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**Statement Sleeves**

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The Museum at the Fashion Institute of Technology presents an exhibition on *Statement sleeves*. In the vibrant halls of The Museum of Fashion Institute of Technology, where historical garments meet present-day garments. The exhibition offers over 70 different examples of sleeves from garments from the 18th century to the 21st century. The exhibition features work from designers such as Tom Ford, Giorgio Armani, Balenciaga, etc. Each sleeve has its section and a bit of background information. My journey through the exhibition allowed me to explore artistic expression amongst diverse cultures and epochs. Among the different variations, the kimono sleeve stuck out to me. I was struck by the fabric pattern and construction of the garment and wanted to know what it symbolized. Each garment captures innovative techniques and a unique story. The theme of statement sleeves has sparked conversation amongst onlookers as it reflects reforms in fashion and societal roles.

Kimono sleeves originated in Japan and date back to the Heian period (794-1192 AD). The word Kimono stands for “wearing thing” or “something to wear”. Although we may identify the garment with this name it wasn't until 1868 the term was officially coined. A person's identity can be told by the style, fabric technique, and color of the Kimono. A person's social status, age, gender, and ranking could be determined by their Kimono (The evolution of Japanese fashion,2023). Depending on the quality of fabrics and detailing would determine whether someone was wealthy or in poverty. Japanese fashion captured the eyes of many Western designers such as Alexander McQueen and John Galliano. Due to the “Open Door Policy” in Japan in the early 19th century and late 20th century, allowed foreign powers access to the Japanese market (Costume Culture, 2015). During this time European culture was influenced by Japanese theater plays, paintings, and art. In the current age, the Kimono can be seen as a reminder of Japanese culture, fashion statements, and expressions of individual

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### *Color*

The color of a garment can capture the mood/symbolism of a garment (Visual Merchandising 1-4). The garment selected only occupied one color. The kimono is two different shades of black, an eerie black and asphalt. The striped garment, consisting of two different shades, consisted of buttons. Each button took a single mixture of the two black colors. There's a contrast between the two black colors because the fabrics show a sense of light and shadow. Although both colors are black, they appear different because of the two different fabric choices. Velvet is deep in color and appears darker because of the way it reflects on light. In Japanese culture the black kimono garment represents a form of power and is worn as a form of casual attire. The color black can be seen as sophisticated and dominant.

### *Texture*

Texture can be defined as a form of texture that can be seen or felt (Visual Merchandising 1-4). Without touching the garment I could quickly tell the garment was rich and tactically. The garment consisted of silk with velvet strips. The velvet strips embodied a sense of softness like plush. The surface of the silk didn't glimmer but appeared a bit matte and gentle. Both fabrics show up differently against light, the silk subtly in the light, and the velvet gives off smoothness. The fabrics also align with the color of the garment, elegance, restraint, and power. Black is Together, the fabrics created a sense of luxury and sophistication.

### *Line*

A garment can represent two different direction lines, horizontal or vertical (Visual Merchandising 1-4). The garment is displayed in a vertical line. With the mannequins, arms extended out to capture the style of the garment. The position of the garment appears dominant according to its line. The position is standing tall with no curves implemented. This gives off strength, precision, and directness. The garment showcases vertical stripes on the main bodice and sleeves. Vertical lines can help a sophisticated ambiance within an exhibition. More culture garments are vertical to show the seriousness of the garment.

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### *Rhythm*

Rhythm can be identified as the way a dominant object is portrayed next to a subordinate object (Visual Merchandising 1-4). The kimono garment was located in the “fundamental forms” section of the exhibition. The section showcased the 8 different sleeve types that designers reinvent into new styles. The rhythm of the section didn't showcase the mannequins in the same stance. All the mannequins were turning in opposite directions and not focusing on one main garment. However, all garments were in the shade black to focus on each sleeve style.

### *Form*

Form refers to the shape or structure of an object or prop (Visual Merchandising 1-4). The form of the garment captures the visual appeal and craftsmanship. Given the dress is displayed on a particular type of mannequin with extended arms, it allows the structure of the fabric to be seen in a way where it isn't hiding the details. Garments like this hold a special part in history, it's very important to showcase it as the proper 3D fixture. When I approached the fundamental forms section I quickly noticed each garment showcased in a different fixture. The mannequin used for the kimono sleeve did not have a head or arms, I think this decision was based on the curator wanting to focus solely on the garment detailing and craftsmanship.

### *Balance*

Balance shows how displays consist of visual weight (Visual Merchandising 1-4). Visual weight consists of balances within a display with different types of fixtures. Even though the fixtures and props may be different they will still equal out. The different sizes of mannequin fixtures in the fundamental forms section were all different fixtures in different shades and heights. However, it all balanced out due to lighting, background color, and all the garments in the color black. This creates a feeling of stability through the exhibition section. The garment shows a form of balance, through its strip detailing. Each strip isn't the same size however it still balances out.

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### *Contrast / Juxtaposition*

Contrast and juxtaposition refer to creating a contrast of two or more elements (Visual Merchandising 1-4). This particular section showcased contrast and juxtaposition by mixing traditional and modern styles. The section consisted of the Angel wing, bell, bishop, dolma(batwing), Kimono, Leg-of-mutton (gigot), and raglan. Beside the kimono sleeve is the lantern sleeve, which arrived in the fashion world during the late 19th century. The garment had a beautiful contrast of two different materials, in two different shades which complemented each other.

### *Dominance*

Dominance identifies the main points in a display, you can identify dominance by prominent elements in a garment (Visual Merchandising 1-4). A primary element in the garment besides the sleeves would be the velvet strips on the garment. What made the garment stand out the most was it wasn't a traditional Kimono print dress with cherry blossoms or fruitful bright patterns. The strips added a different message and caught my attention effectively.

### *Proportion*

Proportion has to do with size and scale in a display (Visual Merchandising 1-4). Two or more elements in the space establish a relationship story through objects. In this section, the mannequin fixtures create coherence due to all the garments being in the color black. Older garments before the 18th century were pushed off to the back, formulating a bit of a timeline. Newer sleeves that came about during the 19th century to the 20th were showcased more in the front. I also notice the kimono sleeve and leg-of-mutton sleeve garments on dress forms and not mannequins like the others.

### *Repetition*

Repetition refers to the use of repeated objects or motifs in a display(Visual Merchandising 1-4). In this particular section, there is a lot of repetition shown. Through the choice of fabric, all eight dresses consisted of either silk, velvet, or crepe. All fixtures were placed standing up in a scattered position and their arms were in an outward position. All garments displayed are in the

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color black. The black captures a sense of visual harmony. The Kimono sleeve consisted of two fabrics: silk and velvet, in a striped pattern. This also shows some repetition on the dresses due to the strips' consistency.

### *Conclusion*

The evolution of the kimono sleeve has adapted over time. Throughout its adaptation, many designers who aren't of Japanese tradition have reinvented their take on the sleeves. Movies like “In the Mood for Love” by Wong Kar-Wai, were created with inspiration by designers like Vera Wang, Jean Paul Gautier, and Marc Jacobs (Foreman,2022). Kimono sleeves have influenced more than the fashion industry. Kimonos have extended into the interior design markets. Designers of statement sleeves should be celebrated because they are keeping the garment alive in the fashion industry. Consistent reinvention allows consumers to follow fashion forwardness and allows designers to keep reinventing in styles. Designers who create should be celebrated because fashion is a part of our history.

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**Figure 1: Black Kimono Sleeve Dress**

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**Figure 2: Seaniah Mcleod at The Museum of Fashion Institute of Technology**



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