

Fig. 1. Fenelon, Fedlande. "Issey Miyake Pleats Please Pants. Composition: 100% Polyester. Accession# FRC2017.01.006", 24 Sep. 2019. Accessed 29 Sep. 2019. Picture taken at the Fashion Research Collection.



ISSEY MIYAKE TROUSERS

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RESEARCH QUESTION: HOW DO THESE PANTS FIT INTO THE VERNACULAR OF ISSEY MIYAKE'S DESIGNS?

"His pleats, first shown in 1989, are known all over the world, in museums as well as boutiques on display as well as on the streets. [T]hey invite Indian women to give up their saris, Parisiennes their power-suits, Japanese women their total looks for the pleasure of wearing clothes as comfortable as tracksuits, but ten times lighter" (Bénaïm 6). Issey Miyake's collection of work is deemed revolutionary in the fashion world. The art of fashion design is heavily influenced by cultural and societal identities as well as social values and ideologies. From ostentatious garments like the Horn of Plenty by Alexander McQueen to practical garments like the Ferris trousers by Isabel Marant, fashion design often serves to mirror the conventionality and extravagance of society in a particular moment. While some designers specialize in the avant-garde and others in conventionality, few experiment in both as Issey Miyake. His design dexterity is exemplified in the *Pleats Please Issey Miyake* collection pants (e.g Fig.1). The features and design of the pant embody Miyake's innovative ways of thinking.



Fig. 2. Pleats Please by Issey Miyake. Youtube, uploaded by Garik Avetisov, 14 Mar. 2018, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Vmwxd4yYwjg>.

OBJECT RESEARCH

At first glance, the garment appears to be black straight leg pleated pair of pants. There are two pockets discreetly hidden by black zippers at the hips, accompanied by two large black zippers found at the bottom side of each leg. A drawstring cord found in the waistline completes the refined detailing. The features of the pant embody Miyake's signature of combining technology and fashion. In this example, technology is demonstrated via the zipper placement, drawstring, and his innovative pleating technique. The use of zippers speaks on his take on fluidity, comfort and functionality. Opening the zippers along the leg of the pants can be freeing, while the pocket zippers allow for a sense of security in moving freely without fear of items falling out. The drawstring allows for adaptability, as the pants can accommodate differing sizes, as the waistline is adjustable, and the material of the pants are lightweight, airy and unrestricted.

MIYAKE AND THE BODY

Pleats themselves are synonymous with Issey Miyake. The creation of his collection *Pleats Please Issey Miyake* serves as an important marker in his catalogue of work. Through experimentation of stitching techniques, "Miyake aimed to discover types of pleats that would increase the flexibility in the movement for the people who wore his outfits." (Issey Miyake: Fashion Designer Biography). In fact, his pieces are notoriously light and airy, allowing for great ease of movement of the consumer. The pieces are imagined to be one with the body. Once the pants and the body meet (e.g. Fig.2), new layers of his designs are revealed. His innovative ways are further exemplified as the pants take on a new shape. On the mannequin, as shown in the picture, the bottom of the pants seems to be inflated by air, giving them a balloon-like appearance. This newfound layer therefore, attests to "[h]is process [that] explores the fundamental relationship between the body, the cloth that covers it, and the space and room that is created between these elements [...]" (The Concepts and Work of Issey Miyake). His clothing is meant to be unrestricted and non-hugging (e.g. Fig 3). In fact, "the first use of these pleated garments was for the William Forsythe 1991 ballet *The Loss of Small Detail*, which triggered the first proper *Pleats Please Issey Miyake* collection in 1993" (Susie). The main takeaway is that this collection, *Pleats Please Issey Miyake* was created "out of a desire to create pieces of design rather than fashion" (Susie).



Fig. 3. Issey Miyake Pleats Pants, ca. 1990s. Toronto Metropolitan University FRC2017.01.006. Photograph by Victoria Hopgood.

CULTURE AND GENDER NORMS

Furthermore, Miyake's designs are representational of his cultural influences and circumstances. "Issey Miyake [has travelled] in search of the essence of Asian Culture through the Chinese and Korean roots of its craftsmen returning to celebrate its eclectic character in his own subtle way" (Bénaïm 12). Miyake's pleats designs came at a time "when the Japanese weaving business was in decline", and the role of women in society was at a rise (Susie). Women in Japan were now leaving their homes and contributing to the workforce. The collection of *Pleats Please Issey Miyake* is credited as the solution to the weaving business all the while being aesthetically pleasing and revolutionary for women entering the office (The Concepts and Work of Issey Miyake). Miyake's design helped disrupt societally entrenched gendered norms by creating, what appear to be, gender fluid pants women would wear to work. Additionally, his work stems from his disapproval of certain western designs. In the book titled *Issey Miyake* by Laurence Bénaïm, the author states that "the Western tradition in clothing seemed to me to be too rigid, [he] wanted to create things that could be free, both mentally and physically" (11). A sentiment echoed in the design and creation of these pants. As seen in the material, weight and technology used to create the pant. "I am Japanese, and in my country, we have remarkably strong traditions, which touch everything in our lives: art, ideas, life and nature. We are able to make use of both technology and our traditions to make our exceptional fabrics" (Bénaïm 12). All to say, Miyake's Pleats Please collection (and these pants) embody his cultural influences and background.

EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND

That said, to understand the origin of the *Pleats Please Issey Miyake* joggers, one must take into account Issey Miyake's education and design history. After graduating in 1964 from the Tama Art University in Tokyo with a degree in graphic design, Miyake continued his studies in Paris, France at the Chambre Syndicale de la Couture Parisienne (Mark Holbum, *Issey Miyake* (Koln: Taschen, 1995), 138). As an apprentice to Hubert de Givenchy and Guy Laroche during his time in Paris, Miyake was able to integrate what he learned under their tutelage with his own vision. What resulted was the cultivation of a signature style that characterizes Miyake's design philosophy to this day: "transplanting Eastern traditions... infused with Western modernity" (Miyake et al. 28). Miyake then returned to Tokyo in 1970 where he founded the Miyake Design Studio (Miyake et al. 29).



Matsuda, Mineko.
Japonica, Michiyo
Nakamoto, March 16
2016, [http://japonica.
info/issey-miyake-
retrospective/](http://japonica.info/issey-miyake-retrospective/)

ARTISANAL TECHNIQUES

During his university years, a Ginza craft shop owner noted that Miyake “was passionate about the study of traditional artisanal techniques of weaving and dyeing.” This sentiment echoes the importance of increasing accessibility to traditional Japanese textiles and related techniques, which have been long standing pillars of the Miyake Design Studio. Throughout their tenure at the Miyake Design Studio, Miyake and his collaborators such as Ikko Tanaka and Makiko Minagawa utilized the studio as an opportunity to explore ways to adapt rigorous traditional techniques to modern production (Miyake et al. 36). Their proclivity towards breathing new life into materials and practices which may have been considered more obscure due to their deep roots in Japanese tradition is illustrated in the Issey Miyake Tattoo collection of 1971. Working with long-time collaborator and head Miyake Design Studio print maker Makiko Minagawa, the two creators explored melding Japanese-style tattooing, which was traditionally done in homage to the dead, with images of Janis Joplin and Jimi Hendrix, Western icons who had both passed away the year before. This interest in traditional skills informed Miyake’s work over the next decade as the Miyake Design Studio continued to visit workshops all across Japan, with the goal of “reinvigoration” through the “redevelopment of these materials” (Miyake et al. 36).

INNOVATIVE TECHNOLOGIES

Miyake Design Studio's research equally divides focus between techniques derived from current technical advances and traditional, artisanal techniques. Pleating production for both the *Pleats Please Issey Miyake* collection and other pleated garments in Miyake's eponymous collection is localized to two sites in the Tohoku region of northern Japan, where a revolutionary form of the pleated garment was engineered by technicians in 1988 (Miyake et al. 23). The garments are cut and fully assembled to nearly three times their intended size, and then "placed in a press between two sheets of paper, from where it emerges with permanent pleats" (Miyake et al. 23). Prior to this, pleated garments were cut and sewn from materials that had already been pre-pleated. While Miyake had experimented with plissé and other pleating techniques throughout his career, it was not until 1993 that his design ideas given life in the form of the *Pleats Please Issey Miyake* line.

PLEATS PLEASE ISSEY MIYAKE ORIGINS

Despite an obvious inclination for form, functionality remains at the core of Issey Miyake's designs. While experimenting with *Pleats*, a principal element of the 1988 *Issey Miyake* collection, Miyake met William Forsythe, director of the Frankfurt Ballet at the time. Miyake offered to design costumes for the company in order to demonstrate specific advantages of the materials used for *Pleats*, namely the ease with which the lightweight material could recover its original shape during movement (Miyake et al. 24). Miyake states that upon reflection of this collaboration, the basic form of *Pleats Please Issey Miyake* was created in 1990. However, it was not until 1993, after a few more years of refinement and experimentation, that *Pleats Please Issey Miyake* was launched commercially (Miyake et al. 24). The intention behind creating *Pleats Please Issey Miyake* is expressed well in the brand's slogan: "Easy to care for and fun!". While lecturing at the Ace Gallery in New York, Miyake explained that despite his rigorous and detailed approach to design, it was important that the wearer derived delight in the fun design and wearability of the clothes (Kanai).

40 YEARS OF DESIGN

Unlike “Western clothes which are cut and shaped with the body as the starting point; Japanese clothes begin with the fabric. Instead of choosing one or another of these approaches, Miyake has concentrated on the coexistence of the fabric and the body. They are linked by movement” (Bénaïm 12). Miyake’s designs are strongly influenced by the importance he places on viewing the body and fabric as one, as explained in this post. Miyake designs have repeatedly proven themselves to be innovative concepts executed with the relationship between body and fashion in mind. That said, during the research conducted for this assignment we were faced with challenges that would determine the exact time of this piece. We have come to the conclusion, that these pants are from the mid 90’s-mid 2000s, however, the exact year remains unknown. Seeing as the label specifically refers to the *Pleats Please Issey Miyake* brand rather than his eponymous line, we were able to eliminate any time before 1993, but without traditional ephemeral markers of periodical fashion dating the piece is difficult. A key tenet of his design philosophy, Issey Miyake creates works of wearable art and exemplary design, rather than purely trend driven fashion. This exact philosophy is what makes his work not only long-standing and engaging for the consumer, but also incredibly difficult for us to date this timeless piece of design. Overall, Issey Miyake’s work carefully embodies his outlook on life and cultural background, whether that be his Japanese roots or his formal Parisian education. Additionally, through his collaborations, Issey Miyake has been able to create revolutionary pieces of clothing that have changed fashion.



Boegly, Luc. *New York Times*, Liza Foreman, 2 Dec. 2014, www.nytimes.com/2014/12/02/fashion/issey-miyakes-50-years-of-making-connections.html

Penn, Irving. "Turtle" *Trendland*, Ani Tzenkova, 16 Feb. 2010, trendland.com/irving-penn-regards-the-work-of-issey-miyak/

CREATIVE PORTION

For the creative element of the project we have decided to highlight Issey Miyake's deeply rooted and varied collaborative endeavours.

The first image is comprised of lamps Issey Miyake created for his interior décor brand IN-EI, which resulted from a collaborative research endeavour with Jun Mitani, a professor at the University of Tsukuba in Japan. These light sculptures were placed in a garden setting at the "Vivid Memories" on display at the Fondation Cartier pour l'Art Contemporain in Paris. The image we have over-laid was photographed by Irving Penn, a longtime friend and collaborator of Issey Miyake. This photograph served as a poster for the Issey Miyake a-UN exhibition at the Musée des Arts décoratifs in Paris in 1988 (Miyake, Issey et al. 45). Having published multiple books of their work together, Miyake and Penn have a rich collaborative past.



Van Oppen, Branko. "Three Venus Statues" *Ancient History Encyclopedia*, Branko Van Oppen, www.ancient.eu/article/1377/disarming-aphrodite-rediscovering-the-venus-de-mil/

Jouanneau, Daniel. "Plastic Body" *Miyake Design Studio*, mds.isseymiyake.com/im/en/work/

The Plastic Body was part of an exhibition titled Bodyworks which explored Issey Miyake's research into the plasticity and softness of the human form (Miyake, Issey et al. 43). Juxtaposed with the Venus de Milo, we believe that same sense of softness and rigidity is conveyed as equally through the plastic bodice as this incredible example of Hellenistic period sculpture.



Background image from <http://modearte.com/yayoi-kusama/>

Model image from <https://lamignonette.tumblr.com/post/176778491488/cotonblanc-jeux-de-tissu-performance-by-yayoi>

Pieces from Issey Miyake's special A-POC 2000 collection are overlaid with, and on top of Yayoi Kusama's trademark polka dots. The collaboration between the two Japanese artists came to be when in 2000, one year after the A-POC collection debut, Yayoi Kusama embellished Miyake's pieces with her iconic polka dots for yet another event at the Fondation Cartier pour l'art Contemporain (Miyake, Issey, et al. 109).



Meier, Raymond. *New York Times*, Liza Foreman, 2 Dec. 2014, www.nytimes.com/2014/12/02/fashion/issey-miyakes-50-years-of-making-connections.html

Penn, Irving. *Dazed*, Kin Woo, 16 Aug. 2011, www.dazeddigital.com/fashion/article/11004/1/issey-miyake-irving-penns-visual-dialogue

Another example of Irving Penn's iconic work for Issey Miyake is utilized here, this time a 1994 ad campaign for the *Issey Miyake* collection. The photograph is overlaid on top of the inside view from the 1998 Foundation Cartier pour l'art Contemporain exhibit in Paris. The two photographs both mirror and compliment Miyake's bold use of colours which have been a mainstay of Issey Miyake's design catalogue.

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