

Ruffles, sparkles and lots of dazzle

Eye for design sets Hein apart

By JOAN KORINEK

The sewing machine has been around since 1790, and yet, it may seem as alien as a foreign country to some people. To others, however, the sewing machine is a part of their lives.

Take Dovie Hein for instance. Sewing is nothing new to the UNL senior in fashion design, who has been sewing for 26 of her 30 years.

Furthermore, Hein is not new to the world of fashion design. For the past 10 years, she has done custom dressmaking out of her home. She then decided to go to school.

A lifetime of sewing has not left Hein unrecognized. This year, she won second place in a fashion show for one of her designs and last year she placed first in best of show and total entry.

The Fashion Group of Kansas City has an annual fashion show to promote and support women involved in fashion and to encourage young people in this field, said Robert Hillestad, a professor in the UNL textiles, clothing and design department.

The one-day show actually is a seminar, Hein said, since it involves all elements of fashion.

"The show was for the rest of the students to see what designers do," she said.

Hein said she thinks the garments are judged on originality and workmanship, as well as, Hillestad said, newness and timeliness.

In creating this year's prizewinner, Hein went to an antique clothing store, bought a 1940s purse and rebeaded it. She also bought five 1950s graduated pearl necklaces and some 1960s prism buttons made of glass and mirror.

She combined all these elements together on a dress, adding the buttons wherever she wanted sparkle. She spent about \$50 on the secondhand materials but, considering labor, the dress is valued between \$300 and \$850, she said.

Beauty from junk

"I made something very beautiful out of all this junk," she said, in a soft Southern accent.

Hein seems to go for the unique, one-of-a-kind dresses with designs never before imagined. Last year, one dress she entered in the total entry category at Kansas City was a button dress with 2,700 buttons.

"I try to be as original as possible," she said. "Everything I do is totally different than the thing before."

On another dress, Hein pleated the material to make it like an accordion. When the dress is not worn, it shrinks into a tube, she said.

But Hein's domain is not limited just to dresses. She has made coats, too. One she made out of scraps of wool, she said. Dovie said she recycles a lot of fabric.

"I use very ordinary fabric," she said. "It's my techniques that are unusual."

Hillestad can vouch for that. Hein is innovative in using techniques, he said.

Sequins and ruffles

Her most current project is a red, ruffled dress. The dress has ruffles running diagonally across it. The ruffles are of man-made suede and she painstakingly has cut 1-inch slits all over the ruffles. When pulled taut, the ruffles resemble a Chinese lantern, she said. In addition, the dress has satin ribbons and sequins to add sparkle and shine, she said.

In designing a garment, more is involved than meets the eye. Hein puts much thought into each garment before working on it. She has the ability to make garments work both artistically and mechanically, she said.

"I think my dressmaking experience helps me a lot in carrying through my designs," she said.

Many students can design but cannot carry the design through, she said. But Hein is able to structure and technically create a garment, Hillestad confirmed.

Hours and hours are spent in designing and sewing a garment. This year's prizewinner took between 75 and 80 hours to make, she said. The red dress took 80 to 100 hours just for the ruffle.

When designing a garment, Hein follows certain steps. First, she must think of an idea. Then she will draw a rough sketch to see whether it can be constructed or not.

"I explore different possibilities with color and design," she said.

At this point, Hein said, she thinks about the design more extensively to see if it actually will work. Sometimes, she will sew a copy of it in muslin to see how it would really look. She makes her own patterns to fit her own 5-foot-9-inch slender figure.

What other things are needed to be a successful designer? Hein said an eye for color is needed. Sometimes, she will combine two colors that a non-designer would not consider putting together.

Bright colors for dazzle

"I like to work with bright colors," she said. She often will use a bright color with black for a dazzling effect, she said.

To be a designer, Hillestad said, "a thorough knowledge of both traditional and non-traditional construction is needed." In addition, a designer needs to know what materials can do and how they will look when sewn together, he said.

The basis of every fashion design, Hillestad said, is to convert the two-dimensional form into three dimensional.

After graduation, Hein said, she would like to move to a larger city where she could expand her business and design more artsy garments for the individual.

Hein has the ability to go as far as she wants to, Hillestad said. He said he could see her as a custom designer or working for a manufacturer.

But Hein said she would rather be a smaller designer so she could have more control over the design. In addition, she said, she is not interested in designing ready-to-wear clothes but wants to design for the individual.

The sewing machine has come a long way in the last two centuries. And with it has come substantial improvements in clothing.

"I consider them more pieces of art than garments," Hein said.



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