

Fashion education: embracing artistic processes and project-based education

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ABSTRACT

This article seeks to present the challenges, achievements, critiques, and issues raised by the implementation of the project to create an Haute Couture collection linked to project-based learning, in collaboration with the Haute Couture creator Maurizio Galante. In July 2019, the creator presented “Carnet de voyage”, inspired by Mexico, in collaboration with students from IESModa, based in Mexico City. To achieve the collection, a project-based learning method was applied. During this process, students collaborated in the creation of the pieces of Maurizio Galante’s collection. What this text seeks to develop and show is the observation and analysis of this pedagogical practice within the teaching of fashion: an attempt is made to carry out an artistic and educational practice, inspired by the position of John Dewey and the Black Mountain College; in this specific project, the creation of Maurizio Galante’s Haute Couture collection. The fundamental intention of working with this project-based learning practice is to challenge the traditional educational practice anchored in the lecture and dictation by a teacher and passive learning from the students; by creating this questioning, the intention is for students to understand the world of fashion from the inside and face the obstacles they might experience in their professional life. Therefore, the goal of this collaboration is to implement a learning process for fashion students, which aims to transform the fashion teaching methods and establish a new university culture for the training of professionals in this industry. In this sense, the article will seek to investigate the following question: how does project-based learning transform higher fashion education by linking it to artistic creation and learning?

Keywords: fashion education, artistic processes, project-based education, haute-couture.

INTRODUCTION

What if, beyond the traditional learning of technical fashion skills and knowledge, experimenting with artistic processes through a project-based learning approach opens up other creative ways of teaching fashion? We start with this premise to aim to answer the question: how can approaching artistic processes through project-based learning

lead the way to creative fashion teaching?

In this part of the research, in order to answer this question we organised the implementation of fashion teaching through a project with a multidisciplinary approach, like creating a real laboratory for scientific, artistic and educational experimentation, which is part of the practical tradition of John Dewey and the Black Mountain College. An artistic approach that "... nous avons entrepris, en regard de notre passion pour l'Humain". (Droit, 2012)¹.

For this project, we requested permission from fashion creator Maurizio Galante to play a crucial role in assisting him with the creative and artistic development of his upcoming Haute Couture collection.

Our particular objective here is to analyse the experimentation carried out with the sixteen students from different semesters in the Fashion and Creation bachelor's degree at IESModa in Mexico, in collaboration with the creator. On our part, we used ethnographic research methodology and participant observation.

We first investigated the wisdom of creating such a project by researching the meaning of project-based learning through the writings of John Dewey and the articles and books about Black Mountain College.

We then looked at what were possibly the functions of project-based education² according to Philippe Perrenoud, asking ourselves which advantages could a project-based teaching and learning approach bring to students and teachers, and how to draw on the factors that would enable such a feat to succeed. At the same time, we seek to examine the learning of some artistic processes such as "le détournement"³, and their potential applications in fashion education.

We analyse the problems associated with this method and its implementation in higher education. Thus, we have identified the challenges encountered during the experimentation process, as well as the achievements mentioned by students in their interviews and surveys.

Subsequently, we analyse the learning process by describing the development of some pieces in the collection through experimentation, highlighting significant student successes.

¹ "... we have undertaken according to our passion for humankind".

² Project-based education: project-based learning and teaching.

³ Détournement: an artistic process in which the object or work is given a different use than its original use. (Banksy, Remedios Varo, Martin Margiela)

At the same time, several insights and criticisms regarding project-based learning are formulated, with a final consideration on the fundamental role of the teacher in this form of teaching, including the evaluation system.

We conclude with the possible implications of these findings for future projects that will incorporate this teaching method and its relevance for the fashion industry.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Project-based teaching has its origins in the early 20th century, in the work of W.H. Kilpatrick, who criticised education centred on the transmission of knowledge and not on the interests and needs of students. Then John Dewey, a key figure in the concept of "learning-by-doing", insists on learning where knowledge is constructed through doing, where learning is more efficient carried out in action. In fashion, we translate this into the creation of collections that include practical and artistic skills with theoretical knowledge. (Reverdy, 2013, p. 46).

The projects offer educational relevance, linking students to learning in real and meaningful contexts on topical issues such as responsible fashion. (Proulx, 2008, p. 14).

Initially, we therefore started looking into the functions of project-based learning, a student-centred educational approach that encourages active and experiential learning. Unlike traditional methods in which the teacher is the main source of knowledge, this approach emphasises the development of transversal skills through concrete projects that respond to real challenges, often related to the professional and creative environment.

Finally, project-based education differs from traditional methods in its socio-constructivist approach. (Proulx, 2008, pp. 20-21) While traditional approaches favour memorisation and rigid transmission, this method emphasises tangible production and applied learning, immediately showing perceptible results. This approach transforms education into a meaningful exploration that links to creative processes and real-world contexts.

The functions of project-based learning mean knowledge, real challenges to overcome and discovering new skills.

This active learning, according to Perrenoud (1999), involves students in meaningful projects with real and complex issues, which reinforce students' engagement and the development of their professional skills. According to him, projects pose authentic and complex challenges aligned with professional situations. This encourages students to mobilise their knowledge and develop transferable skills that go beyond the academic framework.

The project-based approach links knowledge to concrete objectives, bringing tangible satisfaction through the achievement of a relevant outcome and giving meaning to learning. (Perrenoud, 1999). The projects expose students to uncertain situations; these encourage them to explore and develop technical and organisational knowledge while discovering their role and talents as actors in a professional context, like creating a collection. By organising projects, students learn to structure ideas, make decisions, and manage constraints while experimenting with research and creating and organising their learning. Projects allow students to take on a role and develop self-confidence and self-esteem with a clearer identity. Autonomy comes from understanding their own impact on the project and on their peers. (Huber, 2020, pp. 187-188). Projects foster the development of soft skills such as negotiation, collaboration, and communication. Collective intelligence makes it possible to achieve common goals that are often unattainable individually.

Self and peer assessment help learners to measure their progress, identify areas of opportunity, and seek help if needed. They foster greater awareness of their abilities and appreciation of their own learning. In a "project-based society", this approach teaches the practice of planning, coordination and active implementation of vital necessity. (Boutinet, 2008, p. 351). Finally, project-based learning can be a great addition to traditional methods, especially for creative fields like fashion and related arts, because it helps students develop their professional identity while also improving their practical and social skills.

Advantages of project-based teaching

Project-based learning offers significant advantages that can complement traditional educational approaches. These are seen in particular in the development of transversal competences, increased student motivation, a deeper understanding of one's own learning and a boost to autonomy.

It facilitates the acquisition of practical and transferable skills, as collaboration helps students to share responsibilities, delegate, and identify their strengths. They face real-life challenges and learn to make decisions in collaborative contexts when resolving difficulties. These transversal competences are important for academic and professional success by integrating the realities of the professional world, in this case fashion, into their university context. Project-based learning motivates students to engage in meaningful and authentic tasks. It provides a space for personal and collective expression, which is especially beneficial for students experiencing difficulties, whether psychological, familial, or identity-related.

As Michel Huber, (2020, p. 57) points out, projects provide important social recognition, reinforcing students' self-esteem and commitment. By participating in relevant projects, students develop an emotional attachment to their learning, which reinforces their desire to successfully achieve their goals.

Unlike traditional education, project-based learning, which anchors learning in real contexts, is more meaningful. This is in line with Dewey's view that education should not simply prepare learners for the future, but involve them in enriching experiences that can be applied in the present. These help them to reflect deeply on their own learning and can stimulate wonder and curiosity, making knowledge more enduring.

This project-based learning places autonomy at the heart of learning, helping students to take initiative and ownership of the educational process. Students learn to manage projects independently, respecting the collective objectives and at the same time involving themselves in the project, becoming aware of their responsibility and the impact of their own actions throughout the process. This autonomy strengthens their commitment and prepares them for future professional contexts that are sometimes difficult, especially in creative disciplines such as fashion and the arts. (Proulx, 2008, pp. 58-60).

Finally, project-based teaching overcomes the limits of traditional methods by integrating students' interests into an experiential and pragmatic framework.

Success factors of project-based education

Project-based education drives a major change in the role of the teacher, making him or her a facilitator, guide, and mentor rather than just a source of knowledge. This complex role is essential to foster students' active learning and creativity, as well as ensuring the success of projects.

The teacher becomes a facilitator and a guide, providing the necessary resources (in this case provided by us and the Institute) to achieve the projects' objectives. Additionally, he fosters the development of critical thinking by posing challenging questions, mirroring the creator's approach of guiding students through each step of the solution process. This approach assisted in overcoming obstacles while allowing the students to explore and experiment on their own. (Reverdy, 2013, p. 46).

The guide encourages self-directed learning while helping students to manage their frustrations and supporting them in developing those soft skills and adaptability to challenges. The facilitator creates a favourable learning climate, showing great commitment and accessibility. (Proulx, 2008, pp. 75-76). For the success of the projects, the role of the teacher is essential to maximise the benefits of project-based learning, guiding students towards meaningful learning while developing their autonomy. The school should provide workshops and teaching materials to teach teachers how to lead projects. They should also try to get people to use this method by showing that it can work with traditional methods and make them better.

Setting clear objectives and structuring the project phases (preparation, training, launch,

adjustments, and evaluation) from teachers and students is crucial for careful planning. It is also important to organise meetings to adjust plans and provide support to all involved parties. From the outset, the roles and responsibilities of the participants are clearly established for everyone, forming teams according to the project, in order to communicate efficiently and encourage creativity and new proposals, sharing ideas and recognising each other's efforts.

Involving recognised experts in their field enriches the project, inspiring and motivating the students through their experience, expertise, and legitimacy. Symbolic capital thus helps to create a particular value that gives meaning to the project for the students.

This approach creates a stimulating and realistic learning environment to make the implementation of any project successful. It strengthens the students' and teachers' capacity to face challenges together, take artistic and creative risks and responsibilities. But the success of this teaching ultimately requires rigorous preparation, strong institutional support, and continuous adaptation. This can transform teaching into a dynamic, collaborative, creative process and prepare students for the challenges, especially of fashion and the creative arts.

The biggest challenge regarding the implementation of project-based teaching

One of the challenges of this type of teaching in higher education is to transform and/or complement traditional fashion education in another paradigm to encourage a more creative, collaborative, and responsible fashion (Reverdy, 2013, p. 49); to go beyond the current teaching so that students face projects with their challenges and solve real situations that reflect the real context of fashion. How? By creating tangible and significant projects and/or productions, as in the case of Maurizio's Haute Couture collection.

METHODOLOGY

Putting fashion education into practice: an experiment with the development of Maurizio Galante's Haute Couture collection

We asked Maurizio Galante to allow us to be an integral part of his artistic process for this project-based approach, and we humbly assisted him in the development of his Haute Couture collection, which he presented on June 30, 2019, at 3 pm at the Mairie du V^{ème} in Paris. The experimentation was carried out with 16 students from different semesters of the Bachelor's Degree, in Fashion and Creation, at IESModa, in Mexico. The methodology of participant observation was used. (Arborio & Fournier, 2015).

We then analyse the implementation. The project aims to transform higher fashion education through a project-based approach, exploring creative and artistic processes. The aim is to go beyond the traditional paradigms of fashion education and prepare students to face real creative challenges for their future careers. Could we break away

from the traditional methodology, often hierarchical and focused on individualism and competition? Encourage students to develop different solutions, including flexible planning, adaptation to the unexpected, and management of emotions associated with collaborative learning.

In this experimentation, students have learnt to take inspiration from artistic techniques or processes, such as those of Maurizio Galante. They also find creative ideas in everyday elements such as baskets, thereby developing the ability to observe and see beyond the established. Working collaboratively gives them a better understanding of group dynamics, which is important for complex projects such as a haute couture collection.

Project-based education requires a redefinition of the traditional roles of student and teacher. Frustrations with differing results or tight deadlines emphasise the importance of adequate preparation and emotional support. This can be a constraint to this way of teaching or learning.

In this experimentation with Maurizio Galante's Haute Couture collection, the project incorporates creative principles inspired by the "Maurizio Galante style", which favours large geometric volumes. This approach has allowed the students to explore alternative paradigms in clothing design, moving away from classical body shapes.

Student testimonials highlight the transformative impact of this experience. They highlight the emotional intensity and personal enrichment they gain from the process, working directly with a Haute Couture designer. These elements reinforce confidence in their abilities, problem-solving skills, and understanding of professional expectations.

When applied to fashion, project-based learning raises new expectations, prompts us to reconsider fashion education, and explore ways to foster an open university culture that promotes experimentation and research. It also explores the use of fashion as a tool for challenging norms and fostering cultural evolution. By incorporating artistic and collaborative approaches, project-based learning and teaching can transform fashion into a more creative and engaged discipline, thereby establishing new paradigms.

Finally, the experiment with Maurizio Galante demonstrates the potential of project-based teaching to transform, enhance, and enrich higher education in the fashion industry. It prepares students to face creative challenges in their field while developing the practical skills and critical thinking important for the evolution of this industry.

Achievements of this experimentation and project



Fig. 1 Look pompones de lana, de Chiapas

In the educational and creative results and achievements of this project, one concrete example stands out: the creation of a **"Coat of wool balls"**. This realisation uses the concept of "détournement" and illustrates the impact of this method on the development of students' competences. The students were faced with the challenge of working on a coat made of yarn and balls of wool, arranged irregularly. Maurizio Galante's artistic approach, which favoured imperfection and spontaneity, surprised the students, who were accustomed to the traditional paradigms of symmetry and precision.

Guiding the students, Maurizio Galante showed that aesthetic balance could emerge from seemingly imperfect forms, a valuable lesson in flexibility and creativity for the design process. The testimonies of students like Laura Castro and Jesus Nares reveal a profound transformation. They learned that "imperfection" can be an aesthetic source, and that the art "du détournement" can be used to rethink objects - in this case balls of wool - and turn them into different fashion items.

On the other hand, project-based learning has enabled students to achieve several objectives, such as creative autonomy: students learn to make independent decisions, manage uncertainty, and solve unforeseen difficulties in conditions close to the professional world. Encouraged to look for ideas in the everyday items, they developed a finer understanding of sources of inspiration, by observing and adopting a critical approach to "clichés" and conventions. Along with learning how to negotiate and share responsibility, this project helps students work together and value each other's contributions. They have also learned to question the norm and use parts of Mexican culture in new ways to make a meaningful and unique collection.

In order to structure and promote creative autonomy, IESModa uses a tool called the "Cross Key". With 4 parts: the in-depth research and search for sources of inspiration, we call it "the Sherlock"; then the experimentations part with materials, prints, colours and textures, forms, we call it "the Leonardo"; then we integrate the results of the research and experimentation to create prototypes ("monsters"); we call this part "Amelia" (the grounding of ideas); and finally, the "Portfolio", part where the creations are drawn and designed, embodying the culmination of the characters of the collection.

Students learn to identify and go beyond preconceived ideas in their creative process. In the "Carnet de Voyage" collection for Maurizio Galante, inspired by Mexican culture, the students explore themes such as the jaguar, the "Resplandor Tehuano", which they will "turn around" (le détournement) to create contemporary designs committed to the social issue of the "Muxhes", among other themes.

Before conducting any digital research, we encouraged students to engage in dialogue, observe their surroundings, and cultivate a sensitive connection with their subject. We also advised them not to jump into finding sources of inspiration without planning and reflection.

Finally, the example of the "wool ball coat" and the use of the "cross key" show how project-based learning could transform traditional fashion learning and teaching. This process, although difficult, opens up endless possibilities to redefine fashion paradigms and inspire deeper reflection on its cultural and social role.

Another example that stands out and examines how project-based learning fosters students' creative autonomy is the creation of **"the Jaguar look"**. This highlights the challenges, learning, and transformations experienced. For this "Jaguar" look, the students initially, superficially researched images of jaguars, falling into stereotypes associated with the jaguar. Thanks to the intervention of Maurizio Galante, they learnt to look beyond these clichés, focusing on the essence of the animal, in particular the patterns of its fur.



Fig. 2 Look Jaguar

Maurizio Galante guides students towards a deeper understanding of the creative process, showing them how to isolate the essential elements, abstract them (fur patterns) and translate them into design. This learning illustrates Paul Klee's words: "Art does not reproduce the visible, it makes it visible".

The students conceptualized, patterned, and made the garments (a pair of trousers and a yellow silk organza jacket with hand-embroidered black silk spots); demonstrating greater autonomy, although they faced practical challenges and the uncertainty associated with the absence of direct supervision by Maurizio Galante (Maurizio only stayed for six days, the following twelve weeks, they were on their own).

As part of the project, students learned important skills like creative autonomy by figuring out how to solve problems on their own and making important choices about materials, design, construction methods, and how to make the two pieces.

The project taught us to analyse sources of inspiration in depth, distinguish essential elements from non-essential ones, observe and select, and abstract the essence of the source of inspiration. The project illustrates as well the importance of collaboration, where collective decisions enrich the design process, while frequent unforeseen events encourage students to show flexibility, openness, and adaptability.

Maurizio Galante's role has been catalytic in developing the creative autonomy of the students in this project, the role of the guide teaching without giving a traditional lecture, to deconstruct preconceived ideas and to focus on the essential details to stimulate other proposals.

For example, he shows them how to find a certain aesthetic in simple elements and transform ordinary concepts into non-ordinary creations; it is another way of transmitting. In contrast to the traditional perception of autonomy as an individual process, the project emphasized the collaborative nature of creation. Students learnt to combine their perspectives to solve difficulties.

The constant contingencies involved in the production of the collections thus provide unique learning opportunities that are difficult to replicate in a traditional classroom. Finally, the “Jaguar look” illustrates how project-based teaching can transform fashion learning. It gives students creative autonomy while teaching them to work collaboratively, manage doubts, and select essential elements for their processes.

Another achievement of project-based learning is then highlighted: the improvement of observation skills and inspiration drawn from artwork. Through another example, it shows how students learn to transform objects and concepts into creative and meaningful elements in the context of fashion. In contrast to a traditional view of fashion focused on the product as a commodity, project-based learning can push for a more artistic approach. It is a means of expression and a tool for creating identity.

This teaching method helps students develop skills such as observation, analysis, synthesis, and the ability to divert or reinterpret sources of inspiration, discovering their artistic and creative potential.



Fig. 3 Look Canastitas (palm fibre baskets)

For instance, designers used small palm fibre baskets as the basis for two Haute Couture jackets. This object, normally perceived as ordinary in its usual context, was transformed into an innovative and aesthetic textile. Creator Maurizio Galante guided the students, showing them how to see and look beyond the initial function of the object

to reveal its creative potential. The students learnt that creativity begins with the ability to see the extraordinary in the ordinary, as in the case of these small natural palm baskets. Again another “détournement”.

They expressed their amazement at the creative process, describing how this project has enriched their ability to observe and transform simple ideas into unique Haute Couture pieces.

Project-based learning teaches students to transform 'trigger' images or objects into profound sources of inspiration. This involves going beyond simple reproduction to explore more abstract qualities.

The ability to observe is closely linked to the construction of students' cultural background. Project-based learning enriches this background by exposing them to artistic processes, guiding them to extract and synthesis essential elements.

Amazement arises from the ability to see objects or concepts under a new light. This stimulates not only individual creativity but also appreciation of collective contributions. Finally, project-based learning offers an interesting approach to fashion education, encouraging artistic inspiration and observation. Students learn not only to see the creative potential of ordinary objects but also to work collectively to transform these ideas into concrete creations.

The next achievement of project-based learning is explored here: the development of a collaborative approach to fashion design. Through the testimonials of the students who participated in the project with Maurizio Galante, it highlights how this approach drives not only the success of the projects but also the personal and professional development of the participants.

Traditional teaching emphasises individual projects, while project-based teaching emphasises collaborative work. This approach teaches students to share responsibilities, to solve difficulties together and to value the contribution of others; it is another alternative to academic individualism, to the formation of “Divas who don't know how to do anything”. (Edelkoort, 2015).

The students experienced the “real life” of working collaboratively to create a Haute Couture collection. This enabled them to understand the importance of deadlines, pressure, and tangible goals in the professional world.

Testimonials show that students learned to listen, to discuss calmly and to understand each other's perspectives. This process strengthens their ability to work together and overcome conflict constructively.

The project has fostered a greater sense of responsibility; each individual contribution directly influences the collective success, the image of the group and the creator, along with that of the Institute.

Students have found that collaborative work enriches their creations by integrating a variety of perspectives. This diversity opens up new avenues for solving the difficulties encountered. The teams have adopted an open approach with each other, exchanging advice and ideas across divisions. This reinforces the feeling of belonging to a common effort and project.

Students learn to see their peers not as competitors but as allies in a common goal, working collaboratively and learning soft skills. When it comes to solving problems, there is no room for complaints or a bad atmosphere; everyone helps each other. This has created an atmosphere of solidarity and mutual support.

Finally, project-based learning illustrates how collaborative work can enrich fashion learning. By teaching essential skills such as communication, empathy, responsibility, and creative problem solving, this process can prepare students for the difficult challenges of their careers while cultivating a sense of community, collaboration, and learning to live. (Morin, 2014). However, these difficulties also reinforce the importance of a balance between a practical and a reflective critical approach.

We will examine the criticisms associated with the application of project-based learning in fashion education, highlighting its impact on students and teaching staff. In the absence of precise guidelines, students must mobilise their prior knowledge and collaborate with their more advanced peers to make progress. For some, this process presents a challenge, particularly for those who have dropped out of the project from the beginning. Projects can provide a safe haven for students navigating challenging personal situations, and these external factors can also impact their learning and creative abilities. Some may believe they are incapable of handling such situations, but in our case, this project proved to be beneficial. (Proulx, 2008, pp. 66-68).

This approach may limit students' ability to adopt the critical introspection typical of traditional teaching. This begs the question of whether to speed up or slow down the learning pace in these projects to promote a more balanced development; each student profile is unique, and some aren't yet prepared to explore this pedagogy (we won't ignore students who appear to have more challenges).

Finally, the difficulties identified in this experiment highlight the complexity of integrating a project-based education in a university academic environment with reflection on the necessary teacher training.

Maurizio Galante took very naturally the role of the teacher in this project, that of a facilitator, guiding the students while allowing them the autonomy they need to explore

and learn. His attitude during his six-day stay with us was of humility, openness, fostering a collaborative environment and receptiveness to the students' opinions.

As well as trusting them by allowing them to develop garments without direct supervision, which increased the students' sense of responsibility and commitment. It is clearly imperative to provide training for teachers, including workshops and seminars, to identify the skills needed to guide students in this creative approach. These skills include time management, forms of assessment, detailed planning, among others.

RESULTS

Lastly, the project-based learning and teaching that Maurizio Galante and the students from IESModa did together could be a big change in the way fashion is taught. It shows how traditional methods can be improved by adding practice, creativity, and teamwork in a real-life setting.

Throughout the project, we highlighted the development of three key pillars: the students, particularly during their solitary 12 weeks, acquired the skills to manage doubts, make critical decisions, and devise original solutions to complex problems with autonomy. We encouraged a critical and analytical examination of their inspiration sources, transforming them into diverse ideas for creation and fostering a certain level of observational capacity.

The experience has allowed students to learn to communicate, listen, and build collective solutions, strengthening bonds and shared responsibility.

Ultimately, this pedagogy not only prepares students for the real challenges they are likely to experience in their professional environment but also contributes to the development of a more human, reflective, and evolution-orientated education for change. This project is an example of how fashion can remain both an art and a transformative agent in society when taught through a creative and inclusive perspective. It plays a crucial role in fostering a culture of innovation, collaboration, and creative problem-solving in education.

In summary, students have been able to integrate the theoretical knowledge acquired in class into a practical framework, transforming it into tangible skills through the development of a Haute Couture collection. This process demonstrates the importance of linking theory and practice for more meaningful learning.

Thanks to this collaboration, project-based learning has helped rethink the traditional paradigms of fashion education. It has shown how a creative, artistic, and collaborative approach can transform students into autonomous agents, unafraid to face difficulties. This project is a testament to project-based learning's potential to offer a

comprehensive and relevant arts education in the field of fashion.

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APPENDICES

A. Look bolitas de lana de Chiapas





B. Look Jaguar



C. Looks “Canastas”



D. Looks bordados Chiapas



E. Look Resplandor (rojo)



F. Look Resplandor (rosa)



G. Looks vestidos plisados Chiapas (rosa)



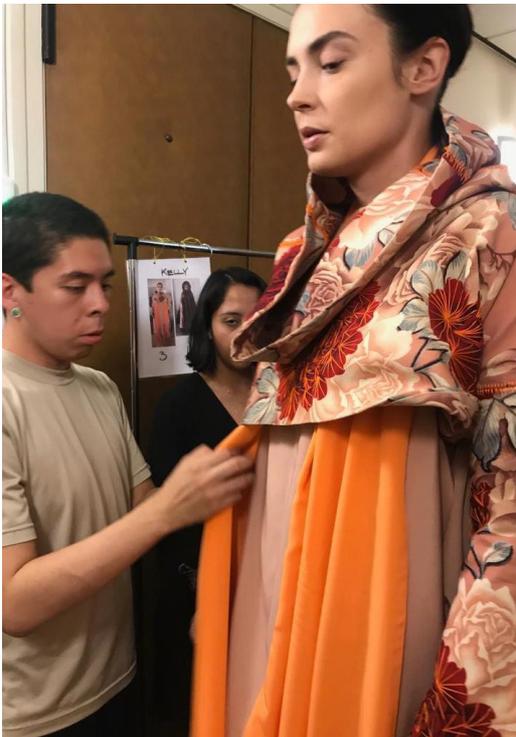
H. Look vestido plisado Chiapas (naranja)



I. Look nudos



J. Look Obi



K. Look papel picado



L. Accesorios: Resplandores de paja de Tzintzuntzan por el artesano Antonio Cornelio Rendón



**M. Accesorios: Resplandores de alambre y piedras de Ciudad de México
por el artesano Carlos Piedras**

