Costume Made From Unconventional Fabrics for Adorning Statue

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Conventional textiles and fashion which used to be the dominant industrial sub-sector has not seen match diversity and innovation since it was revolutionised in the 1960s. The trend believed to have been a contributing factor to poor performance of the industrial sub-sector irrespective of numerous interventions to counter the declining fortunes since its peak in 1975. Adopting waste as alternative material in crafting textile art is a mean to turn around the poorly performing the industrial sub-sector. Braiding corn husk and banana stalk into apparel for cladding statue as a textile art is an innovative novelty. Artefact of such kind for adorning public places should have comparative advantage as all materials applied that were extracted from waste are cheap and readily available. It is believed that the artefact has the potential of generating new excitement in an area with considerable comparative advantage in materials and technology. It also serves as platform to delve in research into alternative textiles for fashion. The largely qualitative study will be employing experimental, descriptive, and narrative research designs.

Keywords: diversity, innovation, textile and fashion, waste, artefact

Introduction

Artefact evolving from braided corn husk and banana stalk clad on female size 12 petite statue is a novelty. An art form aimed to show different way of making textiles and using the subsequent fabric for apparel on cast statue is intended for lightening up public places. The production is facilitated by technical fashion design procedures envisioned to make the needs and requirements of the target client which might not even be explicit as a matter of concern. Resultant impact from the outcome of the exercise is believed to be a plausible mechanism of ergonomics in fashion design. In that, it basically assists creativity, innovation, originality, and authenticity of the composed design and subsequently, artefact. Hopefully, the initiate will generate a new life for the ailing textile industry of Ghana.

Experiment

Sample 1—Research

According to Ary, Jacobs, Razavieh, and Sorensen (2008), research was a systematic process of collecting,

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analysing, and interpreting information (data) in order to acquire reliable information. The authors further elaborated that true and valid scientific knowledge engenders most valuable contribution to decision making through research. Essentially, embarking on research in art composition is to facilitate innovative, creative, original, and authentic art piece. The research experimented were design brief, customer profile, trends, and idea development.

Basically, design brief can be described as instructions from clientele directing the styling and design of clothing items, clothing, or ensemble. “A design brief should primarily focus on the results and outcomes of the design and the business objectives of the design project. It should not attempt to deal with the aesthetics of design... That is the responsibility of the designer” (Hopkins, 2014). The design brief provided the focus by which research, styling, and design are fused for the design composition of the art piece.

Customer profiles are “customer types”, which are generated to represent the typical users of a product or service, and are used to help the project team make customer centred decisions without confusing the scope of the project with personal opinion (Experience Solutions, 2014). In pursuant of the study, La Palm Royal Beach Hotel, Accra, Ghana was adopted for the case study. To be informed on the institutional personality of the hotel, interview was rendered with senior members of the human resources and maintenance departments. Brochures and flyers bearing the business profile, vision, mission statement, among others were added. The collective data extracted from the above were streamlined into the corporate philosophy and orientation of La Palm.

Relatively, fashion trend has been explained as the vogue of style and design that pervades among a significant portion of the population in the society and is collectively followed with enthusiasm for some period. Having considered crafting a fanciful ceremonial wear for cladding of the statue, the research was extended to determine mode of such wears that are beautiful, attractive, sensual but not offensive, unique, and classic to reflect corporate personality of the hotel. In relation to this, the possible apparel to be designed should not be restricted much when being fitted or removed from the statue. To effectively get this through, collection of related costumes were sorted from eBay and Wikipedia. Style lines that facilitate the elements and principles being sought were inferred and deduced for the idea development (refer to Figure 1).

Figure 1. Trends. Source: Wikipedia and Field Data (2009).

Idea development posited by Manley (2009), as manipulating patterns usually from elements extracted from sources of inspiration to craft, layer, and present so that the viewers seeing your work, or your clients or collectors, can feel and understand your art piece. Theme board was employed as the source of inspiration where images from coral reef were applied and entitled “*Splendid Coral*” under the theme “*Splendour*” (refer to Figure 2). The consideration of splendid coral provided aesthetic appreciation, passion, sensuality, admiration, calmness, organized, professionalism, and value for money as inferred from the corporate principles of the hotel. Motifs elicited as lines, shapes, forms, textures, silhouettes, and colours were refined to achieve unique, innovative, and creative patterns. These patterns were further finessed with the new fabric to determine the extent of niceness they could be in the apparel and the entire art piece.

Figure 2. Theme board. Source: Wikipedia and Field Data (2009).

Sample 2—Designing

The impressions inferred from the customer profile and deductions from the trends and idea development then got organized into varying style samples (refer to Figure 3). These toiles were further refined to form the design (refer to Figure 4).

Sample 3—Specifications

Technical specifications contain the visual information required for the manufacture of an individual garment in relation to its associated unit costs, such as all trimmings and design details, which might include labels or an embroidered logo (Hopkins, 2014). Actually, three main specification methods were employed design brief, flat drawing, and specification sheet. The former was to primarily focus on the results and outcomes of the design and the business objectives of the design project. Flat drawing however gave detail visual information and the specification sheet gave detail measurements about the garment against which checklist for quality control was measured.

Figure 3. Styles. Source: Field Data (2010).

Figure 4. Design. Source: Field Data (2010).

Figure 5. Theme board. Source: Wikipedia and Field Data (2010).

Sample 4—Artefact Manufacture

Concluded specifications initiated the main production which was developed in phases. Firstly, braids were made out of corn husk and banana stalk with each braid having a diameter of 0.3 cm and a length of 8 metres. The statue was moulded in clay over armature from wire mesh and iron rods. The mould was cast in plaster of Paris before cast further with concrete over iron rods and wire mesh. Patterns were modeled from the cast from which slip hemming was adopted to convert the braids into fabric/apparel directly. The apparel was fitted on the statue for tracing of flaws and repair. Dried coconut leaves were attached by glue and fastened with blanket stitches for the skirt, arm band, and head gear. The statue was given the final finish, before the final fit. Accessories from discarded beads from vehicular seats were strung at the strips of the halter. Glass beads were fitted at the mid hips. The statue was positioned on a carved pedestal in coffee colorant. The statue was sprayed in chocolate colorant because it was intended to resonate the corporate philosophy of La Palm Beach Resort of Ghana (refer to Figures 6 to 9).

Figure 6. Untrimmed braided banana stalk. Source: Field Data (2010).

Figure 7. Fabric/apparel formation. Source: Field Data (2010).

Figure 8. Showcased artefact (front). Source: Field Data (2010).

Results and Discussion

From the findings, it was noted that hotels are varied and in basically two categories: business and pleasure. With the focus being sensuous but non-obscenity, pleasure resort was chosen. Based on this, the questions for the interviews were reconstructed to elicit information on the requirements of pleasure hotels vis-à-vis the objectives of the study.

The idea development was particularly fashioned to interpret the variables of the customer profile graphically. To reflect the customer profile and the objectives of the research, a theme was crafted: “*Splendour*”. Basically, splendour connotes magnificence, yet it is also endowed with grace and romance leading to the choice of the title “*Splendid Coral*” for the mood board. Hence, the styling and design were directed to reflect the passion of splendour. Using Adobe Photoshop to extract the motifs was a very useful application as it aided in obtaining the patterns in their natural state with little distortion: a phenomenon associated with manual work. Additionally, the refinement of patterns for innovation and inventiveness was enhanced in the sample and fabric board.

Also, the varying styles and designs drifted towards a more acceptable design as the outcome of the project. Firstly, the costume was very romantic while the model for the monument was equally sexy and interesting. However, neither of it was offensive, for it was deduced that, La Palm primarily operates as pleasure hotel but it also does some executive functions as seen in business hotels. As such, the target was to make an artefact that has tremendous aesthetic values and passion but not salacious.

The specifications did reveal a major challenge of determining the cladding and fastening of the costume. Upon careful reflection, thongs were used to lace the sides and the neck towards the back. Eyelets were fixed to

serve as channels for the running thongs without which the braids and costumes would have unravelled.

Originally, the statue and pedestal were to have been made from wood, but for obvious reason concrete was used in place of wood. In that, wood takes eight to 16 months to season properly. Well, the pedestal was however carved and just four months afterwards, it developed cracks but was repaired by cutting and joining. To have a light-weight monument, POP was suggested but because it is generally weak, concrete was adopted. The greatest challenge was the mechanism to reduce the porousness of the cast and since there was not a custom made poker vibrator for such purpose, manual pressure was enforced. Eventual effect was several pigeon holes emerged and was remedied with putty filler. Sanding with sand paper under the support of the palm created undulations. It was later discovered that, scraping the surface of the putty filler with broad hacksaw blade could level the surface before polishing with micro sand paper wrapped on soft wood.

The making of the fabrics and the apparel required tremendous innovation and creativity as the manufacture of the fabrics also led to the manufacture of the apparel. It was so because there was the need to have homogeneity in the sizes of the braids. Also, the fabric formation was to take the dimensions and shapes within the apparel accurately. To achieve uniformity, the senses of touch and sight were used optimally where deliberate stray strips were created to maintain fair uniform size. The patterns of the garment were modelled on the monument to assume the exact proportions of the shape of the monument. With slip hemming, the braids were fused together as fabrics and patterns ensuring that these assumed the shapes of the modelled patterns, the hemming proceeded. Upon completion, finished braids were assembled with further hemming into the apparel. The apparel was fitted to aid the location of faults. Identified faults were remodelled on the monument and hemmed after which the apparel was refitted.

Beyond the above, final finishing commenced on the monument by polishing with micro sand paper after which it was sprayed matt black. This medium reduced virtually all flaws that could not be traced and fixed during the polishing. It also aided in enhancing the sheen of the final colours applied. Originally, bronze was used to spray the monument. The choice of bronze was to make fair contrast between the monument and the apparel. The colour bronze also reflects complexion that resonates well with Negroes and hence; its appropriateness, since the model was to depict a Black African identity. However, the available spray colours did not have bronze; hence, scarlet enamel paint was applied but the gloss was not pleasant because the expected control of the matt black could not recede the excessive sheen of the scarlet. It is for this reason that bright gold was sprayed lightly over the scarlet producing a light brass colour with minute element of brown underneath.

Conclusion

Corn husk and banana stalk are feasible materials for textiles and fashion.

Corn husk and banana stalk could indeed bring diversity into the textile/fashion art discipline and industrial sub-sector.

Braiding corn husk and banana stalk (waste) into apparel for cladding statue as a textile art is an innovative novelty.

Artefact of such kind for adorning public places does have comparative advantage as all materials applied were extracted from waste that are cheap and readily available.

Corn husk and banana stalk could be applied as conventional textiles serving as insulators and making some clothing items.

Further studies could facilitate very efficient mechanisms for extracting and braiding corn husk and banana stalk for textile use.

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