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Making Museums Fashion Forward and Forward Thinking: A Proposal for a Rotating Exhibit Program at the Levi Strauss & Co. Museum

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Making Museums Fashion Forward and Forward Thinking: A Proposal for a Rotating Exhibit Program at the Levi Strauss & Co. Museum

Keywords: museum studies, fashion, textiles, social justice, sustainability, exhibit design, Levi Strauss & Co., denim, jeans

by
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Capstone project submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts in Museum Studies

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Abstract

This capstone project is a theoretical proposal for a rotating exhibit program that was developed for the Levi Strauss & Co. museum in San Francisco, California. It was conceived with the intent to help eradicate some of the stigmas associated with museum fashion exhibitions. This capstone explores the complicated history of the museum field’s relationship with fashion and analyzes some of the social justice issues that the fashion and textile industries face today. The project’s purpose is to demonstrate that museum fashion exhibitions are more than frivolous window displays in a museum setting and that they have the ability to educate visitors about complex global issues.

Keywords: museum studies, fashion, textiles, social justice, sustainability, exhibit design, Levi Strauss & Co., denim, jeans
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Project Background

Since the establishment of the museum field, an ongoing debate has endured over whether a museum's costume and textile collection is relevant (Taylor, 2004). Today critics make the argument that museum fashion exhibitions are nothing more than advertising displays and that they tend to present a single narrative, which focuses solely on the upper class (Anderson, 2000; Steele, 2008). Further complicating a museum's ability to produce fashion exhibitions for the public is the fact that textiles and garments are inherently fragile objects and present challenges when it comes to displaying them (Palmer, 2008).

This mindset began to change during the twentieth century when a shift occurred that enabled museum costume and textile collections to gain favorability within the academic field. This transition coincided with the rise in the interest of object based study methodologies (Anderson, 2000). This newfound enthusiasm felt throughout academia created a surge in museum fashion exhibitions, which generated content that appealed to a wider range of museum audiences. This is because everyone possesses a personal knowledge of wearing clothing, which makes museum visitors experts on the subject before they enter a fashion exhibit (Palmer, 2008).

Since audiences are already knowledgeable about clothing, this presents the opportunity for a museum to approach complex narratives with their costume collection. The garments on display in an exhibit will contextualize a global issue for a viewer because every person interacts with clothing daily. There are many social justice issues that the fashion and textile industries are faced with that could be unpacked in a museum space. One of the leading causes for concern in the fashion and textile industries relates to the environmental impact that manufacturing has on a global level. Yet, sustainability is not considered to be a concern for most fashion consumers. The reason behind this lack of interest is because consumers are not provided with the information about manufacturing processes in a way that they can comprehend it (McNiel & Moore, 2015).

I believe the challenge that consumers are experiencing when it comes to being educated on sustainable fashion is an opportunity for museums to create fashion exhibitions that explore this issue. Doing so could silence the critics who say that fashion exhibitions are overly commercial and lack educational merit. I believe that museums could also dispel the opinion that fashion exhibitions spotlight the upper class if
they were to address global issues and use an article of clothing that is worn by all members of society.

One of the most widely owned articles of clothing is a pair of blue jeans. The average person, including both men and women, owns 7 to 9 pairs of blue jeans (Olesen, 2011; McClendon, 2016; Miller & Woodward, 2012). Blue jeans also embody a variety of functions for their wearer: from workwear to high fashion (McClendon, 2016). The history of blue jeans is not a singular one because it also includes the history of the cloth, denim, and of indigo. For these reasons, blue jeans can be considered a global fashion icon with multiple narratives that would appeal to a broad audience.

A museum fashion exhibition that focuses its narrative around blue jeans or denim has the potential to interest a variety of ages, genders, and social classes. Museums have presented exhibitions about denim before, such as the 2008 traveling exhibit Denim: The Fabric of our Lives. But the vast scope of this exhibition hindered the curators from conducting a thorough examination of a specific topic, which resulted in critics feeling that the exhibit failed to draw any deeper conclusions (Hill, 2009). Another exhibit Denim: Fashion’s Frontier was presented at the Museum at the Fashion Institute of Technology (MFIT) in 2016. This exhibit focused its narrative solely on denim’s relationship to high fashion (McClendon, 2016). By narrowing the scope of its exhibit MFIT was able to provide an in-depth analysis of denim and high fashion, which created a more comprehensive exhibit overall.

One aspect that both denim exhibits shared was that they included garments designed by Levi Strauss & Co. (LS&Co.) as the precedent for denim as we know it today. LS&Co., founded and still based in San Francisco, is a denim company that has multiple histories. It is perhaps best known for inventing blue jeans but LS&Co. is also recognized for its commitment to social responsibility. On a deeper level, the invention of blue jeans is also the story of two immigrants hoping to find success in America, which is a narrative that is still relevant in America today (Downey, 2009). And the commitment that LS&Co. has to its employees’ wellbeing ignited change in the 1980s when they were the first corporation to acknowledge the HIV/AIDS epidemic and provide education about the disease to their staff (Downey, 2009).

I believe that these are the types of stories that critics argue museum fashion exhibitions are incapable of telling. While it may be that fashion exhibitions are not addressing these
subjects, my proposed rotating exhibit program about LS&Co. will
demonstrate that fashion exhibitions have the ability to
approach complex issues. I also believe that the content will be
more approachable for a variety of audiences because these
subjects will be presented in the context of an article of
clothing that is universally known. I hope that this will
courage other museums to utilize their costume collection as a
medium to address complicated topics.

Layout of this Capstone

The chapters in this capstone are as follows:

Chapter 2 • Literature Review — Drawing on contemporary
research and historic documents, this review presents an
examination of the current state of the relationship
between fashion and museums, social justice issues that the
fashion and textile industries face, a brief history of
denim, a look at some previous attempts to present museum
exhibitions about denim, and background information on Levi
Strauss & Co.

Chapter 3 • Project Proposal — A proposed solution to the
issues that museums face when they present a fashion
exhibition. This section also contains the goals and
objects for the proposed project.

Chapter 4 • Action Plan — This chapter includes: a detailed
list of actions that will need to be carried out in order
to complete the proposed rotating exhibition program, a
timeline with the deadlines for the project’s milestones,
and a list of point persons for the project.

Chapter 5 • Conclusion — My concluding thoughts and
reflections on what was accomplished by this capstone.

Appendices — Supplementary materials including: an
annotated bibliography, the project stakeholders, the Gantt
Chart for the action plan, floor plans of The Levi Strauss
& Co. Archives and museum, images of The Vault today, an
elevation drawing of the proposed rotating exhibit
installation, a system of 3 panels for proposed exhibit
topics, and finally a complete list of references used in
this capstone.
Introduction

As discussed in the previous chapter, within the museum world an ongoing debate simmers over the validity of fashion exhibitions. The relevance of a costume collection has been questioned since the very beginnings of the museum field (Taylor, 2004). This is due in part to the fact that fashion has historically held a low ranking in academia (Steele, 2008). Research suggested this was because the majority of the people who studied fashion and tended to the museum collections were women (Taylor, 2004).

It was not until the mid-twentieth century that fashion exhibitions would begin to become prominent museum attractions. As asserted by Fiona Anderson, there was a noticeable shift in the 1990s in which museums began to approach their costume collection and fashion exhibitions with a newfound respect. This transition coincided with the rise in interest of object based study methodologies (Anderson, 2000).

Despite the fact that fashion overcame many of the stigmas that were once associated with it within academia, there are still opportunities for fashion exhibitions to heighten their educational value and appeal to audiences on a multidisciplinary level (Palmer, 2008; Steele, 2008). Critics have accused fashion exhibitions of being overly commercial and only presenting the clothing that belonged to upper class women (Anderson, 2000; Steele, 2008).

The question arises: is it possible for a museum fashion exhibition to be educational and address complex global issues? In order to answer this question, we must look at some of the ways that the fashion and textile industries affect society and also consider what garment, or designer, could provide a narrative about social justice and fashion in a museum exhibition.

Structure of this Review

The questions that guided this literature review are:

(1) What research has been conducted about the relationship between fashion exhibitions and museums?

(2) What research has been conducted about social justice issues within the fashion industry?
(3) What research has been conducted on blue jeans, or denim, regarding its history and global appeal?

(4) What research has been conducted about Levi Strauss & Co. as an apparel company and its commitment to social responsibility?

This review is based on research that was written between 2000 and the present day. Two sources from the 1970s are included as historical documents with the intent that these writings contextualize the research examined in this review.

Are Fashion Exhibitions a Valid Academic Endeavor?

Fashion has historically struggled to overcome its low ranking in the academic field (Taylor, 2004). One of the reasons behind this was that the people who studied fashion and oversaw the costume collections in museums were mostly women and homosexual men, who were looked down upon by the male museum staff (Taylor, 2004). Taylor notes in one of her articles, "In the eyes of the male museum staff, fashionable dress still only evoked notions of vulgar commerciality and valueless, ephemeral, feminine style" (Taylor, 1998; p. 341).

Attitudes toward the relationship between fashion and academia began to change during the second half of the 20th century, when object based research methodologies became more popular (Anderson, 2000). Research has suggested that fashion exhibitions appeal to a broader audience because everyone possesses a personal knowledge of wearing clothing, which makes museum visitors experts on the subject before they enter a costume exhibit (Palmer, 2008). As noted by Lou Taylor (1998):

The entire world feels it "knows" about the history of clothing. The cultural place of dress is so central in any society that it is of little surprise that art and design historians, literary historians, economic and social historians, curators, cultural theorists, private collectors, TV and film directors, fashion designers and tourist organizations have all entered the dress history ring (p. 387).

This fact combined with the increased acceptance of fashion as an academic field of study has created a worldwide surge of fashion exhibitions in museums during the 1980s and 1990s (Anderson, 2000; Palmer, 2008). To quote journalist Miles Socha, "Fashion exhibits are multiplying faster than crashers at a
Manolo Blahnik sample sale—and the public seems to be enthralled” (as cited in Palmer, 2003; p.32).

The popularity of museum fashion exhibitions cannot be denied. However, the sources consulted for this review acknowledged that there is still much work to be done. One of the obstacles faced by costume curators is that garments and textiles are inherently fragile, and cannot be on display for extended periods of time. It is also noted that the relationship between touch and cloth is an important element in comprehending the qualities of a garment or textile, and that this tactile interaction is removed in the museum setting (Palmer, 2008).

Fashion exhibitions have also come under fire for being overly commercial because of their close resemblance to advertising displays and research has suggested that there is an imbalance in the educational content that is presented by curators (Palmer, 2008; Anderson 2008). Famously, in 1983 the Metropolitan Museum in New York (the Met) held a retrospective of designer Yves Saint Laurent that was curated by Diana Vreeland. Critics believed that since Yves Saint Laurent was alive at the time, the exhibit was too closely related to his economic interests. The harsh backlash led to the Met announcing that they would never again devote an exhibit to a single living designer (Steele, 2008). The Met is not the only major museum to come under fire for its fashion exhibitions, in 2000 the Guggenheim announced that it would hold a retrospective of Giorgio Armani, to which critics responded asking if the Guggenheim was for rent (Potvin, 2012).

However, despite these missteps researchers agree that there is potential for fashion exhibitions to be educational while still being presented in eye-catching displays (Palmer, 2008; Steele 2008). It should be noted that just this year, the Met has broken its own promise and announced that they will once again produce an exhibit devoted to a single living designer. In May 2017, a retrospective of Comme des Garçons designer Rei Kawakubo’s work will open and curator Andrew Bolton anticipates that this will not be a repeat of 1983 (Friedman, 2016).

Recommendations have been made that curators and exhibition designers should incorporate displays that show a garment’s fabrication or degradation process instead of only portraying pristine garments in museum fashion exhibitions (Palmer, 2008). Presenting exhibits of this nature would debunk the belief that objects are free from harm and remain unchanged once they enter a museum’s collection (Palmer, 2008). It would also further distance a fashion exhibit display from a
department store clothing display; the museum visitor would be made aware that they were not looking at a rack of new clothes for sale. In doing this, the exhibit would educate the audience about the materiality of cloth and techniques on clothing construction. Once clothing construction is addressed in a museum exhibit, this creates the opportunity for a dialogue about the global nature of the contemporary fashion and textile industries.

What are some Social Justice Topics that Relate to the Fashion Industry?

Research revealed that there are many social justice issues within the global fashion and textile industries, which would go beyond the scope of this review. For the purposes of this paper, I will be focusing on research that has been conducted about sustainability efforts in the global fashion and textile industries.

Fashion is a field that is constantly in a state of change because it is all about change. Waste is created when one trend transitions into another, since the consumer must discard the old season’s looks for the new (Hethorn & Ulasewicz, 2008). This cycle makes fashion an inherently unsustainable concept. And in recent years, the fashion market has become increasingly fast paced and fashion and textile industries have become more unsustainable in their practices in order to keep up with demand, including increasingly low-cost productions (McNiel & Moore, 2015). One of the contributing factors to this phenomenon is the concept of “fast-fashion” in which stores such as Forever 21 and Uniqlo create articles of clothing that are made with the intent that they will be worn no more than 10 times (McNiel & Moore, 2015). With this new model, it is not only the consumer who is creating waste by discarding old clothing, but also the manufacturers who are contributing to the cycle of unsustainable practices within the fashion industry. For the purpose of this review, the term “unsustainable” refers to the fashion industry depleting resources faster than it is replenishing them and creating more waste than it is recycling.

It has been noticed that globally there is an increased interest in exploring processes that will benefit the environment. However, this ideology has not been widely absorbed by fashion consumers (McNiel & Moore, 2015). Research has suggested that one of the reasons for this is because consumers choose being fashionable over being ethical or sustainable (McNiel & Moore, 2015). However, in their 2015 study that took
place in New Zealand authors Lisa McNiel and Rebecca Moore found that if consumers were given comprehensive information about sustainable fashion choices they were more likely to take sustainability into consideration when making future clothing purchases (McNiel & Moore, 2015). This evidence suggests that consumers are aware of the importance of making sustainable choices, but when it comes to fashion they must be educated in a way that makes them fully understand the information in order to base their clothing decisions on sustainability. As noted in a 2001 survey sponsored by the American Alliance of Museums, “87% of respondents viewed museums as "one of the most trustworthy sources of objective information" (Merritt, 2015). This research suggests that museums are a potential venue in which consumers could become better educated about the fashion industry’s role in environmental sustainability.

Researchers have also found evidence that suggests that approaching sustainability through fashion will create a greater environmental impact, because everyone wears clothing every day (Hethorn & Ulasewicz, 2008). This concept is similar to the one I mentioned previously regarding museums and fashion; people are already experts about clothing, making it easier for them to comprehend a larger concept, which in this case is sustainability.

An example of the fashion and textile industries’ attempts to educate audiences about sustainability is the Dirty Laundry Tour that was launched in 2005 by Cotton Inc. as a part of their “Cotton: Blue to Green Campaign”. This event traveled to college campuses throughout the United States and included a denim drive for people to donate their old jeans. The jeans that were collected were recycled and made into Ultra Touch, an eco-friendly insulation material, which was then used in charity housing projects (Olesen, 2011).

The purpose of this event was twofold: it provided college-aged consumers with the opportunity to actively participate in helping the environment, and it was also a marketing scheme for Cotton Inc. to encourage people to invest in cotton fabric because it was presented as “natural, renewable, and recyclable” (Olesen, 2011; p. 15). People who donated a pair of jeans received a coupon for a discount on a new pair of jeans at participating retailers, a gesture that counteracted the donation. The event educated people about the impacts that clothing has on the environment and best practices for shopping sustainably; however, it also propagated overconsumption, which is an unsustainable practice.
It is important for companies and manufacturers within the fashion and textile industries to consider how they can make a large impact and be involved with educating consumers about sustainability. But research also suggested that by shopping at vintage and used clothing stores an individual could reduce their environmental impact (Hawley, 2008). As far as sustainability is concerned, reusing what is already available is just as significant as developing new technologies to reduce waste. This is a simple act that can be done on a small scale, with the consumer only being required to know what types of clothing are made of durable fabrics.

**What is a Garment that Diverse Audiences Could Relate to on Multiple Levels?**

Multiple sources that were examined for this review asserted that blue jeans were a global fashion icon. One piece of evidence that suggested this conclusion is that the average person owns between 7 and 9 pairs of jeans (Olesen, 2011; McClendon, 2016; Miller & Woodward, 2012). Since blue jeans are such a widely owned article of clothing, it can be inferred that:

(1) Blue jeans appeal to a broad audience.

(2) Blue jeans have transcended social classes.

(3) Blue jeans are not a gender specific article of clothing.

It must be noted that the terms “blue jeans” and “denim” are used interchangeably, such that when the history and significance of blue jeans is discussed so is the history and significance of denim (McClendon, 2016). Blue jeans and denim possess visual recognition and as curator Emma McClendon noted, “This common familiarity is perhaps why a basic definition of denim rarely appears in books about the textile’s broad cultural history” (McClendon, 2016; p. 13). And for the purpose of this review, it will be assumed that the reader understands what denim is as a textile.
A Brief Look at the History and Significance of Blue Jeans and Denim

Blue jeans were invented in the 1870s when a tailor by the name of Jacob Davis was commissioned by a client’s wife to create a pair of trousers that would not fall apart (Downey, 2009). Inspired by the rivets used on horse blankets, Davis decided to apply the same technique to the stress points on a pair of pants (Downey, 2009). The first pair was a success and soon other clients were coming to Davis to get a pair of his riveted trousers. Davis realized the potential of this innovation and wanted to patent his technique, but did not have the financial means to do that on his own; Davis needed a business partner. He approached Levi Strauss, who he was acquainted with from buying fabric through Strauss’ dry goods business (Downey, 2009). The two men decided to go into business together and were awarded U.S. patent #139121 for riveted trousers, which they would call “waist overalls” (Downey, 2009). These pants would eventually become what we know as blue jeans today.

During the late 19th century and early 20th century, “waist overalls” were favored among working men for their comfort and durability. Those two words are still associated with what are now called blue jeans, despite the fact that they are now considered to be more than just workwear and are worn by both genders (Miller & Woodward, 2012).

As noted by Daniel Miller, the blue color of the fabric was an arbitrary decision but one that has linked denim to the history of indigo ((Miller, 2015, Taussig, 2008). Today the use of natural indigo is highly coveted amongst denim aficionados. Yet when synthetic indigo was introduced at the turn of the twentieth century, natural indigo dye was quickly passed over for the new synthetic dye, which was celebrated as a scientific achievement. Indigo plantation owners tried to launch a campaign that praised their plant based dye’s “naturalness”, but the more consistent and cost effective synthetic dye won out (Kumar, 2016). This campaign is reminiscent of the one launched by Cotton Inc. that was discussed in the previous section. It can be argued that denim has come full circle.

Blue jeans are also known for their ordinariness making them so extraordinary (Miller, 2015). The fact that blue jeans are viewed as a blank canvas enables the wearer to impart their personal history onto them, creating a one of a kind garment (Townsend, 2011). The intimate relationship that exists between individuals and their jeans is evident is the fact that when
Interviewed, people state that the perfect pair of jeans is the most difficult article of clothing to shop for (Miller & Woodward, 2012).

**Examples of Denim Fashion Exhibitions in Museums**

In 2008 an exhibit in England entitled *Denim: The Fabric of our Lives* opened to mostly positive reviews. However, as noted by June Hill, the exhibit was not able to present a deeper analysis of denim because it covered a too many of the narratives associated with denim. Furthermore, due to the large scope of the subject, the exhibit was a collaborative effort between multiple organizations, which resulted in too many voices throughout the exhibit. Hill argued that the narrative would have been stronger if there had been a tighter focus within the exhibit (Hill, 2009).

In spring of 2016, nearly 8 years after Denim: The Fabric of our Lives the Museum at FIT (MFIT) presented the exhibit Denim: Fashion’s Frontier. The exhibit was comprised primarily of pieces from MFIT’s own collection and had a narrower focus that concentrated on telling the story of denim’s relationship to high fashion (McClendon, 2016). Because denim has such a vast history and so many narratives associated with it, MFIT presented a much more cohesive exhibit by highlighting only one aspect of denim.
What is Levi Strauss & Co.’s Relationship to Social Responsibility?

One aspect that both of the exhibits discussed in the previous section had in common is that Levi’s garments were prominent throughout the displays (Hill, 2009; McClendon, 2016). In Daniel Miller & Sophie Woodward’s ethnographic study, Blue Jeans: The Art of the Ordinary, the brand that was mentioned most often as the participant’s “preferred brand” was Levi’s (Miller & Woodward, 2012). This implies that as a fashion company, Levi’s produces garments that appeal to a broad audience.

The company known today as Levi Strauss & Co. began in San Francisco in 1853. The youngest Strauss brother, Levi (then known as Loeb) was sent to California to set up the West coast branch of the Strauss family’s New York City-based dry good business (Downey, 2009). He never intended to begin manufacturing on his own. After all, as I mentioned in a previous section, it was a tailor by the name of Jacob Davis who invented the rivet technique. However, the trousers bore Levi Strauss’ name when they were introduced to the market in 1873 and the jeans still do today.

Levi Strauss & Co. was a successful company and had a positive economic impact on San Francisco and the entire West coast. The company brought manufacturing out West and provided jobs to women at a higher pay than most vocations available to them at that time. However, despite the fact that Strauss was an immigrant himself, Levi Strauss & Co. also contributed to the anti-Asian immigrant ideology that was prevalent during the late 19th century by touting that they only used white labor to produce their waist-overalls (Cray, 1978).

Despite this misstep, Levi Strauss & Co. would eventually become known for being on the forefront of businesses committed to social responsibility (Grether, 1977). The company established a Community Affairs Division that encouraged employees and executives alike to volunteer within the communities that they conducted business in. However, it was noted in 1977 that Levi Strauss & Co. was not concerned with ecological, conservationist, or pollution issues (Grether, 1977).

During the 2000s Levi Strauss & Co. began to focus its manufacturing practices on being more environmentally sustainable by partnering with programs such as Project WET (Levi Strauss & Co., Scholastic and Project WET Provide Water
Education to 1.5 Million Students Across 50 States, 2016). The Levi Strauss & Co. Headquarters in San Francisco also underwent renovations to become LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) Gold Certified, which is the highest rating for green architecture (Raphael, 2014). From being the first to make blue jeans up until today, Levi Strauss & Co. is still considered a pioneer in their field.

Conclusion

After reviewing the research, it is evident that fashion was not always considered to be a valid academic field. Over time, ideologies shifted about fashion and it became apparent that museum fashion exhibitions have the ability to spark meaningful dialogues about more than just clothes. This is due in part because everyone wears clothing, resulting in the ability for broad audiences to comprehend global narratives through fashion exhibitions.

There are many social justice issues that the fashion and textile industries are faced with. One of the leading causes for concern relates to the environmental impact that manufacturing has on a global level. One of the main reasons that consumers are not considering sustainability when buying clothing is because they rank being fashionable over being environmentally conscious. As mentioned previously, people wear clothing every day so if consumers made sustainable choices about their clothing it would have a large environmental impact. For consumers to incorporate sustainable practices into their fashion shopping habits, they must be educated in a comprehensive manner that they can relate to.

A piece of clothing that is a globally recognized fashion icon is a pair of blue jeans. By examining blue jeans, the history of denim fabric and indigo is also layered within its narrative. Denim is a fabric that has a multifaceted history, from workwear to now being used in haute couture.

It is evident that blue jeans and denim have affected people all over the globe. This makes the subject approachable to many audiences and it is important to explore the associations with such a multifaceted icon. However, previous attempts to present an exhibit based on denim were not focused and resulted in only skimming the surface of its narrative. The exhibit that was developed by MFIT demonstrated that if the scope is narrowed, a more in-depth analysis could be made. Levi Strauss & Co. is only one component of the broader denim
narrative, but an exhibit that solely explores the history of Levi Strauss & Co. and its involvement with social responsibility as a business would shed light on this aspect of the denim narrative.
Proposal

In order to address the criticisms and challenges that museum fashion exhibitions are faced with, I propose to develop and design a temporary rotating exhibit about Levi Strauss & Co. (LS&Co.) that will be on display at the LS&Co. museum known as The Vault. The Vault is free to the public and currently houses a permanent display of selected artifacts from the LS&Co. Archives. This permanent exhibit has not been updated within the past 5 years and is in need of being revised to reflect contemporary research. The proposed rotating exhibits will appeal to a variety of audiences because blue jeans are a global fashion icon that is worn by all ages, genders, and social classes.

My proposed exhibit will address social justice issues that the fashion and textile industries are confronted with and explore how these issues relate to LS&Co. The exhibit will present this information in educational, multisensory displays. I am proposing to test this rotating exhibit format for the duration of 12 months, which will consist of 4 exhibits that will each be up for approximately 3 months at a time. By having the exhibits rotate it enables multiple narratives to be presented in a focused manner. The narratives that will be addressed include:

(1) The history of Levi Strauss.

(2) The techniques used by LS&Co. to manufacture blue jeans throughout history.

(3) LS&Co.’s commitment to sustainability in the fashion industry.

(4) LS&Co.’s development of the Worker Well-being Initiative.

Since the narratives listed above will not be presented all together in a single exhibit, the temporary exhibits will allow for a more in depth examination of each topic. It is my intent that this will avoid previous missteps in which too much content was provided in an exhibition, and enable the viewers to glean a deeper understanding of the topics.

The rotating exhibits will also allow rarely displayed historic garments to be on view. Textiles and garments are inherently fragile and require low lighting, which makes exhibiting them for long periods of time challenging. It is
recommended that textiles and garments be kept on display for 3 to 6 months at a time (National Park Service [NPS], 2002) and the timeframe I have proposed for each exhibit fits within those guidelines.

The final advantage of having this exhibit presented in a temporary rotating format is that it will encourage LS&Co. employees to engage with The Vault more often. Despite the fact that The Vault is located in the lobby of the LS&Co. Corporate headquarters, employees rarely visit it since the exhibits on view in The Vault have not been updated in the last five years. During a recent pop-up exhibit highlighting the LS&Co. Archives’ new acquisitions, an LS&Co. employee stated that they “didn’t even know this [The Vault] was here.”

Presenting this exhibition at The Vault also allows the viewer to be on the premises where Levi’s jeans are designed, which reinforces the physical relationship that people have with clothing. The visitor is coming into this exhibit with the knowledge that clothing is something a person is normally allowed to touch, but when an individual is in a museum space that right is taken away. In order to allow the viewer to physically engage with cloth at this exhibition I propose including an interactive display for each temporary exhibit.

This interactive display will consist of tangible objects that are safe for the viewer to touch. For example, providing a selection of denim swatches that have been dyed with natural indigo and synthetic indigo to demonstrate how this process affects cloth will enable the viewer to understand the physical qualities of denim. By including this interactive element in my proposed exhibit about LS&Co. it resolves the issue that viewers are not able to touch garments that are on display.

I believe that my proposed rotating temporary exhibit focusing on LS&Co. will address many of the criticisms that museum fashion exhibitions normally encounter. Because of the company’s varied history, these exhibits will be able to approach complex topics that museum fashion exhibits are accused of shying away from. By presenting multiple narratives in the form of single temporary exhibits instead of in one large exhibition, the content will not become too overwhelming for the viewer and enable a more focused approach to each topic. The temporary and rotating nature of this exhibit will also encourage visitors to return to The Vault more often. And the inclusion of interactive displays will allow for viewers to be educated in a multisensory environment.
Vision

Museums can use their fashion and textile collections to develop exhibits that educate audiences about complex issues.

Goals and Objectives

Goal #1:
To develop a museum fashion exhibition that addresses social justice issues affecting the fashion and textile industries on a global level.

Objective #1:
Identify a garment or textile collection to use for this project.

Objective #2:
Identify a venue where the exhibit can be held.

Goal #2:
To develop a rotating temporary exhibition about LS&Co. that will be on display in The Vault and will change out every 3 months. The first round of exhibits will be planned out for the course of one year, totaling four exhibits.

Objective #1:
Determine four social justice focused narratives about LS&Co.

Objective #2:
Select objects from the LS&Co. collection to use in each temporary exhibit.

Objective #3:
Design floor plan, elevations, and a system of panels to use for each temporary exhibit.
Project Timeline

The project will commence immediately upon approval of the proposed action plan. The scheduled start date is the first week of August 2016 in which the initial research will begin. The project is planned to run through the end of December 2017. The proposed project will be divided into five phases, with the first four phases culminating with the opening of an exhibit. The final phase will culminate with the closing of the fourth exhibit.

Phase I is the longest phase of this proposed project and will last for approximately five months. Phase I will be dedicated to the initial planning stages of the rotating exhibit program and for this reason additional time has been added. This phase will consist of preliminary research and the establishment of systems and templates that will be used throughout the rotating exhibit program. During this phase the four teams who will be working together will determine their best practices for this project.

Phases II-V will each last for approximately three months and will consist of the following tasks, which will be established during Phase I:

- Research
- Object and image selection
- Label writing
- Exhibit design
- Social media content distribution
- Deinstallation and Installation of exhibits
- Assessment

At the end of each phase, the Project Lead will meet with the Archives Team to assess the exhibit and determine what changes, if any, should be made to the remainder of the action plan for the program. They will synthesize this information and relay it to the Corporate Affairs Team during the weekly team meeting.

During Phase IV a survey will be emailed out to all LS&Co. employees in order to gather their feedback on the program and gauge traffic. The Archives Team will compile and analyze the information provided by the surveys and will report their findings to the Corporate Affairs Team. This data will be used to determine the future of the rotating exhibit program.
For a specific timeline of actions and list of responsibilities, please see Appendix C • Gantt Chart on page 44 of this capstone.

Resources and Budget

This proposed project will be utilizing our in-house resources and will not exceed the allotted 2017 annual budget for the LS&Co. Archives. All work will be completed onsite at the LS&Co. headquarters. Research will be headed by the LS&Co. Historian and Archivist, whose salaries are fixed costs. All garments and images that will be on display in the exhibits will come from the LS&Co. Archives’ collection.

To assist with research, object and image selection, installation, and deinstallation the project utilizes the two contractors on the Archives Team. Their salaries have been included in the 2017 LS&Co. Archives annual budget and are fixed costs. The labels and exhibit panels will be designed by the Archival Assistant contractor. The survey will be written and overseen by the Digital Media Manager contractor.

In addition to the two contractors, the Archives Team will be supported by the Corporate Affairs unpaid intern and an LS&Co. employee, who volunteers their time. The volunteer is a paid employee of LS&Co. and their salary does not come out of the LS&Co. Archives’ budget.

The Archives Team will be working with the Graphic Design Team for printing. The proposed project has been designed so that printing costs do not exceed the Graphic Design Team’s budget. However, to ensure that this does not occur $1,000.00 from the LS&Co. Archives Budget has been approved to be distributed to the Graphic Design Team to cover any incidentals.

All social media content will be distributed by the Senior Manager of Communications who oversees all social media for LS&Co. Their salary is a fixed cost and comes from the Corporate Affairs Team’s budget.
Communications and Reporting

An assessment will be made by the Archives Team and reported to the Corporate Affairs Team after each exhibit opens. This reporting will take place approximately once every three months. In addition to that, The Corporate Affairs Team will be updated approximately two weeks prior to the opening of each exhibit. Communication will also happen intermittently throughout every phase of the proposed project.

In order to analyze the success of the rotating exhibit program and determine if it should be extended, a survey will be sent out to all LS&Co. employees during Phase IV of the proposed project. The survey will be designed by the LS&Co. Historian and the Digital Asset Manager using the online survey development company, SurveyMonkey. The link to the survey will be emailed to the LS&Co. employees and the survey will be open for approximately one month, after which the data collected will be analyzed by the Archives Team. All survey findings will then be reported to the Corporate Affairs team.

Future Related Projects

The proposed project is the prototype for establishing an ongoing rotating exhibit program at the LS&Co. museum, The Vault. The proposed project is intended to also encourage other museums to utilize their costume and textile collections for exhibits that explore complex global narratives, and facilitate collaborations between institutions.
Project Evaluation

On a global level, my proposed project to establish a rotating exhibit program at the Levi Strauss & Co. (LS&Co.) museum, The Vault, is a recommendation that I am making with the hope of moving toward eradicating the stigma associated with museum fashion exhibitions. On a local scale, this project has the potential to encourage LS&Co. employees to engage with the LS&Co. Archives’ collection on a more frequent basis. In Chapter 4 • Action Plan I included a possible means to evaluate the program through the use of an online survey. This survey is targeted only to LS&Co. employees, since their contact information is readily available to the LS&Co. Archives Team. The survey would gauge whether LS&Co. employees visited The Vault more often during the rotating exhibit program and take account of their feedback regarding the content of the exhibits. This type of evaluation opens the possibility to crowdsource the content of future temporary exhibits.

However, since this project is an abstract concept it is not possible to fully determine if it can be deemed a success. In order for this project to accomplish its goal on a global scale, other institutions would need to adopt a similar program to use with their textile and costume collections. Data would also need to be collected from the fashion and textile industries, as well as from consumers, in order to determine if these exhibits are educating audiences about the complex issues that our society is facing. With that being said, in order to track this project’s success a long term evaluation will need to be established and that is beyond the scope of my capstone.

Questions that Remain Unanswered

I performed thorough research to support my proposed capstone project; however, because this is a theoretical project and has not been carried out, questions still remain.

1. Is The Vault the correct venue for this project?

The Vault is a small museum, free to the public, that is located in the lobby of the Levi Strauss & Co. corporate headquarters in San Francisco, California. The Vault is not staffed, although security guards are present in the lobby, and visitors are free to walk in as they please. But because individual tickets are not issued there is no prior data to indicate the number of visitors that pass through each day / month / year.
Due to this lack of information there is no previous data to compare how many visitors this project would reach if it was presented in The Vault. Piloting this program in The Vault is advantageous since the Archives Team has unlimited access and will not encounter any additional costs to use the space. However, without implementing this project it cannot be determined if this is the best venue for the rotating exhibits to take place.

2. Will other museums be interested in implementing this project with their textile and garment collections?

This question can only be answered if this capstone project is carried out. Although The Vault does not currently hold any programing of its own or send out newsletters, The LS&Co. Archives collaborates with other institutions and contributes to trade journals. If this rotating exhibit program, or another one like it, is put into action in the future the Archives Team would need to establish a means of sharing their findings with the field.

3. Would Levi Strauss & Co. support a project of this nature?

As with the previous two questions I have asked, in order to determine the answer to this, the rotating exhibit program would have to be formally proposed to LS&Co.’s CEO for approval. With my experience as a contractor at the LS&Co. Archives, I believe that the company would support this project. LS&Co. is a company that draws on its heritage and views the Archives’ collection as a valuable asset to the company. For those reasons, I think that if this project is proposed it would be approved to move forward.

Questions that Emerged During this Process

Throughout the capstone writing process, my initial idea evolved into what I have presented in this paper. This was due to constraints that I met in both the abstract and concrete realms. In order to present a fully realized idea, I was forced to make some changes based on unforeseen issues that arose.
1. Location.

When I initially conceived this idea, I envisioned a traveling retrospective of Levi Strauss & Co. The exhibit would consist of garments and artifacts from the LS&Co. Archives and the company’s history would be told with a focus on social justice. I proposed that the exhibit would premiere at the de Young Museum in San Francisco and then travel on to the Metropolitan Museum in New York City, the Victoria and Albert Museum in London, and finally the Kyoto Costume Institute in Japan. I thought that presenting this exhibit in some of the most famous museums throughout the world would be the most effective way to confront the stigma that museum fashion exhibitions face, especially since some of these museums have come under fire for the fashion exhibitions they have produced.

It did not occur to me how difficult it would be to orchestrate an international traveling exhibition and upon further examination I realized that keeping the exhibit local would be a much more manageable feat. By presenting the exhibit in The Vault I would not have to write up loan forms, research international customs, or determine the floor plans of four institutions; some of which I have never been to. I also had to take into consideration my deadline for my capstone itself. I discovered that it was in my best interest to propose the exhibit in a local space that I am familiar with, which would ensure that I could complete to capstone’s parameters.

Furthermore, once I began investigating The Vault I discovered other potential impacts that this project would have. First of all, the exhibits in The Vault have not been updated for many years. This compelled me to consider how I could develop an exhibit that would bring in new information at a low budget. Also, by adding new content to The Vault this could potentially encourage LS&Co. employees to engage with it more frequently. Although employees are allowed to visit the Archives for research, due to lack of manpower the Archives Team is not able to accommodate all requests. The rotating exhibit program would be a way for the Archives Team to allow more visitors to access the collection. Changing my proposed project from a traveling exhibition to a stationary, rotating exhibit enabled me to realize additional goals.
2. Scale.

As I mentioned previously, the first iteration of my project proposal was for a Levi Strauss & Co. retrospective. I envisioned the exhibition spanning through multiple galleries in a layout similar to other retrospectives of fashion designers, which I have experienced at larger museums. I had recently seen *Oscar de la Renta: The Retrospective* at the de Young Museum, and was basing my initial concept off that exhibit. However, I realized that to produce an exhibit of that scale was beyond the scope of my capstone project.

The decisions to present my proposed exhibit at The Vault and scale back the exhibit happened simultaneously, but both of these decisions worked well together. During my research I discovered that a traveling exhibit entitled, *Denim: The Fabric of our Lives*, had been presented in the UK in 2008. This exhibit encompassed multiple narratives about denim and was a large exhibition. The exhibit received negative feedback with critics complaining that because of the vast scale and scope of the exhibit, the viewer was unable to glean a deeper understanding of denim (Hill, 2009). Learning about that exhibit reinforced my decision to scale back on my proposed project; it demonstrates that if an exhibit is too ambitious the educational value can be lost.

3. To design an exhibit, you need a script.

When I conceived this project, I knew that I wanted to design elements of the exhibition I would propose. I was more interested in honing my exhibition design skills than to play the role of curator. However, I discovered that I couldn’t design an exhibit without first having content for it. This realization contributed to my decision to work from what was already on display in The Vault and to design an exhibition that would elevate the current content, instead of starting from scratch. The exhibition in The Vault is a good foundation and only needs minor adjustments.
I think that this decision enabled me to see that in order to create change you can work with what you have. This is a method that any museum could apply to their own exhibitions and it is especially useful if they are under financial constraints. A complete renovation is not always the answer; museums can, and should, build on what they already have.

Concluding Thoughts

The purpose of this capstone was to explore the relationship between fashion and museums, and to develop a project that would work toward dispelling the criticisms that museum fashion exhibitions face. Although my capstone project is an abstract idea and has not been carried out, I believe that my proposed rotating exhibit program addresses the issues of educational content within fashion exhibitions, fashion and social justice, and how to conserve garments and textile objects while still providing accessibility. I believe that other museums could develop their own exhibit programs based on my proposed project and I hope that it will be realized in some iteration at a later date. I think that now more than ever it is time for museums to provide important information to the public and to create a safe place for dialogue for our society.

Fiona Anderson’s article explores the noticeable shift of fashion into museums that occurred during the 1990s. She addresses the commercial aspects associated with museum fashion exhibitions and also asserts that there is a new and widespread interest in fashion within the academic sphere. Anderson presents case studies of three museums and galleries located in London, illustrating how institutions of different sizes and structures approach their costume program. Anderson emphasizes that the garments are important museum artifacts in their own right and that they also have the ability to enhance the other objects within a collection. She asserts that a fashion exhibition provides the opportunity for museums that were previously perceived as inaccessible to connect to a broader audience because fashion is approachable to the masses. Anderson’s article is considered by fashion scholars to be one of the first contemporary in depth explorations of the complex relationship between fashion and museums. Her article provides context to anyone planning a fashion exhibition, which is what my capstone project proposes to do. This article provides the history of museum fashion exhibitions and gives insight as to the direction they can potentially take in the future.


In his book, *Levi's*, author Ed Cray examines the evolution of the American company Levi Strauss & Co. Cray tells the story of how the company was formed throughout its 100+ year history, starting out as an immigrant run family business to becoming a global corporation. With such a vast history Levi Strauss & Co. was affected by several major events in the political, the social, and the environmental realms. Cray’s research gives insight into how the company handled these situations, for better or for worse, and was able to overcome its mistakes. His book also details the positive impacts that Levi Strauss & Co. has had on the world; including bringing manufacturing to the American west and setting the precedent for other businesses to create programs that better the lives of their employees and improve their communities. Cray also looks at the apparel produced by Levi Strauss & Co. and examines how blue jeans went from being the uniform for working class men to becoming a
major fashion must have for men and women. This book provides an overview of Levi Strauss & Co. and places the company’s narrative into historical context. When Cray wrote and published this book in 1978, Levi Strauss & Co. was one of the most profitable companies in the world. I have chosen to use this text for my capstone research not only for its survey of Levi Strauss & Co. but also because it acts as a historical document in its own right. The fact that an entire book was written about Levi Strauss & Co. demonstrates the company’s importance to society during that time and will inform my proposed exhibition about Levi Strauss & Co.


Levi Strauss & Co. hired Lynn Downey in 1989 as its first company historian and she is the person responsible for establishing the company’s archive. In this article Downey provides the history of the company, its namesake Levi Strauss, and blue jeans. The article includes images and descriptions of some of the garments and objects that are in the archive, and emphasizes the significance of this corporate collection. The importance of the archive’s collection lies in the fact that Levi Strauss & Co. is known for drawing on its heritage as part of the company’s identity, and its history informs the company’s overall direction. Downey further discusses how the archive’s collection acts as a primary resource for the company’s designers to use as inspiration for their upcoming collections. This article is valuable to my capstone research because it provides insight into the Levi Strauss & Co. Archives’ collection. My proposed capstone project is to design an exhibit that uses objects and garments from the Levi Strauss & Co. Archives, so it is important to have an in depth knowledge of the collection. Downey’s article demonstrates that the collection contains important historical artifacts that can act as primary resources to educate and inspire museum visitors.

This article traces the development of Levi Strauss & Co. between 1918 and 1977 based on oral histories from Walter Haas, Sr., Dan Koshland, Walter Haas, Jr., and Peter E. Haas. By analyzing the personal observations of four prominent executives, Grether is able to provide an in-depth look at the business decisions that were made during the company's transition from being a privately held corporation to going public. Grether also discusses in detail the company's commitment to social responsibility and how Levi Strauss & Co. was a leader in that realm. However, Grether also offers his own observations and notes that at the time that the article was written and published in 1977, Levi Strauss & Co. was not focusing on environmental efforts. This article acts as a historical document that shows the evolution of this company, since now sustainability is considered one of Levi Strauss & Co.'s top priorities. This article and Ed Cray's book, *Levi's*, both demonstrate that during the 1970s when Levi Strauss & Co. experienced its greatest time of growth the company was a huge influence on society. This research informs my proposed capstone project because in order to discuss how Levi's approaches sustainability today, it is important to explore a period when the company did not consider the environment.


This collection of essays explores issues of sustainability and the environment that people working in the fashion industry and consumers of fashion face. The book is divided into three sections: People, Processes, and Environment. Each section expands on its theme, and includes a final chapter providing recommendations for best practices. This format demonstrates that there is no single path to sustainability and offers multiple ideas on how people can make more sustainable choices when it comes to fashion. The authors of the essays come from a range of backgrounds, which results in offering a variety of opinions of how consumers and fashion professionals can achieve sustainability. Some of the essays are more technically focused and analyze textile manufacturing
processes that are more environmentally friendly. Whereas other essays offer recommendations for consumers who want to be more sustainable with their shopping habits, such as encouraging readers to buy second-hand or vintage clothing and to think of it as a form of recycling. I enjoyed that the essays in this collection offer both big ideas on how the fashion industry can be more sustainable and also small steps that individuals can take to make an impact. The vast scope of topics that are covered in this book reinforces the complexity of the idea of what it means to be sustainable in the fashion industry, however, the conversational style of the essays makes the subject approachable for reader. This book is an important source for my proposed capstone project because I want to create a fashion exhibit that explores a complex narrative like sustainability. These essays give insight not only into the ideas that are being discussed but also make the concepts approachable in a way that a variety of audiences can understand them. I will use this source to inform the content that I would include in an exhibition about sustainability in the fashion industry.


This article is a review of a traveling exhibition entitled Denim: The Fabric of our Lives that was shown in England at The Hub, National Centre for Art and Design in 2008, and at the Portsmouth City Museum in 2009. The author June Hill notes that denim is a complex subject with a vast history and that the exhibition should be considered a feat since it was a collaborative effort between multiple institutions. However, the collaborative nature of the exhibit resulted in too many voices attempting to tell the narrative and created an overall disjointed feel to the exhibit. Due in part to the breadth of the subject being presented, Hill also felt that this exhibit was not able to successfully delve deeply into any one aspect of denim. This article is a valuable resource for anyone who is planning an exhibit that relates to denim because it outlines some of the pitfalls one could encounter. After reading this article, I feel that focusing on just one denim brand, such as Levi’s, would enable an exhibit to be more cohesive and provide greater insight.

In this essay, Prakash Kumar examines the shift that occurred during the turn of the twentieth century when synthetic indigo became the preferred method for dyeing textiles. This created a challenge for the Europeans who owned the colonial plantations that produced the indigo plants and dye cakes, which is the product that textile manufacturers used to dye their textiles. After having a monopoly on the indigo dye trade, the European plantation owners were at risk of losing their businesses. Synthetic indigo proved to have more favorable characteristics for manufacturing textiles since it produces a more reliable color outcome, it is more cost effective, and also it was a feat of scientific engineering. The chemical makeup of indigo made it difficult to create a synthetic version, so when the synthetic indigo dye hit the market it was celebrated as an impressive technological advancement for the time. This was appealing to textile manufacturers who wanted to be able to boast about using the latest technology. In order to entice textile manufacturers to once again use the colonial plantations’ indigo, the European plantation owners created a marketing campaign boasting of the indigo plant’s “naturalness. I find this aspect of indigo’s history ironic since today many consumers covet naturally dyed indigo fabric over cloth that is dyed with synthetic indigo. This source provides background to a debate that is still ongoing in textile manufacturing today and would be a fascinating narrative to explore in a fashion exhibit. Also, the history of indigo is intertwined with that of denim, which is noted in Michael Taussig’s essay that I also used for my research. For my proposed capstone project, I intend to develop an exhibition that focuses on Levi’s blue jeans, so the history of indigo will likely be explored. This essay gives insight into how the textile industry shifted away from natural indigo and began using the synthetic dye that most consumers are familiar with today.

The authors of this article took an ethnographic approach to gathering data on how consumers feel about sustainable fashion. This article analyzes their research and sorts consumers into three categories: Self Consumers, Social Consumers, and Sacrifice Consumers. The “Self Consumers” are individuals who buy fashion in order to indulge themselves, they do not take trend or sustainability into account and shop for pleasure. The “Social Consumers” are individuals who buy fashion because they are concerned with how others perceive them, they are focused on buying latest trends and being fashion forward; they do not take sustainability into account. The “Sacrifice Consumers” are individuals who make their shopping decisions based off of environmental impact, while they may consider trends they are most focused on buying what is sustainable. Based on their findings McNeil and Moore argue that while many in the fashion industry are shifting their focus to being more sustainable, not all consumers are. The authors conclude that merely marketing a fashion brand as sustainable is not enough to draw consumers because many do not link fashion and the environment together. This article is an important source for my capstone because it demonstrates that audiences are not fully aware of the environmental impacts caused by the fashion industry, therefore an exhibit exploring fashion and sustainability could be beneficial.


This book accompanied the exhibit, *Denim: Fashion’s Frontier*, which was on view at the Museum of FIT in New York City December 1, 2015–May 7, 2016. McClendon, the exhibit’s curator, tells the story of denim over the past 100 years and the role it has played in fashion. In both the book and the exhibit, McClendon explores the evolution of denim. At the beginning of the 20th century, the fabric was used to construct uniforms for prisoners and sailors, but by the end of the 20th century denim became the fabric of choice for high fashion couturiers such as Jean Paul Gaultier and Junya Watanabe. This is a narrative that this usually told when examining denim,
since it is unusual for a fabric to cross so many class boundaries. But McClendon delves further and also intended for the exhibit and her book to expunge the idea of denim as a “man’s textile” and present it as a fabric that has been worn by both genders throughout its vast history. She supports this concept by highlighting feminine garments from the Museum of FIT’s collection and historic documents such as articles from women’s fashion magazines. Unlike the exhibition Denim: The Fabric of our Lives that was reviewed in June Hill’s article, this exhibit took a more focused approach to the subject of denim. This exhibit demonstrates that by limiting the amount of narratives being told, a more in depth analysis can be made. For that reason, Denim: Fashion’s Frontier seems to be more successful than the exhibit Denim: The Fabric of our Lives. It is important for me to research past museum exhibitions that explored denim, since my proposed capstone project is to develop an exhibit about Levi’s. McClendon’s exhibit is a great example to work from and demonstrates that denim can be used to explore complex narratives and provide deeper insights.


In his article author Daniel Miller acknowledges that denim is a “marketplace icon;” however, he argues that denim is really the antithesis of an icon because of its lack of specificity. Most icons achieve that status because of their specialness, but as Miller points out, denim is something most consumers consider to be ordinary; and people are often unable to even differentiate between brands. He argues that denim jeans are what consumers wear when they don’t want to think about their fashion choices and therefore denim is most successful when it is nondescript. He also asserts that jeans are the anti-fashion because they are made to last whereas most fashion apparel is seasonal. In addition to his analysis of denim, Miller provides a brief history of jeans noting that the blue color and cotton fabric choices were arbitrary. To the author, the lack of decisions made in the design process for the original blue jeans lends to its overall ordinariness. However, Miller also believes that the blue color of jeans, although unintentional, links them to the vast history of indigo and that is a special quality. Miller is asserting that blue jeans are ordinary only at first glance, when
examined further their complexity becomes apparent. In order to plan an exhibit about blue jeans and Levi’s it is important for me to explore the contradictions associated with denim. Miller’s article is a great resource to begin that investigation.


This book is an ethnography that focuses on individuals’ relationships with blue jeans and attempts to their global appeal. The authors conducted their research using a group of people living in the same neighborhood in North London. The stories told by the interviewees are varied and cover topics relating to coming of age, body issues, sexuality, and globalism. The authors conclude that blue jeans have the ability to transcend gender, class, and cultural backgrounds and assert that this is due in part to blue jeans’ inherent ordinariness, which is a concept that Daniel Miller has explored in his other work. This book is relevant to my capstone research because it provides an in depth analysis of how individuals in England relate to blue jeans. This is particularly interesting since my capstone project focuses on Levi’s, which is an American brand. Yet, many of the individuals participating in the ethnography singled out Levi’s as their preferred brand of jeans. My intention is to develop an exhibition that would appeal to a broad audience, so it is important for me to research how various social and ethnic groups view jeans and specifically Levi’s.


In this article, Olesen presents jeans as the “American uniform” and discusses an annual event that takes place on American college campuses called the “denim drive.” It was initiated by Cotton Incorporated, which is an American research and marketing company that is funded by cotton growers and focuses on improving the demand and profitability of cotton. This event encourages people to donate their old jeans so that they can be processed into eco-friendly insulation that is then used in charity
housing projects. This article provides the history of the event and also offers a detailed description of the makeup of cotton fibers and the process used to turn denim fabric into insulation. The event was a way for consumers to be educated about cotton and sustainability, and it also created an opportunity for people to feel like they were participating in helping the environment. Overall, the denim drive was considered a success. However, the main incentive for an individual to donate a pair of jeans was that they would then receive a coupon for a discounted new pair of jeans. I found that aspect of the event to be contradictory to its mission of sustainability. This article demonstrates how corporations can take a cause and turn it into a marketing campaign. Since I intend to use a corporate collection for my proposed capstone, it is important for me to analyze how other corporations have attempted to educate consumers about sustainability. With that being said, this article also provided me with a deeper understanding of the role that blue jeans can play in sustainability, which is a concept I want to explore further in my capstone.


Alexandra Palmer’s article investigates the many challenges that curators face in order to create a fashion exhibit. She acknowledges that not only are there the physical obstacles of displaying fashion and textiles, but also curators and museum staff must overcome the intellectual hurdles these exhibits often face. To demonstrate some of the concerns, Palmer provides case studies as well as her own personal experience working in European and North American museum settings. She asserts that viewers are already knowledgeable about fashion since they wear clothes every day and that having the most basic understanding of what a dress is gives an individual context before they enter a fashion exhibition. However, a fashion exhibit is often reduced to a visual shopping experience, instead of an educational one, because fashion and consumerism is so closely related. Palmer offers her idea to create an exhibit that is visually appealing and addresses the natural deterioration process of fashion and textile objects by putting objects in the process of restoration.
on display. An exhibit like this would provide the viewer with a deeper understanding of textiles and demonstrate how museum conservators work to preserve a textile object or garment. It would also dispel the concept that an object is completely safe when it enters a museum’s collection. Palmer believes that this could be the next step for fashion exhibits, which would provide the viewer with multiple narratives. This article is relevant to my capstone research because it details many of the obstacles faced by museums when they put on a fashion exhibition and Palmer offers advice to ensure that a fashion exhibit is meaningful and educational. My intention of my capstone project is to encourage museums and collecting institutions to use their textile and garment collections to address complex narratives and educate their viewers. One of the reasons fashion exhibitions are not produces as frequently is because textile objects are inherently fragile. This article implies that fashion curators should embrace that quality of their collections and that in and of itself would be educational for museum visitors.


Valerie Steele’s article provides an overview of the history of the museum fashion exhibition and also presents her theories as to why these exhibits are often controversial. Steele looks at several examples of fashion exhibitions from museums in New York City and Europe, and also analyzes the reign of Diana Vreeland as the curator of the Costume Institute. She acknowledges that Vreeland revolutionized the way fashion exhibitions were curated. Vreeland was known for arranging garments and accessories to create visual experiences that intended to delight the viewer. However, Steele notes that Vreeland’s leadership also sparked the commodification of the fashion exhibit, since her displays often disregarded historical context. This article is an important reference for my capstone project because it demonstrates how exhibits involving fashion can cross over into becoming a marketing campaign. This article also emphasizes the importance for museums to present historically accurate information over presenting an aesthetically appealing display, which is what Diana Vreeland defaulted to. For my capstone project I intend
to develop a fashion exhibition that is both aesthetically pleasing and educational and this article provides background on how that can be accomplished.


In this essay, Michael Taussig attempts to unpack the layers of histories of indigo, exploring both the plant and the color it produces. Instead of taking a chronological approach to the history of indigo, Taussig jumps from one subject or event to another in a nonlinear writing technique that emphasizes the variety of ways that indigo has influenced society. He discusses indigo's impact on colonial trade and also the long-held superstitions and rituals associated with the preparation of the dye. Taussig argues that because of indigo's multifaceted history, it is something that transcends class. Taussig also informs the reader “to slip into the blue of your blue jeans is to slip into history.” This essay is a valuable resource for my capstone research because Taussig makes a clear argument that the history of indigo is intertwined with the history of blue jeans. Other articles that I have included in my research also assert this opinion and as Daniel Miller notes, denim's close relationship to indigo is still ongoing. For my proposed capstone project, I intend to develop an exhibition that focuses on Levi's and blue jeans so it is important for me to understand the history of indigo.


In Establishing Dress History, Lou Taylor examines the history of how clothes have been displayed in museums across Europe and the United States. This book is one of the first in-depth analyses of how the fashion exhibit came to be included in museums. A major theme that Taylor addresses is the ongoing battle for fashion to be viewed alongside the decorative arts. She asserts that this is due in part because of a gendered prejudice since many of the garments belonged to women and that those studying the fashion were also women. By presenting case studies and her own personal anecdotal evidence, Taylor is able to show how attitudes toward fashion exhibitions have changed over time. She asserts that today the fashion
Appendices • Appendix A • Annotated Bibliography

exhibit is a respected aspect of academia and the museum world. Taylor believes this trend will continue and offers examples of best practices within the field for the display and care of garments. This book is an essential resource to my capstone because it provides the context for why museums began displaying clothing, and in order for me to develop a fashion exhibition it is important to understand its history. Taylor also provides insight into the future of fashion exhibitions, which in turn will inform my proposed capstone project of a Levi Strauss exhibition. This book also highlights the issue that I am trying to overcome with my capstone project, which is that fashion has historically been regarded as women’s work and therefore frivolous and not important.


In this article Katherine Townsend explores how an individual’s clothing is an extension of their personal narrative and uses blue jeans to support this idea. Townsend focuses specifically on the manner in which a person must "wear" in denim because as a material it is inherently rigid, but softens with age. One of the points that Townsend brings up is that when most articles of clothing become faded or ripped, an individual’s instinct is to throw it away. However, this is not the case with blue jeans and instead these features become a part of the wearer’s story. As a result, Townsend points out that contemporary fashion designers strive to capture these attributes of worn in blue jeans and use new technologies to create distressed or aged denim. Townsend also examines how contemporary artists integrate denim and this concept into their bodies of work, often by deconstructing jeans to create an entirely new piece. This article informs my capstone research because it explores the complexity of denim. One of my intentions for my capstone project is to develop a fashion exhibition that appeals to a broad audience and this article demonstrates that people form close relationships with their blue jeans that is unlike how they interact with their other clothing. An individual’s blue jeans become personalized and that supports my idea that blue jeans are a universal article of clothing that everyone can relate to on a deeper level.
Project Title

Levi Strauss & Co. 2017 Rotating Exhibit Program

Project Purpose

Establishing a rotating exhibit program in the Levi Strauss & Co. (LS&Co.) museum, The Vault, will generate an opportunity for LS&Co. employees to engage with the LS&Co. Archives’ historic collection with increased frequency. The proposed project will make use of the space that is already used by the LS&Co. Archives to display a selection of its collection to the LS&Co. employees and public. The proposed project will design exhibits that are retrofitted to The Vault and will not require any additional changes to the interior architecture.

By employing a temporary rotating exhibit format, the museum will be able to tell multiple narratives around the history of LS&Co. and the company’s relationship to the global textile and fashion industries. The rotating nature of these exhibits limits the amount of time that the garments and artifacts from the LS&Co. Archives are on display, which will aid in the conservation of the collection while allowing access to LS&Co. employees and the public.

The exhibits in this program will focus on social justice issues faced by the fashion and textile industries and will explore how LS&Co. has handled these situations. The exhibits will educate LS&Co. employees and other museum visitors about the ways in which fashion impacts our society on a global level. It is my intention that this program will encourage other museums and archives with costume and textile collections to draw on their collections to produce museum fashion exhibits that examine the complex narratives that challenge our society.

Other Related Projects

This project aligns with LS&Co.’s Employee Engagement Initiative, which is a program that seeks to ensure that all LS&Co. employees feel involved with the company and are inspired to contribute to its heritage.

Project Owner

Levi Strauss & Co.
Project Department

The LS&Co. Archives, which is a branch of the Corporate Affairs Division.

Project Lead

Levi Strauss & Co. Historian

Manager of the Project Lead

Senior Director of Corporate Affairs

Project Team Members

The proposed project will rely on four teams working together. They include:

The LS&Co. Archives Team

- LS&Co. Historian
- LS&Co. Archivist
- Contractor, Digital Asset Manager for the Archives
- Contractor, Archival Assistant
- Corporate Affairs Intern
- Manager Global Brand Environment, Archives Volunteer

Corporate Affairs Team

- Senior Director of Corporate Affairs

Social Media

- Senior Manager of Communications

Graphic Design Team

- Graphic Designer
Key Stakeholders

- The LS&Co. Archives Staff: This project will provide them with the opportunity to share the collection with a broader audience. It will also be budget friendly and enable them to still concentrate on preserving the collection.

- LS&Co. employees: This project will provide them with the opportunity to engage with the LS&Co. Archives’ collection on a more frequent basis. It will also provide them the opportunity to be educated about the company’s heritage and its commitment to social responsibility.

- Levi’s plaza regulars: This project will provide them with the opportunity to engage with the LS&Co. Archives’ collection on a more frequent basis. It will also provide them the opportunity to be educated about LS&Co.’s commitment to social responsibility and what they as fashion consumers can do to help the environment.

- Tourists: This project will provide them with the opportunity to be educated about LS&Co.’s commitment to social responsibility and what they as fashion consumers can do to help the environment.

- Levi's customers: This project will provide them with the opportunity to be more informed about what they are buying and what they as fashion consumers can do to help the environment.

- Museums with textile collections: This project will demonstrate to them how fashion and textiles can be used as educational objects. It will also encourage them to draw from their collections to approach complex narratives.

- Corporate museums: This project will demonstrate how corporate collections can be used to educate visitors about their product.

- “Denim heads” (someone who is passionate about denim): This project will provide them with the opportunity to be further educated about denim and blue jeans. It will also provide them the opportunity to be educated about LS&Co.’s commitment to social responsibility and what they as fashion consumers can do to help the environment.
• People in the sustainable fashion industry: This project will provide them with a platform to continue the discourse about sustainable fashion.

• History groups: This project will provide them with the opportunity to interact with the LS&Co. Archives’ collection on a more frequent basis and be further educated about the history of the company.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Task Description</th>
<th>Start Date</th>
<th>End Date</th>
<th>Phases</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Prepare initial work plan about exhibit #1 opening</td>
<td>4/1/2017</td>
<td>4/1/2017</td>
<td>I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reissue workshop plan for the remainder of the rotating</td>
<td>4/1/2017</td>
<td>4/1/2017</td>
<td>I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gantt chart of Exhibit C effectiveness and make any needed</td>
<td>4/1/2017</td>
<td>4/1/2017</td>
<td>I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Review exhibit overall plan for Exhibit C</td>
<td>4/1/2017</td>
<td>4/1/2017</td>
<td>I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compile final exhibit plans and send final draft for</td>
<td>4/1/2017</td>
<td>4/1/2017</td>
<td>I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Send final draft for Corporate Affairs to be posted on</td>
<td>4/2/2017</td>
<td>4/2/2017</td>
<td>I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final blog about exhibit #1</td>
<td>4/2/2017</td>
<td>4/2/2017</td>
<td>I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Select graphics, artifacts, and images for exhibit #1</td>
<td>4/3/2017</td>
<td>4/3/2017</td>
<td>I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recruit any graphics in articles that are relevant</td>
<td>4/3/2017</td>
<td>4/3/2017</td>
<td>I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Write article and text for exhibit #1</td>
<td>4/3/2017</td>
<td>4/3/2017</td>
<td>I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finishes installation plans for exhibit #1</td>
<td>4/5/2017</td>
<td>4/5/2017</td>
<td>I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Send labels and panels for exhibit #1 to Graphics Team</td>
<td>4/6/2017</td>
<td>4/6/2017</td>
<td>II</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Print labels and panels for exhibit #1</td>
<td>4/6/2017</td>
<td>4/6/2017</td>
<td>II</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Check completion schedule draft of exhibit #1 and send</td>
<td>4/6/2017</td>
<td>4/6/2017</td>
<td>II</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Send email of email to employees about draft of exhibit #1</td>
<td>4/7/2017</td>
<td>4/7/2017</td>
<td>II</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Update Corporate Affairs Team on progress and</td>
<td>4/8/2017</td>
<td>4/8/2017</td>
<td>II</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapters #1 for Exhibit C</td>
<td>4/9/2017</td>
<td>4/9/2017</td>
<td>II</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Send email to employees about opening of exhibit #1</td>
<td>4/10/2017</td>
<td>4/10/2017</td>
<td>II</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Print panels and labels for exhibit #1 from Graphics Team</td>
<td>4/10/2017</td>
<td>4/10/2017</td>
<td>II</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Close the door for exhibit #1 and installation of</td>
<td>4/11/2017</td>
<td>4/11/2017</td>
<td>II</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finalize exhibit #1 and release artifacts and</td>
<td>4/11/2017</td>
<td>4/11/2017</td>
<td>II</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clean and pack exhibit area for installation</td>
<td>4/12/2017</td>
<td>4/12/2017</td>
<td>II</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Install artifacts, graphics, and panels for exhibit</td>
<td>4/13/2017</td>
<td>4/13/2017</td>
<td>II</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Send our email to employees about the opening of</td>
<td>4/14/2017</td>
<td>4/14/2017</td>
<td>II</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
### Gantt Chart

**Tasks by Team**

**Phase A**
- Create a schedule for the next phase of the exhibit.
- Begin preparations for the exhibit.
- Coordinate with other teams to ensure smooth operation.

**Phase B**
- Conduct a site inspection to assess the current state.
- Develop a detailed timeline for the exhibit.
- Meet with key stakeholders to discuss progress.

**Phase C**
- Finalize the exhibit design.
- Complete the exhibit graphics.
- Start installation of exhibit elements.

**Phase D**
- Install exhibit elements.
- Conduct a final walk-through.
- Submit the exhibit for review.

**Phase E**
- Finalize exhibit coordination.
- Submit final exhibit plans.
- Conduct a post-exhibit review.

**Appendix C**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Task Description</th>
<th>Start Date</th>
<th>End Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Prepare for next phase</td>
<td>4/1/2017</td>
<td>4/2/2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conduct site inspection</td>
<td>4/3/2017</td>
<td>4/4/2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Develop exhibit timeline</td>
<td>4/5/2017</td>
<td>4/6/2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meet with stakeholders</td>
<td>4/7/2017</td>
<td>4/8/2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finalize exhibit design</td>
<td>4/9/2017</td>
<td>4/10/2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Complete exhibit graphics</td>
<td>4/11/2017</td>
<td>4/12/2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Begin exhibit installation</td>
<td>4/13/2017</td>
<td>4/14/2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conduct final walk-through</td>
<td>4/15/2017</td>
<td>4/16/2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Submit exhibit plans for review</td>
<td>4/17/2017</td>
<td>4/18/2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finalize exhibit coordination</td>
<td>4/19/2017</td>
<td>4/20/2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Submit final exhibit plans</td>
<td>4/21/2017</td>
<td>4/22/2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conduct post-exhibit review</td>
<td>4/23/2017</td>
<td>4/24/2017</td>
</tr>
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</table>

**Calendar**

**Phase I**
- August 20
- September 1
- October 1
- November 1
- December 1

**Phase II**
- January 1
- February 1
- March 1

**Phase III**
- April 1
- May 1
- June 1

**Phase IV**
- July 1
- August 1
- September 1
- October 1

**Phase V**
- November 1
- December 1
# Appendix C • Gantt Chart

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tasks to Team</th>
<th>Start</th>
<th>End</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Prepare with business team about exhibit A1 opening</td>
<td>6/10/17</td>
<td>6/12/17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Review action plan for 2017</td>
<td>6/10/17</td>
<td>6/12/17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prepare with Corporate Affairs team about exhibit A1 opening during weekly meeting</td>
<td>6/10/17</td>
<td>6/12/17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Draft blog post about exhibit A1 and send to Corporate Affairs team for edits</td>
<td>6/10/17</td>
<td>6/12/17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Edit draft of blog post about exhibit A1</td>
<td>6/10/17</td>
<td>6/12/17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Review exhibits design and add exhibit A and send final draft to Corporate Affairs to be posted on Facebook</td>
<td>6/10/17</td>
<td>6/12/17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final blog about exhibit A1</td>
<td>6/10/17</td>
<td>6/12/17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Draft exhibit A callout about first week of exhibit A and send to Corporate Affairs team for editing</td>
<td>6/14/17</td>
<td>6/16/17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Send exhibit A callout to employees about first week of exhibit A</td>
<td>6/14/17</td>
<td>6/16/17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Close exhibit A callout for second weekend of exhibit A</td>
<td>6/18/17</td>
<td>6/20/17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exhibit A1 and riveting artifacts and elements</td>
<td>6/24/17</td>
<td>6/26/17</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Teams**

- **Exhibit Team**
  - Lead: Librae

- **Corporate Affairs Team**
  - Lead: Corporate Affairs Director

- **Social Media Team**
  - Lead: Corporate Affairs Director

- **Graphic Team**
  - Lead: Graphic Designer
The first floor of Levi’s Plaza, courtesy of Levi Strauss & Co.
Appendices • Appendix D • Floor Plans

Detail of The Vault.
Scale: 1/8" = 1' • 0"

The Vault
An image of the west wall of The Vault taken on November 17, 2016.
Elevation drawing of the west wall of the Vault depicting a proposed system of panels that could be used for each rotating exhibit theme. In this elevation, each panel is for a different theme but is presented in this drawing to show the cohesion of the system and its versatility. This image is at 1/3 of its original size.
A panel designed for an exhibit addressing sustainability. The label text appears in The Vault today and has been updated with new images. This image is at 1/3 of its original size.
A panel designed for an exhibit about the history of LS&Co. The label text and photograph appear in The Vault today but have been redesigned. This image is at 1/3 of its original size.
A panel designed to allow the visitor to physically interact with denim. The label text is taken from this capstone. This image is at 1/3 of its original size.


