

Storytelling In Clothing Design: A Study Of Fashion Brand “SEAM” In Indonesia

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Abstract: Storytelling is an ancient human art. It delivers an idea or message effectively by establishing an emotional connection with audiences. Good narratives draw emotions and we have known how the power of stories shapes our lives with certain values. This study presents the main aspects involved in designing clothing specially created to convey a message to cause the change in society. When fashion designers create their collections, they become a storyteller to be able to create a collection with a message to evoke emotions. The objective of this research is to give recommendations or guidelines to fashion design students and young fashion designers in creating a collection to help how to get inspired, how to describe the non-verbal messages and how to communicate specific values. This research is done by observation the process of women's ready to wear collection of the Indonesian brand “SEAM”. Building a strong message is an important part of the process in designing any collection of clothing. A message will give the framework and lead to lots of innovative thoughts and ideas.

Index Terms: Storytelling, designing clothing, collection, non-verbal, message, framework

1. INTRODUCTION

Creative storytelling engages the audience with your design. It brings them into your world, and arouses empathy and connection to your brand or product[1]. Every season fashion comes with new designs and ideas. Fashion is a very attractive world for visual storytellers. SEAM is a women's wear brand in Indonesia and the pre-fall collection 2019 is inspired by the prejudice towards Chinese-Indonesian in Indonesia. In Indonesian society, Chinese-Indonesian has become an easy target of prejudice and discrimination witnessed throughout history. The collection aims to introduce Chinese traditional culture conveying a message towards Indonesian society to treat others equally despite their cultural background or other factors. The collection aims to influence audience in a positive way to respect each other and emphasize that we have to harmonize. It also aims to influence Chinese-Indonesian who is struggling through the prejudice of society to have a voice and feel confident with their ethnicity, and who they are as a person. Chinese traditional culture and its cultural background often appear as designer's creation inspirations, and they are also one of the expressive elements preferred by many designers[2]. The paper reflects how Chinese traditional culture can inspire and be applied on modern Indonesian clothing design. The paper values how Chinese culture can permeate into the society where it is not accepted by appealing its beauty. The study captures the esthetic value in design without any prejudice by creating a modern womenswear collection. The study starts with the learning process from inspiration, designing to final production.

2 BACKGROUND

Chinese-Indonesian ethnicity is individual of both or either ethnicity. By nature of diverse and unique ethnicity as well as minority in Indonesia has consequence foreign ethnics to become victim of discrimination, stereotypes and prejudice. Chinese-Indonesian has been treated differently among other foreign ethnics in Indonesia[3]. The arrival of the Chinese in Indonesia are first witnessed around the time an expedition was led by a man called Zhèng Hé (鄭和) from China to Indonesia which caused the inter ethnicity marriage of Chinese man and Indonesian woman[4]. Despite the emblem of Indonesia, ‘Unity in Diversity’, the Chinese-Indonesian receive unpleasant racial slur, ‘Cina’ which have a negative connotation and aims to belittle the individual[5]. The big rate of racism towards the Chinese-Indonesian brought up an act by previous President of Indonesia Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono to ban the word ‘Cina’ in official terms under the law, Undang-Undang Dasar Negara Republik Indonesia Tahun 1945 about human rights and eliminating racial discrimination. However, banners in demonstration referring to Chinese-Indonesian as ‘Cina’ can still be evidenced[6]. Further special treatment towards Chinese-Indonesia can be evidenced in the political history of Indonesia. the official forbiddance of Chinese political parties such as the BAPERKRI and Chinese-Indonesian that act as a scapegoat in a political coup d'etat that caused resentment and slaughter of the Chinese descendant in the mass killing tragedy of 1965[7]. Riots of May 1998 left a great impact and ordeal towards the Chinese-Indonesian. During the racially fueled anarchy across Jakarta, Medan and Solo, triggered by the economic state of the nation. The riots occur over economic decline and

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Fig. 1. Mobs Vandalizing Property in Jakarta, 1988
Source: www.vice.com, 2018

critical status of Rupiah currency in global economy[8]. During

the riot, Chinese descent as a scapegoat, became targeted by angered civilian upon the economic crisis. Despite only covering about 3% of Indonesia's population, Chinese ethnics control over 75% of the country's economy. Thus, majority of Chinese-Indonesian felt threatened and was forced to flee the country in fear of their own safety[9]. Without precise data of victims, reportedly at least 1000 people were killed and 87 women were raped in which most are Chinese descendant. This became proof of the declining condition of discordance between inter ethnicity [10]. The inability of the government in protecting the rights of Chinese-Indonesia and ensuring safety rises worries among the community. Thereupon, the Chinese- Indonesian felt the obligation to take some action in order to protect their place in society. As cited by Herlijanto, the secretary of Paguyuban Sosial Marga Tionghoa Indonesia stated "It is why we now form a Chinese organization, it is common for the people to go back to their primordial groups when the state can not protect them".



Fig. 2. Chinese Ethnic Shops Destroyed By Mobs.
Source: www.news.bbc.co.uk, 1998

3 DESIGN PROCESS

The design process of the collection are elaborated thoroughly by the process flow from conceptualizing an idea, creating basic preliminary sketches, finding visual inspiration, fabric manipulation, experiments and thoroughly until final line up and product. The following also focused on each step of the design process from flat drawing and ideas to visualization through fabric manipulation. The process of the project starts from deciding a topic and concept for the collection. After the topic was finalized, the research followed includes understanding the silhouette, fabric treatment and trend research that will be applied for the collection. Initial sketches for the design was made and after the design for the line up were chosen, the process of pattern making began. Alongside pattern making, search for textile are also simultaneously done by material sourcing for the appropriate fabric for the garment. One of the most important step is the toile making and development for changes because it determines the final silhouette of the garment. After trials and error with toile development and fabric treatment, the final product were then produced and photographed for final look book.

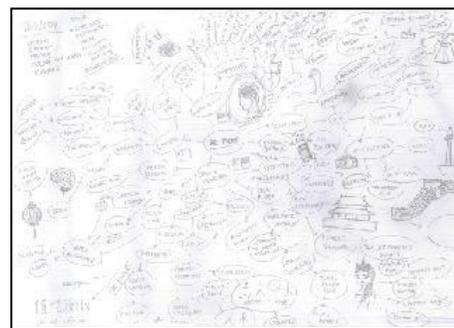


Fig. 3. Brainstorm
Source: Brand SEAM

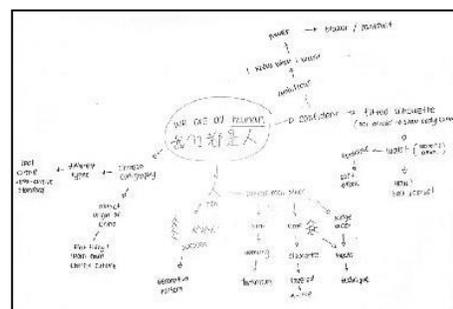


Fig. 4. Mind Map
Source: Brand SEAM



Fig. 5. Design Sketches
Source: Brand SEAM



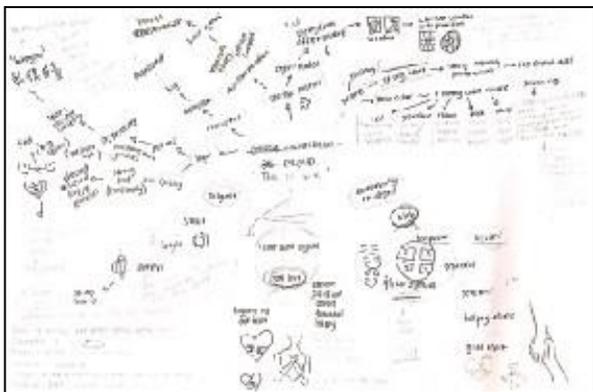


Fig. 6. Toile Development Front View(left) and Back View(right)
Source: Brand SEAM

4 INSPIRATION

SEAM fashion designer is inspired to create a modern women's wear collection influenced by traditional Chinese culture such as Chinese characters, decorative ornaments and architecture. The traditional inspirations are interpreted into sophisticated design to emphasize a strong key feature to create a bold statement towards the serious matter and to appeal the society by its beauty. SEAM fashion designer developed unique hand-made pleating pattern that is influenced by the shape of the Chinese character (人) rén. Print pattern is designed to enhance the Chinese Calligraphy and add touch of oriental atmosphere in the collection. The details of fabric treatment are complimentary to the sheath silhouette of the collection. The pan chang knot or known globally as the endless knot pattern, is believe bring good luck to those who wear it. According to the designer's point of view, the uniqueness of the pan chang knot construction is a way that it supports in each other into creating a strong beautiful shape as how human should support each other into creating a strong and beautiful society.



Fig. 7. Pan Chang Knot
Source: www.chinahighlights.com



Fig. 8. The Forbidden Kingdom, Traditional Chinese Architecture
Wooden Construction
Source: www.videostocks.com



Fig. 9. The China Pavilion, Modern Chinese Architecture
Wooden Crossbeam
Source: www.galinsky.com

5 REALIZATION

5.1 Pleats

The pleats that was highlighted in the collection are inspired by the Chinese character of person or human '人' rén. The pattern was handcrafted and self designed by flat draping on muslin and draping on mannequin for required curves. The pleats are manually heated by steamed iron and pleats liquid to keep the pleats in place.



Fig. 10. Handcrafted Pleats around the Shoulder(left) and the Front Hipline(right)
Source: Brand SEAM

5.2 Digital Printing

SEAM fashion designer experimented on digital print pattern focusing on the Chinese symbolism of flower and significance of the color red. The initial illustration was made from iPad Pro and Apple pencil through the Procreate software, the pattern was then transferred and arranged in

Adobe Photoshop. SEAM fashion designer produced several styles of illustration trials to maximize the possibility of different illustration styles.

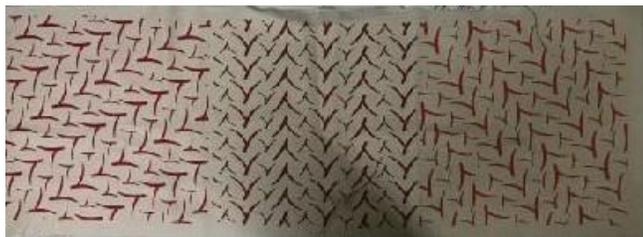


Fig. 11. Digital Printing Result on Textured Polyester
Source: Brand SEAM

5.3 Weaving

The trials of weaving for the collection explored different material such as leather, suede and satin fabric. Experimenting on the weave of the pattern and width of the material to indicate its results, whether the materials create any thick or bulginess when applied to the garment. The leather used for experiments include matte finish and glossy finish to consider its final result.



Fig. 12. Braided Yarn, Leather, Plaited Yarn and Polyester Ribbon
Source: Brand SEAM



Fig. 13. Macrame Trial in Diamond Double Half Hitch Pattern with Polyester Rope and Nylon Rope
Source: Brand SEAM

6 RESULTS

6.1 Look 1

The first look is inspired the construction of the tier of Chinese architecture roof and by the Chinese character ren '人'. The focused on the silhouette is more curved as can be evidenced in the shawl collar and balloon sleeve, meanwhile the straight structure are focused more in the shaping of the pleats to create balance. This look consists of two garments, a jacket and trousers. The shawl collar jacket is created by draping alongside with the self designed pleats aligned on the shoulder and hem. The sleeves are formed by 3 inverted pleats and 3

godets are inserted to create a more voluminous effect. The trousers have pleats from the knee to the hem. The use of the color black throughout the entire look creates a masculine and strong vibe despite the use of semi-wool and silk, soft feminine fabric.



Fig. 14. First Look
Source: Brand SEAM

6.2 Look 2

The second look is inspired the construction of the tier of Chinese architecture roof and by the Chinese character ren '人'. This look is a double breasted ankle length jumpsuit with peak lapel collar. It displays overall pleats from all the way from bodice to the hem. The peak lapel is influenced by man's suit which represents masculinity. The straight silhouette combined with the color grey and semi-wool fabric to finish the masculine vibe for the look.



Fig. 15. Second Look
Source: Brand SEAM

6.3 Look 3

The third look is a jacket and a skirt set that featured digital printing of the Chinese character ren '人' in black on white fabric. The contrast of the colors creates bold and intense with black piping to enhance the lines of panel inspired by the tier of Chinese architecture roof. The jacket is a double breasted suit with panels on the bodice and sleeve. The skirt framed a sheath silhouette with above the knee length, it flaunts two slit on the hem of the princess line. It aims to show a modern and

sophisticated finish. The straight contour of the panels is combined with a more revealing slit and neckline to combine the feminine yet straight and strong look.



Fig. 16. Third Look
Source: Brand SEAM

6.4 Look 4

The fourth look consists of a shirt and a skirt. The shirt is with plunging neckline, collar and placket on the sleeve. The skirt featured digital printing of the Chinese character ren '人' in red, to display the famous color of the Chinese culture that represents luck. The repetition of the Chinese character human rotated and minimized represent the meaning of 'we are all human', emphasizing it by repeating the word human all around the garment. The skirt is with unbalanced hemline in front and back with panels, inverted pleats and godets to create a form fitting silhouette on the waist yet voluminous on the hem. The construction is inspired by the Chinese architecture of the roof by its tiered panels.



Fig. 17. Fourth Look
Source: Brand SEAM

6.5 Look 5

The fifth look displays macrame knots which are inspired by the feeling of support and the Chinese Pan Chang knot that symbolize good fortune, the shape of the macrame pattern are taken from the Chinese character ren '人'. It featured a top and shorts, the shorts flaunted overall alternating square pattern macrame knots with four different types of black material on top of black semi wool fabric. The hint of the macrame knot on top of the same color fabric creates a subtle texture to create a modern look. The sheer fabric of the top with plunging neckline

gives off a feminine vibe where as the color black hold the masculinity

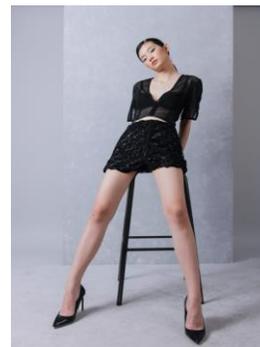


Fig. 18. Fifth Look
Source: Brand SEAM

6.6 Look 6

The sixth look also displays macrame knots on the top and bottom of the look. The top macrame knots are attached to the top and the macrame knots skirt holds itself layered on top of underwear constructed shorts. The macrame pattern display is a simple diamond pattern with combination of three materials. The colors chosen for the look are neutral color to balance the masculine vibe that has been displayed previously on the collection.



Fig. 19. Sixth Look
Source: Brand SEAM

7 CONCLUSION

Storytelling brings the empathy among people in situations and teaches broad lessons that engage real human beings. Designing clothing starts with a story to evoke emotions and gives the framework from the beginning to the end. Storytelling opens up a world of creativity. Clothes have the ability to communicate with audience by convey a message. It is a nonverbal language. Designer's idea or message is represented on clothes, through fabrics, colors, silhouettes, or ensembles. Fashion designers strive for telling strong stories and creating innovative content that catch people's attention. The research reveals that the clothing collection has the potential to transfer thoughts and feelings. This study encourages communication through clothes which can deliver

a message indirectly without aversion and expects the change in society gradually.

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