

Jan 1st, 12:00 AM

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Brianna Plummer
Framingham State University

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Plummer, Brianna, "Parisian Mad Men" (2013). *International Textile and Apparel Association (ITAA) Annual Conference Proceedings*. 115.

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Parisian Mad Men

Brianna Plummer, Framingham State University, USA

Keywords: Design, Parisian, competition



The ensemble, Parisian Mad Men, was created during a one day design competition held at Framingham State University, sponsored by the student organization Fashion Club. Since the conception of the student design competition (fall 2009) I have been the advisor to the annual “Make it Work” Saturday competition. As a professor of fashion design I have been able to share many experiences with my students in and out of class but as the club’s advisor, I have been able to go beyond the academic setting. My design was the outcome of an experience where my students urged me to participate in the challenge with them. The “Make it Work” competition is based on the TV show Project Runway and the purpose is to design an ensemble that utilizes a unique combination of textiles, that expresses a specific design point of view, and that articulates the quality of construction possible in a limited amount of time. The twist to this competition is every contestant receives the same amount and type of fabric, but they do not know what the

fabric is until the start of the competition. As the advisor, it is my job to use funds provided by the college to purchase a unique collection of fabric. This is usually an all-day event for me as there is a great deal of pressure to provide the students with suitable fabrics that have enough variety as to produce a range of garments. The finished (or as close to finished as possible) garments are then judged in the following categories: best all around, most creative, and best construction. The perk to winning is these garments become the finale of the year end fashion show.

As mentioned, each contestant had the same collection of fabrics and only 10 hours to design, pattern, and construct a complete look. The advantage I had was I was the one who picked out the thematic collection of fabrics, but the disadvantage I had was I did not participate until the second half of the competition; I used only 5 hours.

The collection of fabrics consisted of 1 ½ yards of black denim, 2 yards of a floral printed georgette, 1 yard of periwinkle delustered satin, 1 yard of a textured striped knit, and notions. The competition allows each student to make one trade of one fabric with another contestant so their designs can vary with the percentage of each fabric used. They are not required to use all of the fabrics and at the end of the competition it is interesting to see the different combinations used.

My design was inspired by the classic Parisian style and influenced by the structured feminine silhouette featured on the AMC's show *Mad Men*. By taking iconic French street textiles and altering their typical roles provides a contemporary twist to the historic silhouette. The fitted natural waist and bell shaped overskirt are characteristic of the 1960's American housewife but it is the use of striped boat neck top, denim pencil underskirt and the silver chain trim that emphasizes the Parisian vibe.

Due to the time constraint, I used a combination of draping and flat pattern. The contoured waistband was draped first then the two skirts were draped to accommodate the engineered pattern of the printed georgette and satin band detail. The knit top was flat patterned. Traditional, couture, and mass production construction techniques were used in the construction, with the majority of the work being done by machine.

Even though I did not allow my garment to be judged for the "Make it Work" competition it was an inspiring environment to create in and I was thankful that my students saw my process in a different way.

