

# Crafting of Paper Cutting Techniques for Embellishment of Fashion Textiles

A. Vaidya-Soocheta, K. M. Wong-Hon-Lang

**Abstract**—Craft and fashion have always been interlinked. The combination of both often gives stunning results. The present study introduces ‘Paper Cutting Craft Techniques’ like the Japanese – Kirigami, Mexican – Papelpicado, German – Scherenschnitte, Polish – Wycinankito in textiles to develop innovative and novel design structures as embellishments and ornamentation. The project studies various ways of using these paper cutting techniques to obtain interesting features and delicate design patterns on fabrics. While paper has its advantages and related uses, it is fragile rigid and thus not appropriate for clothing. Fabric is sturdy, flexible, dimensionally stable and washable. In the present study, the cut out techniques develop creative design motifs and patterns to give an inventive and unique appeal to the fabrics. The beauty and fascination of lace in garments have always given them a nostalgic charm. Laces with their intricate and delicate complexity in combination with other materials add a feminine touch to a garment and give it a romantic, mysterious appeal. Various textured and decorative effects through fabric manipulation are experimented along with the use of paper cutting craft skills as an innovative substitute for developing lace or “Broderie Anglaise” effects on textiles. A number of assorted fabric types with varied textures were selected for the study. Techniques to avoid fraying and unraveling of the design cut fabrics were introduced. Fabrics were further manipulated by use of interesting prints with embossed effects on cut outs. Fabric layering in combination with assorted techniques such as cutting of folded fabric, printing, appliqué, embroidery, crochet, braiding, weaving added a novel exclusivity to the fabrics. The fabrics developed by these innovative methods were then tailored into garments. The study thus tested the feasibility and practicability of using these fabrics by designing a collection of evening wear garments based on the theme ‘Nostalgia’. The prototypes developed were complemented by designing fashion accessories with the crafted fabrics. Prototypes of accessories add interesting features to the study. The adaptation and application of this novel technique of paper cutting craft on textiles can be an innovative start for a new trend in textile and fashion industry. The study anticipates that this technique will open new avenues in the world of fashion to incorporate its use commercially.

**Keywords**—Collection, fabric cutouts, nostalgia, prototypes.

## I. INTRODUCTION

SINCE its creation in China decades ago, the paper cutting techniques had been used for decorative purposes only. These paper cutting techniques had travelled outside of China and were mastered by other countries for decorative purposes. This craft technique, though present in other countries, is not much popular in Mauritius and can only be seen as ornaments

during weddings, children parties or festivities. While paper is fragile and rigid, fabric is stronger, fluid, comfortable, washable and eventually wearable. Paper cutting is simple to realise once the basics steps are mastered. Practically endless fine-looking effects can be obtained in combination with other manipulations such as printing, embroidery and appliqué. Given that in today’s society where western culture is gaining more importance, people, especially the young 18-25 years old, are generally influenced by media such as television and internet. It has also been observed that they are less conservative and eager for innovation, creativity and originality; therefore, willing to accept designer wear clothing. There is a large potential of implementing this technique for the young people. The present study investigates ways of applying these paper cutting techniques efficiently on fabrics for the making of designer wear clothing. It brings an innovation and originality in the craft, fashion and textile industry. The project introduces innovative and alternative ways of fabric embellishment by using paper cutting techniques.

## II. OBJECTIVES

1. To incorporate paper cutting techniques, in fabrics to create a new fashion statement.
2. To explore methods to create interesting textured surfaces, decorative “lacy” effects and embellishments for fabrics by paper cutting techniques
3. To combine western style clothing and oriental pattern designs (*East meets West*) with cut-outs, printing, appliqué and embroidery techniques.
4. To design clothing, for designer wear, evening wear or on-stage wear, using the art of paper cutting and layering fabrics expressing a balance between transparency and opacity.

## III. LITERATURE REVIEW

Research was conducted to explore existing paper cutting techniques and some craft techniques for embellishment and manipulation of fabrics.

Cai Lun invented the papermaking process in AD 105 and soon after began the art of Chinese paper cutting. It began to appear in West Asia by the 8<sup>th</sup> or 9<sup>th</sup> century and in Turkey in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. Within a century, paper cutting was being done in most of middle Europe. Fig. 1 depicts the chronological history of paper cutting.

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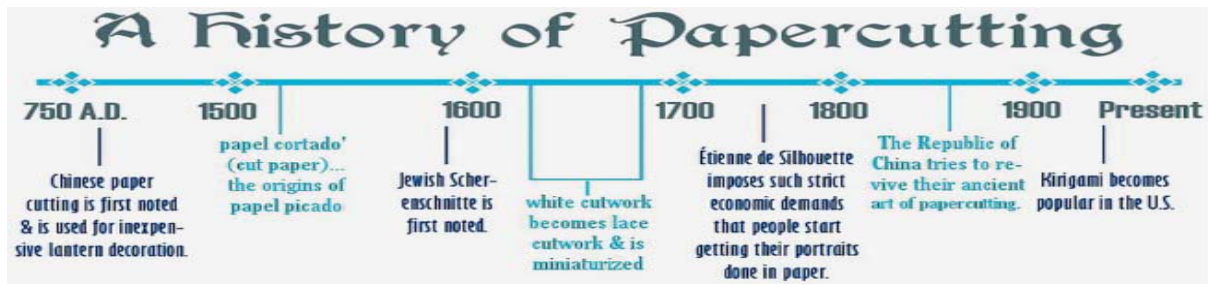


Fig. 1 History of paper cutting [6]

Fig. 2 shows various paper cutting styles. *Jianzhi* is the Chinese art of paper cutting, *Kirie* is the Japanese art of paper cutting, while *Kirigami*, also called *Monkiri*, involves cutting and folding paper. *Papel picado* is the Mexican art of paper cutting. *Scherenschnitte* literally means “scissors cutting” and is the German and Swiss art of paper cutting. *Wycinanki* also called “scissors cutting” is a Polish style of paper cutting [8], [11]-[15].



Fig. 2 Paper cutting styles [8], [12]-[19]

Nowadays, paper cuttings are mainly used as decoration to ornate walls, windows, doors, columns, mirrors, lamps and lanterns; and on presents. They have special significance at festivals and celebrations. Paper cuttings used to be used as patterns, especially for embroidery and lacquer work. There are two methods of manufacture: scissor cuttings and knife cuttings. As the name indicates, scissor cuttings are fashioned with scissors. Several pieces of paper, up to eight pieces are fastened together. The motif is then cut with sharp, pointed scissors. Other paper cutting techniques include Window Paper Cutting which is used to decorate windows. The Gate Label paper cutting is also called “hanging label”, “hanging money”, etc. Festive Paper Cutting is a kind of paper cutting artefact which is used to decorate the household appliances

and indoor furniture [8], [27]. Doilies are those round shaped paper napkins or sheets with a lace edge often found in christening gifts and wedding cards. They are used as an embellishment to enhance cake and dish presentation, as a protection and in craft projects, such as making greeting cards. As seen in Fig. 3 they can be found in a wide variety of designs, sizes and colours, but white being the most common [4].



Fig. 3 Doilies of various sizes, colours and designs [4]

Fig. 4 shows images of exposition by a Chinese artist, Mr. Cai Jiango demonstrating paper cutting skills in silhouette cutting at the IBL Gallery, Dr Ferrière Street, Port Louis, Mauritius [32], [33].



Fig. 4 Exposition by a Chinese artist, Mr. Cai Jiango [32], [33]

*Kanako Yaguchi* [5] is a Japanese artist uses the kirigami technique to create templates for stencilling and appliqué for



apparel making, accessories and interior decoration objects as seen in Fig. 5.



Fig. 5 Work of Kanako Yaguchi [5]

Interior Designer, *Tord Boontje*, working in London, uses the paper cutting technique to create particular unique objects, such as the lamps, curtains, greeting cards and decorative panels, made of delicately paper cut-outs [2]. Fig. 6 shows his work.



Fig. 6 Interior designer *Tord Boontje* display [2]

Techniques such as embroidery and appliqué on fabric relates with the paper cutting. Broderie Anglaise is a French word meaning “English embroidery” [1]. It is a form of needlework technique made on white fabric, which consists in making holes and embroidery around each hole. It was founded in England in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. As in Fig. 7, the characteristic of Broderie Anglaise is patterns with small holes bound with buttonhole stitches [1].

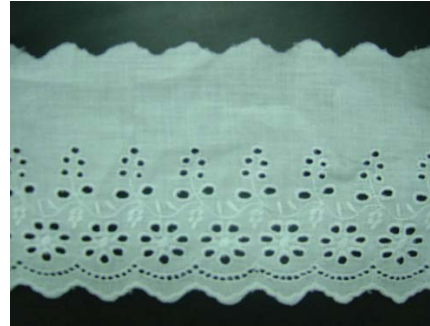


Fig. 7 Broderie Anglaise Trimming [1]

Stump work is a style of embroidery where the stitched designs are raised from the surface of the work to form a 3-dimensional effect [7]. A modern day sub category of this art form used primarily in production embroidery on automated embroidery machines is referred to as Puff embroidery. The process involves putting down, typically, a layer of foam rubber larger than the intended shape on top of the target material to be decorated. Appliqué [20] or *appliqué* is a technique in which pieces of fabric are sewn onto a foundation piece of fabric to create designs. Printing Techniques such as Screen Printing is a quite popular method in printing [24]. Puff Printing makes use of a special paste, which when heated will rise to form an embossed surface. Since, puff paste is white; pigments can be added to the paste to obtain various colours. However, the greater the amount of pigment added, the less the print will raise, that is, the final outcome will be of less good quality.

#### IV. METHODOLOGY

##### A. Selection of Theme and Market Research

Market was researched to gather information about the awareness of fashion. It allowed collecting views about the acceptability of paper cutting technique on textiles and relevance of the theme. Surveys were conducted to test the acceptability and feasibility of the project. The survey also determined the market to be targeted. Questionnaires were distributed randomly to 25 people who had acumen for fashion. The results obtained would determine the target age group so that design development can be carried out. The survey was divided into two sections. The age group is important, as it will determine the direction to take in the realization of the collection and which market to target. After the realization of sample manipulations and design developments, a second survey was carried out to evaluate the

quality, acceptability and preferences of the manipulated samples and designs proposed.

### B. Sources of Inspiration and Visual Research

Quest for visual inspiration was very diverse as seen in Fig. 8. Medias, such as Internet, books, magazines, movies and music videos were the sources of inspiration [28]-[31]. Images of fashion designers and the historical French Queen Marie Antoinette were sourced as in Fig. 8. [10]. Inspiration was drawn from the type of silhouette used between the 18<sup>th</sup> century and 19<sup>th</sup> century. The theme “*Nostalgia*” was chosen.

#### Inspirations

- Internet
- Exhibitions
- Japanese Street Fashion
- Fashion Designers
- Interior Designers
- Music Video Clips
- Movies

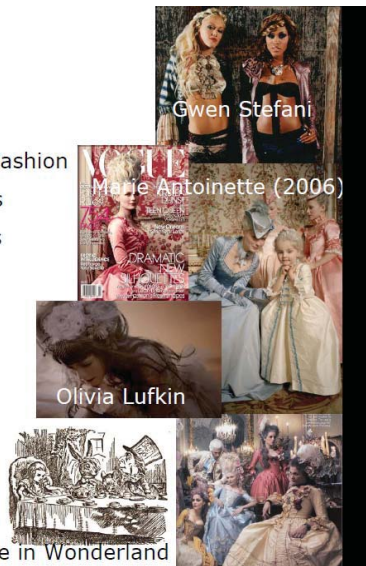


Fig. 8 Sources of Inspiration [3], [9], [10], [22]

### C. “Nostalgia” Brief

According to the Oxford dictionary, nostalgia is the feeling of homesickness and a sentimental yearning for the past [23]. Related to the theme “*Nostalgia*”, it is seen as a voyage across the oceans, like ancient sailors/pirates going on adventure from the West to meet the East and discovering new cultures or a longing for travel, then hence the feeling of homesickness. “*Nostalgia*” is also like a voyage through the past where innocence, childhood, stress free and better days prevailed. It is a means of encouragement to face the present and improve the future. The theme “*Nostalgia*” was chosen to refer to these ancient times of innocence which had a connotation with childhood, and reflected this yearn for crafts which children used to make and play with.

A market research was conducted locally, to research the popularity of the paper cut out products available in the market and study application of the paper cutting techniques in existence or in use in fabrics. It gauged the acceptability of the technique in apparel making and studies the type of potential customers for this work.

### D. Realization of Mood Board “Nostalgia”

A mood board was developed to serve as a platform to represent ideas and draw inspiration on the theme “*Nostalgia*”. It consisted of a background, images, objects, a

colour palette and a title text. The background selected was golden to relate the most prevailing colour among the upper class societies whether in interior decoration, objects and clothing. It was embellished with doilies and a transparent wrapping paper with gold coloured printed plants and flowers, were added to embellish it. The colour palette was chosen according to the colours found on the mood board. The theme label had to reflect Wistful, Romantic, Mystic, Dramatic and Antique mood. Images were sources to reveal the Nostalgia theme as seen in Fig. 9. Objects such as dry flowers, ancient coins, sea shells, paper doilies, mini tea set, a small porcelain doll, old stamps, a mini photo frame, a Baroque-like key and key hole were added to the mood board for further inspiration. The final A2-size mounted mood board is shown in Fig. 10.



Fig. 9 Images Sourced for Mood board [9]-[11], [21], [22]



Fig. 10 Mood board [9]-[11], [21], [22]



### E. Silhouette

Sources of inspirations and visual research determined the silhouette type. It has been inspired by the late 18<sup>th</sup> century and 19<sup>th</sup> century to reflect this nostalgic yearn and look of the past, and combined with a contemporary touch to modernize the overall look. A vague of vintage related clothing style has resurfaced on the catwalk in shops and the streets, particularly among the youth as seen in Fig. 11.



Fig. 11 Silhouettes [27]

### F. Sourcing of Materials

Fabrics available in the local market which were best suitable for the theme “Nostalgia” were sourced. Raw Silk, Organdie and Voile were chosen for transparency. Light weight fabrics that have low tendency to fray would be an advantage in realizing cut-outs. “Rattan” was experimented as a backing fabric. Non-woven fabric such as Tulle was chosen to add to the transparency, opacity along with a certain stiffness to create a decorative and aesthetics appeal. Interfacings were used. Fig. 12 shows range of fabrics sourced.



Fig. 12 Fabric sourcing

### G. Embellishing Materials

Other materials were used along with the paper cutting techniques to further embellish the fabrics or attach the cut-outs to a backing material in a decorative manner [1], [11]. These included, Ribbon-Velvet, Ribbon-Satin, Ribbon-Silk, Ribbon-Transparent, Ancient Metal Coins, Faux pearls, Sequins, Small round beads, Tubular beads, Embroidery Threads and *Fray Stoppa* Liquid, wash proof solvent used to prevent the raw edges of fabrics to fray as seen in Fig. 13.



Fig. 13 Embellishing materials and *Fray Stoppa* Liquid

## V. EXPERIMENTAL WORK

### A. Manipulations and Techniques

Drawing inspiration from the mood board the fabrics were manipulated to develop floral and oriental samples. Manipulation techniques such as cut-outs, appliqué, embroidery and printing were carried out. Fig. 14 shows a step-by-step fabric cutting process using organdie fabric to develop various cut-out samples. The developed fabrics had to reflect the *East Meets West* idea.

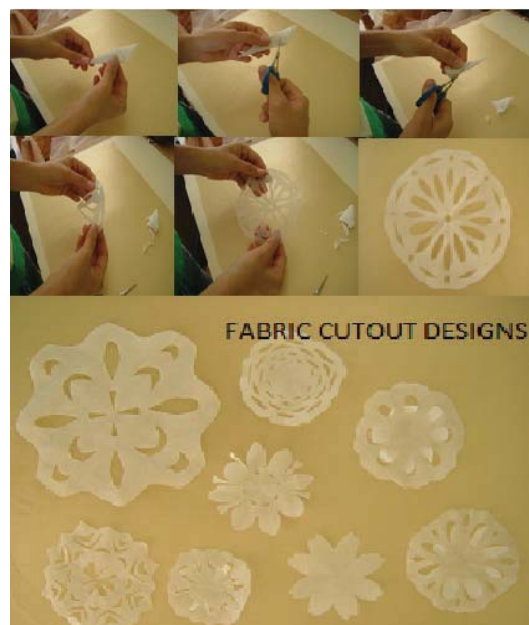


Fig. 14 Step-by-step fabric cutting process

### B. Manipulated Samples

Several fabrics were printed using puff printing ink to develop a nostalgic look. A Japanese inspired design with typical floral flowers made of cherry blossoms, peonies, chrysanthemums, and daisies were drawn and modified using *Photoshop* and used for screen printing. Fig. 15 shows designs developed for printing motifs.

Fifteen manipulated samples are shown in Fig. 16.

Sample 1 used Organdie Fabric to make floral kirigami cut-outs. Square sheets of fabric were cut and folded to make the cut-outs. The petals were not cut off completely and were folded and sewn at the centre with an embroidery metallic thread and decorated with a matching golden sequin. Slightly larger sheets of golden tulle are sewn at the back of each flower cut-out. The various flowers are then arranged on a backing raw silk fabric.



Fig. 15 Design developed for printing motifs



Fig. 16 Manipulated samples



Sample 2 had leaf inspired shapes partly cut in the raw silk fabric that were flipped to the side. Nylon fibres were inserted before the edges were machined sewn with a brown coloured thread, thus resulting in an embossed effect. Pale olive green voile was positioned at the back and the cut-out parts were sewn a few millimetres from the edges. Tubular metallic coloured – golden and bronze – beads were added on the voile part.

Sample 3 had various sizes of cherry blossoms shaped flowers were cut in two coloured raw silk fabrics. *Fray Stoppa* was applied around the edges and left to dry to stop fraying of cut edges. The petals were overlapped to obtain a layering. A pinch of fabric was held while sewing the petals on a backing fabric to give some texture to the fabric. Faux pearls, tubular and round beads and sequins were sewn on the petals with a metallic embroidery thread.

Sample 4 had a cut out and layering effect presented in this manipulation. Round shaped canvas fabric was used to cut out kirigami floral patterns. These shapes were arranged and sandwiched between an opaque raw silk fabric and transparent voile. Sequins were added within each shaped before machining around the circular shapes.

Sample 5 introduced Kirigami cut-outs in fabric [26]. This was done by folding parts in the fabric and using the kirigami cutting technique, to create these patterns.

Sample 6 had Cherry blossom shaped flowers cut in raw silk and *Fray Stoppa* solution was applied at the edges. These were overlapped, sewn together and embellished with silk ribbons, sequins and faux pearl. Gutta was applied at the border of each flower to “pop-out” the shapes. They were arranged and applied to a tulle fabric.

Sample 7 used three layers of fabric. Cherry blossom cut-outs were made in beige raw silk and *Fray Stoppa* solution was applied on the edges to avoid fraying. A backing olive green raw silk fabric was positioned at the back and sewn around the cut-outs to keep the fabrics in position. A voile fabric was placed over it and embellished at the centre of each flower shape with sequins and embroidery thread.

Sample 8 were made by sewing small tucks of raw silk fabric at interval positions and embellished with faux pearls and ribbons for used at the borders of hemline.

Sample 9 used metallic antique coins as an embellishment. Transparent ribbons were passed through the holes and attached. The ribbons were arranged to form a geometrical pattern design and sewn to a raw silk backing fabric.

Sample 10 had Puff printing on a pink light weight canvas. Since this fabric did not fray, the petals were easily cut out, using a small sharp pointed scissor.

Sample 11 was printed with Puff printing on raw silk.

Sample 12 used Puff printing on a “Rattan” woven material to create an interesting embossed effect.

Sample 13 was printed with Puff printing on voile, overlaid on a raw silk fabric.

Sample 14 was printed with Puff printing on a voile fabric. Embroidery metallic thread was used to sew sequins on the printed fabric. A backing raw silk fabric was used.

Sample 15 used a Cherry Blossom floral design with puff print on a raw silk fabric. The larger flowers were cut out, leaving only the puff printing border, which also prevented the edge from fraying. A piece of voile fabric was positioned behind the cut-outs, therefore creating a layered effect. Small daisy embroidery and simple line embroidery were executed to enhance the embossed effect. Sequins, tubular and round beads were added for more embellishments.

### C. Testing of Fabric Manipulations

Laundering of the cut-outs was done to observe if the fraying would affect the overall aspect of the design. Rubbing the cut-outs were done to determine if the cut-outs would fray or not. The feel of the manipulated samples was analysed to evaluate the softness or touch. The samples were hand washed to test their durability. The rubbing test revealed that voile and raw silk had a good resilience. However, the cut-out fabrics resisted to light rubbing, but tend to fray and damage if rubbed more frequently. The fabrics did not wrinkle and the organdie fabrics retained their shape. The raw silk and voile were soft to the touch and therefore were comfortable to be used with fabrics that were interlined.



Fig. 17 Six final designs

### D. Design Development

Based on the mood board and silhouettes, 50 designs with both front and back views were sketched for Inspirational wear, Women's wear, Men's wear and Children's wear. Emphasis was put on the theme and the silhouette of the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century clothing style [25]. The target market and

colour palette was also taken into consideration. Out of the 50 designs, a first selection of the 6 best ranked designs were chosen as per preferences of target group and which are most representative of the theme. A selection of these designs was developed to make prototypes of the designs. Similarly, best manipulated samples were chosen to sew the garments. The six final designs as seen in Fig. 17.

## VI. RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

After determining the target market and age group, a survey questionnaire was distributed to respondents ranging from 18-25 years old. The survey contained questions on the manipulated samples and the acceptability of the designs for the collection.

### A. Acceptability of the Project

It was observed that paper cutting in itself is not famous among Mauritians. The survey demonstrated that only 25 per cent of the respondents have heard of this technique, which in addition was confused with origami which is different from paper cutting, kirigami. The remaining 75 per cent simply did not hear about it. However, all respondents found the project idea of applying these techniques to textiles alluring, which was extremely encouraging. This part of the survey reveals that there is a potential market for the implementation of this study.

### B. Analysis of Manipulated Samples

The manipulated samples were evaluated and respondents were asked to rank the samples according to their preferences. Those with cut-outs received much attention as they were representative of the theme and prints combined with cut-outs were appreciated. Layering of fabrics adds a delicate aspect to the samples. Beads and sequins were perceived as essentials since they add to the decorative element manipulations. Based on the responses of the subjects and the pros and cons of their acceptability, the final samples were chosen for incorporating them during the design development. The most preferred samples were ranked and chosen after reviewing the choices of the respondents. Consideration was given to the colour palette and theme that were to be used for prototyping six garments.

### C. Evaluation and Acceptability of Designs

The six final designs as seen in Fig. 17 were evaluated. Respondents found the designs innovative and appealing as seen in Table I. Few identified that the designs were related to a Japanese fashion style (*Gothic Lolita*) and the idea of mixing *East and West* style was attractive. Some found the designs too frilly and too much to wear. This information was constructive since the designs themselves were inspired from past clothing style and were meant to be exaggerated in terms of frill detailing and layering.

Accessories were created to accompany the collection as seen in Fig. 18. The designs emphasized the theme, colour palette and availability of materials. Raw silk was mainly used along with tulle, light weight canvas-like fabric and voile.

Embellishments such as metallic coins, dry flowers and beads were used. Other accessories such as shoes/slippers/wedges, jewellery (earrings, necklaces, and bracelets), masks and headgears were made to match the collection.

TABLE I  
EVALUATION AND ACCEPTABILITY OF DESIGNS

Design	Innovative	Original	Seen
No.1	20	5	0
No.2	15	10	0
No.3	18	7	0
No.4	2	6	17
No.5	7	8	10
No.6	6	7	12



Fig. 18 Collection of accessories

### D. Client Visual

To better visualize the final designs and understand the technical properties for apparel making, two client visual boards were mounted as seen in Fig. 19. The final designs, technical drawings, collection season and some fabric swatches were arranged to show to potential clients.



Fig. 19 Client visual boards



### E. Relation with the Theme “Nostalgia”

From responses received to describe the collection, most of the qualifying words, such as nostalgic, layered, antique, romantic and mystic were among the most chosen. This showed that the designs in general reflect the mood of the theme. Fig. 20 shows prototypes made for the final collection.



Fig. 20 Final collection

### VII. CONCLUSION

Originated from China, the paper cutting craft technique is widely used for decorative purposes. The present study proposes the application of paper cutting techniques for embellishment of textiles in fashion. The realization of the paper cutting techniques requires a basic knowledge of the methods and practice. It simply demands commitment and patience. It was observed that the quality and outcome of the paper cutting designs depended on the type and weight of fabric used. Simple and interesting fabric embellishments were achieved by making cut-outs with scissors, appliqué and stitching, embroidery and puff printing on raw silk, voile, tulle and organdie fabrics.

The study received an optimistic response from the Mauritian market. The mood of the theme “Nostalgia” is well represented in the designs, with a touch of ‘East meets West’. The final designs offer a designer wear/evening wear collection, which reflect the creative and innovative aspects sought among Mauritian youth. Moreover, the mixing and matching of garments was achievable. The study also revealed that some of the manipulated fabrics were fragile and prone to damage, thus requiring domestic dry cleaning and spot hand washing if soiled. Another benefit would be that this craft technique can be an exploited source of income generation by craftsmen, and incorporated in bridal wear. The present study demonstrates that paper cutting techniques can be applied on textiles for embellishment. It brings an innovative element in the fashion, textile market and craft market. It will increase the awareness that paper cutting are not just decorative objects. Consequently, if techniques are used to their maximum advantage rich and beautiful outcomes can be produced. Bringing this novelty in garments, will increase fashion consciousness among the Mauritian people. Jobs of craftsmen can be diversified, which can create jobs for unemployed as well. It can be concluded that there is a large potential of implementing this technique in the market.

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