

On my 4th birthday my favorite person died: my aunt. She was an artist, teacher, and a loving person. Together we spent hours doing “scribble, scribble, dot, dot” with crayons and markers to make vibrant images. She wanted me to feel free to express myself and be confident in the marks I was making. When she passed, I inherited all of her art supplies, her rocking horse collection, an assortment of vibrant hand painted sweatshirts and an old denim jacket heavy with brooches she had collected. To many people these things might have seemed like useless, stained, well-worn junk, but for me they were the representation of a vibrant personality I did not get the opportunity to really know. When I was old enough, my mother let me hold onto the jacket, some of my aunt’s infamous painted sweatshirts, and to use many of her art supplies. Many people found these items to be gaudy and even on the tacky side making me the target for ridicule by my fellow classmates. For me, they were armor that made me feel special, like I was wearing a piece of art: something unique and made me a little different from everyone else. I may no longer be sporting the colorful vibrant clothing my aunt left me through the halls at school, but my fearless fashion choices have only matured into a unique perspective on fashion as not only a consumer market, but as a form of art and self-expression for both the designer and the wearer.

This point of view followed me all through my early years in school and when I started my undergrad program at Massachusetts College of Art and Design; it allowed me to blossom as both a designer and a risk taker. My choice to switch into fashion had been an unexpected change that few of my family and friends understood, but for me it felt instantly right. I had been allowed the freedom to explore my first year of college, and suddenly the possibilities for where I could go and what I could achieve seemed limitless. I fell in love with fabric as a medium during class when I saw the potential it had to build forms, soften edges, and embrace movement. While in college I was taught to have confidence in my work and learned to embrace my risks regardless their outcome. My journey was not without struggle, and obstacles. I had to work hard to overcome my lack of knowledge about the fashion world through research in books, magazines, and images while simultaneously learning to understand the technical aspects of garment construction. With the help of supportive faculty and fellow students I was able to achieve my vision and ideas through trial, error, and critique. In this environment, I was able to challenge myself both creatively and technically to experiment with pattern drafting, dyeing, and expanding on the human silhouette through clothing.

Clothing is powerful. It can change us, empower us, and most of all, it allows us to express who we are. It has been used to identify people during times of revolution and has served as a tool to express opinion. Whether we use it to hide or to make ourselves seen, the clothes we choose to wear say something about us and the way we interact with the world. For this reason I want to work with fashion as a medium to explore the human experience. The interaction between the identity of the person wearing the clothing and the garments themselves has become a fascination of mine. When you look at a design on a hanger, you may notice interesting elements, the designer’s style, their personal touches, and innovative ideas. But once you put a person into them, the designer’s intentions and the personality of the wearer become a single entity and a way for both to express themselves in the forms and folds of the fabric.

As I reflect back I realize my aunt had a profound impact on the artist I have become even in the short time we had together. The Painted Sweatshirts, Art supplies, and old denim jacket she left me along with the strong determined artist I imagined her to be, empower me to draw inspiration from the world around me, to take risks, and be confident in what I have created. I believe the creative surroundings SCAD offers would be an ideal environment to explore my art and work to better understand myself and the relationship between our identity and the clothing we choose to wear.