

Figure 1. Gucci Cream Coat with Removable Fox Collar, 1996. Toronto Metropolitan University FRC2009.01.374. Photograph by FRC team.



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GUCCI: OVERVIEW OF READY TO WEAR DESIGN

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Gucci is one of the most recognized brands in the world with a revenue of more than \$1 billion per year (Netwise Data). Gucci's signature logo can be seen everywhere: magazine campaigns, social media, the red carpet, street style photos, RnB music videos and in Hollywood movies. Gucci's double-G monogram is deeply integrated into our global culture and is one of the most recognized trademarks in the world. How did Gucci's ready-to-wear design of women's coats evolve in the last three decades? To answer this question, I am going to look briefly at the brand's history, developments and highlights and studying a Gucci coat from Toronto Metropolitan University's Fashion Research Collection (see fig. 1). I will examine the brand's RTW collections and in particular, women's coats from the 1996, 2006 and 2016 runway shows.



Figure 2. Foley, p.37.

BRIEF HISTORY

The Italian luxury brand which represents the epitome of "Made in Italy" was founded in 1921 by Guccio Gucci and originally started as a luggage manufacturer, producing travel goods for the upper class (Jebreal 4). During this time, Gucci grew as a family business which was located in Florence. Guccio's sons worked on the expansion of the business outside Florence and into the rest of the world, bringing their own sons into the business as well (Jebreal 5). Through the '50s and '60s, Gucci gained success with the jet-setting Hollywood stars and celebrities of the time (Mover 17). It was a period when air travel became popular and it was a glamorous event for every traveler, dressing up and carrying their best luggage set with them. Gucci had gained an international popularity as a status symbol. However, after the '70s, Gucci's popularity declined proceeding up to the early '90s due to legal troubles in the family, scandals and a drop in sales. In 1981, Gucci's first RTW collection was presented in Florence where the historical floral print was the main design focus (Mover 20). In 1994, Tom Ford became Gucci's creative director and designed a RTW collection that became a first strong move towards the brand's renaissance and success (wwd.com).



Figure 3. Gucci Fall RTW 1996. vogue.com



Figure 4. Sleeve tab detail.



Figure 5. Notch collar detail.



Figure 6. Inside detail of lining and facing.

RTW 1990s

The Gucci cream coat with a removable fox fur collar (2009.01.374) from Toronto Metropolitan University's Fashion Research Collection was designed as part of the 1996 Fall/Winter collection. This was one of Tom Ford's "super sexy" collections for the brand. According to a Vogue reporter Sarah Mower, this was the "fashion equivalent of a one-night stand at Studio 54" (vogue.com). This coat was featured in a 1997 magazine campaign (see fig. 2). I like it for its simple elegance and timeless look. The detachable red fox fur collar gives this coat a luxurious appearance as intended by Ford to bring back the glamorous look associated with Gucci's successful past. The coat is made of medium-weight, crisp wool fabric with contrasting horn buttons and a rayon lining (see fig. 4). This coat has a classic cut with traditional details including two-piece sleeves, topstitching on the seams, a notch collar with classic shaped lapels, flaps on the pockets, and tabs on the sleeves (see fig. 4 & 5). The outer chest pockets have vertical openings, which is an unusual detail for this type of coat because it gives it a more sporty feel. From the print and runway images, this coat's colour looks more off-white compared to the physical coat from the Fashion Research Collection. Even the colour of the thread and lining is still white (see fig. 4, 5 & 6). Analysing the runway image (see fig. 3), we can see the same details on the front facing joint to lining: both are of the same shade of white. It is likely the colour of the outer wool fabric has changed due to coat's age. This coat was a part of the brand's new direction under Ford: a sleek, sexy and modern way of living on the edge (Jebreal 5). By the late '90s, every Gucci line was sold out and the fashion "waiting list" was born (Foley 7). Tom Ford's design approach to Gucci was bold and brilliant, creating a strong response and commercial success.



Figure 7. Gucci RTW 2006. vogue.com.

RTW 2000's

A decade later, Gucci's 2006 Fall RTW collection was designed by Frida Gianini with very similar colours on the runway as the 1996 collection. There were looks in off-white, black, beige, gold, purple and maroon. Similar to how Tom Ford approached design, Frida Gianini looked back into the brand's historical archives for inspiration and in particular, referenced Gucci's '70s heritage in this collection (vogue.com). A white floor-length wool coat from this collection had a very similar silhouette of a semi-fitted bodice and arms with a cinched in waist similar to the 1996 coat (see fig. 7). The left lower pocket flap is the same size of about 7" by 2 ¼" as the pocket on coat from the Fashion Research Collection. Similar to the coat from the 1996 collection, the front closures consist of three functional buttons. The collar breakpoint starts at the same level on the bust for both coats. However, the 2006 coat does not have a fur collar which would take from the streamlined style of this coat. The ¼" top stitching is the same on the white 2006 coat as the 1996's coat pocket flaps and lapels. The fit and stylistic details in these two coats are very alike, but the latter is more refined and sophisticated in design. It looks like Frida Gianini brought a sensual, feminine and seductive creative approach to her designs for Gucci.



Figure 8. Fall RTW 2006.
vogue.com

RTW 2010's

The Fall 2016 RTW collection was inspired by "Catherine de' Medici and '70s sport". It had features of the "Renaissance biker feel with '80s Italian and French couture" designed by Alessandro Michele (vogue.com). Michele became a new creative director at Gucci in 2015, and in 2017 the house reported a 51 percent revenue increase, setting a new record for the last twenty years (businessoffashion.com). Michele brought his unique sense of style and originality to his designs for Gucci. Fashion is "a bigger reflection of history and social change, and very powerful things..." said Michele in his interview for Vogue (Bowles, vogue.com). The colours of the 2016 collection included white, pink, bright red, green, yellow, fuchsia and many different patterns such as plaid, chevron, floral, geometric, monogram, abstract prints and art from the sixteenth century. There were big puff sleeves, fur-trimmed garments, ostrich feathers, and sequins. Additionally, there was a white, mid-length double breasted coat (see fig. 8)! It had a classy, fitted look with an oversized notched collar and lapel. It also had two lower welt front pockets that open vertically, similar to the chest pockets on the 1996 coat. Size and construction look identical between the two coats, but the 1996 coat had cropped two-piece sleeves that were more fitted. In the 2016 collection, Alessandro Michele used the cacophony of colours and diverse stylistic approaches with extraordinary success keeping in line with Gucci traditions. Different creative directors for Gucci over the last three decades have brought their artistic flare to the design of the same white coat. There were few similar details in these coats but they have a distinctive appearance and style.

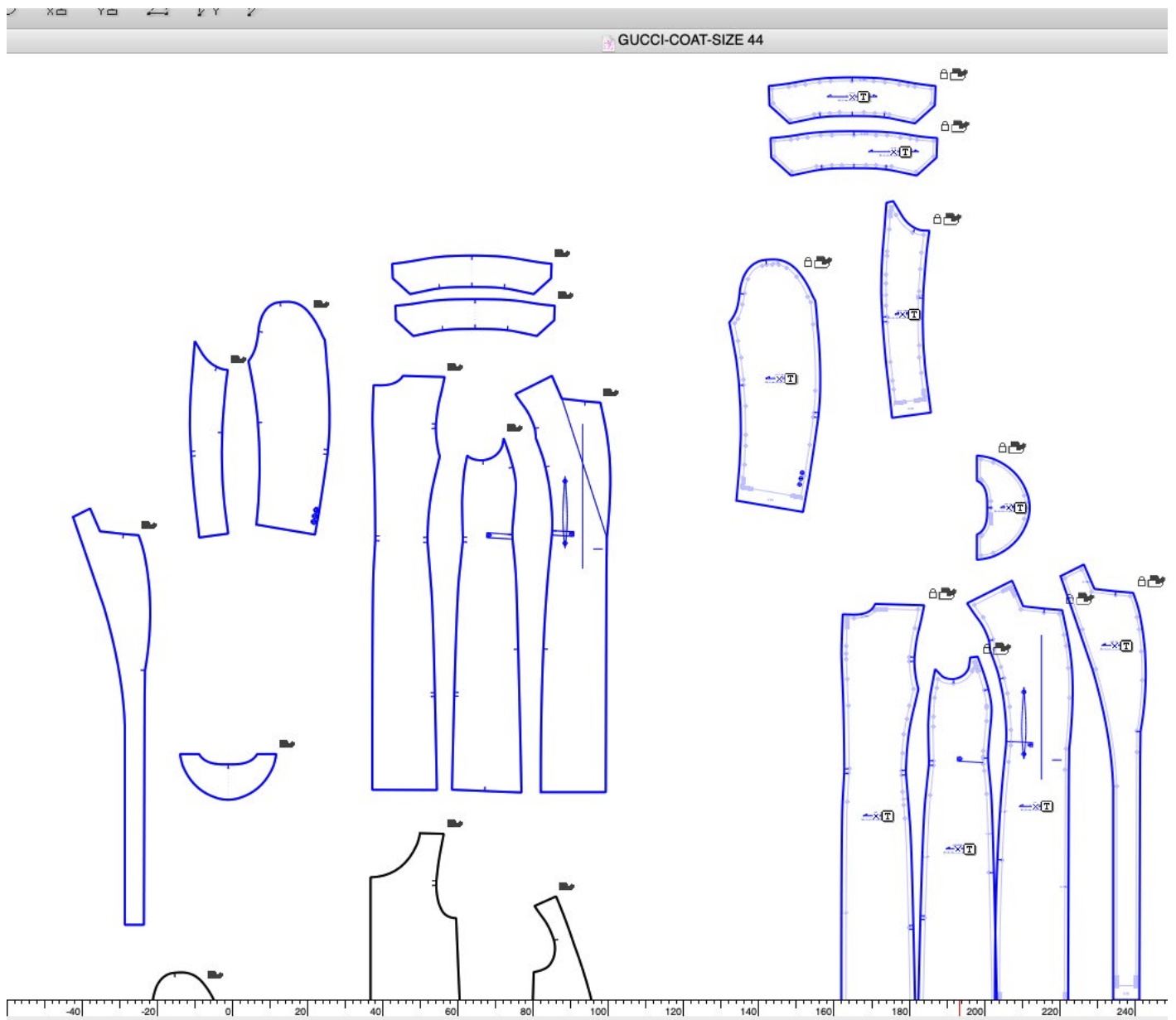


Figure 9. PAD Screenshot of digital pattern by Olena Vivcharyuk.

CREATIVE COMPONENT

The creative component is a drafted digital pattern of the 1996 Gucci coat from the Toronto Metropolitan University Fashion Research Collection that can be used to make an exact copy of the original. I took measurements of all the necessary points and details from the coat. When I had all this information, I drew a technical sketch indicating specific construction details, placement and key notes. The Gucci coat from the Fashion Research Collection is size 44 which is a US size 12-14. I have drafted the coat's pattern pieces using a computer aided pattern design software called PAD and a size 12 torso block (see fig. 9). A sample can be made later to check the fit and proportions compared to the original coat. However, I need to find similar fabric of the same weight, content and weave to make a prototype. After examining Gucci women's coats from three different collections, the similarities are noticeable, especially in the fit and design details. I can use the same 1996 coat pattern to create coat styles from 2006 and 2016 Gucci Fall RTW collections.

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