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FASHION IMAGE: INTERDISCIPLINARY AND COLLABORATIVE APPROACH TO PORTFOLIO PRESENTATION

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FASHION IMAGE: Interdisciplinary and Collaborative Approach to Portfolio Presentation

Synopsis:

Fashion Image course provides opportunities to observe, analyze, create, and examine both figurative and literal function of fashion imagery. The core objective of Fashion Image is to showcase the multi-disciplinary skills and learning outcomes of students by combining theoretical and practical approaches in planning an editorial photo shoot. Methods include lectures, workshops, and collaborative field work with photography and videography students from other schools and disciplines. After hearing guest lectures from important-taste makers in the NYC fashion industry, students collaborate, work as a team, make equal contributions, adjust expectations, and openly speak about creative differences. Learning current industry professional practices aids students in trouble shooting, managing risks, and improvising while on location. Students are assessed by process boards, finished digital stills, videos, and artist's statements, all which provide dynamic enhancements to a traditional portfolio format. Fashion Image course serves as a catalyst for future collaborations in the professional fashion world.

Fashion Image

Keywords: Interdisciplinary, collaboration, portfolio, presentation

The motivation to develop this course was a natural reaction to the fashion industry's ever-changing need for talents who possess versatile skill sets, think creatively, present themselves and their work professionally, and make productive contributions in a team environment. The need for such a course became very evident when design and merchandising students developed their fashion portfolios; a number of quality projects reflecting their intellectual and creative skills as well as technical skills. Common portfolio building practices have been stagnant and uniformed with occasional exception of new physical materials or contents reflecting current trends and needs. Fashion Image course was developed to provide opportunities to observe, analyze, create, and examine both figurative and literal function of fashion imagery to develop visual aesthetics to enhance and complement existing portfolio formats such as hard bound books and online presence. The course combines theoretical and practical approaches in planning through individual and collective efforts through lectures, workshops, and field work.

The core objective of this course is to showcase students' learning outcomes and skills of diverse disciplines. With that in mind, an open garment call is made to all student designers who have completed their senior/undergraduate thesis collection. As the student designers apply to be included in the final photoshoot, they are asked to submit any relevant information their vision was. Once final collections are chosen, typically 4 collections, students in the course start working on inspiration boards while brainstorming about the concept/theme of the shoot.

Fashion Image course is also to reflect current practice of the industry. In efforts to mimic up to date practice, the course also invites several guest lecturers of substantial importance. The first guest speaker, traditionally a fashion editor or creative director of a magazine, is invited to the class to provide them with a full scope and process of an editorial photoshoot. Students learn about roles and responsibilities of all parties involved in an editorial photoshoot. Once collections and groups are matched, roles and responsibilities are assigned and clarified. Each group is consisted of a fashion editor, a fashion stylist, a wardrobe assistant, and two production assistants. Each group's project is considered a campaign, and they conduct multiple concept meetings through compiling research, eventually determining on directions, and presenting concept boards.

To simulate a real world experience and in consideration of the student body, the actual photoshoot and the preparation is done in collaboration with other schools and programs whose programs focus on photography and videography. Previous collaborations include New York University's Tisch School of the Arts and New York Film Academy. Students visit each other's schools, understand what their counterparts are learning, and expand their perspectives on the scope of the process. With a concrete concept of the final shoot, the collaborating partner school's photography professor and the students join final campaign presentation. Fashion students are met with the photography crew; photographer, photo assistant, lighting assistant, and digital tech, along with videography crew; videographer, sound tech, lighting tech. The photography instructor also lectures on industry specific language and nuances, procedures and protocols, and basic theory and concept on fashion photography. This provides fashion students

with an understanding of the importance of lighting, location, and all things involved with a photoshoot. Students are encouraged to visit the potential shoot locations on multiple occasion to see the effects of weather on the location, correlation of the time of the day, and accessibility of the location.

This is followed by a guest speaker who is a beauty expert/professional make-up artist who speaks about the role of make-up and hair in a shoot as well as in fashion. Students learn how colors set a mood, attract attention, or make a statement as well as how to create a specific ambiance by selecting the right color and hair style. Upon completion of all lectures, students arrange a model call, and create style boards, muse boards, and beauty & hair boards along with their story board.

Final pre-production and art direction meeting is organized and attended by both schools' participants. In this meeting, a final line-up of the garments, location, and schedule is agreed, as call sheets are exchanged. On the day of the photoshoot, all students and their models report to the fashion school for their hair and make-up team. Each team composed of fashion studies, photography students, video journalism students, and supervising faculty meet at their location, and the shoot begins. All shoots are scheduled on a same day spreading over several locations, sometimes several boroughs. Each team has a supervising faculty who oversees the entire process while evaluating their performance. Although meticulously planned and coordinated, students often face the unexpected and truly lean to improvise, yet always ends successfully.

Following the photoshoot is a post-production meeting involving image selections and touch-ups. Students also discuss topics relating to organization and layout such as encasement, flow, page design while generating project brief, collection and artist statement. The results are quite outstanding; a number of beautiful photography stills capturing fashion students' creativity and craftsmanship along with the photography students' artistic and technical abilities. In addition, a three-minute behind the scenes video is produced documenting entire process of the shoot. Every student is required to create their on-line portfolio utilizing all aspects and results produced throughout the course. The on-line portfolios showcase their artist's statement, process boards, finished digital stills, and videos are great enhancement to their traditional portfolio.

Assessment of the students encompass several components such as active in-class and off-campus participation and contribution, final portfolio presentation, and different projects throughout the semester- artist statement, bio, project brief, idea journal, concept board, beauty board, muse board, accessory board, line-up sheet, and call sheet. Additionally, final portfolio is graded based on visual presentation, creativity, and content. As the course is largely a collaborative work, students understand that individual contributions make up their group's success.

Fashion Image will continue to be taught and developed further. Students get a glimpse at a professional environment where multiple groups work as a team by working together, making equal contributions, adjusting expectations, and understanding and openly speak about creative/artistic differences. They also learn to trouble shoot, manage risks, and to improvise. This course not only works as an instrumental tool for expanding their knowledge in styling, journalism, and fashion photography, but also works as a catalyst for future collaborations.