Bridge #5

Jin Lee

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Jin Lee is a first year student, currently majoring in fashion design at Parsons School of Design in New York. She began showing a love of fashion at a young age. She is very fond of exploring new things and challenging herself. From the moment she realized a hidden potential, fashion became a subject that she strived to learn more about. She started to read fashion magazines and explore fashion to develop a sense of style and get a better knowledge of fashion. Anyway, after learning Parsons as the best school for students who desire to study fashion and work in the fashion industry, she was instantaneously inspired to learn from this educational curriculum of arts and design. As she learns increasingly more about fashion, her passion for fashion amplifies. She is confident that New York City, specifically Parsons School of Design, is the environment that she can develop and show others of her potential. Furthermore, she hopes to continue studying fashion design at Parsons while using the fashion skills she learned for contributing to the development of the world’s fashion industry. She believes fashion is more than an educational knowledge that she wants to pursue, it’s one of the significant elements of her life. It has brought a lot of positive changes to her life and she wants to convey those positive influences to other people through her fashion career. She strives to be able to better her fashion knowledge and understanding while gaining experiences that would positively impact her passion in the art of incorporating design and beauty with clothing and accessories. She is taking small steps to achieve her dream, and she strongly believes that when those steps add up, she will have reached her dream of contributing to fashion design.

The first year overall gave me an opportunity to experience the diversity in art and design thinking and working methods, and to discover my particular strengths. I spent my first year on foundation skills including critical thinking and research methods. I got to explore different approaches to creative practices, while building necessary skills. The biggest difference between the first and the second semester courses was that for the second one, I got to incorporate the new skills I learned during the first semester with my interests and the skills I’ve already had. Basically, the first semester courses focused on exploring and learning new skills and the second semester courses focused on using those skills. Moreover, during this first year, I researched about social and global issues and reflected those issues through my art. From that learning process, I realized that art has the power to change the world. Today, art is beyond just decoration; it has moved away from the decorative purpose to involve social engagement and political motives. One of the considerable challenges today is that we often feel untouched by the problems of others and by global issues. We do not feel strongly enough that we are part of a global community. Watching and hearing the news from the media oftentimes leaves us feeling overwhelmed and disconnected, not empowered and responsible to take action. Our ignorance is the result of our strong misbelief that it wouldn’t affect our lives. This is where art can make a positive difference. Art engages with a captivating work of art and connects us to our emotions, body, and mind. Unlike the news, which consumes us with a load of information, art makes the world emotionally attached. And this felt feeling may evoke thinking, engagement, and even action. Also, emotions linger when memories fade, thus art is more effective than words could ever be. Like everyone else, I’ve been ignorant about social issues, including environmental issues. But the subject matters that I was taught through the courses finally woke me up to the extent of the problems and the need of our attention. The courses touched various subject matters, but particularly focused deeply on sustainability and environmental issues. If I had to choose two highlights from my first year, I would choose conducting a research regarding the environmental issues and making a collection of sustainable fashion accessories. For one of my Integrative Seminar 2: Fashion, I had a chance to conduct a research and write about the environmental costs of fast fashion. Also, for a few of other classes, I experienced making artworks using different materials I’ve never thought I would. However, my strong advocacy to art’s ability to contribute to positive change led me to create artworks based on social issues, such as environmental problems. Since I became highly interested in this topic, I enjoyed creating artworks based on these issues. I displayed my interest of this topic and love for fashion by incorporating my environmental knowledge and fashion skills. For example, I created fashion accessories such as shoes, hats, and an multi-purpose accessory with paper grocery bags, wool, and cotton. I was compelled to create projects based on this subject, because I wanted to share the responsibility of environmental problems and raise awareness through creatively depicting the issues in my art. While creating these accessories, I considered why people are likely to choose not to wear eco-friendly items, even though they are aware of the environmental problems. After much self- debate and thought, I found an answer; and that is many people tend to perceive those products as inevitably unattractive and not aesthetically pleasing, as if beauty and sustainability were incompatible. Consumers nowadays consider design elements as well as functionality. This common stereotypical perception results people’s lack of interest in platforms offering eco-friendly products and prevent their access to those products. I think one of the challenges of creating products that are made from recycled and reused materials is those are not as high quality as original products in terms of design and functionality. In order to encourage more people to use products made from recycled materials is to make designs more attractive and appealing to consumers while maintaining high-level of quality. Considering people’s perception on eco-friendly products, I concentrated on making my accessories to be aesthetically as possible to prove that those can be attractive in design-wise. Therefore, to draw more people’s attention to eco-friendly products, I created fashion items using reusable and biodegradable materials, such as paper grocery bags, cottons, wood, and fruits for natural dyeing. After creating a collection of fashion items, I took high quality of photos and posted them on social media, so more people can see them and share their ideas. By creating aesthetically appealing objects, people’s negative stereotypical perception would change positively and would get interested in platforms offering eco-friendly products, allowing them to have an access to various eco-friendly products. Through the items I created, I hope people would realize that eco-friendly objects can be fashionable and aesthetically pleasing, and raise awareness of the impact of fast fashion on ecology. I believe reflecting social and global issues through my art is a way to contribute to a community and my responsibility as a community member. I am certain that my small movement has the chance to bring positive change to our world and the footprint I have left can pave the way to the bright future.

I will continue to reflect social and global issues through my art by incorporating those subject matters with fashion. Moreover, in the future, I would like to pursue my interests and questions regarding these subject matters. In order to make variety of more fashion items, sewing skills are essential. So I would need to focus on learning and enhancing sewing techniques.