Ascend: Watch Your Hopes and Dreams Bloom into Life

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Statement of Purpose

The purpose of the designs in this collection is to convey an inspirational message through fashion and clothing. These designs reflect the work of Oscar de la Renta, a Dominican fashion designer who was best known for his evening wear and suits for women. De la Renta's main sources of inspiration came from his Spanish roots and gardens, as he uses an abundance of ruffles and florals in his designs. A flower that I find inspiring is the lotus flower, which is a symbol of hope, purity, rebirth, and transformation (Fields, 2022). Even though it grows underwater in muddy conditions, the flower maintains its strength as it pushes through the dirty obstacles and frees itself from the harsh life conditions below (Fields, 2022). When the lotus flower reaches the surface of the water, it has risen from the depths and blooms in the open air (Fields, 2022). I want the designs to display this metaphor and emphasize that "just like the lotus, we too have the ability to rise from the mud, bloom out of the darkness and radiate into the world" (Fields, 2022). The symbolism of the lotus flower is powerful because it provides hope and strength to people who are struggling in their everyday lives. It illustrates that no matter what you are going through, you are able to overcome whatever is holding you back and find happiness. In this collection, I hope to portray the transformation of the lotus flower through fashion with the use of color, silhouette, and scale.

Aesthetic Properties and Visual Impact

When someone looks at the collection as a whole, I want them to feel joy, peace, and inspiration, just as if they were walking past a pond full of lotus flowers. The goal is to replicate the story of the lotus flower by making each look appear as if the flower is blooming, starting with a darker and less vibrant look that progresses to a bolder, more voluminous garment. This prominent finale look of the collection will be a strapless dress with an extravagant tiered skirt to represent the lotus flower being fully bloomed. It will consist of four pink colors that are the staple colors of this collection (ballet slipper, flamingo pink, wild rose, and pink berry), representing the pink colors that are typically found in a lotus flower. The skirt will have four tiers with each one a different color, starting with the lightest pink on the top of the skirt and getting darker as it progresses to the bottom to provide an ombré effect. Additionally, there will be black beading along the waistline as a way to remember the darkness in which the lotus flower came from and symbolize that our struggles will always be a part of who we are. This look in the collection is made to have viewers feel empowered and inspired, portraying the message that regardless of your roots or past tribulations you are able to rise above it all.

Process, Technique, and Execution

I first approached this look by searching for the four pink colors that would provide a cohesive ombré scale and simulate the lotus flower as closely as possible. To achieve the desired volume for the skirt as well as designer styling and price range, high quality fabrics would have to be used and I thought that silk satin face organza would fit this look perfectly. Silk is known to be a more sustainable fiber since it is a renewable resource, can biodegrade, and is produced using less water than many other fibers (CFDA, n.d.). The use of solely silk fabric in this look is considered designing for mono-materiality, which is a sustainable design approach where a look

is only composed of one material or fiber rather than a blend of fibers (Platts & Williams, 2021). This approach is considered sustainable because if the garment is made of a single fiber, it will be easier to take apart, reuse the materials, and can biodegrade (Platts & Williams, 2021). Since sustainability is becoming an increasingly important concept in fashion, it is essential to design this collection with sustainability in mind wherever possible.

After choosing the fabric, I patterned the strapless top of the dress with princess seams in the front and no princess seams in the back. For the skirt section of the dress, I created a full circle skirt foundation with the desired length of 48" and broke it up into four sections for both the outer tiers as well as the base skirt that the outer layers would get sewn into. I chose to make the base skirt lengths 4", 11", 13", and 20" and the lengths of the outer tiers 9", 16", 18", and 20". This allows the outer tiers to fall 5" below its respective base skirt layer and prevents the base skirt from being visible to viewers. Once the skirt is sewn together, the lengths of the outer skirt layers should be 9", 11", 13", and 15", equaling the total 48" length of the skirt. When constructing the skirt, I made sure to close all side seams with French seams and use a basting stitch to attach each outer tier to its respective base skirt. Working from the bottom up, I sewed each skirt layer together and then attached it to the bodice piece at the waist. After the shell of the dress was together, I inserted an invisible zipper at center back and then sewed the lining into the dress. Lastly, I finished the edges of each outer tier with horsehair braid in order to achieve even more volume in the skirt.

Cohesion

With these four pink colors being the focus of the collection, they are incorporated in other looks as well in order to connect them to this finale piece. For instance, the black fitted pants in the opening look have four godets on the bottom, with one for each pink color, as a way to foreshadow the finale dress and represent the lotus flower beginning to bud at the bottom of the pond. Additionally, the green dress in the collection will have pink flowers on the skirt made from the same silk fabric to tie in the colors there as well. Another cohesive aspect to the collection that may not be as noticeable is the different proportions. Since the tiers in the pink dress are all a slightly different length, I wanted to tie that into other parts of the collection as well. To achieve this, I made each godet in the black pants a slightly different size and the curves in the top of the green dress slightly asymmetrical as well.

Originality and Innovation

This garment, along with the rest of the garments in the collection, was created with the means of searching for something inspirational in nature to tell a moving story but also be cohesive to one another. Every decision made, whether it was a design choice or a fabric choice, was for a specific reason and had a purpose behind it to portray the lotus flower as closely as possible. For instance, the tweed fabric selected for the opening look has a slight shimmer to it as a way to portray that even though someone might feel stuck at the bottom of a pond, there is always hope and things will get better. Additionally, careful choices were made about the necklines of each look to show a transition from feeling stuck (the halter top in the opening look) to becoming free (the strapless bodice of the finale look). Overall, this garment was a way to experiment with circle skirt proportions and determine the best fabric to use in order to create the voluminous, inspirational garment desired.

References

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