BFA REVIEW

SARAH KAUFFMAN
ABSTRACT

Stripes are primary to fashion current and historical but rarely definitive to the design of a garment. In basic principles of art and design, this thesis will look at line both creating and flattening volumes. The BFA Collection “Intergalactic Space Princess” examines stripes and their relationship to volume using surreal or trompe l’oeil effect printing and beading.

Beyond the basic concept of line and volumes, the collection follows a sci-fi comic book narrative. The narrative is illustrated in an original comic book format and communicated through seven separate looks (fourteen total garments). The relationship between volume and line evolves through each look of the collection. The storyline follows the space princess in her travels through a wormhole, landing in 1970s New York. After much dancing and exploring, Space Princess decides to stay on Earth and enjoy life in the city.

This thesis and collection is directed towards a high-end luxury and couture market and will be evaluated against couture brands using trompe l’oeil effects and large amounts of beading. Especially in the world of couture, fashion is an escape from reality, serving to tell creative and well-marketed stories. This BFA Collection serves as a playful and lighthearted narrative of a space princess while still challenging the technical design of each garment with the principles of line and volume.

In basic principles of art and design, how does line both create and flatten volumes?
The use of embellished motif placement in the BFA Collection is comparable to Schiaparelli, although different in technique. Schiaparelli, both the original and modern brand, embraces, “attention-grabbing decoration” and look of being “light-handed in spirit,” writes Vogue columnist, Suzy Menkes. Schiaparelli has always been tied to surrealism, working with artists like Dali and Jean Cocteau in the 30s and 40s.

Perception is essential to understanding reality versus vision. Entire industries have risen out of the need for escapism, much like surreal artists Dali and Cocteau. J. R. R. Tolkien argued for escapism in fantasy literature as the creative expression of reality within a Secondary (imaginative) world, (but also emphasized that they required an element of horror in them, if they were not to be ‘mere escapism’). Art will always continue to be an escape and vision into alternate realities, as well as a familiar partner to the basis of factual life: medicine, science, engineering. A well-fostered culture embraces both the vision of arts and the realities of fact.

Giambattista Valli is another couture brand built on fantasy. However, Giambattista Valli and his designs herald a “return to romance and an elegant femininity, melding a sense of fantasy with lean, modern lines” (Valli). Romance and femininity are not key directives or tones in the proposed collection. The heavily beaded textile techniques are an important reference. Valli has previously worked in stripes, only in the form of print. A large part of the BFA collection is about creating the image of a stripe with a volume (ie., pleating techniques, batting covered by beading, aligning stacked paillettes.)

Additionally, Gucci’s recent collection of trompe l’oeil prints and embroideries is also comparable to the proposed techniques in the BFA collection. Vogue writer, Laird Borrelli-Peterson, recently reviewed Alessandro Michele’s textile use saying, “The faux knots Michele showed at Gucci today also referenced another Italian designer, Di Camerino, a much-copied master of illusion.” She also continued to use Schiaparelli’s surrealist style as a reference for recent Gucci looks. Somewhat of a ‘trend’ the optical illusion prints achieve a playful nature that I hope to achieve with this collection. It is also being applied in a different technique (bugle bead over cotton batting) at the base of a skirt and two or three bustiers. Conceptually trompe l’oeil prints and beading also go with the concept of the real and not real. The goal for the techniques to appear indistinguishable from a traditional printed stripe from afar.

Whether it be in marvel comics, cinema, or futuristic fashion there is a desire for the vision of space to become a reality, and as science progresses the two are becoming more united. Space exploration could be one of the first large alignments of vision and reality in modern history. This BFA Collection should serve as a playful and lighthearted narrative of Space Princess, still challenging the technical design of each garment with the principles of line and volume.

