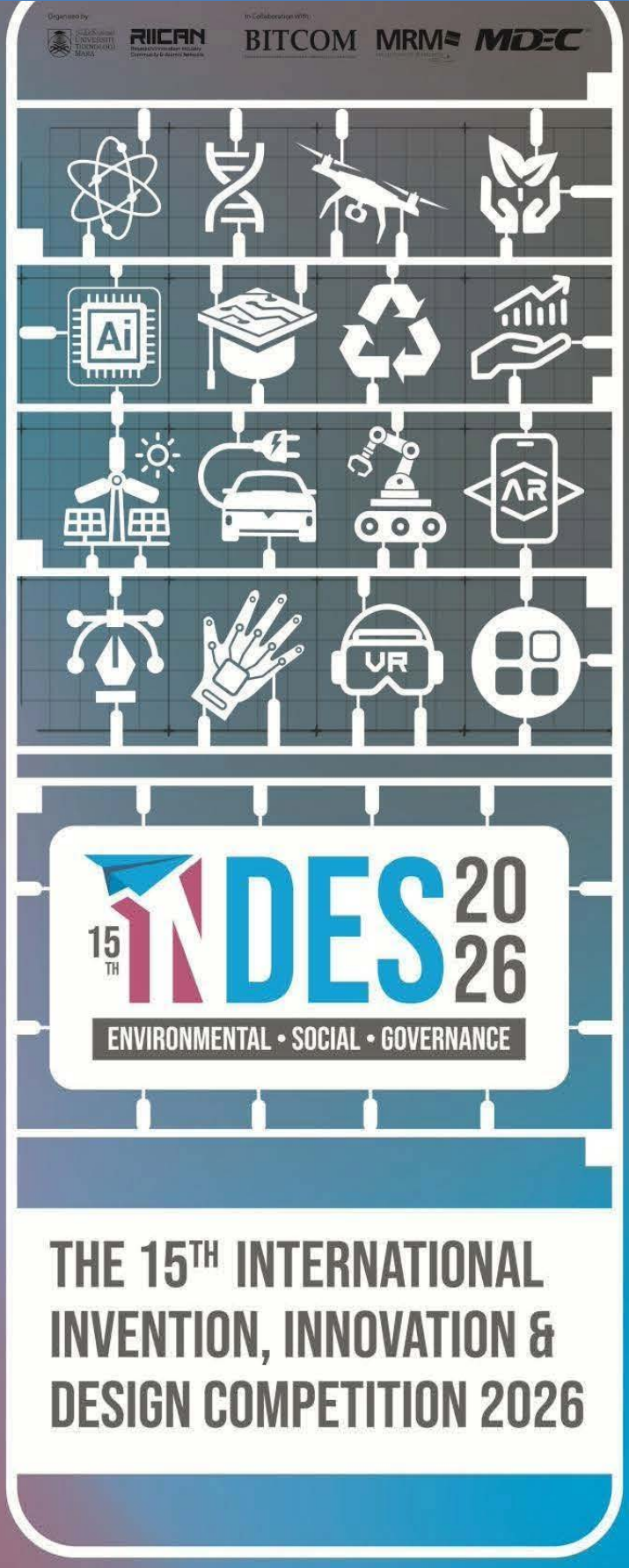


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THE 15th INTERNATIONAL
INVENTION, INNOVATION &
DESIGN COMPETITION 2026

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FROM WASTE TO WEARABLE ART: TRANSFORMING PLASTIC SPOONS INTO FLORAL COUTURE EMBELLISHMENTS FOR CONTEMPORARY FASHION

Khairi Asyraf Abdul Karim*, Dayang Intan Farahanies Almurid, Nooralliya Akmar Hairu-Al'Akmal

Faculty of Art and Design, Universiti Teknologi MARA,
Perak Branch, Seri Iskandar Campus, Malaysia

khairikarim@uitm.edu.my

ABSTRACT

Contemporary fashion design is characterized by bold material experimentation and the redefinition of aesthetic boundaries, where everyday objects are transformed into elements of wearable art. This evolution highlights the increasing centrality of creativity, which now extends beyond visual appeal or innovative strategy. The present study investigates the transformation of discarded plastic spoons into floral couture decorations and examines non-traditional techniques for creating sculptural, visually compelling pieces. Drawing inspiration from experimental fashion practitioners such as Aina Abdul, who reimagines unconventional materials into impactful visual statements, this research explores the elevation of ordinary objects to sophisticated couture embellishments. The project seeks to determine how rigid, mass-produced materials can be manipulated to form intricate floral motifs that significantly alter garments and produce a distinct visual effect. Through processes involving heat, modification, and assembly, plastic spoons are converted into three-dimensional adornments that reflect the delicacy, fluidity, and complexity characteristic of couture floral design. The result constitutes a series of wearable art pieces that prioritize texture, layering, and composition, thereby positioning garments as both fashion items and artistic expressions. Within the context of contemporary fashion, these modified elements assume a central role, redefining the relationship between structural foundation and decorative enhancement. Beyond its visual and material inquiries, this project aims to inspire emerging fashion designers to reconsider the potential of accessible materials. It advocates a transition from reliance on conventional resources to a more experimental, concept-driven design methodology, ultimately promoting innovation, adaptability, and creative confidence in future fashion practice.

Keyword: Wearable Art, Material Transformation, Couture Embellishment, Creative Fashion Design, Experimental Materials

1. INTRODUCTION

Contemporary fashion design is increasingly defined by experimentation, where designers challenge conventional material boundaries to create innovative forms of visual expression. The transformation of materials plays a significant role in redefining fashion as a form of artistic and conceptual expression (Kawamura, 2021). This evolution expresses a desire to convert the mundane or unexpected into a design tool that goes beyond the function of clothing into the art of clothing.

In this milieu, the exploration of materials is extremely significant to stretch the imagination of designers and redefine the value of aesthetics in the fashion industry. Fashion design practices often rely on conventional materials, which may limit opportunities for creative exploration and innovation (Gwilt, 2022). Designers are no longer limited to traditional textiles but are encouraged to investigate alternative materials that can generate new textures, structures, and visual identities within garment

design. This approach not only enhances creativity but also strengthens conceptual thinking in the design process.

Contemporary fashion increasingly emphasizes alternative approaches to material use and creative practice, encouraging designers to rethink conventional design processes (Fletcher & Tham, 2023). This project engages with the redefining of discarded plastic spoons into floral couture embellishments as a contemporary fashion design practice. By reimagining a rigid, mass-produced object into an expressive and sculptural form, this study investigates how material reinterpretation can contribute to innovative design outcomes and enrich the visual language of fashion.

1.1 Problem Statement

Contemporary fashion design often relies heavily on conventional materials and established production methods, which may limit creative exploration and innovation in material usage. The increasing production of waste materials has prompted designers to reconsider how discarded resources can be reintroduced into creative practices (Shirvanimoghaddam et al., 2022). In design education and practice, fostering the use of varied materials to broaden creative thinking and develop unique aesthetics is critical. This gap highlights the importance of exploring unconventional resources as a means of enhancing design creativity and visual expression from waste to wearable art.

1.2 Objectives

- To transform discarded plastic spoons into floral couture embellishments as a wearable art.
- To explore material transformation as a creative approach in fashion design.
- To investigate alternative methods of generating sculptural fashion elements.

2. METHODOLOGY

This project adopts a practice-based design approach that integrates material experimentation with creative development. The methodology examines the stepwise-structured process for the conversion of disposed plastic spoons into ornamental couture flowers.

In the first step, the materials are sourced, and plastic spoons are gathered and selected based on their shape, size, and structure. This is followed by a series of experimental processes, including heat manipulation to soften the plastic, allowing it to be reshaped into curved and organic forms resembling flower petals with the combination of fabric selection as well.



Figure 2 Heat process to reshape as flower petals

Through iterative design exploration, a series of trials is carried out to finalize the shape, size, and placement of each flower. The spoons are then cast, stitched, and assembled to construct shapes to show texture, depth, and a sculptural quality. This stage highlights the transformation of rigid, mass-produced objects into delicate and expressive design elements. Exploring alternative materials through hands-on experimentation is essential in developing innovative design solutions (Rissanen & McQuillan, 2021).



Figure 3 Place onto the garment surfaces

Created floral embellishments are integrated onto garment surfaces with consideration to the desired aesthetics of the composition and placement. The selection of fabric also needs to be carefully considered to achieve the desired outcome. As this design incorporates spoon embellishments, medium-to heavy-weight materials are recommended to adequately support the weight and maintain the garment's structure. The integration process ensures both structure and fluidity are achieved, allowing the embellishments to function both decoratively and as a point of focus for the design.

Overall, the methodology reflects a combination of systematic material investigation and creative experimentation, demonstrating how unconventional materials can be reinterpreted into refined couture detailing within contemporary fashion design.

3. FINDINGS

This project is grounded in the conceptual exploration of transforming ordinary, discarded objects into expressive elements of wearable art. The design fundamentally reinterprets plastic spoons, which are typically regarded as rigid and disposable, transforming them into intricate floral couture embellishments that convey sculptural elegance and visual refinement.



Figure 1 Reinterpretation of plastic spoons into flowers

The innovation lies in the process of material recontextualization, where the original function and perception of the plastic spoon are fundamentally altered. The designer uses spoons as an artistic object to create aesthetically pleasing components that join to complement the visual narrative of today's fashion design. This transformation challenges conventional material boundaries and demonstrates how non-textile elements can be integrated into fashion as meaningful design features. Advancements in fashion design increasingly involve the use of innovative and experimental materials to create new aesthetic possibilities (Quinn, 2022).

From a design perspective, the project emphasizes the translation of hard, uniform structures into soft, organic floral forms. Each individual component has been carefully manipulated and arranged to reflect the flow, layer, and rhythm of naturally occurring petals, thus constructing overall compositions that are symbolic of the fragility and intricacy found within couture embellishments. The interplay between rigidity and fluidity becomes a defining characteristic of the design, creating a unique visual tension that enhances the overall garment.

Furthermore, the concept explores the relationship between structure and ornamentation, where embellishments are not merely decorative additions but serve as focal points that define the identity of the garment. The floral arrangements created from spoons provide visual depth, texture, and dimensionality, rendering the fabric's surface a dynamic and sculptural topography. This approach is reflected in contemporary fashion practices, such as the work of Aina Abdul, who incorporates unconventional materials into visually impactful couture designs (Norman, 2026).

This project also positions creativity as a driving force in redefining material value, encouraging a shift towards idea-driven design thinking. The work illustrates how overlooked and easy-to-access materials may be transformed into couture elements, which broaden the scope of material experimentation within present-day fashion design practice. Ultimately, the design innovation lies not only in the final visual outcome but in the rethinking of how materials can be perceived, manipulated, and elevated into expressive forms of wearable art.

4. CONCLUSION

This project demonstrates the successful transformation of plastic spoons into floral couture embellishments that function as expressive elements of wearable art within contemporary fashion design. Through this material experimentation, the resultant forms demonstrate how this material experimentation has been used to create depth, texture, and sculptural form, elevated the object's status from something that would otherwise be classified as an object, to a more aesthetically sophisticated object.

The work emphasizes the importance of idea-driven design thinking, where innovation emerges through the reinterpretation of material rather than reliance on conventional resources. The exploration of alternative approaches to design development within this project has the potential to encourage a more creative exploration and adaptability about fashion practice.

Ultimately, the project contributes to the advancement of contemporary fashion by presenting new possibilities in material application, reinforcing the role of creativity in redefining both form and meaning in design.

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