

'Till inconvenience do us Part'

Alexandra May

Using inspiration from multiple artists and artworks I created a controversial and cynical depiction of love through collaborative fashion and wearable art.

My main artist of inspiration was a 15-year-old art student, Demi Barnes, whose artwork became famous online and was shared by thousands for its irony and uniqueness. Barnes created a modern style wedding dress, made out of divorce papers she had sourced online. She intended for the artwork to emphasize how important the sacred institution of marriage is and highlight this in the face of ever-climbing divorce rates.

This piece served as the inspiration for my concept.

Another influential artist on this piece is Kate Daudy and her 2010 artwork, 'War Dress'. Daudy is a British artist whose work follows in the ancient Chinese tradition of writing on objects to celebrate the memories they represent, their provenance and their aesthetic impact. 'War Dress' follows this tradition as the dress is adorned in felt lettering to spell out Wilfred Owen's poem, 'Dulce et Decorum Est'. Daudy explains the meaning behind the dress as it reminded her of the photographs one sees in the paper when a young soldier dies, himself with his wife standing proud on their wedding day, this combined with the poem that depicts the horrors of war makes the dress deeply meaningful.

Finally, another student artist, Matison LeBlanc, inspired with her graduation dress from her previous school. LeBlanc explained that the tradition of the school was to wear white dresses to graduate, however LeBlanc thought that boring and looked at the white dress as a 'giant blank canvas'. She then chose to spend one-month painting Vincent van Gogh's 'Starry Night' onto her dress, explaining that she is known for her art around her town and it seemed appropriate to incorporate that into her graduation dress.

All these artists contributed and inspired to create my final product, a wedding dress embroidered with breakup stories to target the themes of love, marriage and divorce.

This artwork explores the ideas of love, marriage, commitment and divorce in a cynical and ironic way. The use of a wedding dress melds well with the concept and helps stray away from the cliché and overused 'love' motif of things such as hearts and tears.

Using typically bridal materials such as satin and lace helped create a very traditional style of wedding dress, incorporating common bridal styles and ideas. The embroidering of the stories also blends well with the dress and concept. Instead of painting the words I chose to embroider, as embroidery typically in the form of floral designs, is a very traditional aspect of wedding dresses. The breakup stories embroidered onto the wedding dress is also a very cynical contrast and helps push my concept, further diving into topics such as divorce rates and the generally different views of commitment in this day and age. The dress is an A-line/Ballgown style dress with a strong silhouette and with the help of a petticoat underneath it has a good amount of volume in the skirt. This helps aid in the concept as the A-line/Ballgown style is very traditional and classic for brides, it gives a very feminine silhouette and feel, and portrays the marriage and love theme well.

The creation of this artwork was successful but challenging, I had never worked with fabrics or fashion before this piece and had to learn how it flows and moves very quickly. I also found myself having to learn how to use a sewing machine, having only hand sewn small fabric pieces in the past. The dress came together nicely however it was a struggle, the piece itself is a collaborative work as I had help embroidering the three featured panels on the dress. Adding to the cynical concept I had my own partner and his mother help embroider two of the panels to cut down on time. I found it amusing that my long-term-boyfriend and my jokingly 'mother-in-law' were helping me create an essentially anti-love art piece and found this to work in my favor as this dress concept targets love and relationships.

All the breakup stories were either collected personally by me, from people I knew, or submitted through a survey that was sent to the entire school. I chose to use stories from people I knew or who went to school with me as I believe it to be more personal than just online stories that may be false.

My initial intention was to embroider all seven panels of the skirt with the lilac thread used, almost giving the illusion of lace from a distance, however due to time constraints I just covered the front three. It still gave the same textural affect, and I chose to cover the remaining blank panels with a white lace train, indicative of the classic wedding dress trains. The back also featured a slightly uncommon but classical corset-back, laced up with red ribbon to match the red bouquet and to add a contrasting pop of color to the otherwise bright white gown.

Ultimately the dress was crafted successfully, and I learned and developed new talents and abilities through the process of making this work. If I were to recreate or alter this work, I would embroider all of the panels and use some stronger craftsmanship to create cleaner and more accurate measurements of the dress.

Exit art statement

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