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Fashion Image: Interdisciplinary and Collaborative Approach to Portfolio Presentation

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Fashion Image

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The motivation to develop this course was a natural reaction to the fashion industry's ever-changing need for talents who possess versatile skill sets, think creatively, present themselves and their work professionally, and make productive contributions in a team environment. Fashion Image course provides opportunities to observe, analyze, create, and examine both figurative and literal function of fashion imagery. Students develop visual aesthetics to enhance and complement existing portfolio formats such as a hard bound books and online presence. The course combines theoretical and practical approaches in planning through individual and collective efforts through lectures, workshops, and field work.

The core objective of Fashion Image is to showcase student's multi-disciplinary skills and learning outcomes. With that in mind, an open garment call is made to all student designers who have completed their senior/undergraduate thesis collection. As outside student designers apply to be included in the final photoshoot, they must also submit any relevant information as it pertains to their original design vision. Once four final collections are chosen, Fashion Image students brainstorm about the concept and theme of the shoot to create inspiration boards.

Fashion Image course incorporates current industry professional practices by hosting several guest lectures given by important-taste makers in NYC fashion industry. The first guest speaker, traditionally a fashion editor or creative director of a magazine, is invited to the classroom to speak about the full scope and process of an editorial photoshoot. Students learn about the specific roles and responsibilities of all parties involved in an editorial photoshoot. Once student design collections are assigned to a group, roles and responsibilities are allocated and clarified. Each group consists of a fashion editor, fashion stylist, wardrobe assistant, and two production assistants. The project of each group is considered a campaign, formed by multiple concept meetings, compiling research, determining responsibilities, and finally presenting concept boards.

To simulate the elements of a real world editorial fashion shoot, Fashion Image students collaborate with photography and videography students from other schools. Previous collaborations include programs of New York University, Tisch School of the Arts and New York Film Academy. Students visit each other's schools to understand what their counterparts are contributing, therefore expanding their perspectives on the entire scope of the process. With a concrete concept of the final shoot, the collaborating photography professor and students join Fashion Image students in the final campaign presentation. Fashion Image students must work in partnership with the photography crew; photographer, photo assistant, lighting assistant, and digital tech, along with videography crew; videographer, sound tech, lighting tech. In addition,

the photography instructor lectures on industry specific language and nuances, procedures and protocols, and basic theory and concept on fashion photography. In turn, all students gain an understanding of the importance of lighting, location, and all things involved with a photoshoot. Students are encouraged to visit potential photo locations several times to observe how the possible effects of weather, time of the day, and accessibility, could impact the shoot.

Once shooting locations are determined, beauty expert or professional make-up artist speaks about the role of make-up and hair in a shoot as well as in the fashion industry as a whole. Students learn how hair styles and colors can set a mood, attract attention, make a statement, or create a specific ambiance. Upon completion of all industry guest lectures, students create style boards, muse boards, story boards, beauty and hair boards, and arrange a model call. Final pre-production and art direction meetings are organized and attended by all participants. In this meeting, a final line-up of the garments, location, and schedule is agreed upon and call sheets are exchanged. On the day of the photoshoot, all students and their models report to the classroom join their hair and make-up team. Each team is composed of fashion students, photography students, video journalism students, and supervising faculty. All shoots are executed on the same day, spreading over several locations and sometimes several boroughs. Each team's supervising faculty oversees the entire process while evaluating student performance. Although meticulously planned and coordinated, students often face unexpected setbacks, learning to improvise in order to complete the shoot successfully.

Following the photoshoot is a post-production meeting involving image selections and touch-ups. Students discuss topics relating to organization and layout such as encasement, flow, and page design while generating project brief, collection and artist statement. So far, the results are quite outstanding; beautiful photography stills capture student creativity and craftsmanship by way of photography student's artistic and technical abilities. In addition, a three-minute behind the scenes video is produced documenting the entire development of the shoot. Finally, every student is required to create an on-line portfolio reflecting the varied processes and results of the photo shoot. The portfolios showcases process boards, finished digital stills, videos, and the artist's statement, all providing immense enhancements to a traditional portfolio.

Students are assessed by several components, such as active in-class and off-campus participation and contribution, final portfolio presentation, artist statement, professional biography, project brief, idea journal, concept board, beauty board, muse board, accessory board, line-up sheet, and call sheet. The final portfolio is graded based on visual presentation, creativity, and content. Fashion Image will continue to be taught and developed further. Students get a glimpse at a professional environment wherein multiple groups work as a team, making equal contributions, adjusting expectations, and openly speaking about creative and artistic differences. Students also learn to trouble shoot, manage risks, and to improvise. Fashion Image not only works as an instrumental tool for expanding student knowledge in styling, journalism, and fashion photography, but also serves as a catalyst for future collaborations in the professional fashion world.