

Ways of Perceiving (ADAD4019)
The Century of Change.

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Named 'The century of change', I will prepare and display an exhibition which highlights the movement of women's fashion through the last century. The exhibition will be held in the National Women's Hall of Fame in Seneca Falls, NY; "created in 1969, the women and men of Seneca Falls created the National Women's Hall of Fame, believing that the contributions of American women deserved a permanent home in the small village where the fight for women's rights began" (National Womens Hall Of Fame Website,2020). This is a place where women's empowerment is captured and appreciated. Today women have the freewill to wear what they want and that is because they have fought to be able to do it. "The 20th century saw the most successful feminist movement in history, from the women's suffrage movement in the early 20th century first putting women's agenda on the national scene to Margaret Sanger who most profoundly influenced women's sexuality later on" (Carroll,2015, *pg.17*).

I plan to use an 8 metres x 8 metres space inside the 1,500 m² building using harbour grey wall structures to section off the area, as this is a neutral colour in between white and black the audience won't deliver any judgement on the exhibition before exploring it. These will allow the exhibition to remain discreet from direct eyesight from the public when visiting, meaning they will have to directly interact with the exhibition to explore its meanings. To not be biased, I have selected a mixture of male and female designers. Through time, there hasn't been appreciation for designs or art made by women as there has always been "the assumption that human beings with wombs rather than penises to create, demonstrates their inability to create anything significant" (Nochlin,1971). However, Coco Chanel(1910s), Mary Quant(1960s) and Vivienne Westwood (1970s) were women who rose to fame for their fashion through the 1900s. "Fashion In the early half of the twentieth century was the preserve of the grand, not something for your everyday women. As far as fashion was concerned, middle- and upper-class men had tailors, but women's fashion was thought a frivolous extravagance" (Quant, 2012). The way women dressed in the 1900s were a way of telling how wealthy they were and what they did for a living. "Clothing, as one of the most visible forms of consumptions, performs a major role in the social construction of identity"

(Crane, 2012). However, over the last 100 years things have drastically changed for women, as its often women you see as ‘fashion influencers’ over social media and the way women dress is not a way of telling who they are. Giorgio Armani rose to fame in the late 1990s so I will use his early designs from the 1990s to compare to the designs in early 1900s, the last important designer I felt was important in my exhibition is Christian Dior.

Each garment in my exhibition will be worn by a mannequin that will be displayed on a circular platform; these platforms will have the option to turn the mannequins by a press of a button, so the viewers get a full view of the garment.



Fig one: *Ensemble*

Starting my exhibition, will be this 'little black dress' “one of Chanel's most popular and enduring contributions to women's fashion” (The Metropolitan Museum of Art ,2004). Dated ca.1924 and part of the collection *Ensemble*, I have chosen this garment as my first piece of the exhibition because it’s a classic style from the start of the 20th century and has many attributes that distinguish a women's style from this time. The flattering body parts of a women are concealed so you can’t recognise the shape of the women’s figure, this outlines how at the start of this century women had to hide their figures and shapes of their body.

“In 1926, American *Vogue* likened Chanel’s “little black dress” to the Ford, alluding to its almost universal popularity as a fashion basic ... suitable for day and evening become both a staple for Chanel throughout subsequent seasons and a classic piece of twentieth-century womenswear” (The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2004).



Fig Two: *Junon*



Fig Three: *Junon*

Following World War II in the 1950s, Christian Dior rose to fame with his post-war designs and dominated the world of fashion. He introduced fresh body lines including the A, H and Y lined types of garments and had a fresh outlook on women’s clothing. “His instinct for calibrated innovations of the body's ‘line’ had established him as fashion's preeminent arbiter” (The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2004). The latest invention of these body lines meant that the garments he made had a lot more shape and structure to them fitting to the body. This "Junon” design, in comparison to the first garment on display, is a lot more flattering around the bust and shapes the women's waist. This dress was made

for post war balls so is a lot more glamorous, but it brings to view the change 25 years made that in society it's not only men who can look good.

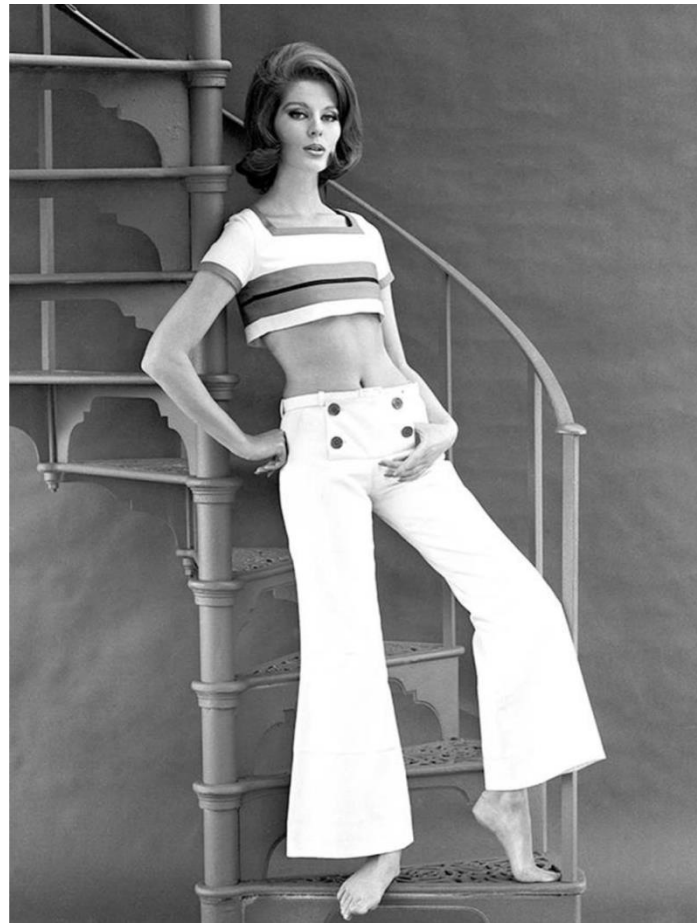


Fig Four: *Toms' trouser ensemble*

Moving into the 1960's, we have the designer Mary Quant who “revolutionised the way we dress” (V&A Museum, 2020). During the early 1900s trousers were only supposed to be worn by men because they were viewed as a masculine piece of clothing. Mary Quant “was one of the first designers to promote trousers and suits as fashionable womenswear” (V&A Museum, 2020). This piece presents a major evolution in women's fashion, as they were having more independence over their clothing choices. This would have questioned ‘*Gender Trouble*’, meaning if a female is wearing trousers then it challenges that she aspires to be a male, all because of an item of clothing.

“If one thinks that one sees ... a woman dressed as a man, then one takes the first term of each of those perceptions as the ‘reality’ of gender: the gender that is introduced through the smile lacks “reality” and is taken to constitute an illusory appearance” (Butler, 2011).



Fig Five: *Seditionaries T-shirt designs*

In the 1976, Vivienne Westwood designed this shirt made from bunched fabric inspired by the ‘Seditionaries’ clothing range, now known as ‘Worlds End’. The imagery on this shirt is very expressive for a female and “demonstrates a form of provocation that is more cheeky than aggressive” (Victoria & Albert 2020). The nipples on the shirt are protest based, showing that women shouldn’t be made to feel that they must cover their bodies up, in fact this was one of Westwood’s motives as he “constantly tried to provoke people into thinking afresh and for themselves, to escape their inhibitions and programming” (Victoria & Albert 2020). You can see this in his designs through time he doesn’t follow trends, he makes them instead for his own beliefs and reasons. During the past 75 years of my exhibition we have seen women show skin, wear figure hugging clothing to freely wearing ‘masculine’ items. Now we have women's naked body parts on a loose, covered up top making a point that women have complete control over their bodies and can reveal or show off any part that they want- something you would never have seen in fashion at the start of the 20th century.



Fig Six: *SPRING 2000 READY-TO-WEAR*

The final piece of my exhibition will be this outfit designed by Giorgio Armani for his Spring 2000 ‘Ready to wear’ collection, “proposing a light, feminine silhouette for the new millennium” (VOGUE,2020). The characteristics of this piece compared to the first back in 1924 have changed drastically, if this outfit was seen on a woman back then, it would have been inappropriate. I have chosen this piece to end my exhibition because it’s revealing, showing off the womanly features of the body – something you wouldn’t have seen 60 years

ago- also the clothing is vibrant with lots of colour, attracting you to look not just at the clothing but also the women herself. Women dress to have pride in themselves, every woman is different some like to show off, and others don't but that is their choice. The 20th century, as you can see, really was the 'century of change' for women not just for fashion but their rights in a lot of aspects of life.

"The real woman of 2000 does not want to be hostage to the rules of fashion. She wants the freedom to create her own look with passion and a sense of self-fulfilment" (VOGUE,2020).

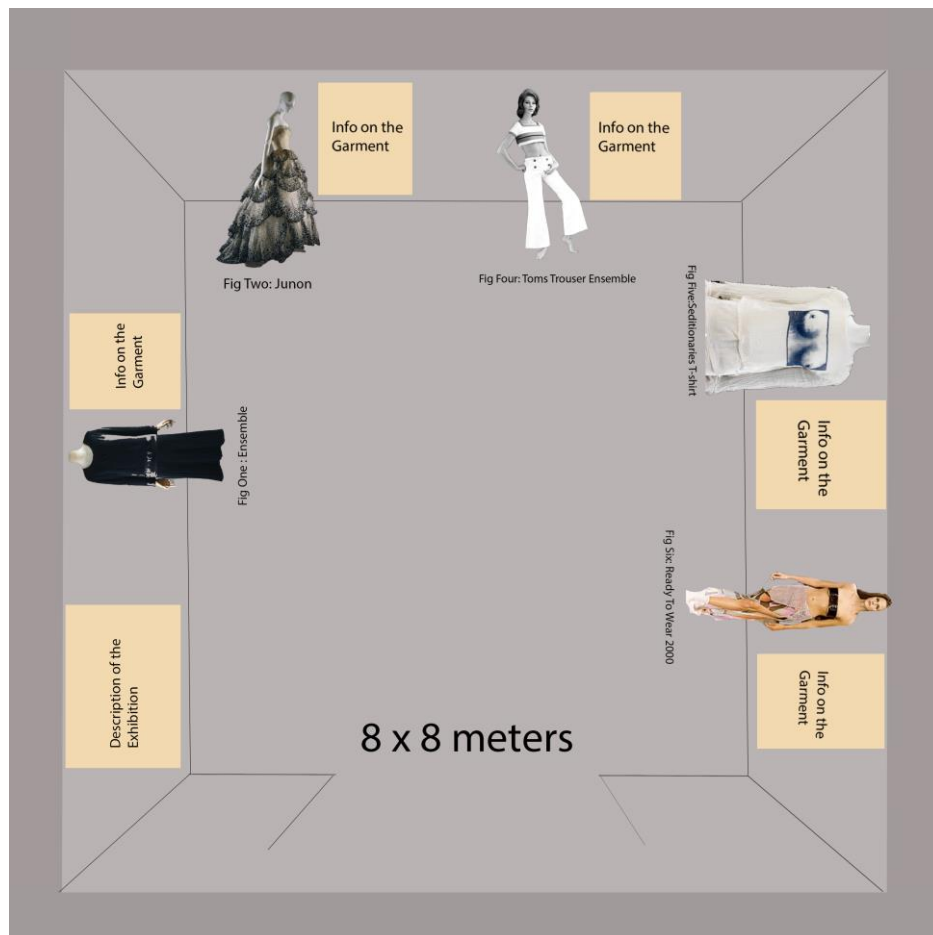


Fig Seven: Blueprint

Due to the exhibition being inside the National Womens Hall of Fame, the spectators who visit will be appreciative of the designs and the significance of them. However, as there is no fee to enter the Hall of Fame its easily accessible for any of the public to enter the exhibition if they wish to do so, I will be sharing the information of my exhibition through social media platforms so

people who wouldn't normally visit the museum will be able to. The intentions of my exhibition are to present the changes in women's freedom over their fashion and allow the spectator to visually analyse this with the garments I have chosen to show these gradual changes over the 20th century.

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Fig Seven: Blueprint. Made by me.

