

Monique Zeitouny

As I grow into a more mature Jewish woman, I learn more about modesty. And more specifically, for a woman in my Jewish community. What the word modesty, or 'tsenuah' in Hebrew, means to my community is self respect and humility. One way in which we practice this is with clothing. We try our best to cover our knees, shoulders and collar bones, especially when in a religious environment such as a synagogue or religious event. It has become common for some women to voluntarily hand out shawls ('mitpachat' in Hebrew), usually made out of plain fabric, to other women as they enter the synagogue to throw over their shoulders for the religious part of an event. My problem with this custom was the lack of style and therefore degrading effect it may have on women who spent a lot of time getting ready for the event and then are forced to cover their outfit. I wanted to create a body extension that will allow women to be modest at the same time as expressing themselves through their style. I kept the color neutral so it can be thrown over anything. To contrast that simplicity, I used a shape resembling the tetrahedron to create spunk, representing confidence and self expression. I created a hood-like element allowing the women who choose to cover the crown of their heads during the blessings to do so by pulling on two strings.

I began by using a black chipboard material to create my design, but had trouble getting the flexibility that I desired. I then found a material called 'butter board' which felt like how it sounds. This soft and thinner-than-chipboard material allowed me the ability to create the resilient and flexible design that I imagined. I used screw posts to attach the pieces and to allow for a rotating mechanism for the head covering and grommets with rope so that the head

covering can be pulled on with ease. I used tiny rubber bands, that are used for braces, to attach the shawl by the screw posts at the front.

I think that the tetrahedron element of my design was strong because it was beneficial to the aesthetic as well as the 'touch' and feel of the design. It provided a pleasing springiness and bounce to the body extension. I also liked the contrast between the simple first layer and the busier second. That supports my idea to encourage modesty along with self expression. I could have improved the mechanism that attaches the shawl together (braces rubber bands), making it easier to strap on and off, but I liked the simplicity that these tiny rubber bands added to the aesthetic.