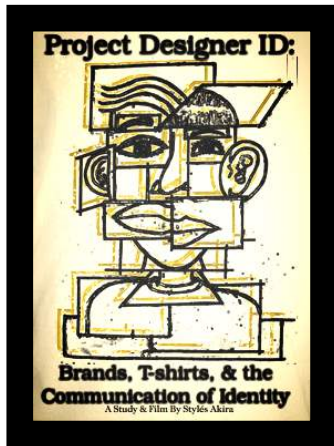


# SYNOPSIS: T-shirt Design (pt. 1)

## Designer ID: Brands, T-shirts, & the Communication of Identity

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### Fiber

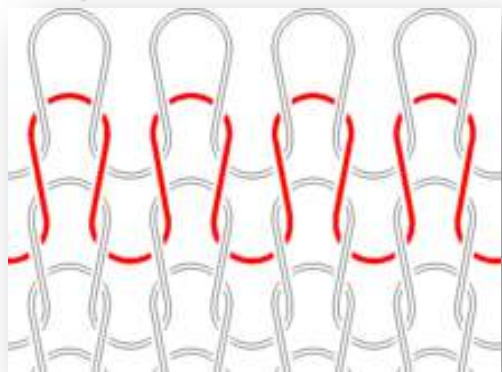
Fibers are the elongated strands of synthetic materials or natural plant or animal byproducts which undergo a process called spinning to produce extremely long strings of yarn that are then turned into fabric for making garments. In the case of T-shirt fabric, the specific type of yarn used is a thin twisted ply called thread. The thread is then assembled into a network of interlacing stitches creating a flat sheet of fabric. The type of fibers used to spin the thread along with the method of interlacing it into the flat sheet determines the nature of the resultant fabric. Fiber affects a fabric's durability, heat retention, water retention, color retention, elasticity, rigidity, density and texture. There are a wide variety of source materials whose fibers can be used to produce thread for making clothing, each with its unique properties providing certain advantages and disadvantages for particular circumstances. Natural fibers can be extracted from plants or animals and offer a feel that is pleasant to the touch of the skin which can be difficult to closely emulate with synthetic materials. Synthetic fibers are much less expensive than natural fibers and are often more resistant to the corruption of their integrity once assembled into sheets of fabric. Some synthetic fibers offer especially unique physical properties such as high elasticity or water resistance without feeling like rubber or plastic. In fashion industries natural fibers are highly coveted above the use of synthetic materials, which are often viewed as cheap, tacky, and of inferior quality, unless utilized for the effects of such unique physical properties. A significant number of T-shirts sold in the U.S. market consist of a 50% cotton/50% polyester blend. This mixture is used in an effort to prevent

shrinkage due to washing, as cotton fibers often experience contraction leading to an undesirable reduction in garment size after soaking and drying. Polyester, on the contrary is resistant to these shrinkage effects. It should also be noted that polyester, having been patented in 1941 came into high production and popular fashion during the 1960's and 70's—a period which has been particularly derided for the campiness observed in its divergence from mainstream fashion sensibilities. As such, clothing made of polyester is in many ways looked upon as being in bad taste by comparison to its natural counterparts, notwithstanding its resistance to stains and wrinkles, its retention of color, its durability, and its similarity in appearance and feel. With regard to T-shirts, this has translated to many status brands avoiding the use of polyester in particular, as it is subject to compromise the perception of a fashion brand and the legitimacy of its values. Cotton, like most field crops, can be grown in numerous different strains. As a means of differentiation some brands may employ the use of 'Extra Long Staple' strains such as Pima or Egyptian cotton, which yield longer, silkier strands of fiber than ordinary cotton, producing stronger yarns with less lint, which are conducive to more easily producing softer fabric and garments. Though these Extra Long Staples are not inherent to the softness and quality of a fabric—which is determined by thread count—their recognition as a premium source material for industrial processing has more recently been exploited as a primary selling point for fabric and garment quality, despite the fact that the staple length itself is not a necessary determinant of these properties.

Cotton Fiber



Jersey Knit



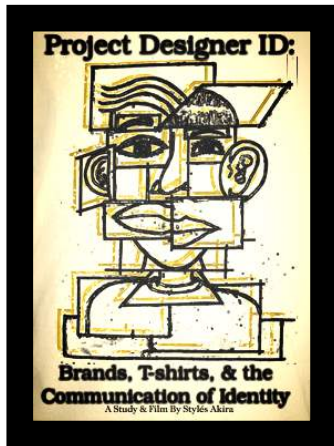
### Knit

The knit of a garment involves the method of interlacing the string of yarn into the network of loops, folds, and stitches, which results in the sheet of fabric. There are several means of producing fabric from yarn or fiber, of which knitting is merely one. Others include weaving, crocheting, knotting, and pressing. There are many different techniques of knitting alone, for achieving different types of knit fabric. Knitting, alongside fiber and yarn type, determines the texture, elasticity, transparency, ventilation, thickness, weight and rigidity of a garment. Because of the structure achieved by knitting, fabric produced by this class of techniques tends to be more malleable in all directions than woven fabrics. T-shirts are primarily knitted using a specific method called Jersey knit. Jersey fabric was employed almost exclusively for underclothing until it was used by Coco Chanel in the 1920's for making dresses (Walton, 1999). This, in turn, helped facilitate the later transition of the T-shirt to an outerwear garment. Jersey fabric produces a lightweight, soft, formfitting, fairly pliable, and well-ventilated material, which is used to manufacture a variety of textile products. The fabric has become a trademark feature of T-shirt design. Though visible upon sight, given the commonality of Jersey knit as a virtually generic aspect of most T-shirts, the knit technique of a T-shirt alone gives this aspect a very limited capacity to make a notable impact on T-shirt design and the perception of a shirt brand and wearer. Clothing brands may seek to distinguish themselves and improve upon the quality of their shirts by using a finer thread in the knit, thereby increasing the fabric's linear density, otherwise known as thread count. Higher thread counts produce a surface texture, which is markedly softer and gentler to the skin when worn compared to lower counts.

# SYNOPSIS: T-shirt Design (pt. 2)

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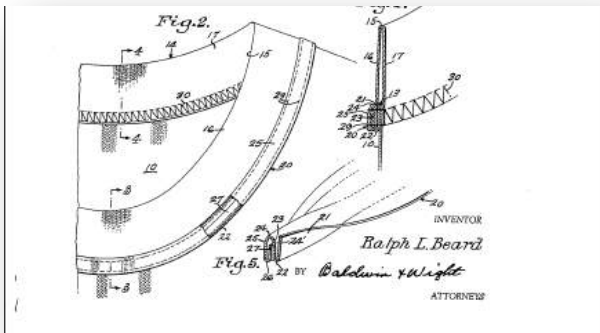
### Stitch

The stitching of a garment has to do with the way in which its sheets of fabric are sewn together. T-shirt stitching determines the position, shape, visibility, and bond provided by the garments seams and sutures used to attach sleeves, shoulders, hemlines and decorations. Though this can have very significant impact on the design scheme of many garments, the stitching is potentially the most subtle and mundane feature in the design scheme of most T-shirts. With the possible exception of decorations, stitching in T-shirts generally follows a classic standard, which is largely meant to go unnoticed. T-shirt patterns are manufactured from a continuous tube of fabric, rather than a front and reverse, side to side, or open-ended pattern which would be sewn together or left with free ends that are connected with fastenings such as zippers, buttons, or Velcro in order to make a closed garment. The T-shirt's tube of fabric is cut at the appropriate angles at the neck, shoulders and waist, and the sleeves are added from separate sheets of fabric. The shoulders are closed and each of the remaining openings is usually hemmed to produce some sort of border with additional seams to make neat form for the excess material. Stitching is often done with the same type of thread used to knit the fabric, for concealment, but can utilize distinct threads to provide embellishments for salient decoration as a design scheme.

Together fabric, knit, and stitching align to form what can be considered the functional aspects of T-shirt design. These features of a T-shirt are highly generic and consistent across the majority of T-shirts sold. In their common standard forms they do little visually, beyond the general connotations of identity elicited by a T-shirt per se, to

influence the social identity of the brand or wearer of a shirt in the perception of passive observers. The value of these design aspects primarily serves utilitarian purposes in the way that the garment moves, feels, and holds together. While these, in turn, implicitly denote quality for a product, which can translate to an influence on status for both a brand and consumer, this value is secondary in its influence because the perception of this quality is relatively inconspicuous in social settings by comparison to other shirt design features. On the contrary, the remaining three aspects of T-shirt design (cut, color, and decoration) can be considered formative aspects of T-shirt design. These features of a T-shirt have a high potential for variety and are inconsistent throughout the spectrum of T-shirts sold in the U.S. market. They provide a highly conspicuous point of visual differentiation which can be understood as a form of mass communication in the signaling of identity, and upon which the more functional aspects of T-shirt design are dependent for eliciting these same effects. These shall be elaborated upon presently.

### Stitch



### Color



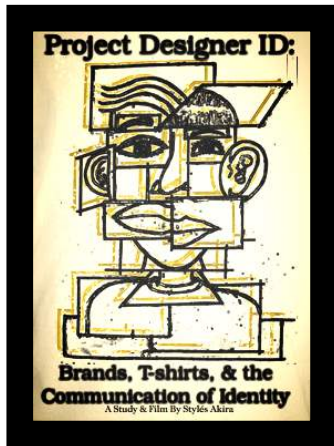
### Color

A garment's color is, in essence, the bandwidths of light waves, which reflect off of the fabric as a result of the dye that has been used to stain the yarn or fabric, or the lack thereof. Color is also a prominent component of society's material reality, because colors have been tied to the elicitation of affective and cognitive responses, and have also been known to carry synesthetic properties (Cozier, 1999; Sharpe, 1974). Color can be used to highlight stitching and knit. Colors in fashion have been tied to social identity signaling in several ways including class, gender, counter-cultural movements, nationality, sexuality and orientation, and political ideology. For instance purple clothing has historically been linked to nobility; red dresses have been idealized as sexually charged; black has on various occasions been linked to punk movements, the criminal class, mourning, and professional neutrality; pink and powder blue have been tied to baby girls and boys; red has been adopted by the U.S. Republican Party while the U.S. Democratic Party is represented by blue; and rainbows have been used as a symbol of the LGBT community. Although with T-shirts color is predominantly used as a means of matching, mismatching or otherwise coordinating a clothing ensemble, many of these sociocultural links may be retained in specific circumstances. T-shirt color is often random, as many clothing brands produce many different shirts amounting to virtually every basic color. Brands may have specific color schemes that coincide with their values and/or graphic identity. For instance a nostalgic brand may produce a line of T-shirts with 1970's earth tone colors that become part of its informal trademark; or a women's lifestyle brand may produce shirts in pastel color tones to accentuate its feminine market position. Likewise an individual or group may elect to wear T-shirts of a specific color in order to symbolize a specific set of values or distinguish themselves from non-members by means of a uniform. Those values may also include the values bound to a specific brand identity, and in this way T-shirt color can be used to shape the perception of a brand or individual in the eyes of observers.

# SYNOPSIS: T-shirt Design (pt. 3)

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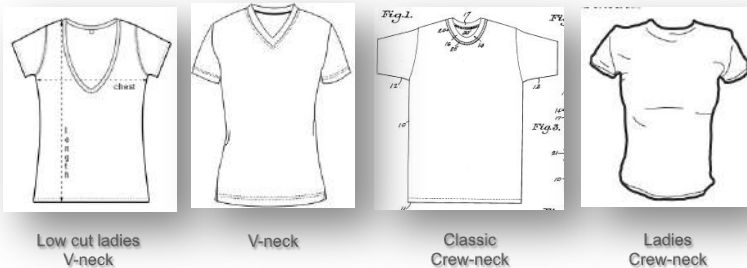


### Cut

The cut of a garment designates the shape of its outline, which, in conjunction with the type of fiber used, and its means of fabrication into cloth, determines how the garment lies upon and hangs from the body of the wearer. The cut is a premier aspect of all fashion design as it produces the silhouette, which establishes paradigms in the evolution of aesthetic standards. The shapes of objects are one of the most salient components in the visual landscape of any society. The differences in clothing across disparate geographies and cultures and their transitions through time underpin many of the prevailing ideological principles which facilitate the social organization within those unique times and spaces (De Long, 2005). Designers and fashion houses garner reputations for the trademark cuts applied to their garments. In terms of T-shirts, the cut of the shirt can vary across a very broad assortment, from the loose, gown-length 'tall-t' once worn in hip-hop circles, to the tight, form-fitting 'baby-t' for women. Cut alone has the ability to insinuate many different things about the identity of both a T-shirt brand and its wearer in different contexts. A significant percentage of T-shirts sold in the United States market have a cut which fall within the range of what may be classified as a standard cut typified by the classic crew-neck T-shirt, whereby small, medium, large, etc. are cut to fit in a way that is neither excessively loose nor tight on a person having a shoulder width, torso length, chest, waist, and arms of an appropriately designated size. Fashion brands may deviate from that standard by labeling larger or smaller garments with those

same size descriptions or they may exercise other nuances of distinction in shape such as providing V-neck, or deep cut neck, shortened or lengthened sleeves, or waist flair. Consumers may also select T-shirt cuts that are inconsistent with the sizes designated by the brand for specific body proportions. These actions on behalf of both consumers and producers communicate information about their identity. The cut of a T-shirt may especially carry strong connotations about human gender and sexuality, eliciting feminine and masculine appeals in the way that the shirt reveals and conceals the skin of the wearer. These in turn may lead observers to make assumptions about the wearer's social values as being either liberal or conservative. T-shirt cut has substantial implications for the identity of brands and consumers of fashion.

### Cut



### Decoration



### Decoration

The decoration of a garment concerns the highlighting and placement of abstract and/or concrete design features in excess of the articles naked paradigm. Decoration in many ways supersedes each of the other design components, as each of these aspects of the design scheme of a garment might be articulated in a way such that it may be considered a decoration of the design. To elaborate, a fiber's yarn may be knit or died into a specific print, which can be essential to its decoration. In this way fiber, knit, and color can be subordinate forms of decoration. A garment might be stitched in a way that is highly ornamental—with or without functional value—or may have cuts which produce decorative pattern effects. Therefore both stitching and cut may also be subordinated to the decorative component of a fashion article. In T-shirts, decoration is a component, which may be viewed in many ways as distinct from the T-shirt design itself, per se. The decoration on T-shirts is often a unique work of art that has or can, easily stand alone on a canvas, poster, or billboard, but has been incorporated into the design of a T-shirt. This is especially the case with graphic T-shirts but can also hold true for other styles of decorative T-shirt design. Decoration is the only component, which can carry conspicuous brand identity within a T-shirt. Even when other design components carry brand identity, they effectively become decorations for all intents and purposes at that point, especially when they are conspicuous. In this sense decoration can be seen as the primary component of T-shirt design, and all other components can be viewed as secondary. When conspicuously decorated, T-shirts may serve as a form of mobile mass communication. When these communications include brand identities the garment can be said to influence the identity of the brand and the consumer, while identities of the brand and the consumer each bear on one another as well as the perception of the communications within the T-shirt design.