

GREAT ART IDEAS FOR TEACHERS

ACCESSORY DESIGN: INSPIRED BY COMME DES GARÇONS

LEVELS 7–10

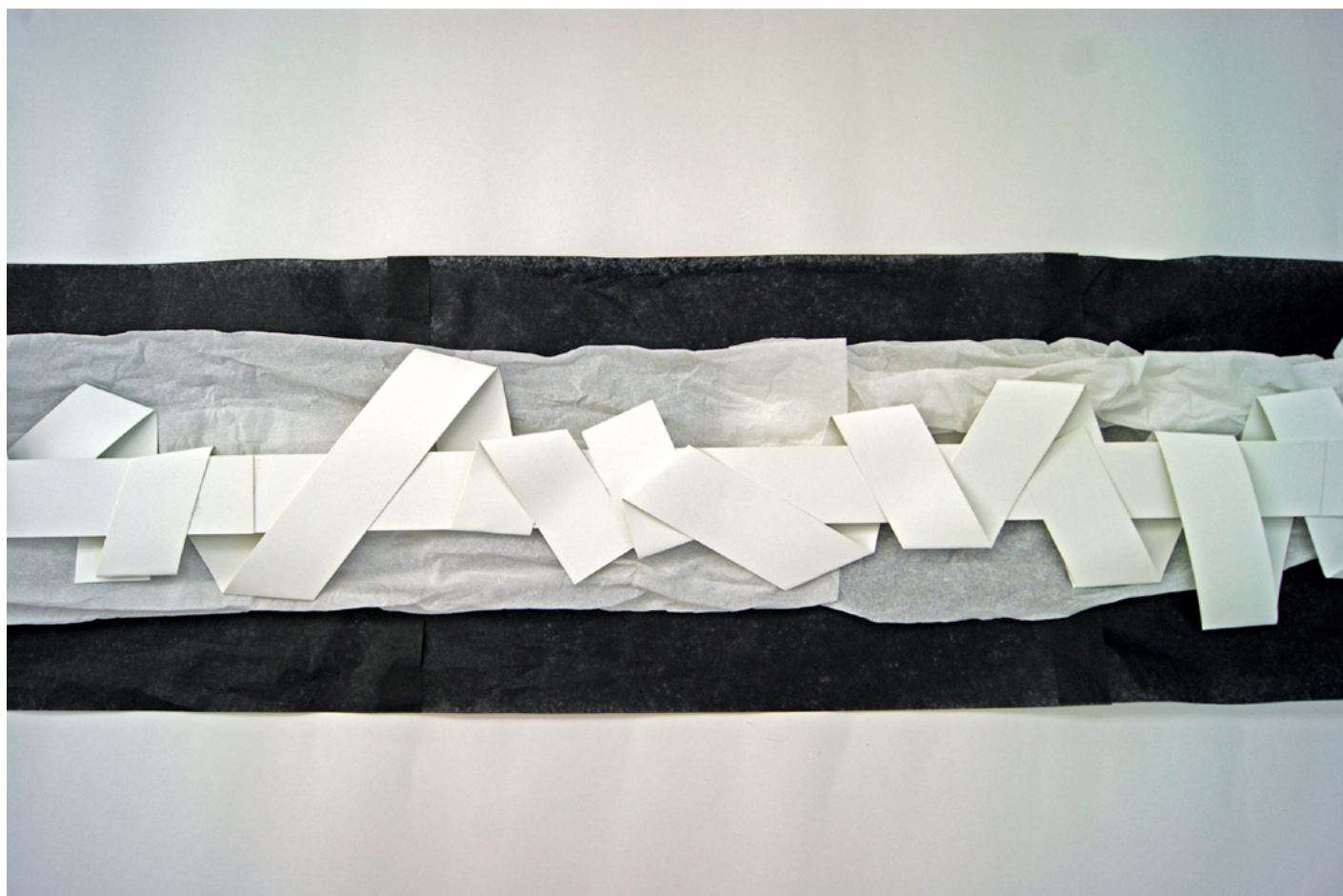
OVERVIEW

In this activity students will learn about the conceptual processes of designer Rei Kawakubo, from Japanese fashion label Comme des Garçons. They will analyse and interpret Kawakubo's designs and use her garments as inspiration for their own work, embracing the aesthetic of Comme des Garçons. Following a design process, students will design an accessory to accompany one of Kawakubo's runway looks and create a sculptural prototype using simple materials.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Analyse and interpret works by designer Rei Kawakubo with consideration for her use of design elements
- Discuss the concepts underpinning Kawakubo's designs and how they influence her design decisions and processes
- Evaluate how the combination of construction and materiality in Kawakubo's work redefines fashion
- Produce a conceptual design for an accessory to accompany one of the selected works
- Explain the idea/s addressed the conceptual design and reflect on how effectively their intentions have been realised

STUDENT EXAMPLES



Student belt design inspired by
Dress, 2012, Crush Collection

RELATED ARTWORKS



(left to right)
COMME DES GARÇONS
Tokyo (fashion house)
Rei KAWAKUBO (designer)

Top and skirt
2003 (*Abstract excellence*
collection, spring-summer 2004)

Skirt
1996 (*Body Meets Dress –*
Dress Meets Body collection,
spring-summer 1997)

(clockwise from top right)
COMME DES GARÇONS
Tokyo (fashion house)
Rei KAWAKUBO (designer)

Dress
1996 (*Body Meets Dress –*
Dress Meets Body collection,
spring-summer 1997)

Jacket
2005 (spring-summer)
Fb102120

Dress
2012 (*Crush collection*,
spring-summer 2013)



DISCUSS

Rei Kawakubo (born Japan 1942), founder of Japanese fashion label Comme des Garçons, is considered one of the most visionary and influential designers working today. Her designs have subverted the norms of garment shape and function, reframed ideas of beauty, and proposed a new relationship between body and dress. In her endeavour to make clothes that, as she says, 'did not exist before', Kawakubo deconstructs clothing and creates it afresh.

For nearly five decades Kawakubo has defied convention and redefined fashion. She established Comme des Garçons in 1969, began showing in Tokyo in 1975 and debuted in Paris in 1981. The label quickly gained iconic status for its avant-garde concepts and techniques, deconstruction, androgyny, and radical forms.

Throughout her career, Rei Kawakubo has continuously re-examined various fashion 'logics'. She has repositioned fastenings and openings, ignored function, up-ended tailoring traditions, and played with form and scale. From one season to the next, Kawakubo's collections have consistently introduced the unexpected. A new collection might begin with a crumpled wad of paper, an abstract phrase or the instruction to, in Kawakubo's words, 'start with something perfect and go backwards'.

Read more about Comme des Garçons in the NGV ebook: <https://www.ngv.vic.gov.au/collecting-commes/>

Look closely at one of the related designs and use the following discussion prompts to explore Comme des Garçons with your class:

- What are some words you could use to describe the design?
- How does it make you feel or what does it remind you of? What about the garment creates that feeling or association for you?
- What details stand out to you? What makes these details stand out?
- How do these garments differ from those you might traditionally see in a clothing shop? In what ways do they subvert norms or challenge assumptions about the purpose and function of clothing?
- What title would you give this look or collection? Explain why.
- Look at the name of the collection which the design belongs to. What does it suggest about Kawakubo's interests and inspirations?
- Make a list of the textiles and materials in the design. Next to each of the materials, note a word you associate with it, for example, lace – delicate.
- Imagine an accessory designed by Kawakubo for one of the garments. What does it look like? How does it reflect the design principles and ideas that Kawakubo utilises? What type of person or event would it be for?

RESOURCES & MATERIALS

- Coloured paper of varied sizes
- Long lengths of card strips
- OHP film acetate
- Tissue paper (red, black and white)
- Newspaper
- Scissors
- Sticky tape and glue
- Fastenings such as bulldog clips, paperclips, split pins and blue tac

CREATE

Students create a concept design, including creating preliminary sketches and a sculptural prototype, for an accessory to accompany one of the selected looks through the following steps:

1. Choose one of the designs and make a list of the key design features, colours, textures, forms, and embellishments in the work.
2. Brainstorm a few ideas for an accessory to accompany your chosen design
3. Once you have decided on an accessory, sketch ideas for a design.

Use elements of the design language you saw in the garment you have chosen, referring to your list for ideas.

4. Refine your design, drawing a final sketch of your accessory.
5. Use markers or coloured pencils to render your sketch and make written annotations which note materiality and features.
6. Use the materials provided (coloured paper, strips of card, acetate, tissue paper and newspaper) to construct a 3D sculptural prototype of your design.
7. Fix in place using the fastening

Extension

8. Photograph your sculptural prototyped accessory
9. Use a photography app, such as Adobe Photoshop, to digitally overlay it onto the design from Comme des Garçons that inspired it.

PRESENT & REFLECT

Students show their designs to the class, modelling them in a fashion parade or putting them on display.

- What accessory did you choose to design? What lead to your choice?
- How did you take inspiration from the original work?
- How effectively does your design communicate the same concepts as the garments? What design elements and features do they share?
- What were some of the aesthetic decisions you made through the planning and construction of your design?
- What did you find challenging? What might you do differently next time?
- How does your accessory look against the original design? Do they share an overall style or make a cohesive outfit? Give reasons for your answer.

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