

YVONNE LIN: ANALYSIS OF THE WHITE SLASHED LEATHER MINIDRESS

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In 2013, Yvonne Lin created a ten-piece collection for *Mass Exodus: Formation* [1]. She then generously donated one of her pieces to Toronto Metropolitan University's Fashion Research Collection -the FRC. The garment (see figs. 1&2) presents a variety of current themes to explore through the construction of the dress as well as its appearance. Art-to-wear or made-to-measure, 3D technology, femininity and the grotesque, are themes that I will explore to further understand whether the use of 3D technology in fashion can challenge the feminine ideal and alter the narrative of the grotesque. Lin utilizes collaborations between architecture and fashion, and 3D technology and machine sewing to create the garment, the dress is classically feminine and fragile while portraying a tough exterior through textile and construction. Lin's inspiration for the dress comes from Michael Hansmeyer's subdivided columns (see fig. 3). However, the dress is also reminiscent of Iris Van Herpen's Haute Couture collections, specifically the 3D printed 'skeleton dress' debuted in 2011 (see fig. 4). The designer's use of 3D technology challenges traditional uses of fabrics and the production of garments. Comme des Garçon's creator Rei Kawakubo also challenged traditions by playing with the female standard and shape, to stray away from what was expected and to understand what is grotesque or 'anti-fashion' (Granata 103; The Met 2017). These three women all question the way in which women's bodies are portrayed, by using non-traditional methods of creation and design, their final products challenge the feminine ideal by translating their inspirations into fashion, art-to-wear and made to measure designs.



Fig. 1 Yvonne Lin's Dress. Photographed by Author at the Fashion Research Collection. FRC2013.04.001.



Fig. 2 Yvonne Lin's Dress. Photographed by Author at the Fashion Research Collection. FRC2013.04.001.



Fig. 3 Hansmeyer's subdivided Columns
Hansmeyer, Michael. "From Mesh to Ornament." *Future cities: ECAADE*, 2010, pp. 285-293.



Fig. 4 'Skeleton Dress' from Capriole Collection
Van Herpen, Iris. "About." *Iris Van Herpen*, 2019, <https://www.irisvanherpen.com/about>.



Fig. 5 Shoulder Seam. Photographed by Author at Fashion Research Collection. FRC2013.04.001.

OBJECT ANALYSIS

Observation

The dress is made of an ivory/bone leather with slashed columns along the dress. It was made in 2013. The dress's large open back is juxtaposed with the cap sleeve and high necked design. The label is simple, the designer's name is written out Yvonne Lin 9/10, referencing that it is the ninth piece of ten in the collection. The garment is structurally sound; however, the slashed columns need support to ensure the integrity of the dress, there are also small seam stitches that are tearing at the shoulder, (see fig. 5). There is an emphasis on the female figure, structure, and back, with a zipper enclosure -there are minimal signs of wear as it is a custom piece for the runway collection.

Reflection

The dress is made for simple access with a long zipper on the back of the dress, placed from the neck, past the skirt which is contrasted to the complexity in which this dress was made. There are references and similarities which come to mind, however, the dress is unique, which is intriguing and asks us to understand more about art-to-wear and made-to-measure designs. This dress evokes and protests the feminine ideal, its classic mini-dress shape with exposed back conjures up themes of femininity- while its protruding slashed columns keep others at a distance (Bari 67). This deviation from the standard of female dress is what drew me to inquire more.

Interpretation

The unique construction and style of this dress can be used to consider:

- art-to-wear or made-to-measure [2]
- the feminine ideal
- the incorporation of 3D technology in fashion



Figure 6. Commes des Garçons SS 1997 example. Bruna, Denis. "Tenue Correcte Exigée: Quand Le Vêtement Fait Scandale. ." Los Angeles County Museum of Art , Museum Associates , Paris, 2019, <https://collections.lacma.org/node/185545>.

FEMINITY, THE GROTESQUE, ART-TO-WEAR OR MADE-TO-MEASURE & 3D TECHNOLOGY

Femininity & the Grotesque

As noted, the construction of the dress presents differing dialogues to whoever wears it, the protruding columns of Lin's gown exceed the limits of the 'ideal' feminine body, thus rejecting a skin-tight slender shape and creating a grotesque figure (Granata, "Mikhail Bakhtin" 98). Kawakubo's Body Meets Dress, Dress Meets Body spring/summer 1997 collection - also referred to as 'lumps and bumps' (see fig. 6)- distorted the standard feminine shape by padding non-normative areas of the body, (Blumberg 2019). Although Lin's garment is not padded, the columns protrude from angles that normally are not extended or accentuated by designers, like shoulders, hips, and stomach. The grotesque does not reside solely in the view of the body, but also in the construction of the garment. The slashing in Lin's work emphasizes the deconstruction in the garment as it does not fit the norms of expected western clothing ideals (Granata, "Deconstruction" 185 & 193). Designer Van Herpen focuses on reaching beyond the female body when creating a garment in order to explore new definitions of femininity, Van Herpen's work emphasizes unconventional parts of the female body as well, (Van Herpen 2019). It is important to note that these designers question body standards, thus, informing what is the grotesque (Granata, "Mikhail Bakhtin" 102).



Iris van Herpen, the Most Avant-Garde Fashion Designer in History, M2M - Made to Measure, Feb. 2018, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iJH0mOcpCrk>.



Rei Kawakubo/Comme des Garçons: Art of the In-Between , The Met, June 2017, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=60yGE64Xzs4>. OR https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UzV2IQcAm_Y. *The Weird Clothes of Rei Kawakubo*, YouTube, May 2016, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UzV2IQcAm_Y.



CASHMERE/ WOOL COAT



CASHMERE WOOL COAT



TROUSERS



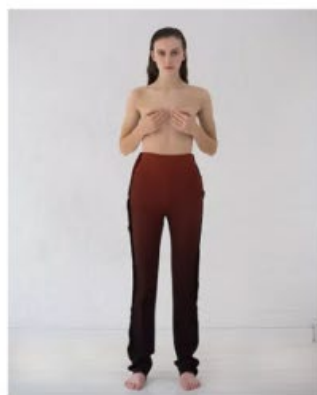
JUMPSUIT



LASER CUT DRESS



FITTED TROUSERS



TROUSERS



DRESS

<https://www.ylin.co.uk/shop>

Art-to-Wear or Made-to-Measure

Lin, Kawakubo, and Van Herpen all challenge the feminine ideal and walk a fine line between art and fashion (Blumberg 2019). Lin challenges ideals and norms through the process of made-to-measure design production rather than ready to wear production, or standardized sizing, (Prendergast 92; Volonte, 259). Bari (53), notes that “standardized sizes paraphrase our complex bodies” in which we purchase this clothing with the hopes that they fit, and unfortunately, they cannot meet the needs of our individual body types. Lin continues to design and create art-to-wear and made-to-measure pieces which, disregard the grotesque as there is no standard size in her collections.

The thin ideal for the westernized female body does not only come from the idealization of thinness but, also the production techniques that are in place and have stayed relatively stagnant. Standardized sizing simplifies production thus, by categorizing bodies and neglecting differences, standardizing sizing allows for the grotesque. Lin’s production practice of made-to-measure challenges the production system that restricts female bodies. In Prendergast’s interview (92), Lin notes that her choice of an art-to-wear collection comes from the fast-paced life of the city to which she is not accustomed to, taking time to hone in on her craft, and deeply connecting with the garments, which is contrasted to our current frantic “throwaway society” (Dale 12).



*Iris Van Herpen | Ludi
Naturae | Process
Film, Iris Van Herpen,
Mar. 2018, [https://
www.youtube.com/
watch?v=LOtV7pc4U1E](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LOtV7pc4U1E).*

3D Technology

Lin uses laser cutting to achieve the slashes on the leather dress, (Prendergast 90). 3D technology offers a multitude of ways in which it can aid in changing the narrative of our bodies. 3D technology can increase the scope of techniques within the industry which may widen the market for art-to-wear, as well as made-to-measure garments, (Prendergast 170-171). 3D body scanning has already been implemented in the construction of Olympic athletes' garments, this leads to the question: then why not for the general public (Prendergast 175)? Unfortunately, many of the designers that use 3D technology do not create for the everyday client, thus their designs are art-to-wear that are produced on a made-to-measure basis. Van Herpen creates one of a kind haute couture collections and clients will order dresses on occasion, most of Kawakubo's collections, specifically from 2014 and onwards, are deemed 'unwearable' as she plays with fashion as an object adorned by the body (Van Herpen 2019; The Met 2017). Lin requests sizes for orders, while her models portray a standard body size, thus, fusing art-to-wear and made-to-measure principles.

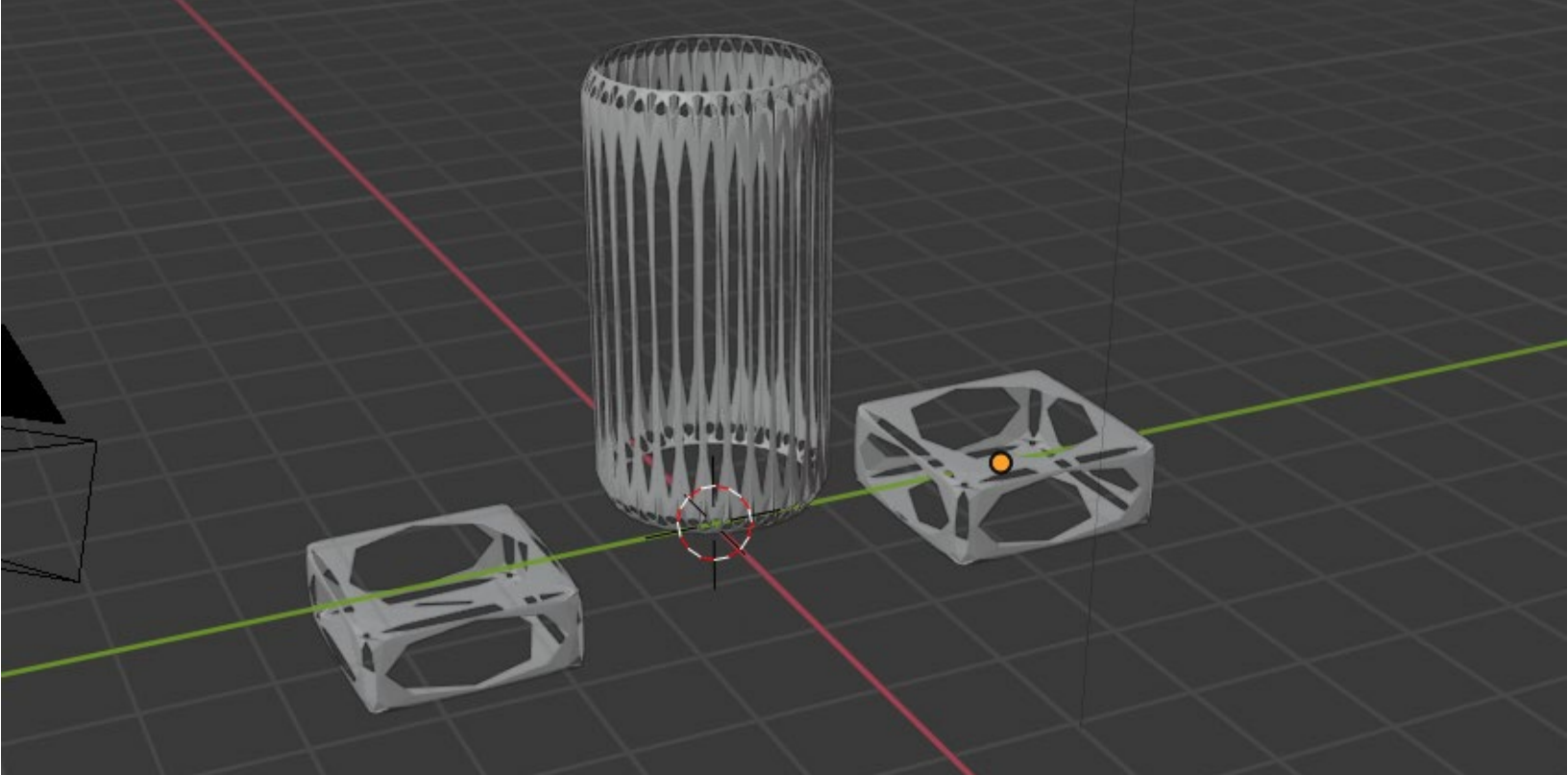


Fig. 7 Process work for Subdivided Column, created by the author.

CONCLUSION

A central theme for all our designers is their approach to the body, Lin actively avoids oversexualizing the female body and rather plays with its complexities and dichotomies (Prendergast 90). By approaching the female body through different lenses and challenging the norms of beauty Lin proves that lumps and bumps in design and body are beautiful, they are art. By creating custom pieces that are fit to the wearer, Lin disregards the westernized standard body, dismantling the grotesque, thus changing the narrative of the normative. 3D technology allows designers to step outside of the restrictive bounds of ready-to-wear and the female body, allowing them to play with fashion, femininity, and art.

CREATIVE ENGAGEMENT

Like Lin, I too am fascinated by the work of Hansmeyer, his columns are symmetrical creations of subdivision, in which he creates ornamental designs by reconfiguring the subdivision process [3] (Hansmeyer 285). Taking inspiration from the narrative told by Lin, I created my own subdivided column. This column includes the 3D slashing and hills of the dress that represent the ups and downs of life, (Prendergast 90-91). Lin also chose to use a smocking pattern technique when creating this dress to portray the “reunion and separation in life” (Prendergast 92)[4]. When creating the column, I too used a pattern of modifiers to contract and subdivide the columns property to create the intricate folds which emulate Hansmeyer’s columns and Lin’s dress. Using a 3D software called blender, I started with the basic shapes for the column and applying the modifiers, (see fig. 7).

These modifiers change the properties of the objects, applying bevel curves the object, the wireframe modifier simplifies the model into major lines, then subdividing and displacing the objects. By repeating this process and placing the objects together, I created this column (see fig. 8 and 9) and rendered this image (see fig. 10).

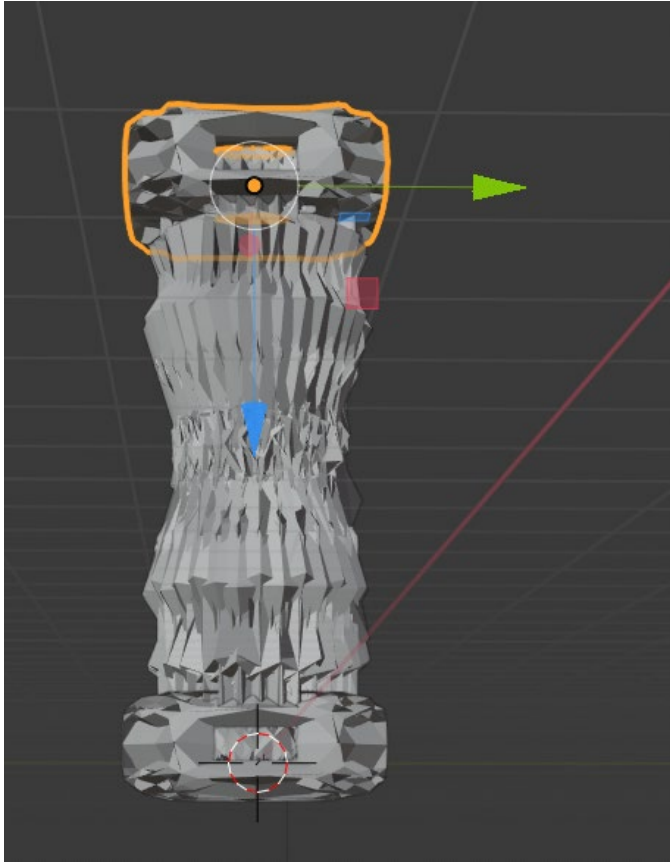


Fig. 8 Subdivided Column, by author

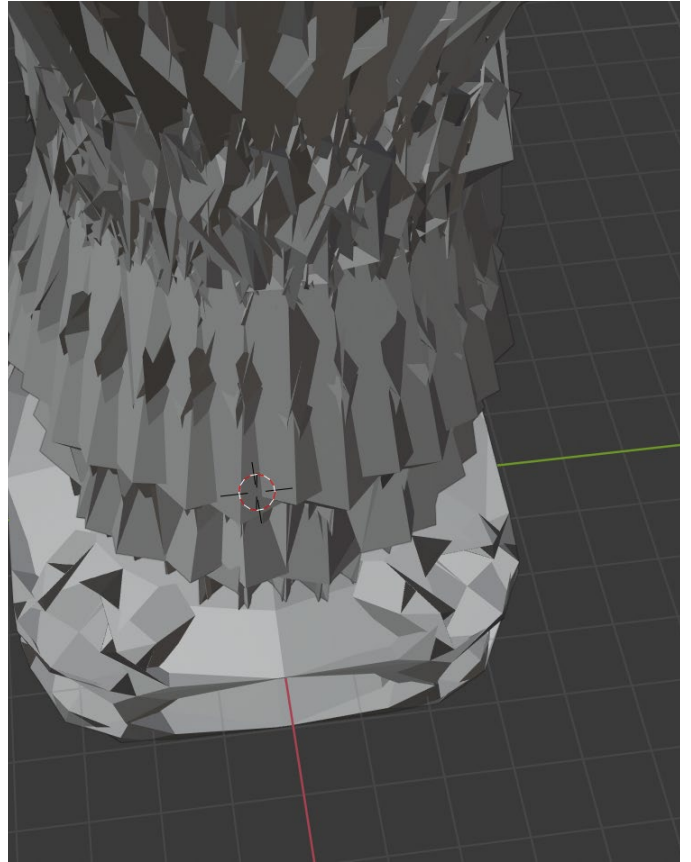


Fig. 9 Subdivided Column, by author



Fig. 10 Subdivided Column, created and rendered by the author.

NOTES

Note 1: Mass Exodus is a fashion show produced by Toronto Metropolitan University fashion and communications studies undergraduate students. Each year the fashion show is held and the theme name changes each year.

Note 2: It is important to note that art-to-wear and made-to-measure are similar in their ideas on bespoke creations, making custom pieces specifically for the wear. However, made-to-measure is inclusive of all body types as it is custom to fit for their proportions. Art-to-wear is often to fit the mannequin or the model, not challenging the feminine ideal, but, still custom fit for those who purchase and created with technical skill.

Note 3: Hansmeyer explains in his paper on ornament subdivision that by using algorithms to 'fold' the 3D objects, the software can create columns that are inconceivable by the human brain and impossible to create by hand, (Hansmeyer 285-286).

Note 4: Lin's smocking pattern technique comparison to reunion and separation comes from the techniques process in which dots on the dress are connected and separated to construct the garment (Prendergast 92).

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