

The Design Process

Unit

11

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Learning Outcomes

On successful completion of this Unit the learner will be able to:

- Discuss how the designers work
- Explore theme based fashion illustrations

How the Designers Work

Generating Ideas in Context

Designers use their perceptions of the relationships between garments, styles and the state of fashion not just to evaluate their designs but also to selectively generate only appropriate designs. They also actively control their context - the sources of inspiration in their immediate environment - to provide appropriate elements for these designs.

a) Memory and Idea Generation

Designers' memories for other designs they have seen, as well as other objects and images, provide the building blocks for the creation of new designs. Designers' pattern synthesis actions, that create or modify new designs, combine, manipulate and transform the objects, features and properties they have available in memory. Thus creative thinking is powerfully influenced by recent experiences, and helps designers to produce their creative works.

b) Strategies for Guiding Idea Generation

In the course of designing, the sources of inspiration in combination with the designers' earlier memories help them in the generation of new ideas and concepts.

Many designers appear to apply these strategies to generate very large numbers of ideas for designs as mental images which they perceptually evaluate and discard.

c) Fashion Research and Range Planning

Before designing for a new season, designers need to gain an understanding about what will be fashionable for that season. They need to learn the constraints of the fashion space by understanding what looks dated and what is not yet right for their market sector, as well as the key looks and features that define a particular fashion.

They begin with an awareness of current fashion trends, giving an indication of proportions, styles and overall appearance. Styles often persist and evolve incrementally for several years. Being able to spot trends and mentally translate them into garments is a vital skill. By doing fashion research designers tune the unspoken perceptual skills they have developed for recognising what is and is not fashionable, what cultural connotations a garment will have, and in what way a garment design needs to be modified to conform to fashion, as well as provide themselves with the set of garment type concepts and other memories that they need to create new designs.

Designers aim to know what their competitors are doing as well as the companies designing for the next higher segment of the market -whose looks they aim to imitate - so that they can produce garments within the same fashion.

Designers develop a progressively sharper understanding of the fashion for a new season as the season approaches. They can only begin working on a new season when the forecasting materials are published and the main trade shows take place, about two years before their garments will reach the shops. As time progresses, designers get more information from magazines, designer label garments in shops (which precede high street garments by about a year), trade shows for future seasons, and so on, about how the fashion spaces of previous seasons are and are not being extended, and which styles and features created by couturiers are being adopted by commercial designers. Companies evaluate their designs against this clearer picture, and if necessary, add designs at a late stage to fit emerging trends they have missed. But as this disrupts the development of other designs and the process is under severe time pressure anyway, they prefer to get their fashion research right, and produce 'too many' designs and discard those that don't fit.

Designers in different companies look at the same forecasting materials and the same magazines, attend the same shows, and see the same garments on sale. So similarities in most of designer garments are quite obvious.

Basic Requirements of a Designer

The olden days are gone when there were only few great designers in the world of design intended for designing for the public. Today there are a great number of opportunities in the field of design for people with good talent, imagination and a flare to design. Many fashion institutes are cropping up which are aimed at producing good designers across the world.

But to become a designer is not an easy task. It requires a lot of research of the market to identify consumers' needs for design and to satisfy their needs by producing good design. This is a challenging task requiring many aspects to be taken care of. Insight and perception always play a large part in a designer's success. Let us ponder upon the special qualities that make a good designer.

Fashion designers are also called apparel designers who create new ideas for garments and accessories. Fashion designers must be imaginative, have natural ability to design and have a talent for clothing. They should love fashion, fabrics and beauty. They must be creative artists who can sketch and who have a strong sense of art elements & principles. They must be able to generate a constant flow of ideas. They should have an awareness of changing social and economic movement so that their designs have a good consumer demand. Current trends in consumer's purchasing, lifestyles, and attitudes are to be noted and analysed. They must also be decisive and believe firmly in their own creativity.

Fashion designers must have technical knowledge of fabrics, trimmings and fit. They should keep up with art and fashion news through trade publications. Visiting to fashion shows, retail stores helps them to keep in touch with new trends. Technical skills like pattern making, draping and sewing will be an added talent. They should be able to visualize the three-dimensional garment before it is made.

Designers must continually study the lifestyles of those consumers for whom their designs are intended. Because designers work far in advance of the final production they must be able to predict future fashion trends. They must be aware of the effects of current events, socioeconomic conditions and psychological attitudes on fashion interest and demand.

Constant experimentation with new ideas is a must. A designer should be able to get ideas and inspiration from all arts and lifestyles throughout the world by going through museum exhibits, art shows, the theatre, dance, world travel and especially fashions of the past which are a rich source of design inspiration. They should take precaution to ensure that they are presenting what customers want. They should have new styles ready by the time the old styles become obsolete.

Designers must plan and supervise the work of their staff members. They should understand manufacturing processes and should be able to help with the costing of the garments. All designs must be produced at a profit and within the firm's predetermined wholesale price range. So, they should consider the availability and cost of materials and techniques of production and labour costs. They need to work easily and comfortably with others, which call for characteristics like flexibility and cooperation.

They should work well under pressure often in restricted working conditions. Designers must have enthusiasm, determination, and drive to succeed in this demanding career. They need to deal with buyers and fabric sales people in addition to management, production and publicity teams with great interest and enthusiasm. Designers influence fashion by providing an unending series of new designs from which consumers choose the best ones to express their individual lifestyles.

Theme Based -Designing Fashion Illustrations

The fashion calendar is divided into two seasons- 'spring summer' and 'fall winter'. Categorically, the first 6 months of the fashion year constitute 'Spring summer' and the remaining 6 months comprise 'fall winter' break up.

Today, 'Fashion' is defined as an extensive procedural process that produces utility clothing. To understand this process we need to understand the concept of line planning. This term primarily indicates a range or collection of garments falling in the same category (like casual wear, formal wear, bridal wear, and lingerie, ethnic). The design process triggers at least two seasons before the actual selling season to facilitate the arrival of merchandise at the right time in the market.

Fashion has attained a global appeal; this goes to say that it has with a mass produced uniformity. Thus, to initiate the process of line planning the fashion designers follow varied forecasting sources to arrive at a range of garments with a global appeal. Each line starts as a vision in the mind of the designer. In the women's apparel industry 4-6 new lines or collections have been customary in the past. The opening dates and number of new lines vary from one segment of the industry to another, but as a general rule, higher priced lines will be presented before lower priced lines. The size of the firm, the nature of the apparel produced and the fashion orientation of the company influence development of lines. In large firms, merchandisers are responsible for developing new lines. Merchandisers plan the overall fashion direction for the coming season and instruct the design staff about seasonal themes, type of items to be designed and colours.

A line should focus the type of customer to whom it is targeted. Lines designed without orienting towards a specific type of customer's market will end in failure. Every line is developed in a series of processes starting with the story board.

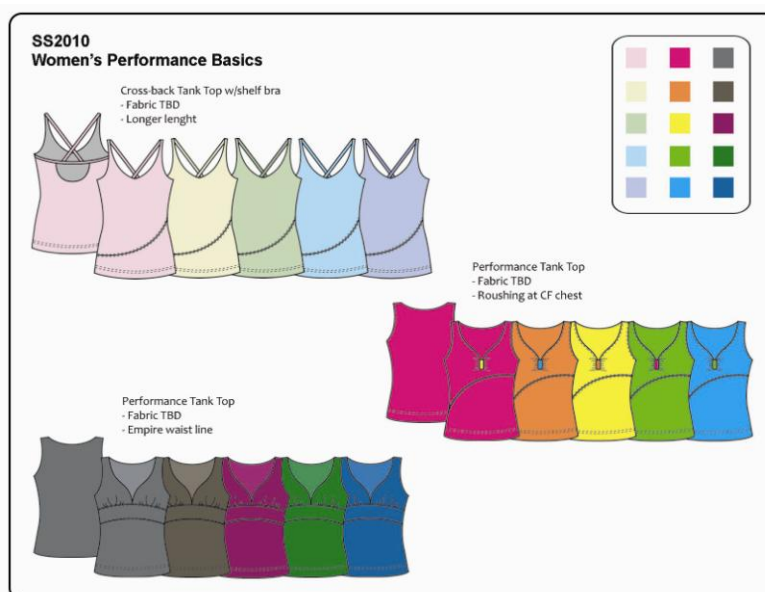
a) Story Boards

The designers generate Design sheets or Design boards with in depth study of the fashion forecast services. Story board is visual form of expression. These boards take start from a source of inspiration. This board comprises the visual pictures in the form of cut-outs, photographs or natural items that are collected and pasted in the form of story on the board. Along with the name of the collection a brief write up indicating the mood of the collection/line is given in the board. Inspiration source could be any entity the designer feels in accordance with the forecast. Later, key words are generated to formulate the styling of garments. Continuing with one of the above example- calligraphy, key words like curvaceous, smooth, feminine elegant, bell shape, continuous etc. fit the line.



b) Colour Board

After the story board has been formulated, a visual presentation of colours in the form of swatches, write up (adjectives of colours may be used), pantone chips etc is done. Pantone contains the standard colours, which are numbered. This number is indicated along with the colour for accuracy in colour shade and tone.



c) Fabric/ Swatch Boards

These boards contain fabric swatches. Swatches are cuttings of fabrics indicating the selection of fabric to be suitable for garment style. Swatches could be a small clipping or could be large enough to show a print repeat, embroidery details or trims. It also gives a rough estimate of the garment drape.



d) Illustration Boards

Once the story board is created, the illustration board, which talks of fashion drawings of human forms (women, men or kids) with garments rendered on them is done. This rendering of garments on the figure sketches create an element of interest. Illustrations could be hand rendered or worked on the computer using latest software like Adobe Photoshop, Illustrator, etc.

Different types of figure formats are in use. Single, double or multiple figure formats can be selected by the designers depending on the intricacy of the designs. Generally both the front and back view of the illustration is done for complete visualisation of the garment design.



e) Flats

Flats are miniature drawings of garments when drawn flat on table. On the design sheets, it is important, to indicate flats or specification drawings. Specification drawings or specs as they are called small proportion drawings, with measurements of the various styles furnished. It also contains details of construction lines.

f) Client Board

This board gives the details of age group, season, target market and exact or approximate costing of the line. The layout of these sheets could be changed as desired by the designer.



g) Tag Designing

Tags are designed with theme, colour board, swatches, wash and care, price code and price.





h) Logos/Labels

Company's name can be designed and attached along with tags for fixing on the garments. Size tag may be attached with the label or may be separate.



Use of Colour and Texture in Rendering Illustrations

Textures create good interest to an illustration, depicting the type of material to be used in the line with realistic and nearing accuracy. These may be rendered in an accurate way which creates the 'feel' of the fabric rather than showing every detail. Simple drawings look better and more clear and easier to interpret than cluttered, overworked drawings. It is not necessary to show a texture over the whole surface of a garment. Try fading it in areas of highlight and darkening it in shadows, or render only the dark side of the figure, leaving the light side plain.

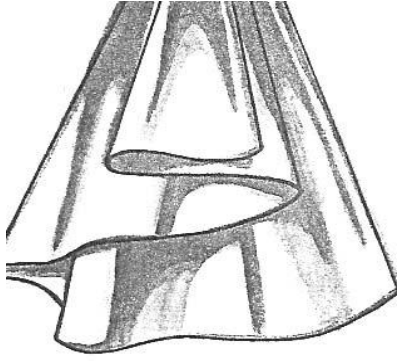


A white space down the highlighted side of the body between the colour and the outline adds interest and creates the effect of a highlight. Keep the size of the texture in correct proportion to the size of the figure. Very small textures cannot be rendered accurately, so sometimes an impression of the overall effect can be shown.



When using colour, try using complementary colours for shadows instead of blacks and greys. They still look like shadows, but add a lot of vitality to the work. Light bright and warm colours advance, dull dark and cool colours recede.





On a walking figure, the back leg and foot should be shaded, and the front foot should be light. A spot of highlight can be placed on the front knee to bring it forward. The further back the form, the darker the shading can be.

a) Shiny Surfaces

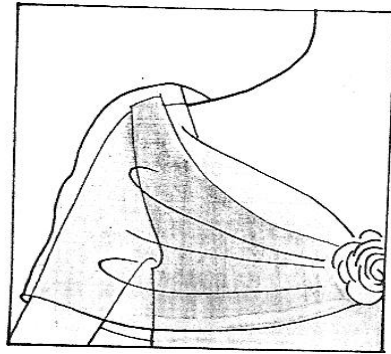
Satins are smooth, shine and reflective. They have many highlights, which with contrast, rich and deep shadows. Colour application should be smooth and follow the folds of the fabric. To keep the texture simple, restrict using only three layers of different tones. Highlights may be emphasized

with white paint or pencil. Out- lines should be smooth and requires undulating fluid lines (rising and falling lines), which cling close to the body.

Velvets are like satin but are thicker, heavier and has a rougher finish because of the pile. It can be similarly rendered as satin, but hemlines are rounded off to indicate the thickness of the fabric. Shade over the highlights with a pencil to give a textured finish resembling the nap or pile.

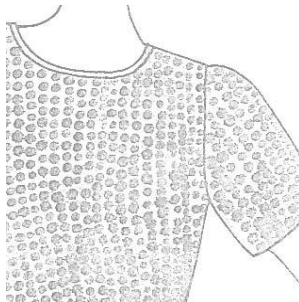
b) Sheers

Fabrics such as chiffon, organza and lace are semi-transparent, therefore the skin and underlying fabrics can be seen. Using the same colour in various tones results in creating layered effect. More the layers the more darker the effect is. Start by sketching the outer garment and the lining shape beneath. Use a mid-tone for the lining or undergarment and skin tones for other areas, leaving white spaces for highlights. Apply soft shadows wherever fabric folds and drapes occur, keeping the brush strokes smooth and simple. When dry, apply the lightest, most transparent tone for the sheer outer garment. To finish, lightly outline the hemline, garment parts and major folds and creases with a fine pen or pencil.



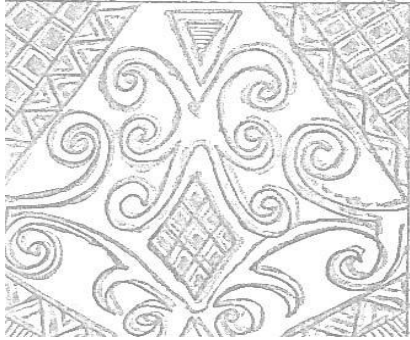
c) Brocade and Sequins

These fabrics have the shine, highlights and dark shadows as that of satins, but their surfaces are rough with a pattern which need to be shown clearly. Apply the flat base colour to the garment leaving plenty of highlighted areas. When dry, add a darker tone of the same colour for shadows. Start the pattern with the same darker tone. Use fine lines of darker tone for outlines and shapes such as sequins or brocaded motifs. Finish with flecks of white highlights for glitter effect.



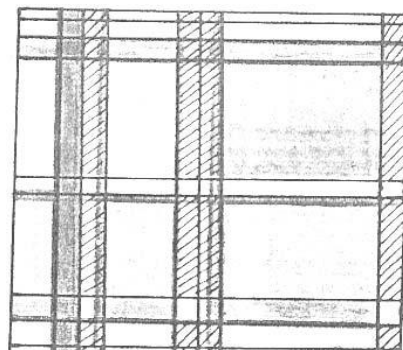
d) Patterns and Prints

Sketch in the main features of the pattern and fill in the areas with the lightest colour. Build up the pattern by repeating with the darkest colour and leave the highlighted areas white or lighter than the rest of the pattern. Bring up fine details by outlining with a fine black or coloured pen or pencil.



e) Checks and Stripes

Folds, tucks, pleats, darts, body contours, design lines and panel lines distort the direction of the stripe or check. Horizontal stripes follow the flow of a hemline, so start from the bottom and work up. Build up a check or plaid by starting with the lightest coloured stripe and adding darker colours either horizontally or vertically.



Suggested Further Readings:

- **Fashion Thinking: Contemporary Approaches to the Design Process (By Fiona Dieffenbacher)**
- **The Ultimate Fashion Study Guide - the Design Process (By Hunter Publishing Corporation)**

