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Can Clothing Hold Memory?

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Clothing has many different purposes some of which are being used as a form of self-expression, a shield from the natural elements, and also as a time capsule in costuming. These different purposes helped shape so much of the visual world around us today and represent our history of yesterday through visual influences. This fills in so many clues about the past and continues to be prevalent in today's society. Along with clothing, memories are incredibly important to humankind. They give us our individual stories and show us who we are today. When I seeing an item of clothing I can think back to specific memories, so I believe that clothing can hold a memory for others as well. Do you think clothing can hold memories?

Clothing has a very primitive purpose originally: Covering your back and shielding you from the weather and natural elements. It was determined that humans started wearing this as a protective layer somewhere between 83,000 to 170,000 years ago. It was believed that more coverage led to being perceived as more modest, especially since the word modest comes from the Latin word modestus. Which means to keep within measures (Modesty). This idea has been passed on for centuries. This idea even is considered today with school dress codes. When there was more fabric used it was seen as 'better' in some people's eyes. Along with this modesty, concept clothing started to gain more meaning for the average everyday consumer. Clothing

became a personal statement instead of a proof of class and wealth at the beginning of the 1900s.

But can clothing hold many different memories? We have all opened a box and looked inside at baby clothes or an old T-shirt in your closet that makes you think of a specific time in your life. Costuming and clothing are things that can trigger memories for many different people. A small example of this is when I see anything Egyptian related I think of my grandfather who was a Merchant Marine and traveled the world. He would always bring gifts back from Egypt and Greece. Clothing from a specific period can also be a form of memory itself for the people who lived during those memories. Many people when they see a dress from the early 1900's due to pop culture only see something from the titanic. When a costume designer sees a period's clothing we think of certain shows that are set in that time, like Three Penny Opera being set in the 1930s.

Clothing is the main form of outer representation for all human cultures. This is how we can tell some cultures apart in history like how the indigenous Americans all wore feathers. Clothing or Costuming can represent a person's mood, class, or even how they want to represent themselves consciously or unconsciously making choices for the 'self'. They are wearing certain things to present themselves to the people they know they will encounter. "Fashion can often be considered an expression of one's true personality and creativity. From famous fashion shows in Milan, Italy to London fashion week, fashion dominates

much of our everyday lives. Every day, we debate what to wear to work, to school, to a party, etc. Undoubtedly, with changing times, fashion has changed over the decades to cater to the changing environments." (American House Of Fashion). We as humans also dress according to how the world is feeling to us. In today's day in age with the global pandemic, there are two different moods to clothing. There are the people who don't get off the couch and wear sweatpants every day and there are the people who get dressed up in lavish clothes to live their best life whether that be for social media or work (PopSugar). I am one of the people who doesn't get out of sweats. This has taken a major toll on the economy. People not leaving, going to parties, there is no reason to buy new clothes. Everyone is showing themselves as tired and stressed out in their ways throughout this pandemic through these choices of clothing. According to USAToday, we as a country are dressing more and more relaxed than even our corporate offices will no longer be requiring business dress but when the world opens back up, will only require business casual at most (USAToday).

The nature of fashion is to be forever changing and fluid as trends come and go. With each trend that comes and goes these trends leave a mark on the world. When you think of a certain time period you can see a certain image or clothes that go with that. Everyone can picture the 1950's or the 1980's. There is such a recognizable image that associates with these decades (America House Kyiv). The 1940s was the time frame of World War 2. In this time of the Industrial Revolution, women were working in factories so they were wearing shorter clothes than

ever before. This silhouette is one that became incredibly easy to spot (Drover). It symbolizes hope and patriotism due to the propaganda posters made during the war. Along similar lines, the 1950's style clothing represented freedom and safety once the war was over.

Clothing can be used as symbols in movies, plays, and novels as well. The clothing and costuming worn depict the stereotype of the character (Tvtrope). How long or short their clothing is can show if this character is flirty or more modest. An apron can be a simple but great example of a costume piece that can show a character who works hard and cares for their clothes but is usually a lower class, who can not afford to buy new clothes if they get dirty. Some other types of symbols could be color-based. A good example is how in every Disney movie the color blue represents the protagonist and the color green or red represents the antagonist. These colors have drilled themselves in all Disney kid's memories subconsciously.

When clothes are worn during an important time in someone's life it holds that emotion and memory for us. Clothing also holds memories for many people. Clothes can be used to trigger past memories. Clothes have memories that turn them into keepsakes. These keepsake articles are things that we keep for sentimental purposes. It could be a baby blanket or a dance costume or many other things. Many families have old wedding dresses or tuxedos that have significant meanings. Rewearing wedding dresses to get married is not only a tradition but can be incredibly sentimental.

When a person sees that item that held a memory the person can experience the feeling of the memory again. These memories or moments could be very strong or very light but they are still held dearly. However, there can be negative connotations as well. There are many instances in police cases where someone wouldn't remember a traumatic event until they saw the clothes they were wearing from that night. Another example would be in a patient with dementia. Dementia is a memory disease that causes a person to forget either short-term or long-term memory. Showing a person with dementia an article of clothing with significant value to them can help bring back some memories for a short amount of time. We will often show my grandmother her wedding dress along with other clothes we have in storage from her childhood to help her remember situations. We also noticed she is more at ease in some of her older clothes than if she wears something new. Those clothes can bring her comforting memories and help her feel more peaceful.

Clothing can also be an emotional trigger that can carry, store, and records memories, conjures tactile memory, stimulates sensory and emotional memory. According to Lynda Friedmanschmidt, "Its close contact to the body gives it the the the ability to hold personal and intimate stories from the past. Worn clothing represents traces of lives lived; it is alive with everything it has witnessed, evokes deep feelings, can tell real-life tales. Once intended to conceal, the clothes I use to create my artwork reveal and unfold a personal narrative woven from disturbing recollections." These emotions are held in the fibers and sometimes only be recalled when seeing the item (Clothing and Memory).

I worked with the idea of memory closely in mind along with time period clothing while designing Eurydice. I wanted her to be in all purples and black excluding her wedding dress. Purple is a color that can be both bright and vibrant but also dark and sullen. Along with this purple dye was kept mostly for royalty for many years due to the fact that it was incredibly expensive to make. She is royalty in my mind. This is her story I wanted her to be my focus and everyone around her would either compliment or contrast her. Orpheus and Eurydice are in the 1950s in the beach scene which is also the opening scene. This shows not only the fact that she would do as a housewife was expected to do, follow Orpheus like a lost puppy, but also showed their colors and sets of style. In the wedding scenes, Orpheus is seen in a more laid-back kind of half suit. He doesn't care about his appearance at his wedding, just his music. Transitioning into the underworld in the second movement I wanted her to still be in purple but more muted down. I put her in a more whimsical suit and dress combo that would she still means business and still followed to the 1980's suit requested in the script. All of the underworld dwellers wore grays to show they are lacking color, memory, and creativity. The father however has a purple tie since he still has kept some of his memories. Characters full of color have memory and creative although some of the characters like the Child hide this in the beginning as the Nasty Interesting Man. In the end, all who lose their memory in the river were lit to be darker and gray to show the lack of memory and self. This is how I made my choices for my designs. From there I allowed myself to look into the script and with careful discussion with the director we came up with a perfect blend of colors and contrast for the characters of Eurydice.

Memories are often something we hold dear and can be triggered by something very small but can mean the world to us. Something as small as a piece of cloth can hold great and dear memories which can help you heal. This can be done by showing off someone's personality and style. Showing modesty and covering from the elements gives so much personality to a person or character. Clothes can be symbolic in books, novels, plays, and in people's lives. They are more than their original primitive purpose. We can express ourselves and who we are as characters as well as use them to describe a character in a story. Clothes and Costumes give us expression and hold memories we didn't even know we had. I couldn't imagine a world where we all had to dress the same. Those memories and emotions would be gone. Memories are something we hold very dear to us. They make us who we are as individuals.

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