Beauty

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The concept of beauty inspired my first practical. Drawing on my substantial background in fashion design, I wanted to create something wearable, but inspired purely by aesthetics. While fashion is heavily reliant on models, my piece disregards the wearer's form, gender or features, using the model as a frame for the garment's movement. When brainstorming different concepts, I was particularly attracted to the contrast between natural and synthetic beauty. For example, flowers and pearls convey natural delicacy, whereas Art Deco architecture, another inspiration for this project, is geometric, sharp and precise.

I also sought to question fashion's philosophical foundation through artistic exploration. Society views fashion as an addendum to the human form: without a model, fashion is redundant, without meaning or a reason to exist. I question that belief. In my conceptualisation, fashion takes the lead and disregards its wearer, taking on a validity, significance and life of its own. In my visual world, fashion is itself art; the humans who wear it are hidden by its form, made redundant by sheer aesthetic power. My goal was to allow my final piece to assume this all-powerful artistic form, rendering its wearer a mere irrelevance: a servant to clothing's ambition and desires.

In developing this concept, I felt inspired by the work of Victor and Rolf. Their high fashion creations experiment with the human form: hiding models beneath layers of clothing. Finding their pieces captivating, I integrated this inspiration with an aesthetic that is prominent in Paolo Sebastian's works. Sebastian's scattered floral embroidery in his 2017 Wildflower collection inspired the coat's scattered floral artwork. Though my artwork explores form, similar to Victor and Rolf, and an aesthetic similar to Paolo Sebastian, neither designer's influence overwhelmed my final. It remains an original piece, true to its sources of inspiration.

The final product is aesthetically pleasing; the colour pallet is cohesive, balancing angelic pastels with deep jewel tones. The gradient of the florals, heavy at the top and sparse at the bottom, is balanced with a reverse gradient of pearls. The matte texture of the acrylic florals juxtapose the shiny base fabric, creating textural detail. However, while the top of the garment fits well, it is too long for the model. The fabric is stiff; the train doesn't flow and should have been shortened, or fixed by using platform shoes. The shape of the shoulders could be larger and less cylindrical and the collar doesn't cover the model's face as first intended. That said, the overall appearance achieves balance.

My final product truly reflects my sources of inspiration. I've honoured traditional beauty through colour palette, visuals, and technique. I've honoured the natural world while incorporating the manmade through fabric. I convey the 'future of beauty' by playing with gender and form, challenging expectations by incorporating the feminine into a piece designed for a male. Despite my intention to demonstrate fashion's superiority, my exploration of gender draws attention to the model. Though this is a counter-productive outcome, it's a detail I would not change. Through this project, I've realised the importance of pushing for discomfort. If traditional beauty is never broken, modern beauty will never be formed. The process and product broadened my horizons as an artist: I now realise that art can be shocking, yet aesthetically pleasing.

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