

Garment making as a practice of freedom

BY EMILY BENNISON



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Dedication:

To all the people who sew and don't consider themselves artists.

To my first sewing teacher, my grandma



BETTY BUTLER, MY GRANDMOTHER

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Abstract:

THIS THESIS INVESTIGATES SEWING EDUCATION IN SCHOOLS AS A TRANSFORMATIVE EXPERIENCE FOR TEENAGERS. THROUGH A TEACHER-BASED RESEARCH METHODOLOGY, THIS STUDY DELVES INTO THE IMPLEMENTATION OF FASHION DESIGN CLASSES AIMED AT FOSTERING CREATIVE EXPRESSION, CRITICAL THINKING, AND SOCIAL ENGAGEMENT AMONG TEENS. THE RESEARCH DRAWS UPON SCHOLARLY WORK THAT ENGAGES WITH HOME ECONOMICS, COMMUNITY SEWING CLASSES, AND TRAUMA-INFORMED PEDAGOGICAL APPROACHES. THE QUALITATIVE DATA GATHERED FROM CLASSROOM OBSERVATIONS AND TEACHER REFLECTIONS HAVE INFORMED A SOCIALLY ENGAGED SEWING ZINE THAT COMPRISES SEWING LESSON PLANS. THE FINDINGS SHED LIGHT ON THE POTENTIAL OF FASHION DESIGN EDUCATION TO EMPOWER STUDENTS, CULTIVATE THEIR ARTISTIC SKILLS, AND ENCOURAGE THEM TO ADDRESS SOCIAL ISSUES THROUGH CREATIVE EXPRESSION. THIS RESEARCH CONTRIBUTES TO THE GROWING DISCOURSE ON COMMUNITY-BASED APPROACHES TO ART EDUCATION, HIGHLIGHTING THE SIGNIFICANCE OF INCORPORATING DIVERSE CONTENT TO MEET THE NEEDS AND INTERESTS OF CONTEMPORARY HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS.

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A THESIS

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Table of Contents

A LIST OF SELECTED CHAPTERS

MINI MEMOIR	PAGE 8
RESEARCH QUESTIONS	PAGE 10
LITERATURE REVIEW	PAGE 13
METHODOLOGY AND SCOPE OF LIMITATIONS, RESEARCH OVERVIEW	PAGE 23
RESEARCH FINDINGS	PAGE 26
CONCLUSION	PAGE 46
REFERENCES	PAGE 48
APPENDICES	PAGE 50



CHILDHOOD ME SHOWING MY QUILT AT A CRAFT FAIR

Stitching Stories

A MINI MEMOIR

My grandmother taught me to sew when I was six. As many women of her time did, she put all her time and excellence into her home, domestic traits, and the relationships that were held there. Sewing for her was not a hobby born out of passion but necessity. I grew up watching my grandmother sew and lived with her in the summer months. I lived in her house that mothered me, in the little corners of the linen closet, where I would find tattered embroidered napkins that could be transformed into little dresses for my dolls. Sewing was an opportunity to world build ... to create and un-create.

Around middle school age, my mom signed me up for local sewing lessons. The classes were held in the teacher's home. There, I was taught the basics of sewing and garment construction. I worked alongside students who were older and younger than me allowing for a diverse learning environment. The more advanced students inspired me, and I mentored students younger than me. My two teachers, Judi and Jessica, were pivotal in fostering my love for fiber arts. Judi was/is a highly talented quilter and crafter, while Jessica was/is an expert in all things fashion history and garment design. Jessica taught me the tools to have agency over my quickly changing body. She taught me how to alter my clothes or make new clothes that not only fit me but also expressed my personality. It was the first learning environment where I felt brave enough to ask questions. Jessica always supported my weird and albeit questionable middle school style choices. She supplied me with many books, museum exhibits, and BBC documentaries on fashion and history. I never felt like I was an academic child. I was always sectioned off into extra help classes. I would say that sewing is the first thing I ever thought I was good at, but in hindsight, it was just the first educational environment I felt comfortable and seen in.

As a teen, I rejected art classes in high school as I held my craft so private to my familial teachers and home space. I was uninterested in the painting and drawing curriculum that my high school offered. I didn't feel my craft was worthy of holding space in an art classroom. Fiber arts was unacademic. Instead of filling my schedule with art classes, I was

usually found spending my days in detention, a consequence of my 'distracting' clothes. Staff at my high school were encouraged to carry notecards around with them to measure girls and femme presenting folks' skirts and dresses. I always drew a sigh of relief if I made it through an assembly without having my thighs grabbed and pants pulled by male teachers to check for 'stretchy pants.' If student's clothes were ever deemed inappropriate, we were sent to the office to put on the "man pants." These were men's cargo pants, size 18, for us to wear instead of our clothes. These pants worked as a modern-day dunce cap, a shame-based consequence of our actions. I always knew there'd always be a close eye on me as my older sister was a veteran of dress code infringements. We both had curvier bodies from a young age and were constantly put in detention for wearing the same clothes as our slimmer classmates. In high school, I never wore my sewing creations. Sewing my clothes allowed me to have bodily autonomy. I understand bodily autonomy was not valued or allowed in my school. I shared my work and sewing only in these female-centric private spaces.

By the time I graduated high school, I was extremely eager for the freedom that that fashion school held for self-expression and self-exploration at a higher education level. In my first fashion design class, we were made to model our garments. I had educators tell me I was too fat to fit into the garments I made. I would spend thirty minutes in the bathroom trying to squeeze into my creations for an art critique. Half the critique would be spent on how my body looks bad in the clothes rather than discussing what I had sewn. When I asked for a larger size dress form to sew my clothes on, I was told that it wasn't the industry standard and they were not available for me to use. Educators told me to make my garments for the slimmer people in the class to model. Up until college, my experience of garment making and fashion took place in these maternal, kind, female environments. I graduated from school, burnt out, and questioned whether I wanted to work in the fashion industry.

After graduating at the beginning of the 2020 pandemic, I moved back home to my parent's home. It was the first time in a long time that I had time and space to create for the sake of creating. After four years of intense client-based designing, I found so much joy in just sewing a little pillow for my bedroom. I started teaching sewing at the small home studio in Pennsylvania, where I learned how to sew. I was inspired by an influx of elementary school-age students who were committed to learning how to sew to make masks for their local hospitals, schools, and communities. Going back to my old sewing studio reminded me why I loved sewing in the first place; it was/is the community it fosters. After a year at home, I moved to New York City to pursue my small business full-time. There, I met many amazing game changers and small business owners working towards making fashion more inclusive, accessible, and sustainable. This small business community fostered kindness and reciprocity. Instead of gatekeeping, we shared our knowledge without fear of someone 'stealing' our 'niche' in the marketplace. There was enough space for all of us. While running my small business, I continued to teach fashion design in the city. I met so many inspiring children and teens! I saw something special when I taught garment making to young people. I knew it was something too important just to ignore.

This is what led me to my thesis topic, and this is what I want to share. When we think about sewing education, most think of a very blah home economics class they had to take in the seventh grade and never sewed again. Sewing belongs in the art classroom just as much as an art form like ceramics does. Fashion design incorporates traditional art techniques and crafts. In recent years, as educators have prioritized interdisciplinary artwork and inclusive artmaking, it feels like the perfect time to include fashion design in art education.



STUDENT SEWING A DRESS

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Throughout my thesis, I have worked to facilitate, foster, and investigate teaching garment-making to students thirteen to eighteen. I have expanded on my own ideas as a teacher as well as questioned how fashion design has previously been taught. Throughout my teacher-based research, I have crafted a Body neutral language framework for teaching fashion design and incorporating trauma informed pedagogical techniques into my teaching. I have also worked towards creating a more equitable way of teaching fashion design that socially engages and creates a meaningful environment for all students.

How can garment making be a practice of freedom?

How is garment-making a practice of identity?

How can clothing be an act of freedom or resistance?

How can garment making in an arts classroom be a transformative experience for students?

Why is the art classroom a good place to facilitate transformative experiences through garment making?

How can incorporating students' cultures and identities affect the type of garments made?

How can teaching garment making be a socially engaged practice that takes on ideas of power and identity?

Where can accessibility and inclusivity be incorporated into a fashion design curriculum?

How can I create a language and environment more reflective of body neutrality in the fashion design curriculum?



LITERATURE REVIEW



STUDENT MOOD BOARD

Key Words:

Craft- An art form that requires a specific skill or technique done by hand. I use the term craft in this thesis as an umbrella term for skills historically done by women that were not necessarily considered artistic and were undervalued. Sewing as an art form would be considered a craft.

Trauma- “Trauma results from an event, series of events, or set of circumstances that is experienced by an individual as physically or emotionally harmful or threatening and that has lasting adverse effects on the individual’s functioning and physical, social, emotional, or spiritual well-being” (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) 2012, p. 2). SAMHSA’s definition of trauma is a good jumping-off point for this subject. I think this word has become kinda a buzzword, particularly in education. I think of trauma as that gut-wrenching feeling that puts your body into ‘survival mode’. The flight, fight, freeze, or fawn response that so many of us have felt.

Trauma-informed pedagogy- Pedagogy that centers on empathetic and restorative frameworks to reduce harm, cultivate trust, and rebuild positive relationships with students and education (Brummer and Thorsborne 2021).

Socially engaged pedagogy- Pedagogy that works past the classroom and engages in community and conversations around society, equity, and social justice issues (Lifschitz-Grant 2020).

Body autonomy- The right to own your own body. The right to dress, look, move, modify, and define your own body.

Body neutrality- “Body neutrality is fairly self-explanatory: it promotes neither positivity or negativity toward the physical body, but rather an acceptance of and respect toward it ‘as it is’”(Clark, 2023, p. 5). Body neutrality is all about de-centering the body, as NOT the most important aspect of your life.

Home economics movement - A movement in the 1900s to teach certain household skills, particularly to women. The movement was based on the idealized cis hetero white woman household manager (Wozencraft 1990).

Garment making - The creation of clothes or pieces to go on the human body.

Education as a practice of freedom - A philosophy coined by educator bell hooks. The idea is that teaching is a practice of freedom as opposed to a practice of domination (hooks 1994). In hook's book, *Teaching to Transgress*, she writes,

“To educate as the practice of freedom is a way of teaching that anyone can learn. That learning process comes easiest to those of us who teach who also believe that there is an aspect of our vocation that is sacred; who believe that our work is not merely to share information but to share in the intellectual and spiritual growth of our students. To teach in a manner that respects and cares for the souls of our students is essential if we are to provide the necessary conditions where learning can most deeply and intimately begin” (p. 13).

History of Sewing in the Arts Classroom:

While I explore the topic of fashion design in the art classroom, I have to acknowledge the history of sewing and craft in education. The following pages contain resources on the history of sewing in home economics classes and a broader look at craft education worldwide. This history of craft education will be from the Eurocentric, white historical standpoint in relation to the development of the home economics movement in the American school system. America has historically valued colonial European perspectives in the development of education and often has disregarded and sometimes actively erased other cultural perspectives. After the home economics movement, I will discuss craft and textiles through BIPOC histories and lead into community-centered learning and craft education outside of the public schooling system.

Home Economics Movement in American Public Schools:

Sewing found its way into the classroom through the home economics movement in America. Wozencraft (1990) said, "Some popular disciplines considered part of home economics are fashion merchandising, interior design, restaurant management, and textile and clothing manufacturing. Students also take courses in nutrition, consumer counseling, child development, and family life" (para. 5). Wozencraft was a leader in reimagining home economics in the 1990s, they sought to de-gender the classroom and move away from the 1950s white housewife trope tied to home economics. Sewing was a part of home economic classes as the American people shaped gendered careers. Sarah A. Gordon (2023) writes,

Girls, teenagers, and adult women of a variety of backgrounds often used sewing skills for different reasons. Most sewed chiefly in the home, but others worked in the garment industry as machine operators and piece workers, while others ran their own dressmaking establishments. But most girls would sew for themselves and

their families at some point in their lives. (para. 2)

Sewing became a part of home economic classes as an incredibly gendered career path. Depending on class, women either learned to sew to work in a factory or sew to be housewives. It was in the 1970s that domestic craft and textile art started to break through to the world of fine arts. Pioneer textile artists like Sheila Hicks and Faith Ringgold brought textiles and sewing to the forefront of the fine arts scene (Gottesman, 2016). Despite fiber arts and craft becoming integrated in the fine arts field, sewing clothing stayed in the home economics realm. As the second-wave feminist movement gained traction, so did feminist artists finding their place in the fine arts world rather than the craft/home economic world. With the shift of sewing into the art world sector, many modern-day fine artists use sewing in their work. So why is sewing often left out of the art classroom in 2024? In 1994, Home Economics officially changed names to Family and Consumer Sciences (FCS) (American Association of Family and Consumer Sciences 2023 (AAFCS)). In recent years, I have seen the class changed to be called 'human ecology'. In an ever changing world, FCS covers a lot of different curriculums from financial education to nutrition to interior design (AAFCS 2023). Sometimes it feels like the subject is a catch all for education that does not fall under the umbrella of traditional subjects. According to the RI department of education, there are no required family and consumer science classes in the public school system. RIDE (Rhode Island Department of Education) has implemented some required classes that would normally be taught in a Family and Consumer Science Curriculum. RI has required financial literacy classes for students as of 2021. Unfortunately from chatting to multiple students at RI public schools, most say that their art classes were actually canceled and replaced with financial literacy classes rather than adding financial literacy as a separate class. Students said the teacher told them that there was not a budget for both art and the finance class. Students deserve free, well funded and diverse classes in their schools.

Sewing and the School Curriculum:

Shifting to a broader look at sewing/textile education, craft education has long been a part of Finnish elementary and secondary school education (Veeber 2023). Eva Veeber, Erja Syrjäläinen, & Sirpa Kokko (2023) conducted a study on modern textile education in Finnish and Estonian schools by engaging with craft educators. The researchers found a few key takeaways from their interviews with craft educators. Veeber, Syrjäläinen, Kokko (2023) takeaways are as follows: opportunities for students to do hands-on making, design thinking, problem-solving, persistence and patience, and connection and collaboration (p. 9). This qualitative data speaks to the experience of so many students and educators who have engaged with sewing and the meaningful growth and skill development that comes from craft education. Craft education is important. Why do Nordic countries prioritize craft education, while America does not? Culturally, Nordic countries teach craft as a cultural connector to the countries' histories and Indigenous populations. According to Merin (1990) most craft education knowledge is derived from the knowledge and culture of the Indigenous Saami People. Craft techniques like woodworking, sewing, and embroidery are still actively used in Sami Culture and Finnish schools (Merin 1990)

Craft/Textile through BIPOC Histories:

Indigenous craft histories are often absent from the dominant rhetoric of craft education (Kabir 2020). In April 2020, BIPOC artists Melanie Monoceros and Raisa Kabir did an interview in conversation for Disability Arts Online to discuss BIPOC textile art and the erasure of its history and present makers.

Kabir (2020) says,

Knowledge is valued when it's written down, knowledge is valued when it's archived properly in a museum. It has to be removed from Indigenous geography. And I guess a lot of the times when things are not archived in this Western colonized way, it's like the body is the archive. And Indigenous knowledge is maybe of the body. And textiles are of the body, and that relationship of things. When they're made with the hands, they are always of the body. And how that knowledge is transmitted from the body and into the textile.

As Kabir (2020) explains, Indigenous knowledge is rooted in oral tradition and storytelling. While the knowledge and culture are clearly present, this dissemination of knowledge is not valued in colonial society. In December of 2023, Healing Ribbons, an Indigenous Nebraskan and Iowan sewing group, discussed with NPR the importance of sewing in inter-tribal communities (Arena, 2023). Arena (2023) explains the "healing journey" many Indigenous people are on to reconcile with the generational trauma of colonialism, as well as recent disproportionate losses due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Healing Ribbons sponsored a fashion show where people were able to engage with their culture and dress. Many people found community, comfort, and pride in engaging with multi-generational individuals through sewing (Arena, 2023). Healing Ribbons created a space for people to share stories and knowledge through sewing, ultimately fostering community care.

Dr. Sharbreon Plummer (2022), artist, educator, and activist, is working towards creating a written history of black ancestral knowledge of sewing and craft. In her book, *Diasporic Threads*, she highlights black craft history. When talking about the absence of written black craft history, as Plummer (2022) puts it, "Unfortunately, many of the women who served as bearers of culture and creativity through the medium have gone unnamed in historical writings and recollections" (p. 4). She continues with, "Not only has there been a difference in the visibility of works created by Black women, those based in mediums such as fiber were often further reduced to hobby/handiwork without the consideration

of deeper significance and meaning" (p. 4). Throughout Plummer's book, she centers fiber arts around the black female experience. She carefully covers black quilt history in America and its complicated ties to slavery and textile production. Her book also highlights many current black fiber artists that I plan on using as artist inspirations with my own students.

Dress Coding and the Policing of Bodies in American Schools:

Fiber arts is deeply cultural and personal. The absence of indigenous craft history in schools is an erasure of identity, people, and culture. The erasure of identities, histories, and stories are a tale as old as time for the American school systems. Educational institutions are an incredibly powerful tool of assimilation, control, and domination (hooks 2003). This research provides educators insight into the disparities and power dynamics American students experience daily through dress coding and policing of bodies in school settings. Teachers need to be educated on the discrepancies of policing bodies to understand their stakeholders as they enter their classrooms. To create a democratic and inclusive space, educators must understand the dynamics of dress and identity in the classroom. There is enormous potential to use the art classroom as a catalyst for conversations and explorations of identity, apparel, and bodily autonomy.

Gender and Clothing:

The United States Government Accountability Office (GAO) conducted a research project on dress coding in 2022. The GAO report (2022) states,

While school districts often cite safety as the reason for having a dress code, many dress codes include elements that may make the school environment less equitable and safe for students. For example, an estimated 60 percent of dress codes have rules involving measuring students' bodies and clothing—which may include adults touching students. Consequently, students, particularly girls, may feel less safe at school, according to a range of stakeholders GAO interviewed. (para. 2)

Clothing is deeply connected to gendered

expression. Author Laura Anne (2014) writes, "Schools are inevitably and inescapably gendered places; from restrooms to locker rooms to separated health classes and sports teams, schools require and produce gendered bodies in a multitude of formal and informal ways" (p. 33). Students are assigned spaces and are expected to perform gender (West & Zimmerman, 1987). Butler (1990) was one of the first philosophers to coin gender as a form of performance in her book, *Gender Trouble*. All gender is a construct, and regardless of assigned sex at birth, one performs gender. One way institutions can control and simplify student bodies is through censoring and criminalizing certain types of gender performance. Gender becomes a form of discipline in schools. What happens when a student does not normatively perform their gender like society or school expects?

Schools across America are at odds with anti-trans bills, dress coding, and hate crimes against LGBTQ+ students. Some school districts have taken it so far to even have school boards implement dress codes based on birth certificates that yes, the schools require students to have in their permanent files for dress coding infringements. At Harrison Central High School in Mississippi, their new dress code states students must dress in accordance with their sex assigned at birth (Lee 2023). Now, I know sometimes it's easy to think it's just a dress; it is not a big deal to change. But what are the serious implications of the anti-trans rhetoric in schooling systems? In 2023 Mississippi alone tried to pass 23 anti-trans bills, with many being codified into law, and they're not alone (Mississippi Bills | Anti-Trans Legislation, 2024). In the United States in 2024 there are currently 427 active anti-trans bills across 42 states that are up for vote to be codified into law (Trans Legislation Tracker 2023). Many bills are targeting basic rights to healthcare and life-saving medical care. Dress Coding is just one small piece of the web of anti-transness in America. The school system is not just policing clothing, they are actively criminalizing gender nonconformity.

Race and Dress Code:

The GAO (2022) found that almost all dress code enforcements disproportionately affected Black students, particularly Black females. Dress coding enforcement falls under a 'safety concern' in school districts. As educators, one has to ask what feels unsafe/threatening about someone's clothes. With clothing tied so close to identity and culture, are educators regulating identity rather than clothing? Most schools work under strict organizational structures that value predictability over diversity. Dress coding works as a means to neutralize identity. When students do not adhere to the predictability expected, they are pushed out of school. In Monique W. Morris's (2018) book, *Pushout*, she discusses the criminalization of Black girls in schools. Morris shares stories of dress code handbooks targeting Black hairstyles. She writes, "Dress codes do more than slut-shame Black girls. They marginalize and criminalize them. They cast them as deviant and reinforce social ideas about Black girl's identity in a way that can be very destructive" (p. 93). Schools treat particular identities as a threat. What is Black girl's identity a threat to? Whiteness? Overzealous punishments for Black girls' dress code infringements only further push marginalized people out of their education.

Disproportionately Black boys are dress code infringements of hairstyle with being cited as 'unclean'. Mumphrey (2024) for PBS writes about an ongoing trial of a Black Texa high school student who has been out of school since the beginning of fall 2023 for refusing to cut his locks. Mumphrey (2024) discusses the histories of many dress code rules that can be traced back to South Carolina's Negro Act of 1700. Many dress code rules are based on the ideal 'clean' 'well dressed' white man. Most dress codes are for students to assimilate to whiteness. While many states have removed their hair dress codes, Texas still remains strong in its implementation of male hairstyle dress codes despite laws like the CROWN Act that protect against discrimination against hairstyles (Mumphrey 2024). With clothing tied so closely to culture, schools are criminalizing Black culture.

Fashion and clothing are culture and identity. Fashion is a way to express culture. Culture should be celebrated and incorporated into education rather than erased and neutralized. Garment-making in the art classroom is one way to invite culture and identity into the classroom.

The Art Classroom and Dress:

Social identities in the classroom affect how students learn and interact throughout school. The importance of visibility or lack of visibility can lead to transformative experiences or lack of connection to students and lessons, and at worse, creates harm. Social identities in the classroom and social identity as power structures are important pieces to note as an art educator. The art classroom has always had great potential for transformative work. The art classroom can hold space for students to explore all the ideas through garment making. The unspoken dialogue of clothing and identity is culturally relevant to the students' daily lives. An example of the art classroom as a place to explore the power dynamics of dress happened in art educator Mathew Etherington's seventh-grade art class. In Etherington's (2018) article, *Criticizing Visual Culture Through Fashion Design and Role-Playing*, he reflects on his 4-week fashion design course, describing

I have noticed that many students are preoccupied with personal appearance and establishing/experimenting with their social identity through clothing. For example, I have observed students embrace fashion trends as dictated by peer social cues, and I have witnessed the bullying of others who did not. (p. 27)

Etherington saw his students forming their identities and testing new fashion trends as the school year went on. This initial observation was what sparked his idea for a fashion design curriculum in the art classroom. He wanted to specifically focus on why we choose the clothes we do. What influences us? Etherington's students worked to design for the future of fashion and worked from mood boards to final garments. In Etherington's (2018) reflection, he writes, "When students

were able to make connections between their identity and social capital and discuss social norms centered on clothing and the ethics of body image manipulation, they were able to examine visual culture more deeply" (p. 32). Etherington used roleplay as a form of exploration for students to act out their fashions and explore more complex topics of identity, race, and cultural dynamics. Etherington's class shows the art classroom as a capable and potentially transformative space to explore visual identity and combat the social norms and power dynamics addressed.

Sewing and Socially Engaged Pedagogy

Researching for resources on sewing in the art classroom has been admittedly sparse. The gap in the field is pretty evident. The articles and work I have seen on sewing in the art classroom have almost always been from socially engaged educators. I think the reason almost all articles on fashion design classes are socially engaged is that clothing and fashion are not neutral subjects. Clothing has been politicized because clothing is so closely tied to identity. In the following sources, I will share socially involved work done by art educators. I don't think you can talk about fashion design without discussing society, culture, and identity.

Sewing and Cultural Connection:

Culturally relevant pedagogy has proven time and time again to be a vital tool for long-term student engagement and success. Hendrix-Soto & Collazo (2023) wrote an article on the importance and transformative experience of culturally relevant pedagogy for the *Journal of the Texas Council of Teachers of English Language Arts*. They cite the importance of representation for the engagement of Latinx students in Texas in English classes. Curriculum and class content that reflects the cultures and lived experiences of the students in that class allows students to have more learner agency and help create a classroom with 'humanized instruction' (Hendrix-Soto & Collazo 2023).

Hewett's (2021) book, *This Long Thread*, comprises a series of interviews, essays, and memories of BIPOC crafters. Many people recount their first lessons of sewing from a family member. Crafters share stories about mothers, grandmothers, and so on; generations of inheritance of craft knowledge. Naomi Lifschitz-Grant (2020) writes about her experiences with teaching with culturally relevant pedagogy in a New York City Public school. Grant came up with a lesson on how to make quilt patches, have family members or caregivers join in the art-making process, and visit a quilt museum. After their visit to the museum, Grant (2020) writes,

Despite assertions in the literature that low-income families are less likely to participate in their child's school (Epstein et al., 2009; Lareau, 2011), this was not observed. When hosting these workshops, I marveled at the overwhelming number of family members who participated (often 100%) and the rich interactions that took place between caregivers and children as they became absorbed in the artmaking process. (p. 33)

Grant witnessed something that is so incredibly important. With a culturally engaging art lesson, her students and their caregivers were all invested in the work. Grant fostered connection throughout her quilting curriculum and showed many examples of quilters that she hoped would reflect and represent her students. After screening a film on the famous Gee Bend's quilters, Grant (2020) writes, "Afterward, I was astonished by the rich conversation that took place. Many shared stories of their own history and the quilts that had been passed down from generation to generation. One mother admitted that she had not wanted to come to the screening because she lacked the time, but after hearing these stories it was a powerful reminder of her own family's history and roots. After the screening, three members of the class voluntarily brought in family quilts that were placed on display in the classroom. (p. 34)

Sewing is a cultural connector. Quilting has a rich history in the United States, particularly among black Americans (Grant, 2020). Each student seemed to have a private familial connection to quilting. With this in mind, Grant's class helped facilitate conversation about

family history in a way that some children had never had before this class. Grant (2020) found the students to be incredibly engaged in their quilt work as they felt such a personal connection to their work. Through quilting in the art classroom, Grant created a transformative experience for families and their children. Socially Engaging Schools and Museums:

In 2001, Hochtritt and Lane (2004) implemented a high school art course that collaborated with the Metropolitan Museum of Art's exhibit, *Extreme Beauty: A Body Transformed*. Lisa Hochtritt (2004) writes, "Working with our art teacher, Kim Lane, and the Costumes Institute's Shannon Bell Price, we developed a project that would augment the art curriculum and bring students into the exhibit in a formalized way to explore conceptions of beauty across time" (p. 37). Working with the museum allowed the students to engage with their community outside the school setting. The exhibit also allowed the students to see fashion that might not have been accessible and allowed students to learn about different cultures' beauty standards and relate their findings to their own culture and ideas (Hochtritt, Lane, & Price 2004). Students were able to see clothing and different beauty standards that they might never have seen walking down the street in New York City. Seeing the diversity of fashion in the world can help people find connections in the differences. This article focuses on the importance of interdisciplinary work between community organizations, institutions, and schools. Different types of learning institutions working together allow students a diverse learning environment where they can engage more deeply in their environment.

Sewing as a facilitator for connection: Kala Wilburn, a Flint Michigan native and owner of Sewing To Stop Violence, was featured as a hometown hero in *Good Housekeeping* in 2018. Her program is sewing classes for young people who have experienced violence in some capacity in their childhood. To join the free classes, each student is required to write an essay on their experience with violence. Kala is able to engage with these students deeply and uses her sewing classes as an opportunity to talk to the youth of Flint Michigan. Kala Wilburn (as cited by Drake, 2018) says, "When you're sewing, it's kind of

quiet, so it provides an opportunity for them to talk about what's going on in their lives. It's like therapy, only you don't realize it" (p. 58). What's important about this community organization is not the sewing education; it is the opportunities for talk that Kala fosters. Art is an incredible connector and often facilitates conversations that are not always easy to have. This is why art classes should be socially engaged. Young people are not exempt from experiencing some harsh realities of the world; an art classroom is a place for students to share and work through their feelings.

Sewing as a Catalyst for Change:

In socially engaged pedagogy, educators work towards empowering students to voice their opinions and be a catalyst for change. At the Social Justice Sewing Academy, (SJSJA) based out of Antioch California, educators come together to create a place for young people to use textile art to give voice to marginalized communities and civil rights issues in America. Kipp (2021) writes, "One of SJSJA's earliest and longest-running projects, Community Quilts, involves creating intergenerational, 21st-century quilting circles for students and youth to process their feelings and thoughts around issues of social and racial justice" (p. 15). SJSJA uses quilt and textile education to create a space for youth to talk about issues and how as a community they work toward solutions. Socially engaged pedagogy works towards creating a more equitable environment for learning. There is this amazing intersection that happens when something like sewing is brought into socially engaged education. Sewing has such a rich personal and intergenerational aspect to it for a lot of people and bringing sewing and socially engaged pedagogy together creates such a potential for transformative experiences.

Sewing and the Body:

Sewing and fashion design naturally involves work around the body. The following sources work to break down the potential lived experiences and traumas many young people encounter growing up. Above, I discussed the dress coding of students and their bodies and the potential for harm and trauma of dress coding. The next sources are here to help inform educators on the body, trauma, and language that we can use to attempt to dismantle the policing of bodies. As educators, we must be aware of these experiences and also continually practice our own self love and healing of our own bodies in order to not perpetuate harm. Trauma informed pedagogy and Body neutral language are both components of my fashion curriculum.

The Body and Trauma:

Educators who teach about the body, whether directly or indirectly, need to develop a pedagogical approach to teaching that is well versed in trauma and the body. The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Administration (SAMHSA 2012) defines trauma as “Trauma results from an event, series of events, or set of circumstances that is experienced by an individual as physically or emotionally harmful or threatening and that has lasting adverse effects on the individual’s functioning and physical, social, emotional, or spiritual well-being” (p. 2).

According to SAMHSA (2023), “Child trauma occurs more than you think. More than two thirds of children reported at least 1 traumatic event by age 16” (para 1). Out of the 11 potential events noted by SAMHSA, 6 engaged directly with the body. As fashion design educators, it is highly likely that many students who walk in your classroom will have experienced some form of bodily trauma.

Trauma Informed Pedagogy:

Trauma informed pedagogy is a way for educators to have a framework in place to help minimize the risk of students feeling unsafe, triggered, or having a traumatic experience in class. In Joe Brummer and Margaret Thorsborne’s book, *Building a Trauma-Informed Restorative School: Skills and Approaches for Improving Culture and Behavior*, Brummer and Thorsborne (2021)

define trauma as, “Trauma is not the events we experience; it is our response to these events. It lives in our central nervous system as part of our stress response” (p. 48). Brummer and Thorsborne continue to unpack what trauma is and how it affects the classroom. Brummer and Thorsborne make a framework for “The Four Elements of a Restorative School Climate and Culture”. They are as follows, “Restorative language, building community, repairing relationships, and rebuilding communities” (p. 71 Brummer and Thorsborne 2021). All elements play an important role in student learning and safety. I will be adopting these four elements in my own pedagogical practice as well as drawing on my own experiences of teaching to work towards a restorative classroom. I will be looking at restorative language in particular as a key part of my fashion design curriculum.

The Language of Body:

Body Image:

Although not all students will have experienced a form of bodily trauma, all humans experience body image and it is important to address body image and the effects it has on young people, particularly adolescents who are experiencing puberty. With quickly changing bodies, puberty can bring up a plethora of body image feelings from gender dysphoria to body dysmorphia. The National Eating Disorders Collaboration (2023) defines body image as,

a combination of the thoughts and feelings that you have about your body. Body image may range between positive and negative experiences, and one person may feel at different times positive or negative or a combination of both. Body image is influenced by internal (e.g. personality) and external (e.g. social environment) factors. (para 1)

In a 2020 research investigation on adolescence and eating disorders, authors, Dr. López-Gil, Dr. García-Hermoso and Dr. Lee Smith (2020), found that the global statistics of eating disorders in young people are higher than originally thought. They write, “In this systematic review and meta-analysis of 32 studies including 63,181 participants from 16 countries, 22% reported that children and adolescents showed

disordered eating. The proportion was further elevated among girls, older adolescents, and those with higher body mass index” (para 1). Personally, I have encountered many students as a classmate and as a teacher with eating disorders in my fashion design classroom. I also have experienced many students using fashion design to heal their body dysmorphia. I have also experienced problematic fashion design educators who were perpetuating and rewarding disordered eating ie - students being praised for their slimmer frame and model like figure, other students being excluded from making clothes for themselves as a result of having a larger body. For most young people, body image is a very personal and vulnerable subject to talk about. How can we as art educators create a vocabulary of body neutrality and care when talking to students about body image? Below I will expand on the body positivity movement and Body neutrality movement and why I believe Body neutrality is the best stance to take as a fashion educator.

The Power of Language:

The language we use to talk about bodies, our own, and others has a huge impact on ourselves and the people around us. Going back to Brummer and Thorsborne (2021) Restorative Language framework for trauma informed pedagogy, restorative language will particularly play a large role in creating a healing centered environment for students to engage in garment making.

Body Positivity:

The body positivity movement was originally intended to diversify the beauty standards in Western media by representation in model and fashion campaigns (Leboeuf, 2019). The Body positivity movement is rooted in fat black queer activism and authors like, Sonya Renee Taylor, have created spaces for self love and body pride through critical intersectional work on queer theory, race, and feminism (Taylor, 2018). Céline Leboeuf (2019), writes a journal article, titled, *What Is Body Positivity? The Path from Shame to Pride*, where she discusses the body positivity movement. She writes about beauty standards in American media and body positivity as a response to this stating,

In response to the alienation and shame many suffer because of these narrow standards of beauty, “body positivity” has emerged as the term for the movement to accept our bodies, regardless of their size, shape, skin tone, gender, and physical abilities. As the campaign slogans just mentioned suggest, body positivity is often implicitly understood as the movement to celebrate diversity in bodily aesthetics—to expand our narrow beauty norms

p. 114

I believe Body Positivity is a movement about accepting our bodies, because of their size, shape, gender etc, not regardless of. In Sonya Renee Taylor’s (2018) book, *The Body is Not an Apology*, she outlines the key to body positivity is radical self love. Leboeuf (2019) and Taylor (2018) both work towards eliminating body shame and transitioning people’s body image to body pride. Body positivity is a radically joyful movement and has helped so many people create an unapologetic loving outlook on their body.

I do think it is important to note when talking about fashion design and body positivity, that many companies and fashion houses have commodified the movement in a way that engages with tokenism and performative activism. Companies like Aerie (American Eagle Brand) have been praised for their #AerieReal campaign that was started in 2014. Aerie Real campaign has been an ongoing body positive ad campaign where Aerie has made an effort to show different sized models without any photoshopping. Despite having ad campaigns with fat models who would size out what the industry calls ‘straight’ sizes, Aerie does not actually make clothing that goes larger than an XXL and most clothing is in the XS-XL range (Aerie, 2024). This is just one example of the countless companies commodifying and profiting off of the body positivity movement without making real changes to be inclusive. In an article for *Vox* in 2018, author Mull (2018) dives into some specific performative campaigns. Mull notes companies such as Everlane, have also been called out for making custom underwear for ad campaigns with plus size models and not

actually selling clothes over the size of XL (Mull 2018). Mull writes, Brands have done such a good job at setting tight boundaries on our expectations and their own responsibilities that even when we chide fashion designers for not being size-inclusive on the runway, we gloss over the reason they’re not: The vast majority of fashion brands make no size-inclusive clothing and don’t see people with different bodies as worthy of being their customers. (para. 16) With the rise of plus size pop stars like Lizzo and Sam Smith, many high fashion brands are collaborating with stars to create looks for red-carpet events and music videos. Unfortunately, almost all clothes made for plus size pop stars are custom made and the fashion houses do not actually make clothing in any extended size. The visibility and representation of all body sizes are needed in the fashion industry, but when they are not paired with true activism and actual steps to an inclusive fashion world, they are performative.

Body neutrality:

Eleanor Clark (2023), author of *Body Neutrality Finding Acceptance and Liberation in a Body-focused Culture*, writes about her own personal experience with Body Positivity and why it did not work for her. She writes “The solution to body obsession can not be continued with body obsession” (p. 1). Clark notes that body positivity and body neutrality should not be considered in competition but rather two frameworks. Clark (2023) defines body neutrality as, “Body neutrality is fairly self-explanatory: it promotes neither positivity or negativity toward the physical body, but rather an acceptance of and respect toward it ‘as it is’” (p. 5). I find that body neutrality as a framework will work better in a classroom setting as to not invalidate any students feelings towards their bodies. You are allowed to love your body and you’re allowed to not like your body. As stated above, many schools make students feel uncomfortable about their body and shame with dress coding and policing physical appearances. Using a body positive framework might feel disingenuous to a lot of students who lived experiences through their body. Clark expands on her concerns with body positivity noting, “One such concern

includes the pressure it places upon individuals to love their bodies, resulting in guilt when this aspiration feels impossible. This also further reinforces the belief that we must love our bodies to live a happy life” (Clark, 2023, p. 5). So how can body neutrality be a helpful framework for students and teachers to engage in fashion design? In my fashion curriculum guide for educators, I will have a Body-neutral framework for educators to follow.



STUDENT CORSET SKETCH

METHODOLOGY/ LIMITATIONS/ RESEARCH OVERVIEW

My primary mode of research is Teacher-based Research, as I have taught a series of fashion design classes. Teacher-based research is defined as, "Teacher research is intentional and systematic inquiry done by teachers with the goals of gaining insights into teaching and learning, becoming more reflective practitioners, effecting changes in the classroom or school, and improving the lives of children (p. 1 Henderson et al., 2012). My hope for using teacher-based research is to bridge the gap between theory and practice in the art education field. As I worked through my Teacher-based research, I shifted my focus more toward a community-based research approach. LeRue (2023) describes Community-based research works toward having a more collaborative framework for art research. Community-based Research emphasizes agency in participants and involves participants in decision-making and in the actual academic process of a research project. Some ways I have incorporated this framework into my research is by asking them about their own inquiries into garment making. Literature research and autoethnography supported my practitioner-based research as I embarked on these classes. Cochran-Smith and Lytle (2021) write, "Despite the current emphasis on teaching as test preparation and learning as on-demand test performance, however, many educators and reformers still believe that deep changes in practice can only be brought about by those closest to the day-to-day work of teaching" (p.2). During my research, I worked as much as possible with students in person to give me the best opportunity to facilitate important dialogue between my students and me and for me to research in community rather than on a community. My research is grounded in ethical research practices and focuses on facilitating as much learner agency as possible. While working

with teenagers in a teacher research setting, I asked myself many times, is it possible to facilitate full agency in this environment truly? Childress (2019) defines learner agency as not only the ability but comfortability of a stakeholder to be able to make their own decision about themselves and their own learning goals. Childress (2019) emphasizes the importance of acknowledging all forms of people in an institution as learners. For example, at a library, the Directors, visitors, and custodians are all stakeholders and learners in the ecosystem of a community center (not necessarily just the participants of a teacher-based research class). Kraehe and Acuff (2013) write about ethical research practices with students in "underserved communities." They write, As a field and as individual researchers, art education and art educators must recognize the possibility of complicity in undesiredness in ways that have not been considered. In our own research endeavors, these four framings [insert the four framings here for clarity purposes] have helped to heighten our perceptivity and reflexivity toward unequal power relations and privilege, as well as forms of creative agency and resistance. (pp. 304) Kraehe and Acuff's work was a guiding light for me as I evaluated my own power as an art educator and researcher with students aged thirteen to eighteen. Throughout my teacher-based research, the word ethical feels more like a buzzword for research practices that try to create the least amount of harm. I have decided that in the future, I am going to reframe my teaching to work towards the goal of generative practices rather than ethical. It is not enough to just try to negate harm in educational research systems. Community-based research-creation, where community members actively participate in creating the research guidelines, would be considered a generative practice vs. ethical research

practices of teacher-based research where the teacher comes into the classroom with the research project already decided to some degree (LeRue 2023). This thesis analyzes the capabilities of garment making in the art classroom to be transformative. This research is backed by deep research into theories, scholars, and literature in the art education field, as seen at the start of the literature review below.

Scope/Limitations:

I sought to explore the ideas of garment making in the art classroom as a practice of freedom for students to explore the dynamics of identity and power. I explored these ideas in an after-school program capacity for students 13 and up. I worked with Project Open Door and the Barrington Public Library in Rhode Island. This research may not fully apply to other types of learning environments or be outside the context of the state I am researching. I addressed ideas of identity, culture, and power throughout my work. The qualitative data I gained from teacher-based research will depend on the cultures and identities of stakeholders in my classes. My fashion design curriculum will not be able to encompass all aspects of identity but will focus on body autonomy and gender expression. My stakeholders/students will all be minors. In my research, my top priority is for my students to be engaged and proud of the work they create with me. This is a priority in my work, and I allowed my students agency in what I share in this document.

Research Project:

For my teacher-based research, I taught two different fashion design curricula. One class was entitled Future of Fashion at Project Open Door, and one was entitled The Body Transformed at Barrington Public Library. RISD's Teaching + Learning in Art + Design program Project Open Door is a Providence-based arts center where public high school students are offered free art classes that typically focus on fostering artistic skills and an interest in art in the higher education sector. Barrington Public Library is the local library in Barrington, RI, a small town just south of Providence. Both curricula are included in the Educator Book for socially engaged sewing. Both projects were purposely open-ended and student-led. My top goal for my classes was just to be able to give students in Rhode Island a free sewing class. In terms of my Thesis, I was interested in engaging in conversation with my students about gender, identity, and culture throughout their work. I wanted to listen to students' ideas on fashion and why they are interested in garment making. I wanted to facilitate an environment that made students feel comfortable and confident in expressing their ideas as well as feeling confident in a new art technique.

Throughout the classes, I collected data through check-ins, one-on-one conversations with students, and my reflections at the end of the day. Please see Appendix A and B for the lesson plans for both classes.

POD:

I started my POD workshop with an entrance survey for the students where they shared their names, pronouns, favorite way to make art, sewing experience, and their favorite music so that we could make a class playlist. My students ranged in age from 15 to 18, and most students identified as BIPOC and some as first-generation Americans. At POD, my class was split 50% 50% with male and female-identifying students. After introductions, we did a writing prompt where every student wrote down some words that came to mind when they heard the word future. Common themes arose with words like growth, time, art, excitement, technology, and AI. Almost every student was excited to sew something for themselves (this was not a requirement). While making their mood boards and sketches, students drew inspiration from different places, from their cultures to fantastical sci-fi movies. For sketches, I printed out various body shapes for the fashion croquis for the students to sketch on. I had made plus-size models (male and female), bodies with top surgery marks, and what the fashion industry would call traditional croquis for males and females.

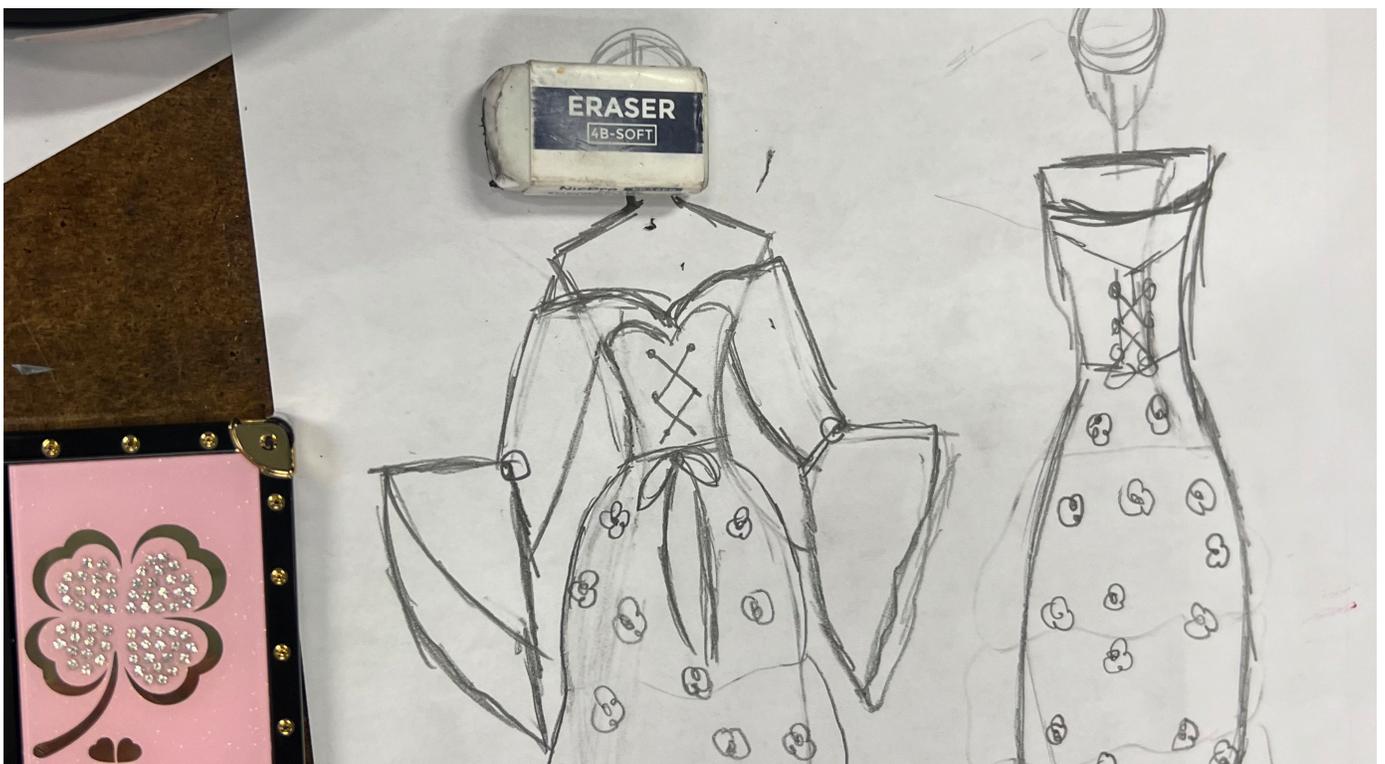
Barrington:

I started my time at Barrington Public Library with a 'get to know you' day, where I just hung out with the students and chatted with parents. This was a nice way to get to know the Barrington community and my students. At Barrington, my students were considerably younger than the students I taught at POD, most ranging from age 13 to 15. All my students at Barrington identified as female or non-binary; the majority were white. Barrington, Rhode Island, is an incredibly affluent, majority-white town known for its well-funded schools and community centers, i.e., the library. This is the most well-funded program I have ever taught throughout my career as an educator. I was not really given a budget and had free rein to buy art supplies for the classroom. In our first class, we reviewed the class's project, and students were encouraged to mood board, sketch, and look through some fashion books I had brought to the class. Some students shared that they had previous fashion design classes at their high schools and were less than impressed by the curriculum. Students were immediately interested in making a garment to wear to school. Most were uninterested in sewing a garment that engaged

in the Metropolitan Museum of Art's exhibit, Extreme Beauty: A Body Transformed. Student-driven inquiry is one of my core tenets as an educator, so I ensured everyone knew this was their time to create whatever inspired them. I am there to help facilitate their visions and lend technical knowledge to their looks.



RESEARCH FINDINGS



BODY IMAGE

Many students gained new confidence in their bodies.

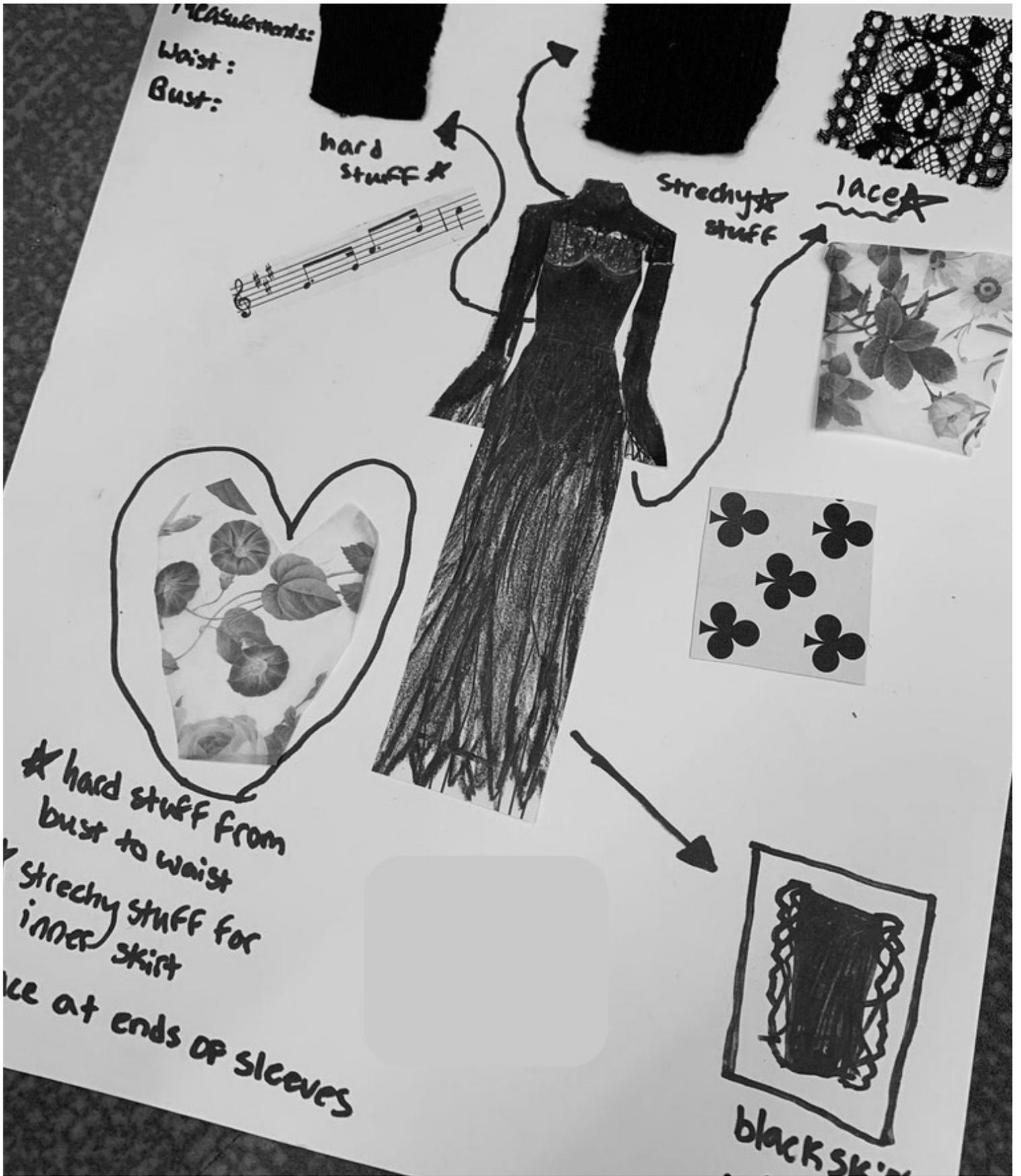
When it came time for students to make their garments, everyone wanted to sew for themselves. When we got to measuring students, I gave a demonstration on how to measure yourself and made sure to let anyone know if I needed help measuring, I could help measure them and if they would prefer not to see their measurements, then I could keep them private. When it comes to measuring a student, this is where I actively engaged in trauma-informed pedagogy from Brummer and Thorsborne's (2021) book, *Building a Trauma-Informed Restorative School: Skills and Approaches for Improving Culture and Behavior*. As so many people struggle with body image. I also introduced students to the frameworks of body neutrality by way of Eleanor Clarks (2023) framework. I know measuring one's body can be a really big trigger for students who have body image trauma. While helping some students measure, many shared that they were not happy with their bodies and expressed skepticism that we would be able to make a garment that actually fit them. All students were curious about their measurements and actively discussed how each student had different measurements. As we worked through the final sketches, I had several students lament about their frustrations with clothes shopping and their inability to find well-fitting clothes. As we talked more about size and body, I explained the idea of body neutrality and offered an article by Elizabeth Endicott (2023) titled "Your clothes were never meant to fit you".

In one class, I had one student, let's call them student X for purposes, who was actively skeptical of the sewing process and making a dress that could fit their bust area, as they expressed that it was their hardest measurement when it came to buying clothes. Student X also expressed anxiety about the dreaded prom dress shopping and getting a dress that fit. Student X was incredibly wary of their dress patterns, exclaiming, this is going to be way too small for me. I had to let them know we should trust the process a little, and if there is an issue when we try on their garment, we can easily fix it. When we finally got to the try-on phase for the top part of their dress, Student X was shocked that their garment fit. They were giddy with excitement. "It actually fits. I can't believe it fits and looks so good," exclaimed Student X. Student X spent the rest of the class taking photos and FaceTime with their friends and family to show them their top.



STUDENT X FITTING THEIR DRESS

Student X's experience was common among all my classes. As students sewed, we actively tried on the garments. It was really exciting to see the pure shock and joy on so many teens' faces when they tried on their garments and they fit. I can't describe with words that moment you try on something you've sewn and it actually fits. It's a transformative experience that sticks with you forever. I still remember the first time I tried on a dress I sewed. So many students were euphoric when they got to wear their garments.



SKETCH OF STUDENT X'S DRESS

Perseverance:

Students learned perseverance as they sewed, seam ripped (un-sewed), and created garments. Sewing, in particular, can be a challenging skill to learn, and students expressed frustration and delight throughout the sewing process as they made mistakes, re-worked, and solved problems.

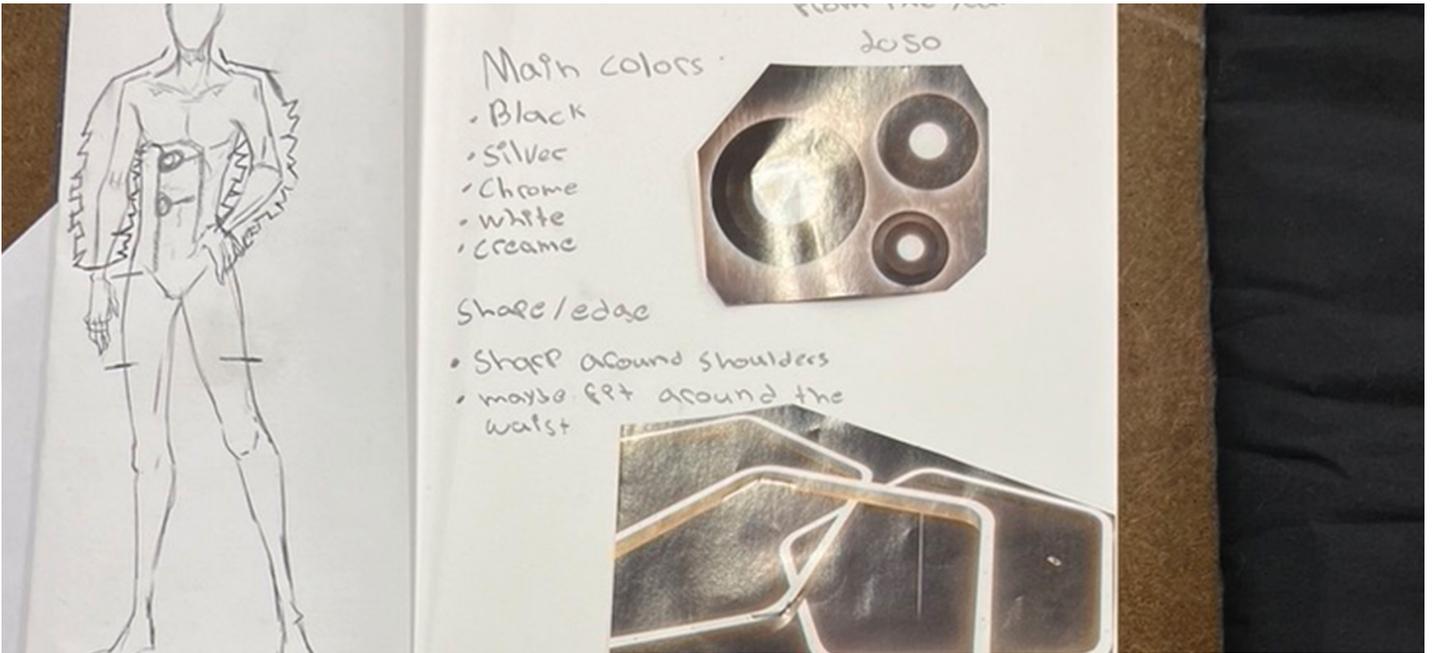
I came to the theme of perseverance throughout both classes. As each student learned how to sew and worked through their garments, many were surprised and sometimes discouraged by the complexity of sewing. I always say 50% of sewing is seam ripping and redoing your work, and the other half is problem-solving. The biggest challenge of teaching this project is balancing creativity and technique. Some students were actively engaged in learning specific sewing techniques, while others were sometimes frustrated by the limits of a sewing machine in comparison to other artmaking processes. Many students shared their surprise at the amount of time and work that goes into sewing a single piece of clothing. Many left their half-sewn garments for the rest of class while sewing other parts of their pieces. There's nothing quite like the delight of getting a sewing project to fit; on the other hand, it can be incredibly discouraging when you try on your work and it is not looking the way you want it to look. A lot of sewing can be a trusting experience; it teaches perseverance.



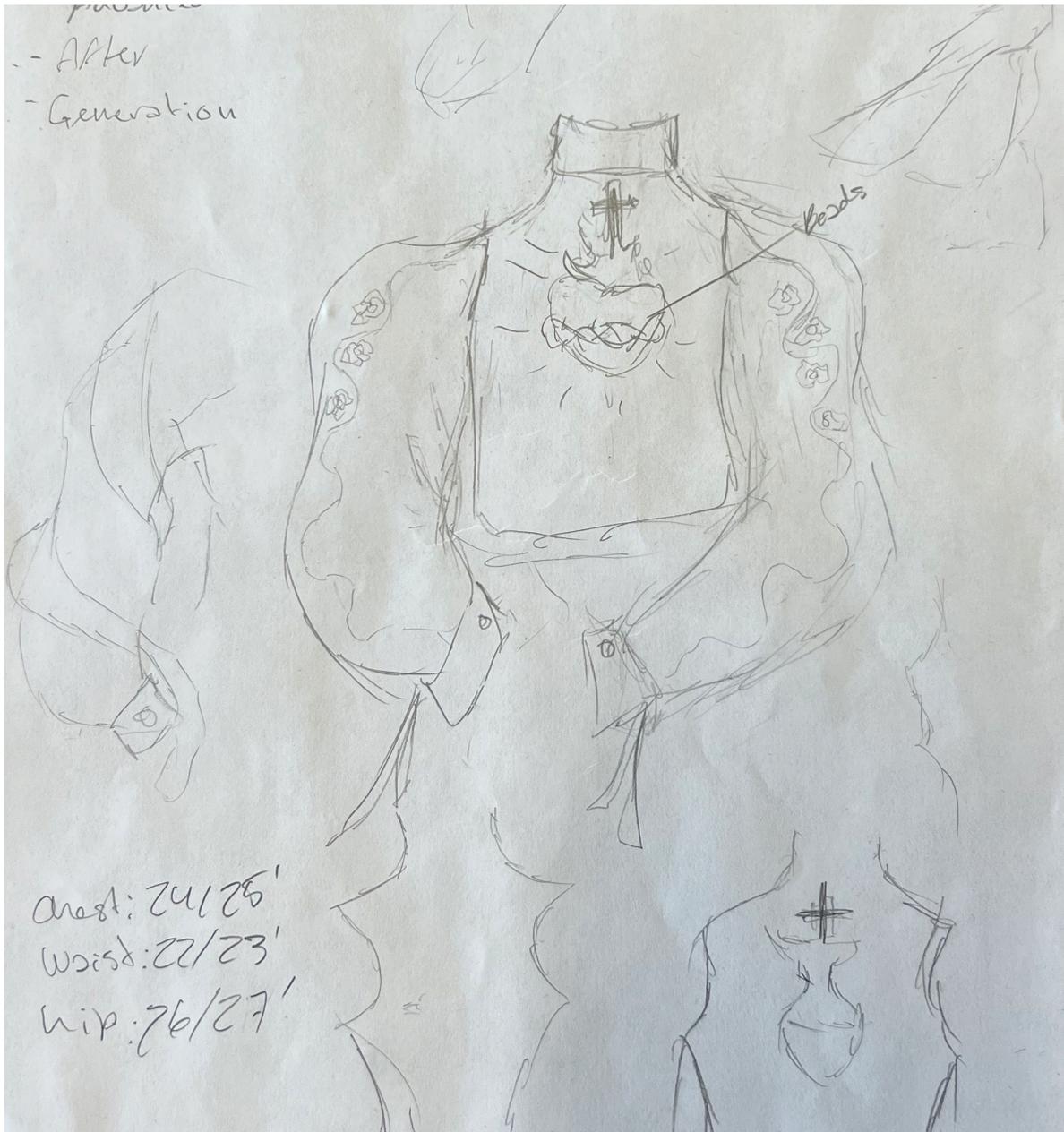
Design Thinking

Students learned the balance between creativity and design as they worked through the sketch to finished sewn product. They learned about the limits and capabilities of the sewing machine. Many students worked through multiple ideas for their looks as they honed their skills to think like a designer and the feasibility of a garment.

Taşpınar (2022) writes about the importance of design thinking in art education. Taşpınar (2022) writes about design as specifically working towards an answer to a problem. I wouldn't say all garment design is trying to solve a specific problem, but fashion students encounter many design problems while working. Fashion design encompasses design thinking as you are working around a body, a 3-dimensional form that a student is confined to in terms of their garment making. For example, the clothes students make have to be able to go around someone's arm or head for the garment to fit. Design thinking also puts a lot of emphasis on process. In my fashion design classes many students had to work and rework their garments into feasible designs. Taşpınar (2022) describes design as the bridge between science/logic and art. One of my students, Student C said to me, "I really had no idea we would be doing so much math in this fashion design class". When we did our dyeing workshop at RISD, students were surprised that we were balancing a chemical equation in order to dye our cotton fabric a specific color. Taşpınar (2022) writes, "Design thinking is a human-centered problem-solving method focused on original and innovative solutions in terms of feasibility, desirability, and applicability" (p. 382). Students had some incredibly creative ideas for garments that we just not feasible in terms on construction and machine constraints. Although this can be frustrating, not being able to take design from sketch to real life, students were able to learn the constraints of designing for a body and the sewing machine. In that learning curve, students were able to think of new creative ways to be artistic within the limits. I had one student, Student Z, who wanted to create these physical spikes coming out of their garment (see sketch below). We went over a couple of ways to achieve that look through pattern design, in the end, the student decided to make a jacket base and use a pleated fabric (draped and hand-sewn on at the end) to emulate the idea of spikes. In the end, Student X said, "I never could have imagined my jacket would look this, but through the process, my design evolved and changed, and I'm really happy with the outcome." Photos will be below of Student X sketch vs. Final Look.



STUDENT X SKETCH VS. STUDENT POSING IN FINAL LOOK



STUDENT SKETCH VS. FINAL LOOK

“This class allowed me to think in new ways and open my mind to new ideas”

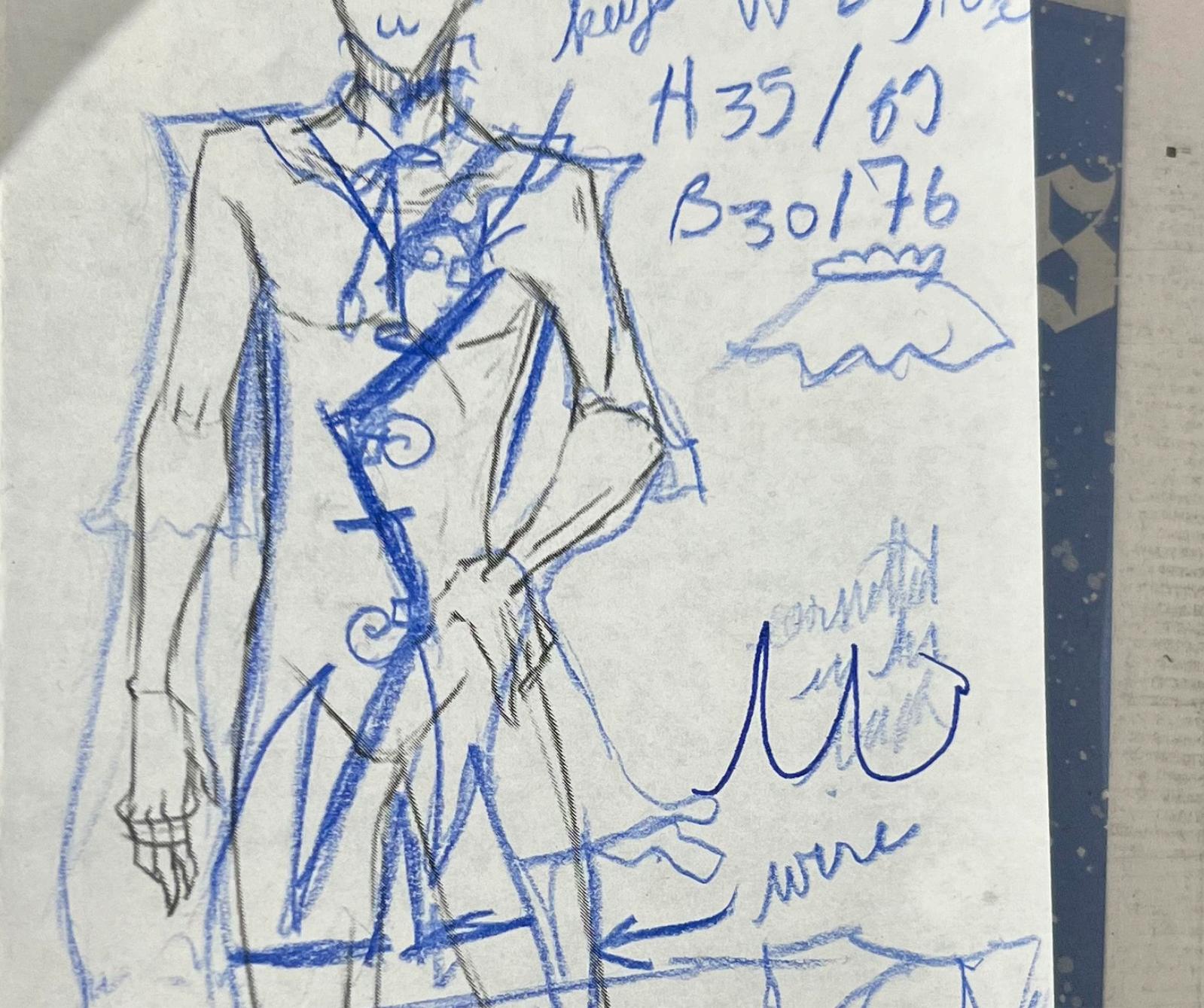
STUDENT I



COLLAR SHOULDER

6





STUDENT SKETCH VS. FINAL LOOK

“It was very helpful being able to see my results and have something in my mind to perfect and get better at give me the motivation to keep learning design.”

STUDENT G



Community

Students connected with family members who sewed and had so many stories to tell me, from talking to their aunts, grandmas, and family members about their fashion design class.

Through POD, I learned about these intergenerational connections to sewing through students coming in and telling me stories about talking to their parents or extended family about the class. At Barrington, many parents actually came into the classroom, and students showed their parents the process of wearing their garments. So many parents came up to me and said that their parents sewed, but they never learned and are really excited about their children learning the skill. Other parents were avid sewers and brought in extra supplies, and were always happy to help out with the class.

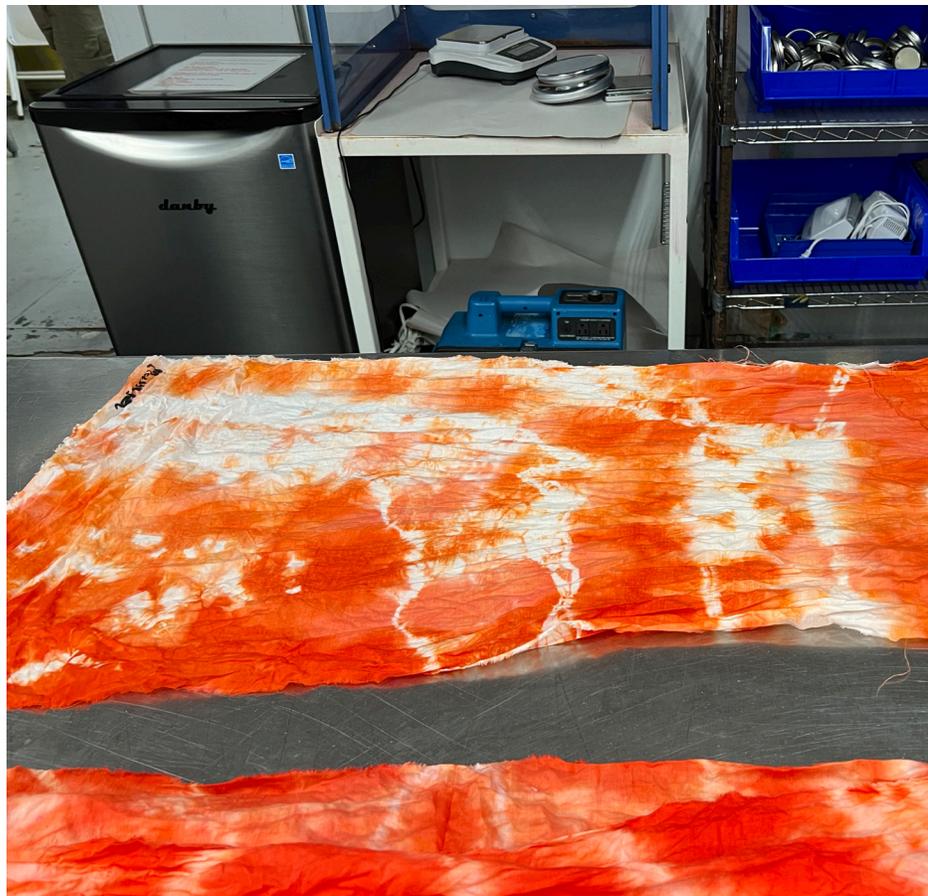
Community is an incredibly important part of many people's sewing journeys. In Dr. Sharbreon Plummer's work (2023) she emphasizes the importance of community when it comes to fiber arts. In her book, *Diasporic Threads: Black Women, Fibre, and Textiles*, she introduces contemporary fiber artists who all found their love of craft through community. In Jen Hewitt's (2021) book, *This Long Thread*, Hewitt comprises stories and lived experiences of crafter through community and family. During my classes, it seemed like every student had a story about a grandma sewing or an aunt who crafts. Bringing sewing into Barrington and POD kinda reactivated a lot of memories and connections for parents and students.

Students found a new community in their sewing friends; many students enjoyed the sewing room as a place to share stories, personal problems, and joy as they sewed. The sewing room fostered relationships that will last well beyond our workshops.

Barrington's Fashion Show was a great way for the community to engage in the student's work. Many library patrons, friends, and family of the designers came to the show. The library itself is a community hub. Most students, who went to different schools and were in different grades, made friends with each other. By the end of the class, I had students attend each other's school plays and soccer games to support one another outside the sewing classroom. Barrington Library fostered a really caring community. Even now, as I continue to teach at Barrington, I have older library patrons coming in and chatting to the students about their work and the patrons lending knowledge to the students on their sewing skills.

Students want to connect with working/higher education student artists

While working at POD, I actively wanted to make a connection between RISD's textile community and POD. I held a workshop in collaboration with RISD Textiles. I personally found this to be the most students were most engaged and excited in the class. We actually went to work in RISD's textile department, which allowed students to see a new part of campus and everyone expressed that they felt really honored to be welcomed into the textile department. Our textile class on dying really allowed students just to have fun experimenting. The students had never seen an industrial dye lab and were surprised by the amount of science that goes into the dying process. Students had no idea textiles was a major at RISD and even a career path post-high school. I think what made that day so special was the ability of my students to make connections with higher education and see other students working around the dye lab. Everyone was really inspired. I will note that it was incredibly hard to get RISD to agree to work with Project Open Door, but thanks to Professor Maliaka Temba, she helped me advocate for the students to be able to access the space. Here are some photos from our dying day on the next page:





POD DYING
DAY IN THE
RISD
TEXTILE DYE
LAB

Challenges and Limitations

Time-

Both classes had challenges and limitations to them. The biggest challenge in both classes was time. We had some unavoidable time lost with snow days, illness, attendance, etc. Sewing is something that takes time and really can not be rushed. Also, the positive experience of sewing can be overshadowed by time constraints and the stress of a time frame. If I were to teach both classes again, I definitely would add more time to allow students to feel comfortable in their abilities to finish their looks without feeling rushed. With Barrington, I am going to continue teaching classes there, so I am excited to be able to have another chance to teach new techniques and adjust our length of sewing classes.

Class Size -

My class size at Barrington was seven students and ten at POD. Class size with sewing instruction can really affect how the class works. My students at Barrington were able to get more individualized instruction as the class size was smaller.

Sewing Knowledge -

Another challenge, I personally struggled with in teaching is at places I have previously taught, I have had supervisors and coworkers that had sewing knowledge. At both Barrington and POD, I was the only teacher with sewing experience.

Funding-

Another challenge during teaching was funding. Barrington and POD had vastly different funding and many times my POD students were left with less access to materials and supplies for their work. Students were free to attend both classes. At Barrington, I had a significantly larger budget and was able to get almost everything the students needed for the work as well as the capacity to have me hold multiple sections of one class. Also, many Barrington parents were financially able to buy special pieces for their children, such as accessories, special embellishments, etc. Some Barrington parents even bought fabric and extra supplies for the whole class, even donating new sewing machines.

Personal Reflections

While working at Barrington and POD, my students came from very different socioeconomic backgrounds, cultures, and schools. I did not intentionally seek to do two case studies of different socioeconomic art funding backgrounds for my thesis, but as I found my community sites to teach at, the questions and sometimes disparities in the classes arose. Throughout my teaching, I had a lot of frustration over the inequities in funding for my two classes. An important piece to note is that all my students at Barrington went to Barrington Public High School, while my POD students went to many different public schools within Providence. Barrington Public High School is a mere 15-minute drive from Providence, yet the access to resources at Barrington Public School and access is incredibly different from the Providence public schools. Both sets of students went to public schools in Rhode Island. My Barrington students would often note that they wished they had more interesting art classes at their high school; meanwhile, I had two of my POD students say their school did not even have art classes. Working with such different groups of students, my focus in my classes had to change a lot. For example, one of the original goals of my class was to talk about dress coding with students. With my Barrington students, they talked about dress coding being one of the 'most annoying' aspects of school, while many of my POD students' biggest stressors was trying to pass their access tests for English proficiency at their public schools. I very quickly realized at POD, dress codes were the last thing on their minds when it came to school.

Although my students had different prompts for their classes, both classes participated in making a single-sewn garment (of whatever inspiration they chose). The biggest difference I saw between classes was just access. Access to free art classes, access to art education in school, and access to transportation to get to the classes, access to free time to be able to take a class without balancing school and potential jobs.

REFLECTIONS



STUDENT PINNING HEM OF SKIRT



KEY TAKEAWAYS

My biggest takeaway from both classes is that the work I am doing is important. Teens want fashion design classes. Both classes filled their spots within days of being posted, with just as many students on the waitlist to get in. After teaching both classes, every single student expressed interest in more classes. As I continue to teach in the future, I want to work towards getting grants, fundraising, collaborations, and making sure all classes and students have access to supplies and funding for the classes. I also want to work towards having a more collaborative working environment where students can engage with older students and working artists and create more meaningful connections through sewing overall. Most importantly, I want to give myself and my students more time, time to experiment, time to connect, and time to find joy in sewing.



STUDENTS AT BARRINGTON
FASHION SHOWING OFF THEIR
FINISHED GARMENTS!



CONCLUSIONS

As I conclude on this thesis, many ideas are still developing. I want to appreciate the work I have done and the work that is yet to come; this is just the beginning of more meaningful work. As I reflect on the beginning of this project, I asked myself, How can garment-making be a practice of freedom? bell hooks (2003) writes, "Education as the practice of freedom affirms healthy self-esteem in students as it promotes their capacity to be aware and live consciously. It teaches them to reflect and act in ways that further self-actualization, rather than conformity to the status quo (p. 72). I have witnessed garment making as gender-affirming care. I have seen students use garment design to disrupt and question society, schools, communities, and status the quo. I have seen students find out more about themselves through garment making and become confident in their bodies. Throughout this work, I have seen garment making be a life-changing experience for some students as well as just a fun hobby to do! Garment-making can be a multifaceted form of expression. How can garment making in an art classroom be a transformative experience for students? Throughout my teacher-based research, I implemented knowledge I learned from my literature review and my own educational experience. I saw so many thoughtful and creative students have transformative experiences in the fashion design classroom. I saw the sewing room as a place of community and care. I saw students make meaningful connections with their family members through their sewing classes. Sometimes, I want to scream from the rooftops "this is important and this matters". Sewing classes deserve funding, deserve to be in schools, and

deserve to be accessible. sewing classes have proven to teach students important skills: Eva Veeber, Erja Syrjäläinen, & Sirpa Kokko (2023) had many of the same conclusions as I did while teaching sewing classes. They noted the importance of students learning design thinking, perseverance, patience, and collaboration (Veeber 2023). Grant (2020) wrote about the power of connection through a quilting class she taught in a New York public school where parents were not just only invited to join in the class but actively worked to connect with their children through sewing; paving the way for so many children to learn about their family sewing histories and their family cultures. So many of my findings resonated with other craft educators' work.

As I progressed through my research, naturally new questions and inquiries arose. Some of these questions are: How can community care be integrated into the fashion industry?

How can fashion design classes continue to disrupt and question modes of domination and power in education? How can fashion design classes be integrated into public school arts, specifically in RI?

These are just a few of the questions and ideas I approach the future of my practice and my research with. The most important takeaway I have from this project is the sewing community is important, meaningful, and deserves to take up space. Art practices that prioritize connection, mindfulness, and love are our way forward to truly belonging.

I will leave us here with one last quote from bell hooks. She writes,

"I dreamed about a culture of belonging. I still dream that dream. I contemplate what our lives would be like if we knew how to cultivate awareness, to live mindfully, peacefully; if we learned habits of being that would bring us closer together, that would help us build beloved community (p. 8)".

BELL HOOKS



STUDENT POSING IN THEIR
TSHIRT DESIGN

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APPENDICES:

A. Project Open Door Workshop:

Workshop Title	
Teaching Artist	Emily Bennison
Workshop Media	Sewing, garment-making, multimedia – sewing, 3d garment-making, sketching, mood boarding

Workshop Description: *Write 2-4 sentences describing the class. This may be used to recruit teens so consider starting like “In this workshop, you will....”*

In this 6 week workshop, students will critically analyze fashion past, present, and future. Students will make one garment from sketch to finish that is inspired by what they think the future of fashion is. Throughout the five weeks, students will learn sketching, concept/mood boarding, pattern making/draping, fabric manipulation, and sewing techniques for garment making. This will be a choice-based class where students can create any type of garment.

Workshop Objectives: *What will teens create? What specific skills and content will they learn?*

- Students will create:
 - One garment
 - final sketch of design
 - Inspiration Board
 - Process board
 - Flat sewing patterns

Week 1

Class Objective + Essential Concept
<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Create a final sketch of the garment and be able to talk about WHY you think this garment is where fashion will be heading in the future.● Big ideas: the future, fantasy, identity, culture

- The four artists I will be introducing work with garnet making in terms of Futurism, Gender, Armor and Protection, and Environmental/sustainability

Skills and Techniques Developed

- Sketching
- Mood boarding - creating a concept for a garment
- How to talk about each other's work and fashion with body-neutral language

Schedule Breakdown

10 min - introductions get to know me and the students
 25 min - presentation on artists and overview of the project (this will include a five min presentation on myself and my work and my thesis)
 10 min - as students start to make mood boards and as they sketch I am going to talk about body neutrality – key terms for how I run my class, how we will talk about the body and how we will talk about each other's work as some students might be making clothes for themselves to wear.
 1 hr - mood boarding, sketches, check-ins about the feasibility of the garment, and time constraints. (in terms of the feasibility of the garment, students will be encouraged to focus on one part of the body ie: torso, legs, or arm, – students won't be making a full look with multiple garments) Take measurements if students are making for themselves
 15 min - share out with students

Week 2

Class Objective + Essential Concept

- Essential Concept - taking a 2D sketch and working towards making a 3D garment

Skills and Techniques Developed

- Patternmaking
- Basic skills for sewing on a machine
- Students will learn how to bring 2d ideas into the 3d realm

Schedule / Breakdown

- 10 min - check-ins about the final design sketch
- 15 min - overview of draping and patternmaking (for time, I will do the majority of the base patternmaking for the students, and then they can do the pattern alterations for example changing a neckline or collar shape)
- 5 - students pick out fabric
- 35 - sewing lesson and demo – students will all make a small fabric test with the machine. Their sewing test will go on their process boards
- Rest of class - individual work on patterns and cut fabric

Week 3

Class Objective + Essential Concept

- Sewing the majority of garment

Skills and Techniques Developed

- More advanced sewing techniques - sewing curves, darts, pleats etc

Schedule Breakdown

10 min - by this class students should have patterns done and fabric cut out. Check-ins
 1 hour 50 min: Rest of class - individual sewing and check-ins

Week 4: 1/30

Class Objective + Essential Concept

- Exploration with fabric

Skills and Techniques Developed

- Material exploration - ie: modern lace making, fabric manipulation, dying (this is potential to do this lesson at the textile department in RISD, but I have to talk to the department and confirm that)

Schedule Breakdown

30 min - Individual check-ins and sewing
 1.5 min - go to the RISD textile department and demo fabric manipulation (heat pressing, fabric dying, and modern lace making. Each student will make one swatch of each technique, and then they can put that on their process boards.

Week 5

Class Objective + Essential Concept

- Continued Individual Sewing

Skills and Techniques Developed

- Individual Sewing Class

Schedule Breakdown

- Full class of sewing

Week 6: 2/6

Class Objective + Essential Concept

- Finished concept and presenting

Skills and Techniques Developed

- Sewing finishings (hems, top stitchings, embellishments, etc)
- Photoshoot

Schedule Breakdown

1 hour - individual sewing finishing garments and check-ins (for early finishers – can start to sketch out a full collection inspired by their garment and big inspiration)

1 hour - Photoshoot of Garments

Contemporary Artist Examples - For this class, I have four contemporary artist examples: From Left to Right Artists: Nick Cave, Iris Van Herpen, Jeremy Hutchinson, Rei Kawakubo



Each Artist focuses on themes including, armor and protection, technology, environmentalism, and gender.

B. Barrington Public Library Workshop

Workshop Title	<i>Extreme Beauty: A Body Transformed</i>
Teaching Artist	Emily Bennison
Workshop Media	Sewing, garment-making, multimedia – sewing, 3d garment-making, sketching, mood boarding

Workshop Description: *Write 2-4 sentences describing the class. This may be used to recruit teens so consider starting like “In this workshop, you will....”*

In this 6 week workshop, students will create one garment that focuses on a specific part of the body. Students are encouraged to critically analyze beauty as a cultural standard and the social aspects of fashion. Students will make one garment from sketch to finish that will be presented at a fashion show. Throughout the six weeks, students will learn sketching, concept/mood boarding, pattern making/draping, fabric manipulation, and garment-making techniques. This will be a choice-based class where students can create any type of garment. This Class was inspired by a lesson by Hochtritt and Lane (2004) with the Metropolitan Museum of Art’s exhibit, *Extreme Beauty: A Body Transformed*.

Workshop Objectives: *What will teens create? What specific skills and content will they learn?*

- Students will create:
 - One garment
 - final sketch of design
 - Inspiration Board
 - Flat sewing patterns

Week 1

Class Objective + Essential Concept

- Create a final sketch of the garment
- Big ideas: identity, culture
- We will use the exhibit book from the Metropolitan Museum of Art’s exhibit, *Extreme Beauty: A Body Transformed*

Skills and Techniques Developed

- Sketching
- Mood boarding - creating a concept for a garment
- How to talk about each other’s work and fashion with body-neutral language

Schedule Breakdown

<p>10 min - introductions get to know me and the students</p> <p>20 min - presentation on artists and overview of the project (this will include a five min presentation on myself and my work and my thesis)</p> <p>10 min - as students start to make mood boards and as they sketch I am going to talk about body neutrality – critical terms for how I run my class, how we will talk about the body and how we will talk about each other's work as some students might be making clothes for themselves to wear.</p> <p>45 min- mood boarding, sketches, check-ins about the feasibility of the garment, and time constraints. (in terms of the feasibility of the garment, students will be encouraged to focus on one part of the body i.e., torso, legs, or arm – students won't be making an entire look with multiple garments) Take measurements if students are making for themselves</p> <p>10 min - share out with students</p>
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Week 2

Class Objective + Essential Concept
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Essential Concept - taking a 2D sketch and working towards making a 3D garment
Skills and Techniques Developed
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Patternmaking Basic skills for sewing on a machine Students will learn how to bring 2d ideas into the 3d realm
Schedule / Breakdown
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 10 min - check-ins about the final design sketch 15 min - overview of draping and patternmaking (for time, I will do the majority of the base patternmaking for the students, and then they can do the pattern alterations, for example, changing a neckline or collar shape) 5 - students pick out fabric 35 - sewing lesson and demo – students will all make a small fabric test with the machine.

Week 3

Class Objective + Essential Concept
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sewing Refresh and Cutting Fabric
Skills and Techniques Developed
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sewing techniques and how to cut fabric from patterns
Schedule Breakdown
<p>10 min - Check-Ins</p> <p>20 - sewing refresher</p> <p>Rest of class - cutting fabric</p>

Week 4

Class Objective + Essential Concept
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sewing Garments
Skills and Techniques Developed
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individual instructions and sewing techniques
Schedule Breakdown
30 min - Individual check-ins and Everyone shares what they are working on 1 Hour - sewing

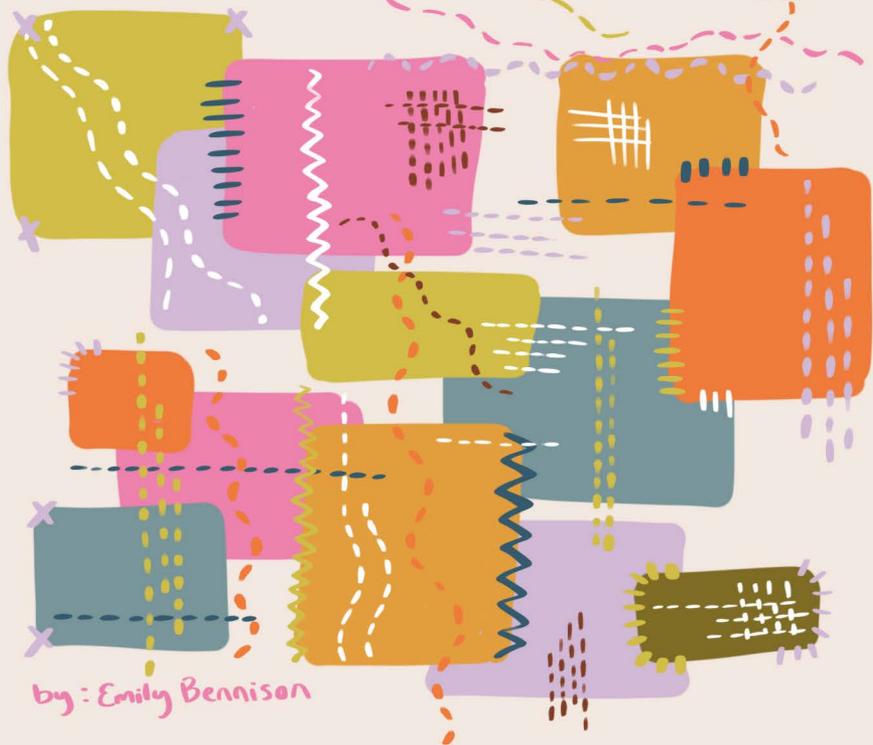
Week 5

Class Objective + Essential Concept
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sewing
Skills and Techniques Developed
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sewing • Learning finishings (hems, top stitchings, embellishments, etc.)
Schedule Breakdown
1 hour - individual sewing finishing garments and check-ins throughout class 30 min -share out of work

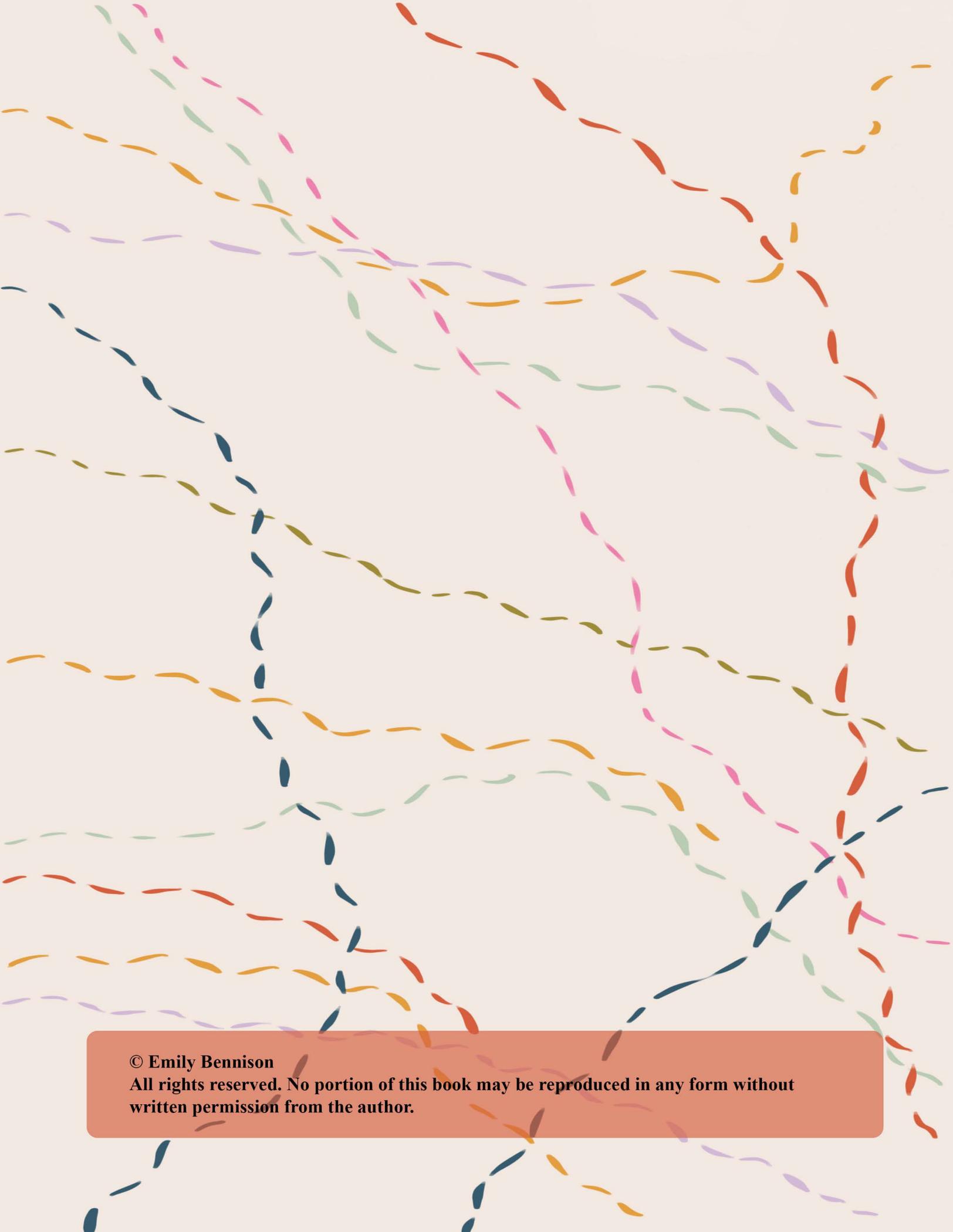
Week 6

Class Objective + Essential Concept
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fashion Show Presentation
Skills and Techniques Developed
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presentation, Celebration of students
Schedule Breakdown
15 min - check garments and make sure all threads are cute, etc 45 min - run through of show 1 hour- Fashion Show!

Socially Engaged Sewing



by: Emily Bennison



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Safety and Sewing:

Explain why sewing is safe and lots of fun to do but takes time. I would introduce students to the supplies we use for sewing and how they are used.

My Overall Safety Lessons for Sewing/Cutting/Pinning Fabric:

SCISSOR CUTTING SAFETY:

- No running with scissors
- Always cut fabric on a flat surface and not in the air
- When carrying or passing scissors, always carry down and closed holding by the blade
- Make sure fabric is flat and straight on a flat surface before cutting
- Make sure students hold scissors correctly (will have left-handed scissors available)
- I will demo cutting fabric etc.

PINNING FABRIC SAFETY:

- Explain what a pin is and how it has a pointy side. Explain why and how we use pins when we sew. (we use pins so the fabric does not slip when we go to the machine)
- Demonstrate how to pin fabric and give everyone a test piece of fabric to pin through and practice (make sure everyone understands the pinning process before moving on to sewing safety)

SEWING SAFETY:

- This should be done in smaller groups of 5ish to an instructor. Students can gather around the instructor to learn:
 - Turn on the machine and off
 - Change the speed of the machine
 - How to place fabric under the presser foot of a machine
 - How to put the presser foot down and up and needle as well
 - How to keep your fingers outside of the gray box of the sewing machine and how to guide your fabric keeping your hands away from the needle of the machine. Machines will all be equipped with a finger guard for extra safety (this allows for an extra barrier between students' fingers and needles)
- Students will practice sewing on test pieces of fabric until they are comfortable with the machine
- The instructor will check each student's sewing test piece.

Differentiated instructions for sewing:

- * At least one sewing machine with a stop and start button for students who are unable to use their foot to work the pedal. Most machines that have a start-stop button have speed control as well. This is important for students who might have motor delays.
- * Have left-handed scissors and arthritic scissors
- * Have fabric weights as an option for cutting fabric instead of pins (pinning requires fine motor skills)
- * Have clips as an alternative to pins (pinning requires fine motor skills)
- * Students should always have the option not to sew - options like fabric adhesive tape, stick on velcro, and fabric glue as all ways for students to engage with making clothing

A BODY-NEUTRAL FRAMEWORK

The language we use to talk about bodies, our own, and others greatly impacts us and the people around us. Clark (2023), author of *Body Neutrality Finding Acceptance and Liberation in a Body-focused Culture*, defines body neutrality as “Body neutrality is fairly self-explanatory: it promotes neither positivity or negativity toward the physical body, but rather an acceptance of and respect toward it ‘as it is’ (p. 5). When teaching fashion design classes, a lot of emotions and insecurities can sometimes come up for students. Educators need to create a relationship of trust with students and reduce the potential to perpetuate harmful language and preconceived notions of the ‘ideal’ body.

Representation matters:

Suppose I am showing examples of fashion designers and their creations. In that case, it’s essential to make sure there is a diverse array of models of different body types, races, abilities, ages, etc. When it comes to sketching looks on a fashion croquis, I always have different kinds of models (examples: plus-size men, Plus-size women, trans bodies, skinny men and women, people with disabilities, etc).

Measuring:

When it comes to having students sew clothes for themselves, make sure to let students know that they do not have to see their measurements if they do not want too. Measuring bodies can be a common trigger for many people struggling with body image.

Adjectives to Avoid:

Flattering/Unflattering
Curvy/Skinny/big boned
Slimming
Healthy (Have you lost weight? You look so healthy!)
That look really works for your body type

Real Life Example:

“ Ugh, I look so fat in this.”

Step One: validate a student’s feelings and say, “ Hey, I understand you are not loving how your body, and that is totally okay feeling to have. You’re allowed not to like your body. Instead of saying the word fat, let’s try to say something like “I am having a bad body day.” Fat is not an inherently bad word, and it’s essential to decenter it from our conversations about our bodies.

The Fashion Critique:

In a fashion critique or artist’s presentation of a garment, it’s common for students to wear their looks. Talk to the entire class about how we will talk about the garments. Ensure everyone understands that it is unacceptable to comment on the student body (good or bad). Instead, have students look at specific design elements of the student’s work: IE - I like how you made an asymmetrical hem. That was a creative design choice.

FUTURE OF FASHION

Students will critically analyze fashion past, present, and future. They will make one garment from sketch to finish, inspired by their vision of the future of fashion. They will learn sketching, concept/mood boarding, pattern making/draping, fabric manipulation, and sewing techniques for garment making. This will be a choice-based class where students can create any type of garment.



PHOTOS TOP LEFT TO RIGHT: REI KAWAKUBO FASHION PHOTOGRAPHED BY VOGUE, IRIS VAN HERPEN PHOTOGRAPHED BY VOGUE, REI KAWAKUBO PHOTOGRAPHED BY THE MET, JEREMY HUTCHINSON PHOTOGRAPHED BY SELF

LESSON OVERVIEW

Age: 12 and up

Big Ideas: Eco-literacy, sustainable futures, nature and the environment, recycling discarded everyday objects.

Cultural Responsiveness:

This course works towards a sustainable future as students engage with the climate crisis, recycling, and the pollution of the fashion industry.

Objectives:

Students will:

- Make a garment out of found materials
- participate in a fashion show
- Present their work and make an artist statement
- Engage in recycling and sustainable fashion

Differentiated Lesson:

Don't have sewing machines? Think about students collaging, glueing

Students should always be encouraged to make art any way they want! If they don't want to sew, offer them this alternative prompt.

Artist Inspo: Marina Debris

Session time: 14 hours total (2 hours weekly for 7 weeks)

Materials:

Sewing machines and sewing supplies, found objects (trash, masks, paper bags, newspapers),
Hot glue gun

FELTED FEELINGS

This class is inspired by Artist Nastassja Swift. She makes large and miniature felted sculptures that are inspired by her black ancestry, dolls, and black femininity. She often creates multiple faces with a breadth of emotions on each miniature. Students will be prompted to make their own felted self-portrait or portrait expressing an emotion. Students are encouraged to think past the physicality of emotions and create something that doesn't necessarily have to look like a traditional portrait. Students will be prompted to think about why artist Nastassja Swift uses felting and fibers as her medium of choice.



LESSON OVERVIEW

Age: High School

Big Ideas: Identity/Emotions/Storytelling/

Cultural Responsiveness:

This project is a great opportunity for students to discuss black fiber arts and art forms that aren't as represented in the fine arts culture.

Objectives:

At the end of this lesson, students will:
Have learned more about Black fiber arts
Created a portrait and learned about the formal art techniques of portraiture
Have learned wool felting
Learn about soft sculpture and miniatures

Differentiated Lesson:

Students are welcome to either make a 2D wool felted portrait or a 3D miniature felted sculpture. Students who are unable to wool felt through needling can use an alternative technique like soap and bubble wrap felting (this is easier for students with motor skill disabilities)

Artist Inspo: Nastassja Swift

Session time: 12 hours total

Materials: styrofoam, wool shirring for feltings (multiple colors), rit liquid dye (to paint felt), felting needles, paper, and pencils to draw out ideas first, loose weave canvas

A QUILT STORY

Bisa Butler inspired collage quilt patch of self or of someone important to student.

How can we use quilting to tell a story about our family? Who is Someone important you would like to tell a story about? Why is quilting so important to lots of families? Students will first draw out their ideas and then use fabric and glue to collage their own quilt patch. Students will make two quilt patches (one for themselves and one for a community quilt).



LESSON OVERVIEW

Age: K-1st Grade

Big Ideas: Identity/Storytelling/Family History

Cultural Responsiveness:

Students will learn about Bisa Butler and her Quilts. We will talk about big ideas of storytelling through art, and making art that means something to the artist. We will talk about the history of black families and quilting (a normally invisible art form and history).

Objectives:

Students will:

- Learn about a portrait
- How to story tell through art
- Age-appropriate quilting techniques
- How to collage
- Learn what a composition is
- How to use your own ideas in your art

Differentiated Lesson:

For students with any motor skill disabilities - have precut fabric and shapes for students to use

Questions to help students brainstorm:

- Who is someone important to you that you want to collage
- What are their favorite colors?
- What is your favorite thing about that person

Students will have a demo for collaging and early finishers will be offered the option of peer modeling and helping other students

Artist Inspo: Bisa Butler

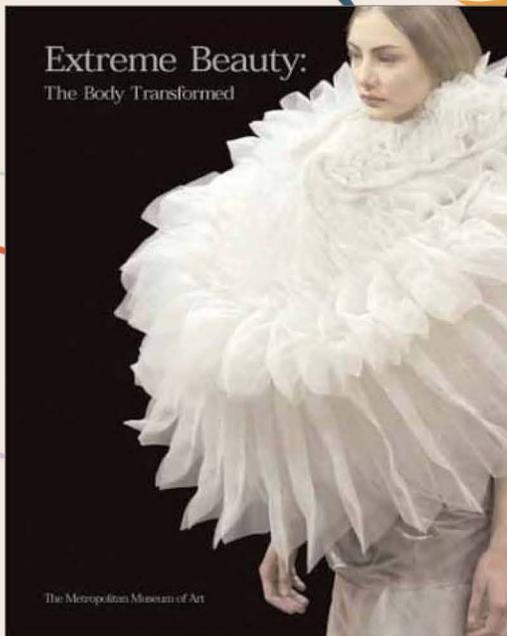
Session time: 2 hours total

Materials:

Cardstock, collage material, fabric scraps, fabric glue, paint and paintbrushes

THE BODY TRANSFORMED

Inspired by the Met Exhibit, **Extreme Beauty: The Body Transformed**, students will focus on a specific part of the body (hips, arm, shoulders, waist, etc) to investigate trends throughout history and create their own garment.



PHOTOS COURTESY OF THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART EXHIBIT
EXTREME BEAUTY: THE BODY TRANSFORMED

LESSON OVERVIEW

Age: High School

Big Ideas: Self/Others, The Body and Culture, Body Image,

Cultural Responsiveness:

This lesson is about learning that beauty ideals are cultural. Students will be able to engage and question beauty and fashion trends, past and present. This lesson is all about giving students a chance to disrupt and question the body and how we adorn it.

Objectives:

Students will create:

One garment
final sketch of the design
Inspiration Board
Flat sewing patterns.

Students will be able to:

synthesize ideas about the culture, body, and art
Gain confidence in sewing on a machine
Ability to work and think 3 dimensionally

Differentiated Lesson:

Students having trouble with an idea... Questions and prompts:

Focus on one part of the body ie: arm, bust, waist, or hips

Was there a particular piece in the exhibit book that you were inspired by

What do you want to say with your piece

Who are you creating the garment for

Don't have sewing machines?

This can be a drawing exercise, illustrating a collection, or a mixed media collage of the garments.

Students should always be encouraged to make art any way they want! If they don't want to sew, offer them this alternative prompt.

Artist Inspo: The Met exhibit, the Body Transformed

Session time: 14 hours total (2 hours weekly for 7 weeks)

Materials: Sewing machines and sewing supplies, fabric, patternmaking supplies, collage materials, foam board for inspiration board

CLOTHING AS ARMOR

Students will design and sew a garment inspired by the idea of protection. Nick Cave will be our artist to look at for inspiration. This unit's value is to allow students to work through some big emotions that come up around feeling unsafe. Students will be able to physically build something that protects themselves. This can be an absolute fantasy project or can be very grounded in real-life events. This project is intended to allow students to work through ideas of body autonomy, identity, and agency.



PHOTOS OF NICK CAVE'S SOUNDSTUIS FROM NICK CAVE'S ARTIST WEBSITE

LESSON OVERVIEW

Age: 4-5th Grade

Big Ideas: Power/Protection

Cultural Responsiveness:

This lesson contributes to showing a diverse array of artists. Nick Cave's work is culturally relevant to ongoing issues in America. This lesson will show my students that vulnerability is valued in the art classroom. I think this will also help students expand their ideas of fine art and show them that they don't just have to paint or draw!

Objectives:

At the end of this lesson, students will

- How to use unconventional materials in art-making
- Students will learn how to talk and present their work
- Sew, pin, cut from a pattern, embellish, and cut fabric
- Critically think about clothing
- Work around a 3D form
- Incorporate their own identity into their artwork

Differentiated Lesson:

Dont have sewing machines? Think about printing out or having students trace each other to make their bodies on paper and then collage on their armor.

Students should always be encouraged to make art any way they want! If they don't want to sew, offer them this alternative prompt.

Artist Inspo: Nick Cave

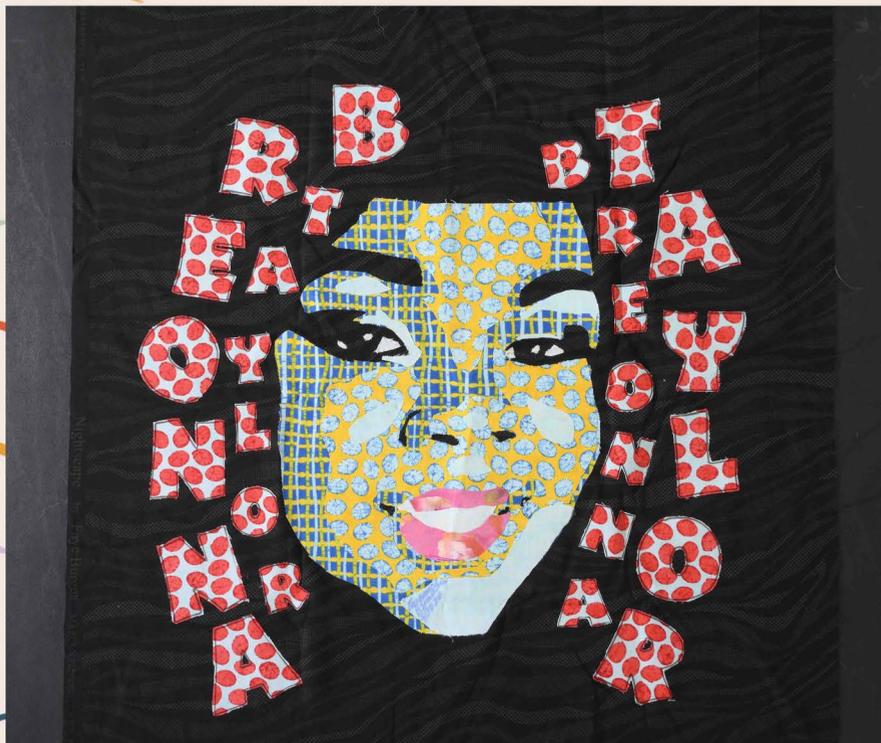
Session time: 10 hours total

Materials:

Fabric, unconventional art-making materials, found objects, sewing machine, and sewing supplies, hot glue, fabric glue, dress forms (optional, foam, cardboard etc.)

Social Justice Quilts

Students will create Social justice quilts inspired by the Social Justice Sewing Academy. Students will come up with their own message for their quilt patch and can work collaboratively to quilt multiple patches together. Quilts can be hung in public places to read student's art activism. Students will learn how to use art as a form of expression and activism.



LESSON OVERVIEW

Age: 6th-7th Grade

Big Ideas: Social Justice/Power/Change

Cultural Responsiveness:

This is a chance for students to learn about the unsung activists of quilting throughout America. Many black Americans have used quilts for activism since the time of the Underground Railroad. Students will use quilts to send a message to the reader. Art as activism is powerful!

Objectives:

Students will learn:

How to use art to stand up for something they believe in

Quilting and fiber arts techniques

Art as activism

How to work collaboratively on an art project.

Differentiated Lesson:

Students are not required to sew if uncomfortable with the machine (make sure to demo and go over the machine with students fully)

There is no wrong way to create their art, as long as students are engaging in the prompt and feel inspired, that's all that matters

Precut materials and letters for those who need

Artist Inspo: The social justice sewing academy, Gees Bend quilts

Session time: 8 hours total

Materials:

Fabric, Quilt Batting, Quilt Backing, Sewing machine and sewing supplies, Fabric glue and fabric paint

FAMILY FABRIC

For this lesson, we will look at family tartans from Scotland and Kente from Africa. Both fabrics represent families (different kentes and tartans are made from different families, each unique to the family). Students will be working with the idea of identity and family. The students will decide what colors and shapes to use in their family fabric. Students will be encouraged to collage and draw their patterns. Once students have their pattern finished. I will print their design onto fabric.



PICTURED ABOVE - KENTE FABRIC AND TARTAN FABRIC

LESSON OVERVIEW

Age: 2nd-3rd grade

Big Ideas: Family/Storytelling/identity

Cultural Responsiveness:

Students will learn about two very different kinds of fabrics that can be used to express identity and family. Students will be encouraged to engage with family members to talk about their history and cultural roots. This should help garner intergenerational connections through a family fabric.

Objectives:

Students will learn:

- What a pattern and motif, and how to make it
- Synthesize motifs that are important to them
- How to explain their artistic decisions to make pattern

Artist Inspo: Fabric inspiration - Kente and Tartans

Session time: 6 hours total

Materials:

Printer fabric (fabric with a paperback to print on in regular printer), letter-sized paper, art-making supplies...Pencils.. paint..etc.

SCRAPPY LANDSCAPES

Students will make a fabric landscape based off of a memory. Students will be working with fabric scraps, and we will talk about nature and sustainability. We will talk about how we can use discarded materials to create art while helping the environment. Big ideas of nature, sustainability, and memories will be at the core of this class. The students will be making fabric art, and I will show them techniques for sewing fabric to create a landscape.



LESSON OVERVIEW

Age: 7th and 8th grade

Big Ideas: Time/change, Memories/ Sustainability in Art

Cultural Responsiveness:

How can we use art to combat the climate crisis? How can we as art activists tell stories of the environment? How can a memory be preserved through art?

Objectives:

Students will learn about:

Found objects in art

Sustainability in art

What a landscape is

How to preserve memory through art

Differentiated Lesson:

Don't have sewing machines? Think about students collaging fabric and finding mixed media on a canvas to create a landscape.

Students should always be encouraged to make art any way they want! If they don't want to sew, offer them this alternative prompt.

Artist Inspo: Alexandra Kehayoglou

Session time: 8 hours total

Materials:

Sewing machines and sewing materials, fabric scraps and found materials, fabric glue, hot glue

TRASH FASHION SHOW

Students will use only found objects and trash to create a fashion look. The goal of this class is to make a garment that is creative and sustainable at the same time.



PHOTOS FROM ARTIST MARIA DEBRIS

LESSON OVERVIEW

Age: 12 and up

Big Ideas: Eco-literacy, sustainable futures, nature and the environment, recycling discarded everyday objects.

Cultural Responsiveness:

This course works towards a sustainable future as students engage with the climate crisis, recycling, and the pollution of the fashion industry.

Objectives:

Students will:

- Make a garment out of found materials
- participate in a fashion show
- Present their work and make an artist statement
- Engage in recycling and sustainable fashion

Differentiated Lesson:

Don't have sewing machines? Think about students collaging, glueing

Students should always be encouraged to make art any way they want! If they don't want to sew, offer them this alternative prompt.

Artist Inspo: Marina Debris

Session time: 14 hours total (2 hours weekly for 7 weeks)

Materials:

Sewing machines and sewing supplies, found objects (trash, masks, paper bags, newspapers),
Hot glue gun

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