on a dress form to create a desired style of garment. In the second week, we practiced draping basic skirts and bodices. It took me a while to realize that pattern-makers are not merely manipulators but also listeners. Fabrics talk. As one is draping, the tension in a piece of fabric shows and points right to where the problem originates. The fabric tells the pattern-maker where to release that tension and how it wants to sit on the body.

Another important concept during these first two weeks of pattern-making is manipulating darts. Darts are created by folding the fabric into the garment to take away extra volume not needed in the desired style. This extra volume is what we call ease. Darts can create wonder. For a certain amount of volume in a piece of garment, the darts can be shifted to different places to generate various styles.

After revisiting some pattern-making work I had practiced during the summer, I was glad to find out that I could work more efficiently because of my familiarity with the basic pattern-making skills. The next two weeks presented some new challenges and I would like to illustrate them through two specific projects.

***Draping a Smock***

The style of a smock is not difficult. However, because the smock needs to accommodate the large and frequent movements of the wearer, draping it required me to leave a lot of ease on the garment, which was something I was not used to. Beginner draping usually starts with form-fitting garments that fit the body snugly. It is easy because the draper can just pin the fabric rather tightly over the form without leaving too much ease. However, when more ease is required, it is harder to shape the fabric and tell if the draping is done right because there appear to be more folds and wrinkles on the garment.

As I draped the smock, I envisioned it as a super blousy long dress. I had to constantly remind myself to go against my instinct of smoothing the fabric tightly over the form and leaving a lot of ease. I thought the final sample would fit like a bucket but it ended up fitting just right and slightly tight across the over-bust area. This makes me realize that there is so much more for me to learn and practice to get a hang of manipulating ease and being able to tell how the final product would look like with the amount of ease I put in.

***Drafting Pants***

The pants have come a long way since they were pantaloons and they still remain one of the hardest garments to drape. During the final week, I attempted to draft a pair of slack based on my measurements. The most unique feature of pants, also the one that makes them difficult to drape/draft, is called rise. This refers to the part of a pair of pants that covers the butt to the crotch area, which is also where the front of the pants meets the back of the pants. On paper patterns, the rise is illustrated as a triangle formed by extreme curves.

What I realized after testing my first draft sample was that the length, angle, and shape of the curves determined not only how the rise would fit but also how the pants hugged the body. My sample’s rise was too low and this could be fixed by raising the rise on the paper pattern. However, the kick/angle and the shape of the rise must remain the same because that determined how the pants hug the body in the back at the butt. If I simply raise the rise without paying attention to its angle or shape, the butt might look either too flat or too baggy. And this is the butterfly effect principle of pattern-making — when one part of a garment is changed, it will likely impact other parts. This is why alterations done on garments are always incremental and thought thoroughly.

Knowledge is when one knows that there are a lot of unknowns for them. This phrase sums up my four weeks of pattern-making internship this winter term. I have conquered some challenges but also realized that there is so much more for me to learn. Now the internship is finished, I wish to continue creating and learning how fabrics speak.

**Scholarly Resources**

Abling, Bina, and Kathleen Maggio. Integrating Draping, Drafting and Drawing. Fairchild Books, 2019.

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