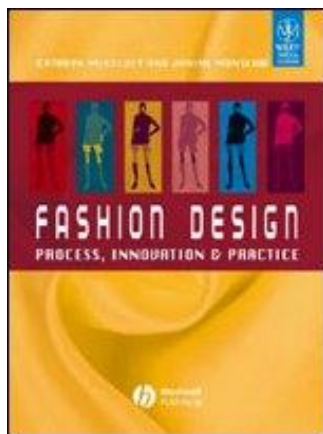


Book Received and Reviewed

Fashion Design: Process, Innovation and Practice

By Kathryn McKelvey and Janine Munslow



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Fashion Design: Process, Innovation and Practice by Kathryn McKelvey and Janine Munslow is a remarkable attempt at acquainting readers with the process of commercially successful fashion designing. Kathryn McKelvey, Senior Lecturer at the University of Northumbria at Newcastle, Janine Munslow, Course Leader for the B.A (Honours) Fashion Marketing Degree Course, have put together a little of their enormous experiences gained from their practising career. This book is planned basically to satisfy the theoretical needs of fashion-designers, aspirants and fashion enthusiasts with sufficient guidelines, starting with conceptualization to a successful promotional merchandising. It is honestly confessed here that “for reasons of size it does not set out to be, nor could it be, fully comprehensive in its contents. Its aim is to pull together in one text book the basic knowledge and skills necessary to begin designing” (p. 1). The topics discussed here emphasize more on the basic principles and exercises to pursue a successful fashion-career.

In the short chapter ‘Analysing the Brief’ Dr. Kevin Hilton explains how in fashion designing the brief is to be considered to be the nucleus, around which the requirements of the client are woven. Dr. Hilton’s graphical explanation of a brief is worth mentioning here.

Innovation, the primary process to a case solution holds several interesting stages in itself. In this chapter we find explanation of an ‘innovation cycle’ which shows how an ‘opportunity’ through ‘investigation’, ‘influence’, ‘incubation’, ‘inspiration’, ‘invention’ and an ultimate ‘innovation’ reaches the proper destination. The influences which have a great impact to promote an innovative process are quite stimulating. That even includes a suggestion regarding a designer’s diet: “Correct diet...is about eating responsibility”, “Seek qualified advice before you enter a new diet plan”. In the chapter ‘Developing Design- Quickstart Exercise’ design-development process is explained with some exercises like selecting materials, gathering research inspirations, two dimensional and finally three dimensional design development with the help of a

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simplistic flow-chart showing the source material required for design development.

In the next chapter research inspiration has been shown as an interesting phase and it is quite truly assumed that inspiration can be drawn from the “museums to inkblots” and “internet to family photographs” in addition to books, magazines, art-movements, graphics, photography, exhibition and many more relevant spheres. The chapter ‘Research Inspiration’ is consequently followed by ‘Research Direction’ which is divided in several parts. The authors argue that fashion prediction is probably the toughest job for fashion marketing. A master-minded designing strategy can bring a boom to the upcoming fashion market. The chapter ‘Research Direction’ deals with a unique fashion cycle which shows how an avant-garde is derived by a designer’s gathering inspiration from the old-fashioned or antique specimen of fashion world. Primarily it is adopted by a very few of the general mass. Subsequently passing through the phases like Trendy, Fashionable, Contemporary and some others it approaches the area of anti-fashion. In ‘Fashion and Art’ the authors very briefly discuss how several attempts are made to use the fabric as the image-canvas since the very 1880 when the Native Indians painted their muslins with visually impairing images. However, the authors’ argument that today fashion and art sound almost to be synonymous may not be applicable everywhere. The chapter concludes with a topic on subculture or street style which is supposed to create the most fertile ground for the upcoming designers. The “trickle up factor” of this style not only influences the designers of a particular zone, but it also has a great impact in main stream fashion-designing.

Then comes the chapter on ‘Design Development’ which is considered to be the basic step to get into the action of applied field. It takes a few steps to portray the basic illustrations of the desired product from very idealisation, sketches of the final products and experimenting texture on it. Colour which has a tremendous impact on the viewers possesses numerous significant aspects in itself. Here several features of colour are analysed: how it works, how it is collected and how a little difference of names brings out a wide variety of a same colour.

Silhouette, the topic of the next chapter, is probably considered to be the most important thing in fashion designing. Not only does it signify the shape of the product, but also the social, political and economic influences of the time, on the matrices of which it is created. The high hats and pointed shoes, as referred in this book, echo the tall points of Gothic architecture whereas the flat and broad style of the dress-accessories reflect the same of the Tudor era. A silhouette also conveys the distinctive identity of its designer. The authors have also given certain specific guidelines regarding how to create a silhouette and how to take measures for its improvement.

The ‘proportion’ of designed product is a basic factor which is almost solely responsible for the appeal to the general mass. The proper combination of asymmetrical and symmetrical balance of the product, exact scale a rhythm can pull it up to the highest appreciation level. Some illustrations are here to show that the proportion of applied shades and textures that can create an eye stimulating focus, given with precision.

‘Fabric Understanding’ is a crucial matter in fashion designing as a designer must be aware of the fabric type (whether woven, knit, lace, net etc, finish of the fabric (sanding, washing, mercerizing etc), fibre composition and is

source (animal, vegetable, natural polymer, man-made), new developments of fibre, fabric printing processes and also new inventions which even include textile with technological advancements like electro-textile as an instance. The basic techniques of cutting woven fabric for dress construction are worth learning to create a desired silhouette. In the chapter of silhouette learning some illustrations of basic curbs, basic bodices, skirt panels, skirt pleats, basic sleeves, basic trousers, and basic collars of dresses are drawn out to enhance the basic knowledge about cutting and fitting of a complete dress.

Then the authors take up the topic of 'proto-type' or primary three-dimensional outcome of the concept nurtured throughout the whole discussion. Many steps which are to be taken to make a desired proto-type like patter-cutting, toile modelling, grain direction, bias cutting and so on, are suggested by the authors. These proto-types are essential to notice the movement of the garment before it reaches the final design.

The whole process of design ends with embellishment. Numerous patterns like pleating, designed edges, quilting, frills, patch-works and other ornamentations can be attached externally to create strong visual impact. Some illustrations are drawn from Autumn/Winter collections of 200-01 to highlight how embellishment like oversized or unusual zips, complicated or multiple pockets, quirky combination of asymmetry of check pattern can catch the attention of the viewers and buyers.

A specialist designer, as suggested here, must have a thorough knowledge of the construction and performance of the product designed by him. He should be aware of the material and manufacturing process. The chapter of lingerie clarifies how a designer needs an expertise for a good production.

As stated earlier, the authors have taken care to pay special attention to the commercial aspect of fashion designing. A range planning is stated to be an essential part in fashion merchandising. In fashion designing 'working-drawing', which is mentioned in the chapter 'Decision Making', plays a vital role where minute things of the garment are simplified with a greater detail and clarity. Some illustrations in this chapter are given to explain better the benefits of working-drawing.

At present computer is an inevitable device for designing. The chapter 'Design Using the Computer', though naturally too brief, argues in favour of integrating computer into the designing process by using programmes like Adobe Illustrator and Adobe Photoshop, Macromedia Director, Adobe Premier and Adobe After Effects.

A range of marketable products needs a promotional approach for a profitable merchandising and this is explained in the next chapter. The authors rightly points out that selecting a name for a brand is an important task as it conveys both the identity of the product as well as its designer: "Today's brands promote themselves as more than just a logo, a slogan on a distinctive package, they promise to deliver a host of emotional benefits too." Another opportunity to promote the range, as discussed here, is a photographic shooting. With the help of a photographer and fashion-stylist and a designer setting the mood, backdrop, props, camera angle, lighting, good models can reach the desired destination. The next chapter deals with how to prepare a good portfolio for interview. Quite fittingly the writers have at length discussed in the next chapter various fashion careers, which an aspirant can aim at or move on to.

Finally, however, it may be said that the book lacks coloured illustrations and intensive studies on many of the topics. But with basic guidelines and proper route-direction to the subject, the scope is left open for further research on any of them.

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