Jan 1st, 12:00 AM

Rebirth II

Chanjuan Chen
Kent State University, cchen48@kent.edu

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Chanjuan Chen, Kent State University, Kent, OH, USA

Apparel design, sustainable design, upcycling, culture

As a sustainable strategy for fashion design, redundant or damaged textile waste can be refashioned and add new value through the process of upcycling. In the work from fashion designer Cloed Priscilla Baumgartner, men's trousers were transformed into thoroughly modern pieces for women, under the label "MILCH" (Brown, 2013). While designers can remanufacture fragments to create original garments by making use of this post-consumer waste, one challenge is to standardize one garment into a set or series as conventionally designed and produced clothing since material supplies are irregular and quantities unpredictable (Gwilt & Rissanen, 2011). Previous studies have explored the use of secondhand men's tailored jackets and neckties to recreate evening wear by utilizing inspirations from Chinese cultural elements. This design is a continuation of study on the use of upcycling combined with the concept of cultural inspiration to further determine the potential of production efficiency in upcycled designs. Both the tailored men's jackets and neckties were made out of quality fabrics despite small damaged areas. By redesigning and making use of these otherwise underused items, they are given prolonged life and increased value. Furthermore, all the pieces from the original jackets have been utilized to create the design, despite small trimming for appropriate fit, in order to prevent any further textile waste.

The limitation and repetition of structure and materials of the tailored men's jackets allowed this design to focus on clever use of construction and details, such as plackets and lapels. Similar to previous designs, elements of the western men's suit jacket, such as the lapel, was reapplied and subtly manipulated into the dress to form a unique combination of different cultures and identities. The silhouette of the dress was motivated by a traditional Chinese dress style, *Qipao*, meaning "banner gown", referring to a style of robe worn by Manchu women in the Qing dynasty. In the 1920s, it began to develop into a more fitted one-piece dress style with a high neck, front frog buttons, and slits on the sides, and was commonly worn by Chinese women (Ng, 2015). The use of tailored men's jackets and ties, items traditionally representing status and power, distinctively contrasts with the *Qipao* dress style, which characterizes women's modesty, gentleness, and beauty.

The process began by deconstructing two tailored men's jackets that were made out of wool fabric, one navy blue and one grey. Some worn-out or damaged areas on the jackets, such as a pocket flap and the edge of the under sleeves, were carefully avoided or stitched into the seams. The interesting elements, such as the lapel and pocket, were kept as whole components for reuse. To finalize the pattern, the pieces were transferred onto a heavier muslin fabric and draped on a body form to construct a *Qipao* inspired dress. The process required analyzing the amount of available fabric and existing pattern pieces from the two jackets in order to make effective use of the materials and form the desired new look. To minimize textile waste, nearly 100% of all the pieces from the two men's jackets were utilized for the new design despite minor trimming for appropriate fit. For instance, the two sleeve pieces from the grey jacket and the under sleeve piece from the navy blue jacket were joined together on the armhole area like a puzzle to form the front of the dress. Part of the lapel and

collar from the navy blue jacket were used to form a high neck design and front opening, while the rest of the lapel and collar were used for the facing on the front hem. In this way, the entire lapel and collar were used without the need to discard. The grey jacket front pieces created a back train as well as two side slits on the front to conform to the style of *Qipao*. The navy blue and grey wool pieces were arranged to balance the design and enhance the gracefulness of the female form.

The technique for the button on the front of the dress was inspired by the Chinese frog button- a traditional closure and decorating element associated with *Qipao*. Using research and visual aids, an abstract sketch of a phoenix was designed. Two recycled neckties were used to create the closure. Since most of the neckties were cut on the bias and made of finely patterned silk, they provided an innovative way to obtain quality fabric for bias strips (Copenhaver, 2014). The two neckties, one purple and one patterned, were deconstructed and ironed in preparation for use. They were cut into several 1/2 inch strips and sewn into long bias tubes with one side purple and one side pattern. A loop turner was used to turn the tubes right side out. The bias strips were then pressed carefully and manipulated and sewn by hand on the dress according to the initial phoenix sketch.

With increasing textile waste in the fashion industry, it is increasingly important for designers to explore new ways of upcycling. This design demonstrates a reassessment of the value of waste materials, while also encouraging the consideration of cultural inspiration and how the two concepts can be combined into upcycling. In addition, while designers reuse and repurpose post-consumer waste to create innovative designs, the notions of consistent fashion collection needs to be considered. Since most tailored men's jackets have a repeated structure, systematized sizing system, and similar materials, they allow the researcher to continuously create cohesive pieces to constitute into a collection and provide possibilities for reproduction. In fact, the uniformity of styling in menswear has increased the potential of production efficiency in upcycled designs (Brown, 2013). Moreover, nearly complete utilization of the original jackets promote advanced sustainability. Future research will continue to analyze and combine the concepts of upcycling and cultural inspiration as well as promote standardized fashion collection production from upcycling.

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