

# BIAS

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### Dream July Dress-Up Game

By  
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*I am my own doll.  
I choose to joyfully dress myself.  
I wear what I create.*

As a child growing up in the early 2000s, for hours on end, I would play an array of online computer games—frequently and with great zeal. I was especially drawn to fashion and beauty games where one could choose a doll and give her a makeover as you desired, using the items provided in the game. This was a means to digitally conceive one's own fanciful vision of beauty, all within the parameters of websites that were often colored with every shade of pink. These websites hosted an assortment of games designed for "...girls with a passion for fashion," to quote the slogan for the popular early 2000s Bratz fashion dolls.

I could certainly write about how these kinds of games may encourage children to place too much attention on material goods at an early age, or how they may encourage a vision of artificial beauty standards in the minds of the players, or how they may perpetuate a narrow definition of what constitutes being a female. But I'd like to share a different story—a story where my childhood interest in fashion metamorphoses over time and merges with my lineage, leading to my personal liberation.

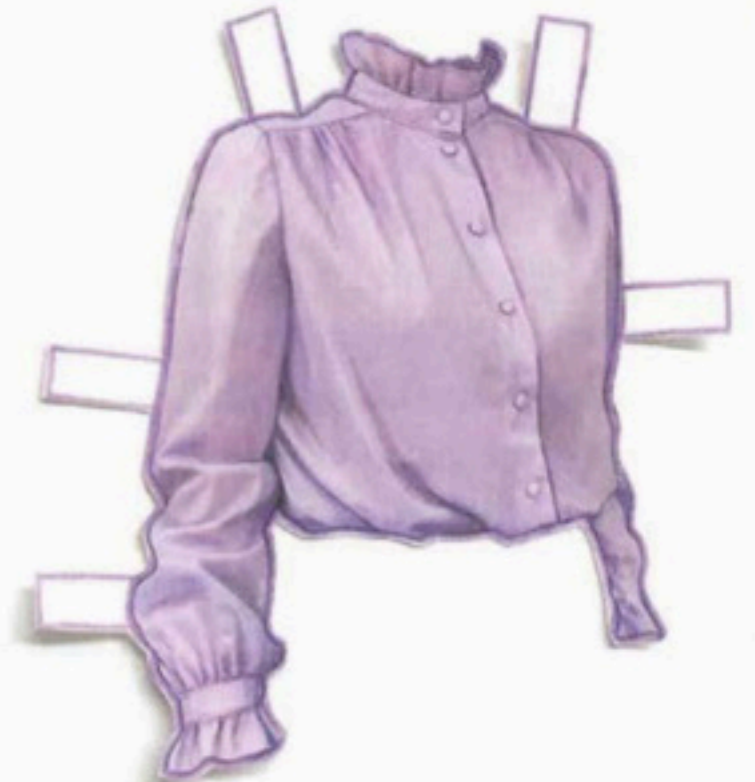
My mother, a child in the 1960s, would play with paper dolls that she received as gifts from her parents during special occasions. These paper dolls typically came in booklets with a variety of garments printed on the pages that one would cut out for play. She adored playing with these dolls—so much so that she drew her own dolls and designed all the clothes herself. As a young adult in the 1980s, she studied textile design at a college in Colombia, our home country. She started sewing her own clothes at this time, creating much of her own wardrobe. Sometimes she would use tissue-paper patterns that were included in the back of Burda magazines, and other times she'd cut straight into the fabric itself to form simple garments.

When flipping through old family photo albums as a child, I was always in awe of the beautiful clothing my mother made for herself. She was smilingly pictured wearing her own creations—everything from casual beachwear to elegant dresses, and even her own elaborate white wedding dress. Ever since I learned to sew when I was in high school, I dreamt of making my own clothes as my mother had done in her youth.

In June of 2021, I began to start sewing my own clothes using vintage tissue-paper patterns by Butterick, McCall's, Simplicity, and Burda from the mid-to-late twentieth century. My aim was to create my dream wardrobe by mindfully selecting the designs, fabrics, and trims to suit my current taste. I wanted to free myself from my own designs and simply construct garments that I thought were beautiful, using patterns I did not draft from scratch myself.

As a fashion design graduate, I was accustomed to creating my own original garment designs and patterns following a specific concept, theme, or vision. I found myself in a creative block and it proved to be a liberating experience to delve back into sewing by using mass-produced tissue paper patterns as a basis for my customization. I was able to focus on the act of lovingly creating







an item for myself to wear by enjoying the process of sewing from start to finish. As a result, I felt a sense of reconnection to my innocent childhood enthusiasm for fashion design.

Sewing garments using vintage patterns was also a means for me to feel a sense of kinship with women from the past; it was an act of connection. As I was sewing, I was thinking about all the women who had constructed the exact same design using the same mass-produced tissue-paper pattern. I wondered what fabric they selected, if they enjoyed the sewing process, where they wore their newly created piece, what memories they made while wearing it, and where the garment is located now. I found myself in an invisible dialogue with those who I did not know and could not see; we were linked, across generations and through space and time, to the same designs. This process helped me reconnect to myself and beyond myself—connecting me to my lineage of ancestors. As I was sewing, I also thought about my mother, my two grandmothers, and my two great grandmothers, all of whom enjoyed sewing for themselves and their children.

Creating my wardrobe was an act of personal revolution where a part of my internal peace was experienced through the freedom of making clothing for myself to wear, enjoy, and make memories in. I cannot control the apparently chaotic world surrounding me, but I am responsible for myself, my actions, and how I internalize the external. We each individually decide how we clothe our body and how we treat our body; it's our vessel, our home, and it's for our highest good to strive for a harmonious relationship. Anything we create for ourselves to enjoy is a huge act of self love through the process of dedicated effort. There's something innately precious about handmade items that were made with love at home, compared to standardized articles of clothing that were mass-produced in a factory. There's charm in the natural imperfections of homemade garments and they seem to have an aura of warmth due to the hands-on act of sewing that brought them into existence.

My days of playing online dress-up games are over—I've switched from digital pixels to tangible fabrics, from digital dolls to my human body. Inspired by my mother's youthful paper games and the computer games I played as a child, I am now my own doll and I choose to joyfully dress myself with garments of my own creation.

About the Author

*Tactile Visions!  
Cherished Objects!  
Transcendent Words!  
Hopeful Sounds!  
Buoyant Evolution!*

*I'm on a path of self-exploration through the process of developing my creativity with design, art, writing, and music. At Parsons School of Design, studying in Paris and New York City, I earned a BFA degree in Fashion Design and a minor in Fashion Studies. During and after the program, I developed an interest in art history, psychology, philosophy, astrology, and spirituality—these varied influences animate my approach to the arts. Within fashion design, I'm developing offerings that can be meaningfully experienced in individual lives, as a means to bring warmth and joy to the human experience.*

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