

Crafts, professions of excellence

Textile

Related professional – SANDRINE DIAS

Workshop: Dressmaker/Fashion Designer



Figure 1 Original pieces by the interviewed fashion designer.

Portugal is a country with a long history related with textiles. Until the French Revolution, artisans were the only producers of clothes and adornments, and their recognition as artists or "fashion creators" was not recognized. Only in the 17th century some artisans started to be recognized as stylists.

One of the biggest historical marks of Fashion was the Industrial Revolution, in which fabrics began to be produced in machines, but garments continued to be produced in an artisanal way, until the emergence of the sewing machine.

To establish a balance with the modern world, the clothing industry was composed of two distinct forms, which had totally different goals, values and products. The Haute couture translates into creations adjusted to the needs of each client, sewn by hand, while mass production is characterized by cheap and standardized pieces of clothing.

In this way, it is possible to conclude that there is a link between design and craftsmanship, which together can contribute to a more conscious consumption, as well as being an alternative to promote craft techniques. While craftsmanship translates more into "know-how", passed on from generation to generation, design has a more theoretical character, where techniques and theory are learned.

When we think about the manufacture of clothing, industrial production is efficient because it produces massively pieces of clothing in a short time, but artisanal production humanizes the result, as each piece of clothing was produced manually by someone – the dressmaker. In this way, craftsmanship, when linked to fashion, enhances a variety of benefits: relationship with the consumer, customization of clothing to customer needs/desires/requirements, sustainability, and cultural relevance.

What are the skills and expertise of professionals in this profession?

Besides the fact that it is critical that dressmakers must know how to work different types of textiles, being aware of their own characteristics, it is also important to acquire/improve skills related with time management, communication, stress tolerance and resilience, as unexpected requirements can emerge. Dressmakers deal with different people/clients, so it is important to practice active listening and empathy, to make them feel understood, as each client has his/her specific needs/requirements.

When making a degree in Fashion Design, it is expected that professionals can understand the historical, cultural, and economic contexts of fashion, improve their skills in relation to individual/team interrelationship and work organization, and improve their communication skills and marketing strategies.



Figure 2 Fashion designer interviewed creating a piece.

Some materials used for textile

Textile is a sector that can deeply contribute to the circular economy and local sourcing. The professional that was interviewed for CYFE project, for example, mentioned that she puts her efforts to reduce textile waste, by using fabrics from leftover collections, purchased in local stores.

Materials used in this craft are typical tools that can be easily found in stationery stores. These tools include tracing paper, scissors, pins, pencil, aristo, rulers, tape measure.



Figure 3 Tracing paper. Source of the picture: <http://www.pulppapermill.com/tracing-paper-roll-sheet-and-pad/>



Figure 4 Scissors, measure tape, threads and pins are some of the most used materials in fashion design. Source of the picture: <https://mauvelli.com/10-essential-fashion-design-tools-every-fashion-designer-needs-at-the-start-of-business/>



Figure 6 Sewing machine of the interviewed fashion designer.



Figure 5 Material used by the interviewed fashion designer.

What markets are related to this profession?



Figure 7 Original pieces by the interviewed fashion designer.

Fashion & accessories: the dressmaker is a person who creates pieces of clothes in an individual approach – he/she considers the needs, desires, and requirements of each client. Consequently, this is linked to high fashion, where it is possible to create clothes for famous people who can promote the “brand” of the dressmaker; being also possible to create clothes for other target groups and public in general.

Arts: many dressmakers/fashion designers try to create pieces of clothes that transmit creativity, harmony, and balance, through different combination of colours and tissues. The creation of clothes can also be seen as an art form, as the “artist” (in this case, the dressmaker/fashion designer) applies techniques to work with different materials (in this case, textiles), and transform something abstract into a concrete product – clothes. Dressmakers can also work in collaboration with visual artists.

Cultural heritage. Dressmakers have an important role in promoting the culture of their own countries/local, and adding cultural identity to innovative pieces of clothes, they raise their opportunities to develop products with added value. The design of typical costumes is seen as a symbol of recognition of each place, as well as its culture and language. This is an issue highly valued by African designers, for example, who consider that the inclusion of cultural elements in their productions is essential to preserve and enhance their cultural heritage. In Portugal, there is a co-design project that started at the end of 90s which aims to promote the local innovation and economic sustainability, as well as the recognition of historical and cultural relevance of jackets “Capucha” of shepherds and peasants of the north of the country. There is cooperative focused on the traditional art of weaving wool and linen, where dressmakers/designers develop several pieces of clothes, with the main focus on these jackets, linking the contemporary design to the traditional and craft techniques.

Where to learn the profession in Portugal

It is possible to make a degree on Fashion Design, so it will be possible to deep the knowledge required for this profession.

In Portugal, there is a university (Instituto Politécnico de Castelo Branco - Escola Superior de Artes Aplicadas) in Castelo Branco with the specific master degree in Fashion Design and Textile; and two universities (in Lisbon: Universidade de Lisboa - Faculdade de Arquitetura; in Covilhã: Universidade da Beira Interior) with the Degree in Fashion Design.

Degree in Fashion Design (Lisbon):

<https://www.fa.ulisboa.pt/index.php/pt/cursos/licenciaturas/designdemoda>

Degree in Fashion Design (Covilhã): <http://www.ubi.pt/Curso/30>

Master Degree in Fashion Design and Textile Instituto Politécnico de Castelo Branco - Escola Superior de Artes Aplicadas): <https://www.ipcb.pt/esart/ensino/mestrado-em-design-do-vestuario-e-textil>

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