

Midterm Essay:

Ballerina: Fashion's Modern Muse

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Essay #1

Prompt: Using at least 5 elements of design, please define, describe, and apply to one Ballerina figure and compare to the statement, “In the world of Elizabeth Warren and Ursula von der Leyen and Margrethe Vestager, the assumption that a woman who comes out fighting has to hide a man’s suit has shattered.” Conceptualize the statement and visualize what the statement means to you.

In the exhibit, *Ballerina: Fashion's Modern Muse*, Chanel’s red cape, as seen in figure 1, stood out the most for me. In order to understand a work of art or a visual design, one could use the Elements of Design. One may use line, texture, color, value and composition to effectively gather an understanding of this garment. Line is used as a form of direction such as vertical, horizontal, curved and diagonal. Line is shown through the vertical folds throughout the back portion of the cape. Texture is the “feel” of a surface. Chanel also uses a balance of light, fluffy, silky and smooth textures. She creates a pattern from feather appliques at the neck and shoulder area, then uses silk crepe de chine in the middle portion and finishes it with an exaggeration of feathers at the end. Color is the hue being used throughout the piece. When using color psychology, red gives the feeling of power, strength and passion (2020). Value is the shades of dark and light. Lastly, Composition can be defined as a grouping of elements to create a whole (Adomaitis, 2020). With the use of line, texture, color one may have the conclusion that Chanel’s red silk and feathered cape is almost bird-like and gives a sense of control to the wearer.

This piece effortlessly uses the elements of design to showcase the beauty of women as well as the fierceness and power she holds. The quote, "In the world of Elizabeth Warren and Ursula Von der Leyen and Margrethe Vestager, the assumption that a woman who comes out fighting has to hide in a man's suit has shattered" is trying to convey that in their mind it is no longer necessary for women to try to fit into a man's shoes. Women like Warren, Leyen and Vestager are empowering figures in society who use their position to advocate for women's rights. They were all able to accomplish the things they did because of this mindset. This ties into Chanel's red cape because the vibrancy of the garment demonstrates the fuel and fire women have towards society's point of view. The flow and shape of the feathers show their poise and their abilities to fly higher than ever imagined.



Figure 1. Chanel, silk and feather cape, (The Museum at FIT).

Essay #2

Prompt: Using color and terminology, select one figure from either exhibit but not from Essay 1, and describe the figure using all terminology being as descriptive as you can.

In a ballerina's world, they are used to convey a message by movement, expression, music and their dress. Most importantly, the *color* of dress. Color speaks volume than words can ever do. *La Valse* costume created for the New York City Ballet, was originally created by Barbara Karinska and then recreated by Marc Happel (2020). This ballet costume and the colors chosen creates an eerie almost unsettling feeling. Which is opposite to the typical angelic energy when we think of a ballerina. The mannequin wears a dark gray embellished corset embedded with boning to give it structure, a skin toned mesh underlay to hold the garment up, paired with white gloves and neutral satin belt and lastly, a two toned mid length tulle skirt in gray and pink.

Barbara Karinska uses adjacent colors for this garment. The hues of pink and purple can be seen next to each other when looking in a color wheel. There is also a contrast between light and dark. For example, the beige waist tie and dark toned bodice. She also plays with the contrasting textures between silk and tulle which feels gentle and light to the touch and the hard and sturdy boning from the corset. This can all be seen when looking at figure 2 below.



Figure 2. Marc Happel (Recreation)

La Valse Costume, (The Museum at FIT).

References

Adomaitis, A. (2020). *Visual Merchandising: Chapters 1-4* [PowerPoint slides]. New York City College of Technology

Ballerina: Fashion's Modern Muse. (2020). Retrieved 26 March 2020, from

https://exhibitions.fitnyc.edu/ballerina/?url=from-costumier-to-couturier/NYCB_201812

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