Research: FINAL

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PROJECT OVERVIEW

Discipline: Photography and Media Art
Topic: Recycled Fashion in Fine art Photography

My Senior Studio project explores how recycled and found materials can be transformed into fashion, costumes, and media art. I am interested in using materials such as newspapers, plastic bags, packaging, and old textiles to create objects that are different from their original purpose.

Photography will be my main medium, but I also want to experiment with costume construction, styling, lighting, video, sound, digital editing, and possible installation. I am interested in how these different forms of media can work together to create a finished artwork.

The project explores transformation, waste, fashion, identity, beauty, and storytelling. Instead of presenting recycled materials as simple craft materials, I want to investigate how they can become part of a constructed visual world.

This project builds on a previous project in which I created clothing from newspapers and plastic bags. For Senior Studio, I want to expand that idea into a larger and more experimental body of work.

Research Questions:

How can recycled and found materials be transformed into costumes, environments, and media artworks through photography and other forms of media art?

How can recycled materials be used to create constructed fashion photographs that communicate ideas about transformation, waste, identity, and beauty?

Link to My Pinterest Board:

https://pin.it/3lqPtgVLm

PRIMARY RESEARCH: *MAKING*

Recycled Costume Experiment

Part of my main research is to experiment with recycled materials. I'm interested in using materials that would be discarded as waste, and altering the physical properties of them to make them wearable objects.

I had a point of reference for this research from my previous experience using newspaper and plastic bags. I continued to experiment with cutting, folding, layering, attaching, shaping and building with paper, plastic, packaging, and old textiles to make clothing or costume pieces.

It is a way for me to get to know the physical properties of each material. Some materials may retain their shape well, others may require extra support. The surface, texture, transparency, colour and movement of each material can also play a part in its appearance on the photo (e.g. newspaper tears are easier to take, plastic bags melt quickly).

The costume will not just be a prop for the final pictures – it is important for this experiment. It can be among the central elements of the painting.

Recycled Set and Environment Experiment

I also investigated the idea of recycling materials for a small environment/ set. This brings the project beyond the scope of making clothes and the materials into the context of the space around the subject.

When I make a set, I have another option of controlling the visual environment of a shot. Even materials that may be deemed a waste can be used as background, surfaces, props or sculptural components.

This experiment is to see if my project needs to be wearable only or will the costumes be in the constructed environment.

Photography Experiment

Photography is the main medium for my project. My aim is to capture the recycled costumes and materials as fine art images, not just as objects.

The elements of lighting, composition, styling, pose, location and background can alter the way the recycled materials are viewed. I am interested in making materials look intentional and visually interesting, but also identifiable as a material.

The image in the photograph is thus an additional stage of construction. The costume is created first, then the scene and lighting created around it.

SECONDARY RESEARCH: *LOOKING*

Suzanne Jongmans

Portfolio: Suzanne Jongmans' official website

Additional sources:
CNN, Suzanne Jongmans and recycled plastic

Colossal, Suzanne Jongmans Recycles Everyday Materials

Suzanne Jongmans is an interdisciplinary artist who works as a photographer, costume designer, sculptor, and seamstress. She creates costumes from discarded materials such as plastic packaging, foam, and other forms of waste. She then photographs the costumes in portraits inspired by Renaissance and Old Master paintings.

Her work is relevant to my project because it combines recycled materials, costume construction, photography, lighting, composition, and historical references. I am especially interested in how she makes disposable materials appear valuable and carefully constructed while allowing the viewer to recognize the materials used to create the costume.

Jongmans' work shows me that recycled fashion can become part of a larger fine art image. The recycled material does not have to be the entire message of the artwork. It can contribute to the character, atmosphere, composition, and story of the photograph.

This is useful to my project because I want my final images to communicate more than the fact that an outfit was made from recycled materials.

Prazzle Arts: From Trash to Wearable Artistry

Prazzle Arts, “From Trash to Wearable Artistry”

This source introduces artists who transform waste materials into wearable art and environmental artworks. It helped me understand the larger field of recycled fashion and the different ways artists use discarded objects as creative materials.

This research is useful because it gives me examples of different approaches to material selection and costume construction. It also helps me think about the relationship between fashion and art.

The artists discussed in this source demonstrate that materials do not have to remain connected to their original purpose. A discarded object can become part of a new artwork when the artist changes its function, appearance, or context.

This connects directly to my project because I am interested in taking materials that are normally considered disposable and giving them a new visual purpose.

Nina Syc

Portfolio: Nina Syc Artwear Fashion

Additional source:
Vogue, PhotoVogue Festival 2025, “The Art of Recycling”

Nina Syc's work is relevant to my project because she creates artwear and fashion pieces from unusual and recycled materials. Her work demonstrates how newspapers and other discarded objects can become clothing with a strong visual identity.

I am interested in how her pieces can function as both fashion and art. This gives me ideas for experimenting with materials and constructing costumes that can later become part of photographs.

Her work also makes me think about the relationship between clothing and character. A costume can communicate information about the person wearing it through shape, material, color, and construction.

This is important to my project because I want the costumes I create to contribute to the identity and story of the photographs.

Costume Design

For my project I believe costume design is essential because these clothes and/or wearable objects will help define the identity of the person.

I want to talk about the different materials that could make different characters, moods and visual ideas. A costume constructed out of newspaper might have a different message than a costume constructed from plastic packaging or old fabrics.

By conducting this research, I will consider costumes not just as what the subject is wearing, but also as a way of passing along the story of the subject.

Textiles as an Artistic Medium

Another material area that I would like to explore is textiles. I am interested in using old textiles and combining them with other recycled or found materials.

Various textures, patterns, movement and structure can be added to the project through textiles. They can also establish a link between fashion and conventional means of manufacturing.

I would like to try out using more conventional materials like plastic, newspaper and packaging with textiles.

Found-Object Art

Found-object art relates to my project because I alter the purpose of the materials. I don't want to start with materials that are only made for art or fashion, but with objects that are already there.

The method used is to make the material the subject of the study. I can explore the possibilities of an object being taken out of a context and brought into a costume, photograph, set, or installation.

This is related to my general interest in transformation. The material becomes disposable or ordinary, but has now been transformed into something that is used for a new visual and/or artistic purpose.

WHAT I HAVE LEARNED FROM MY RESEARCH:

Through my research I have discovered that recycled fashion can lie between a few forms of art. Can include costume design, sculpture, textiles, photography, fashion, installation, video and sound.

I'm learning the most from this research is that the re-used material needs to serve a purpose in the artwork. I don't want the final pictures to convey the idea of something being created from garbage. I want the material, the costume, the setting, the lighting and the photography all working together.

Suzanne Jongmans' work showed me the possibilities of creating and using fine art photography with discarded materials. With the help of Nina Syc, I started to consider recycled materials as wearable art and clothing with a strong visual identity. This Prazzle Arts research fostered an awareness of the wider artist group using waste and wearable materials.

My primary research is helping me understand the physical side of the project. I have to try out various materials to see if they can be made into costumes and environments. I also need to find out how those materials react to light and in photos.

I want to continue working with recycled materials, making costumes, styling, lighting and creating environments in the future. I also want to know if video, sound, projection, or installation should be a part of the final presentation.

NEXT STEPS

My next stage of research will focus on making more material experiments and documenting the results.

I want to:

Test additional recycled and found materials.

Experiment with combining textiles with plastic, paper, and packaging.

Develop more complete costume pieces.

Test different lighting approaches for photographing the costumes.

Create constructed sets or environments.

Photograph the finished costume experiments.

Continue testing video and sound.

Experiment with digital editing.

Explore how photographs, physical materials, and installation could be presented together.

Use these experiments to determine the final direction of my Senior Studio project.

RESEARCH CONCLUSION

Through my research I have determined my main direction for Senior Studio to be recycled fashion and constructed media art. I'm fascinated about creating a costume, setting and visual artwork from discarded or found materials.

Photography will continue to be the primary medium and other media can be used to increase the possibilities for creation and presentation. I will keep investigating and experimenting to see which materials, techniques and media work best.

The project will continue to explore the concepts of transformation, waste, fashion, identity, beauty and storytelling in the process of creating and photographing recycled materials. This is an extension of my previous costume project that was actually recycled, but also allows me to work on the concept for more pieces.