

Modesty à la Mode Redesigning the head scarf for devotion and comfort

Shrouded in head scarves, Muslim women outside the Arab world face a range of reactions: pity, outrage, ostracism. European right-wingers are advocating ever more sanctions that would restrict Muslim women from publicly observing hijab, or modest dress. In 2001, when Dutch schools forced girls to remove head scarves in gym class for safety reasons, Dutch designer Cindy van den Bremen created Capsters, elastic-blend or fleecy athletic versions. This fall, she's launching two related projects: designing a safe head scarf for prison guards and expanding Capsters with a stretchy fashion line.

In creating Capsters, Van den Bremen addressed fashion's practical demands—breathability, comfortable closures—while working with an imam to observe Koranic edicts to cover hair and

neck. The prison-guard model meets strict safety standards: its polyester is nonflammable and tears loose readily to foil would-be stranglers.

While not Muslim herself, Van den Bremen felt provoked into action in the live-and-let-live spirit of Dutch citizens: "I asked myself: Do I have to pity these women? Are they denied rights in having to wear hijab? How Dutch are they?" Younger Dutch Muslim women read the Koran themselves, unlike their mothers, and regard following hijab as a liberty, Van den Bremen adds. "Usually, in the Netherlands, everybody gets their rights respected. These women don't consider themselves victims. To them, this is a proud sign of being religious."

Van den Bremen's designs are willfully non-denominational (and affordable: the sports headgear costs 20–25 euros [\$25–\$30] apiece, and fashion-line prices will be similar). She wears the cotton-elastic and polyester-elastic coverings as shawls; her father dons the fleece Outdoor Capster while biking in winter. An observant American Muslim once sent her a grateful email: "If I wear Capsters, it shows I'm willing to integrate, but within my own values." Van den Bremen pauses after reading the thank-you, then says, "It's so nice to hear from these women. We talk about them so much, but we never really listen."

www.capsters.com JUDE STEWART



The Capsters Tennis model is a stretchable polyester head covering with Velcro enclosure.



Schoolhouse Frocks New program trains next generation of fashion curators

The course catalog has tempting, enigmatic choices such as Ethics/Audience, Collect/Recollect, and Turning Theory into 3-D. An East Coast semi-Marxist ivory tower? No, a pragmatic yet open-minded new degree track at the London College of Fashion, the world's first master's program in fashion curation. Four students in January began a cross-disciplinary investigation into the many influences on the ways museums present clothes now.

"Exhibitions that revolve around fashion are an ever-increasing feature of programming at major museums and galleries worldwide, because fashion is considered a popular and accessible subject," says program director Alistair O'Neill. LCF students in the one- or two-year tracks are building up résumés with hands-on projects and theoretical explorations that go far beyond the clinical glass vitrine. They've already helped develop a website for performance artist/LCF staffer Lucy Orta's solo show at the Venice Biennale and presented short films at London's Victoria and Albert Museum.

They've also been asked to imagine exhibitions culled from stellar collections at the V&A, Antwerp's Mode Museum, and New York's Metropolitan Museum of Art and Fashion Institute of Technology. Lecturers include curators and designers, to be sure, but also experts in fine art, photography, architecture, merchandising, graphic design, retail design, and even new media. Says O'Neill, "The presentation of dress has the potential to harness the complexity of fashion in its very broadest sense."

www.fashion.arts.ac.uk SHONQUIS MORENO

Fashion curation student Louise Clark assembled her class essay "The Well of Bones" on slotted playing cards.