Designing and making with textiles

A waistcoat

In this task, you will make a basic waistcoat. You will dye or surface-decorate the waistcoat using block printing or spray painting. You will use 100% cotton fabric as this dyes and prints well. You will make your own pattern, which will include darts. Darts are a useful way of getting curved shapes into fabric and will ensure a good fit across the shoulders.

Part 1 – Developing a paper model

What to do

1 Sketch out a rough design for the basic shape of your waistcoat. The one in the illustration doesn’t have front fastenings and is quite short. However, yours can be different.

2 Develop your sketch to include an idea of what sort of effect you want to get by colouring or printing your waistcoat. Spraying, plain dying, tie-dying or block printing are all possible.

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3 With the help of a friend, take your measurements and note them. You need measurements of:
◆ chest;
◆ across back (from armhole to armhole);
◆ length from nape of neck to hem of waistcoat.

4 Fold a large sheet of scrap paper in half so that it is double. On a flat surface, draw out your basic shapes as shown in the illustration.
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5 When you have drawn the two shapes, cut them out. This is your rough pattern.
6 Using the scrap-paper shapes, proceed as follows:
   ◆ On the back – fold the darts and tape them in place.
   ◆ Tape the front and back together at the shoulders and then at the sides. Tape the pieces edge to edge (do not overlap) as this rough has no seam allowances included.
   ◆ With the help of a friend, try on the paper waistcoat for fit.
7 If the fit or shape isn’t what you want, ask your friend to tape on extra bits of scrap paper and use a soft pencil to mark any trim-off sections (then trim them off).
8 Once you have the shape and fit that you want, carefully cut through the tape so that you have three flat shapes again. Lay them out on a flat surface.
9 Take the two front pieces and check that they are exactly the same. If not, alter one so that it is exactly what you want. Throw the other one away.
10 Fold the back section in half again (along the centre back fold) and check that each half is exactly a mirror image of the other. If not, add or trim.
11 Now cut the back piece in half down the centre fold line. Throw away one piece.
12 Check that your new front shape has the same length of side seam as the new back shape.
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13 Check that the front shoulder length is exactly the same as the back shoulder length (with the dart folded).

14 Lay greaseproof paper (or other see-through paper) on top of your rough pattern pieces. Trace the shape of your rough pattern pieces, very accurately, onto the greaseproof paper. Don’t forget to trace the darts. Put your rough pattern away safely.

15 All round each of the traced shapes (apart from the centre back edge) draw another line, parallel to the traced line and 15 mm outside it. This 15 mm is the seam allowance. The original traced line is the stitching line. This is now your pattern.

16 Where the dart comes, make small holes in the pattern. Where the notches come, snip little (5 mm) V-shapes. This enables you to mark the positions of the notches and the dart on the fabric with a soft pencil or water-soluble marker when you are ready to cut out the shapes from the fabric.

Part 2 – Colouring or decorating your fabric

What to do

1 If you are going to plain dye or tie-dye your fabric, or spray paint it with cold-water dyes, you need to do this before you cut out the fabric pieces.

2 If you are going to block print your fabric using fabric screen-printing inks, then it is probably best to cut out your fabric pieces before printing.

3 Follow the instructions given with the dyes or printing inks very carefully and wear an old shirt, or other cover-all, and rubber gloves.
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Part 3 – Construction

What to do

1. If you haven’t already cut out your fabric pieces, do that now.
2. Choose your sewing thread to match your fabric. Always choose slightly darker if in doubt.
3. Iron your fabric if it is at all creased.
4. Pin and machine both the darts on the wrong sides of the back piece.
5. Overlock, or zigzag edge, all the raw edges on your pieces.
6. Stay stitch (short machine stitch) all round each piece on the stitching line (15 mm from edge).
   Stay stitching stops the fabric stretching and makes it easier to get a smooth edge.
7. With right sides together, stitch the shoulders of the fronts to the shoulders of the back, using flat seams.
8. Press the shoulder seams open.
9. With right sides together, stitch the side seams with flat seams.
10. Press the side seams open.
11. All around the front edges, round the back hem and round the back neck, fold inside 15 mm of fabric along the stay-stitching line.
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12 Press in place and then tack round with large stitches to hold the fold in place.
13 Do the same round the armholes.
14 Machine all round the edges using a fairly long stitch (top stitch). Take out the tacking.
15 Press all the edges.
16 Press your finished waistcoat thoroughly.