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Museum Exhibit Experience Evaluation: Scraps of Fast Fashion

This pop-up exhibit, which would be a part of a larger exhibit on climate change and the impact that individuals and corporations have had in the climate crisis. The main takeaway message for this exhibit is: fast fashion is a rapidly growing industry that causes harm to the environment through climate change, which can affect us all. I developed a few questions to evaluate the theming and educational value of the exhibit. These are:

1. How has the fashion industry changed over the past few decades?
2. Do you recognize the impact fast fashion has on either the environment or people?
3. Are you reflecting on what you have done with your fabric waste in the past?
4. How do you feel about fast fashion now?
5. What do you expect the future to look like if the current trend of fast fashion continues?

In order to perform the evaluation, I set up the exhibit in Curry Student Center, and asked people if they had time to test out my exhibit. Aside from asking them to put on the jacket and giving them space to play with it, I provided little to no other introduction or background. I was able to evaluate with two groups of girls, one group of two 1st years, and another group of five 3rd and 4th years.

One important note to make is that I had asked many more people to participate in the exhibit evaluation, but three people declined when they found out they had to put the jacket on. The main method of delivering the central message is to make the user look at themselves in the jacket and make them somewhat uncomfortable to recognize the growing fabric waste was a bad thing, but this likely just created an uninviting environment that did not make people excited to participate in the exhibit. An additional person put the jacket on and looked in the mirror, began

looking upset and distressed, and then asked if they could take it off and leave without participating in the evaluation. I feel bad for this person, and recognize their reaction likely was entirely due to her outside circumstances. However, this also shows how this prototype is particularly uninviting and not exciting or enjoyable for people to try on and wear.

The first group of two 1st years were excited to participate, but were confused about what to do. One tried on the jacket and the other held the tie, meant for secondary audience participation. They noted the prototype was a little cumbersome, as the jacket was very heavy with all the extra fabric, and the short wires limited the range of movement, especially with the tie. However, we can assume these are just limitations of the prototype, rather than the exhibit itself, although the cords do cause a potential tripping hazard. The first girl put on the jacket and looked in the mirror, but promptly forgot about the buttons and nametag. She looked at me and had no idea what to do, and I had to remind her of the buttons. At first, she only noted the change in the Piezo speaker, and then later discovered the change in the nametag. She noted the buttons were very difficult to press. The second girl, who was holding the tie, was not able to find the heating pad on her own.

I then asked the 1st years a couple questions about their experience with the jacket, such as how they felt, whether they knew what to do, what they took away from the experience, etc. The person wearing the jacket questioned why the buttons and display were embedded in the jacket, rather than on the mirror. It was difficult to read the year labels on the buttons, and even more difficult to read the nametag. They didn't initially connect that the value in the display represented the fabric wasted in that year, but figured it out together. They felt as though the meaning and interaction with the prototype felt somewhat like a puzzle, and they had to work together to figure out what to do with it. Once they figured it out, they quickly moved on and

reflected little on fast fashion and the impacts of fabric waste through the years.

The second group similarly struggled with the cord length and limitations of the prototype, such as trying to find the heating pad in the tie. They also did not press any buttons on the jacket until they first looked to me for help or direction, which I did not provide. They noted the buttons were difficult to press with the cardboard year labels placed around the buttons. However, the entire group did seem excited to try on the jacket, yet lost interest in it once they put it on. They likely expected more components to activate when wearing the jacket, such as lights or motors to move the fabric scraps. They also noticed the heat in the tie, but didn't identify that the heat changed based on different years. They all struggled to find meaning or takeaways in the project, until I mentioned that it was meant to discuss fast fashion. They then were able to note certain learning and emotional takeaways they had from the exhibit. For future iteration, this means it would be very helpful to include the phrase "fast fashion" in the brief amount of text above the mirror, or maybe change the appearance of the jacket to more resemble this industry.

Clearly, this prototype needs a lot of work to become an appropriate pop-up exhibit, especially rethinking the way the users interact with each component. Having text on the jacket makes the exhibit very difficult to experience individually, as a friend was needed to help read the text on the display, and it could not be read easily due to the reflection in the mirror. The jacket was also a little too uncomfortable and heavy for users to be excited to wear it. Possible future solutions include embedding the buttons and display into the mirror instead of the jacket, having a mannequin wear the jacket and embedding heating pads throughout the entire tie for users to hold, or having a paid actor wear the jacket so that people can still see the interesting movement of the jacket.