

HISTORICAL REFERENCE AND REVERENCE  
EMULATION AND INNOVATION  
TRENDS: ON, OFF, AND ADJACENT  
CORROBORATING COUTURE  
FORGING IDENTITY  
SENSING STYLE  
FASHION EQUATIONS  
SUITS OF ARMOR  
CLIENT COMPATIBILITY  
CUSTOMIZATION  
RESTRAINT, IMPULSE, AND IMPACT  
MIND MAPPING  
NET AND NARROW  
DISPOSABLE AS INVESTMENT  
ENVIRONMENTAL CONTEXT  
ACQUISITIONS  
COLLABORATION  
ARTICULATION OF STYLE  
BUILDING AND BREAKING TEMPLATES  
PATTERN INSTRUMENTS  
STITCHING TOOLS  
RENDERING MEDIA  
TAMING TEXTILES  
LETTERS: SLOPERS  
WORDS: GARMENTS  
SENTENCES: ENSEMBLES  
STORIES: COLLECTIONS  
PUNCTUATION: DETAILS  
CLOSURES  
SPECIALTY REQUISITES  
MISCELLANEOUS MARKERS  
CARE AND FEEDING OF A GARMENT  
ANCIENT TOOLS AND TECHNIQUES  
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FASHION TRANSLATIONS  
FOUR SEASONS: A TIMELINE  
ROTE, RULES, AND ROUGHS  
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CHECKS AND BALANCES  
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MANIPULATING FULLNESS  
BODY MAPPING  
UNIFORMITY  
FIT  
MEND AND ALTER  
DECONSTRUCT AND RECONSTRUCT  
STRUCTURE AND SCALE  
ANATOMICALLY CORRECT  
ROADS LESS TRAVELED  
CAMOUFLAGE AND COMPLEMENT  
CLOTHES THAT CARRY  
DESIGN UNTO OTHERS  
RESHAPE AND RECONFIGURE  
RESURFACE  
A CUT ABOVE  
FRINGE AND FRAY  
ADD, SUBTRACT, AND PRESERVE  
CHANGE AGENTS  
DRAWING THE EYE  
A-SYMMETRY  
INTARSIA: PUZZLES AND MISSING LINKS  
THE REVEAL  
CULTIVATED INFLUENCE  
CURATED EXPERIENCE

# *Fashion* Design Essentials

100 Principles of Fashion Design

ROCKPORT

Jay Calderin

*Fashion*  
**Design Essentials**



ROCKPORT

*Fashion*  
**Design Essentials**

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Jay Calderin

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**Creative ideas are elevated by experience and expertise.** This book sets forth a challenge to fashion designers: Continue to expand your horizons, hone your skills, and experiment with strategies. The idea behind collecting and cataloging the essential principles of fashion design is to build a framework for artful examination that the designer can revisit regularly for inspiration and instruction. This book is for anyone devoted to fashion—whether you are a professional designer, a design student, or a fashion DIY enthusiast.

The world of fashion design is constantly changing—what was in style last month may be old hat now, but if you know how to stay ahead of trends and keep your design skills sharp, you'll always be ahead of the curve. *Fashion Design Essentials* offers principles, tools, and processes for succeeding in all fashion endeavors.

Editing the list to one hundred concepts is meant to help organize and prioritize this information for maximum efficiency. The references in each layout have been selected because they hone in on the essence of the topic with precision, while allowing for diverse reinterpretation, not simply reproduction.

**Five primary areas of investigation** provide the structure for the book. In many ways, they can be described as a set of best practices for cultivating creativity:

#### **Thought**

*Intellectual exercises* that are intended to serve as catalysts for channeling creativity

#### **Inventory**

*Definitions and applications* for using or repurposing tools, manpower, and raw materials for fashion design

#### **Technique**

*Fundamental skills* for identifying and executing fashion design ideas

#### **Artistry**

*Creative rituals* that help conjure and cultivate the imaginative instincts of a fashion designer

#### **Navigation**

*Diverse strategies* designed to allow a fashion designer to negotiate a clear path to success

Each essential concept is ultimately a source of stimuli that must be deciphered and then shaped to fit the project at hand. Dedication and attention to detail during that examination will help leverage a designer's vision.

In an attempt to round out the whole experience, some philosophical debates are woven into the ideas throughout the book, such as the benefits or far-reaching impact today's fashion designers will have on the foreseeable future.

# 1 Historical Reference and Reverence

It is said that those who don't learn from history are doomed to repeat it. Within the frame of fashion, those who don't learn from history are doomed to waste a wealth of inspiration. Three mainstays in the fashion world that are restyled time and again are corsets, aprons, and kimonos.

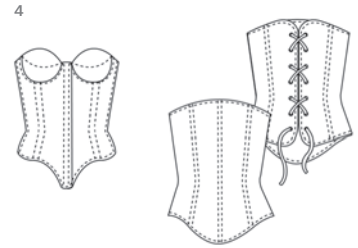
The corset, originally a foundation garment, still reigns supreme on the fashion landscape. Commonly associated with goth, fetish, and most recently, Steampunk fashions, couturiers such as Thierry Mugler and Jean Paul Gaultier have been responsible for raising the corset to an iconic status.

The apron at its most functional protects clothing from wear and tear. Aprons at their most glamorous have graced the runways of Alexander McQueen, Miu Miu, and Marc Jacobs as fashion accessories. Short-waist aprons made in practical fabrics as well as decorative hostess aprons speak to a time when homemaking was a way of life for most women. Long versions such as the bistro apron are among many that are used in the service industry. The bib-style apron can take shape in leather, rubber, or heavy canvas for more rugged uses. The pinafore is a decorative style of apron that conjures up images of life on the prairie—a look that was very popular in the 1970s. The cobbler apron is a pullover style with a front, a back, and ties on the side. Whether it is incorporated into a collection by way of nostalgia or utility, the apron still makes strides in fashion.

The kimono is a full-length, T-shaped robe. When part of a traditional ensemble, it is secured with an obi sash. The kimono is made from a tan, which is a fixed bolt of fabric measuring 14 inches by 12.5 yards (35 cm x 12 m). The length is cut into four panels of fabric that make up the two sides of the body and both sleeves. A collar and lapel-style panels are added with small strips of fabric. Kimonos were originally disassembled for cleaning and reconstructed by hand.



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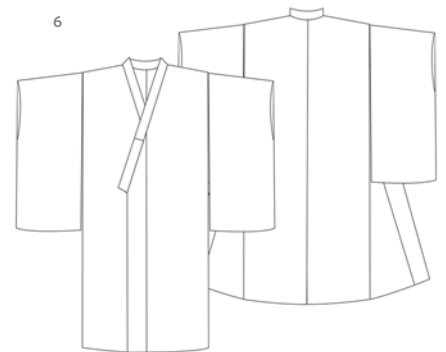
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5



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6

1. Corset by Joe Carl

2. Vintage apron—Poor Little Rich Girl

3. "Old Japan" Bridal Kimono (circa 1980s)

4. Corset

5. Apron

6. Kimono

French model Audrey Marnay in a tweed corset suit by Thierry Mugler, haute couture collection, Autumn/Winter 1998/99



PHOTO: THOMAS COAX/AP/GETTY IMAGES

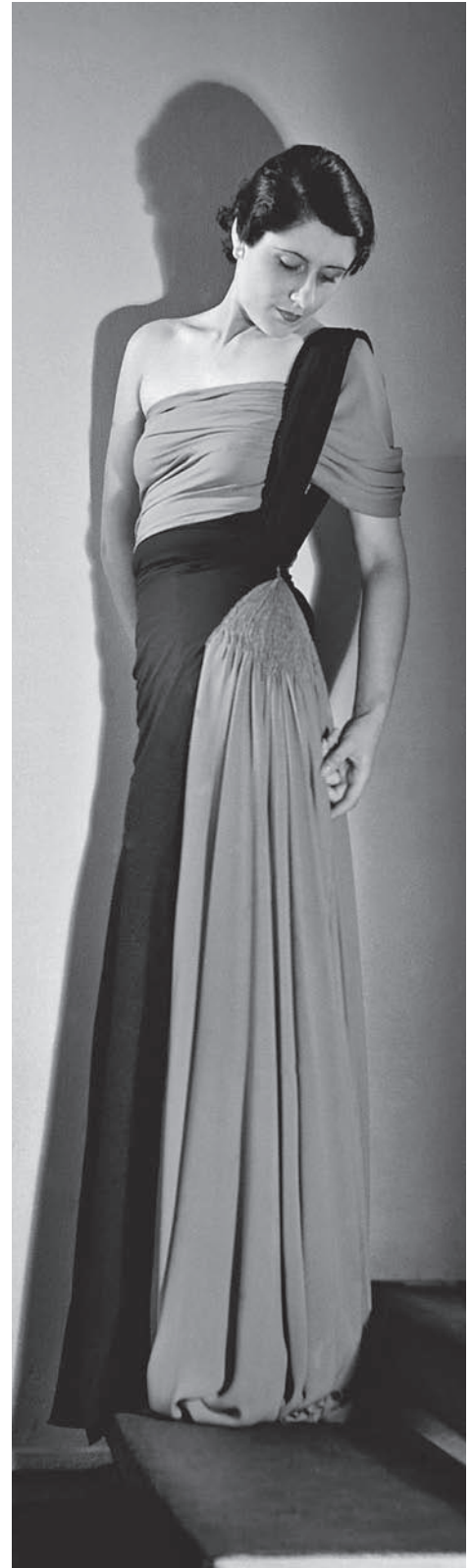
## 2 Emulation and Innovation

Emulating styles from the past often will go a long way in fashion design, as everything eventually makes a comeback. The grace of Grecian gowns forever immortalized in stone is a prime example of the power of a fashion idea that does not simply survive, but thrives in the imaginations of fashion designers throughout history. In the 1920s, Madeleine Vionnet was influenced by the dances of Isadora Duncan who, in turn, was inspired by Greek sculptures. While Vionnet commanded the bias, Halston summoned the spirit of these enduring drapes and folds with the knit jersey in the 1970s. The House of Halston continues to pay homage to that aesthetic today.

At every level of the marketplace and from every corner of the globe, the goddess gown continues to spring from the collections of designers who can appreciate its beauty and who wish to interpret it for themselves. Designers can take a cue from this example and explore the degrees of separation that link them and any of their ideas to kindred historical counterparts.

**Below:** Greek-inspired statue

**Right:** Floor-length Madeleine Vionnet dress, September 1935



Halston fashion show  
Autumn/Winter 2008/09  
New York City

PHOTO: KARL PROUSE/CATWALKING/GETTY IMAGES



### 3 Trends: On, Off, and Adjacent

Although trends are no longer dictated, design houses spend a great deal of time and money trying to predict trends and/or set them into motion. Designers looking to find their place in the market must know whether they intend to be on-trend, trend-adjacent, or off-trend altogether. They must consciously decide whether they will lead, follow, or ignore a trend. Although trend-conscious designers ride the wave of the media and the public's clamoring for examples of the latest fashions, designers who intentionally miss the bandwagon sometimes find that their independent perspectives inadvertently trigger trends or countertrends of their own. On-trend collections will be boiling over with the concept. An alternative approach to the latest craze may be to find smaller and subtler ways to embrace it without making it the focus. The consumer breaks down the same way, and a designer who has a clear understanding of where she stands on trend will connect with the right audience for her product.

Leopard and other animal prints get pulled out of relative obscurity and are presented as fresh and new every few seasons. In fairness, designers will be moved by a trend in different ways from season to season, resulting in new and interesting interpretations of it. If a designer decides to offer the trend du jour as a statement garment, accent piece, and accessory, she makes it easy for clients to adopt at least one interpretation of it on their own terms. Then, of course, there are those who will want to have nothing to do with it. The fashion film classic *Funny Face* depicts the character of fashion editor Maggie Prescott painting the town pink. Someone on her staff asks, "I haven't seen a woman in two weeks in anything but pink. What about you?" Prescott replies, "Me? I wouldn't be caught dead." Truth is, many trends are not merely forecasted, but often made by an industry.



**Above:** Model Naomi Campbell in leopard print hat, 2004

**Below:** Anna Wintour in leopard print jacket, 2007



PHOTO BY TONY BARSON/WIREIMAGE

Publicity portrait of actress Audrey Hepburn as she wears a wide-brimmed hat and white blouse during the filming of *Funny Face*, directed by Stanley Donen, 1957

PHOTO BY PARAMOUNT PICTURES/COURTESY OF GETTY IMAGES



## 4 Corroborating Couture

Fashion history is the next best thing to a time machine for the fashion designer. Contact with authentic artifacts brings the true essence of a time into sharper focus, whether those artifacts are the actual garments and accessories, or illustrations, photos, and film clips. Eras are composed of complexities that involve everything from science to celebrity. The 1950s, for instance, could be a source for fashions informed by the Cold War, teenage culture, foundation garments, rock-and-roll, or popular television programs such as *I Love Lucy*.

Paco Rabanne's fashions in the 1960s were considered "out of this world." At a time when the race to the moon was heating up, visions of a future in space fueled the imaginations of many designers. Rabanne's foray into film led him to team with designer Jacques Fonteray. Together they created the costumes for the cult classic film *Barbarella*. Although many of the clothes in this genre now seem dated, elements of their fashion predictions for the future live on.

Hallmarks of the 1970s include the exploration of androgyny and a growing importance for the relationship between fashion and celebrity. Unisex fashion blurred the lines between the sexes, and even though genderless jumpsuits never became a mainstay, pants played a bigger part in women's fashion than ever before. Fashion became about labels, so much so that they were no longer on the inside of garments but boldly displayed on the back pocket of designer jeans.

Everything was big in the 1980s—hair, jewelry, belts, and most of all, shoulder pads, which were served up in dramatic proportions. Fashion designer and television costumer Nolan Miller is best known for creating the fashions for the cast of the popular 1980s television series *Dynasty*. Careful study of bygone eras (or the current one) can lead designers to consider how they may be able to best define the times they are living in.

**Right:** Maureen McCormick and Barry Williams rehearse on the set of *The Brady Bunch Hour*, 1977.

**Below:** Linda Evans, John Forsythe, and Joan Collins, who starred in *Dynasty*



PHOTO BY MICHAEL OCHS ARCHIVE/GETTY IMAGES



PHOTO BY ABC PHOTO ARCHIVES/ABC VIA GETTY IMAGES

Actress Jane Fonda in a publicity still as the title character of Roger Vadim's film *Barbarella*, 1968



PHOTO BY CARLO BAVAGNOLI/TIME & LIFE PICTURES/GETTY IMAGES

## 5 Forging Identity

“Age cannot wither her ...” These words from Shakespeare best describe Betsey Johnson’s staying power in the fashion industry. A Betsey Johnson runway show is not complete until the brand’s namesake takes her bow in the form of a cartwheel. Gymnastics aside, the spirit of the gesture is what is important. The brand’s the thing in fashion, and in this case, consistency—youthful spirit, flirty femininity, and a wild-child playfulness—is responsible for making Betsey Johnson such a recognizable label.

Great brands have one thing in common: They deliver messages, products, and services that evolve, but never deviate too far from the fundamentals that generated them. Designers can craft an identity with every choice they make.

Designer Betsey Johnson does a signature cartwheel after her spring 2009 collection show at Mercedes-Benz Fashion Week, 2008, in New York City.

PHOTO BY STAN HONDA/AFP/GETTY IMAGES





## 6 Sensing Style

Each of the five senses plays a significant role in how we interpret fashion, and each should be considered in the design process.

### Sight

This is easily the fastest way to assess whether something is pleasing or not. How do shape and scale relate to each other? How vibrant is the color? How dramatic is the contrast?

### Touch

This is the second most important factor. How does the material feel against your skin? Does the garment conform to your body and feel comfortable? Is the material soft and pliable, or stiff?

### Sound

Imagine the clicks of loose beads knocking into each other; crisp, papery fabrics that rustle as they sway on the body; the synthetic squeak and crunch of plastic as it strains to move.

### Smell

Scents have been designed and are chosen to transform environments, camouflage, or seduce. For example, the Thomas Pink label, which primarily sells dress shirts for men and women, pipes a fresh laundered scent into its stores as part of its retail strategy. Although subtle, details such as this serve as a psychological trigger, heightening the fashion experience through aromatherapy.

### Taste

Edible garments might seem like the exclusive domain of naughty novelties, but food and fashion have always had a mutually inspirational relationship. Jean Paul Gaultier's dress sculptures made of bread might make the mouth water inasmuch as they could inspire the color, texture, and form of an actual garment. The Salon du Chocolat is a chocolate expo that recognizes the bond between the foodie and the fashionista. A fanciful fashion runway show is a highlight of the event, and features models clad in every kind of cocoa confection.

Fashion designer Jean Paul Gaultier poses with a sculpture of one of his dresses made of bread by French bakers for an exhibition at the Cartier Foundation in Paris, 2004.

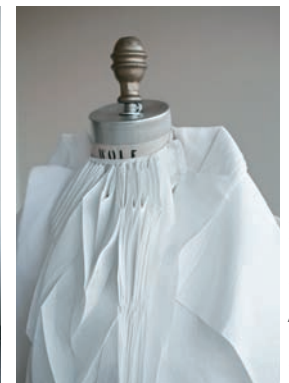


PIERRE VERDY/AFP/GETTY IMAGES



**Left:** Jon Fishman's Sonic Rhythm Dress by Alyce Santoro, Sonic Fabric 2003. Sonic fabric is woven from 50 percent recorded audio cassette tape and 50 percent polyester thread. When gloves equipped with tape heads are rubbed against the fabric the dress makes sound.

**Below:** Ying Gao's Walking City pneumatic fashions, which are triggered by movement, wind, and touch.



PHOTOS BY DOMINIQUE LAFOND



Human beings have more than just five senses. Consider the sense of balance, acceleration, temperature, kinesthetic, pain, and the sense of direction. Royal Philips Electronics of the Netherlands is working on projects that promise a new level of interaction between apparel and the wearer. Textiles infused with sensors that read and respond to movement, biological variations, and external factors hint at the future of fashion. One example is the SKIN: dress, which uses pattern and color changes to display a person's emotional state.



## 7 Fashion Equations

The basic arithmetic of dressing can be a useful way to build a collection. Top plus bottom is easy enough, but which top? Which bottom? Once the designer figures out which basics will fit into a collection as well as into a client's wardrobe, he can begin to calculate the variables.

Design details aside, customers have other demands, such as practicality and comfort, when it comes to mixing and matching. The designer must analyze those needs, design components that will fit into the architecture of the collection, and engineer the garments themselves. Broadening a customer's wardrobe of basics or a designer's core line is easy to do. Having more than one variation of each fundamental garment is an effortless way to increase the number of options. Once a structure is in place, it is easy to pull in accessories to keep things interesting.

In 1985, the first Donna Karan collection was launched and it featured her Seven Easy Pieces. The original Easy Pieces were the bodysuit, a wrap skirt, a chiffon blouse, a blazer, a longer jacket, leggings, and a dress; they all remain relevant today. This system of dressing was an important tool for women in the workforce who had a desire to replace their "power suits" with more fashionable choices, and to streamline the decision-making process so that they could put together outfits for the office, travel, or a social occasion at a moment's notice. In 2009, Donna Karan reintroduced her version of the Easy Pieces with an updated list of must-haves: a turtleneck, a skirt, the pant, a jacket, a coat, and jeans.

