ONLINE EDUCATION: TEACHING IN A TIME OF CHANGE

- **Paper / Proposal Title:**
Pivots, Paradigm Shifts and the Future of Fashion Design Education

- **Author(s) Name:**
Shireen Soliman, Emily White

- **University or Company Affiliation:**
Adjunct PT Professor/Parsons School of Design and Pratt Institute

- **Abstract (300 words):**
Design and design curriculum are undergoing a paradigmatic shift greatly accelerated by the virtual platform and the move to online learning through the Covid crisis. For educators in the field of Fashion Design, these constraints challenge us like never before. As with the industry landscape of fashion itself, we find ourselves at a crucial juncture...we are compelled to adapt, respond, evolve. This moment has called upon us to leverage the powerful intersection of technology, community, social media and social justice, both in the industry as well as in the classroom. These new opportunities have provided a space for us to experience, share and connect through design curriculum.

The debates in fashion design education resonate with those in the virtual education landscape. What does it mean to democratize knowledge and decentralize power? How do we create a culture of access and equity? How does one teach to a practice and social landscape that are ever-changing? How can fashion design education curriculum be designed to better align with a global collective push for increased transparency and responsibility? What shared values are vital to our field, our education, our practice?

Despite these challenges, opportunities are dramatically emerging through the online learning experience. We as practitioners and educators are in fact, empowered as we are compelled to to shed outdated modes of seeing, knowing and making.

Among these new possibilities and realities for design educators, perhaps the most implications for the “new present” are to be found in some of the following:
1. The dynamics of design education are shifting from looking outwards for inspiration to affirming oneself as the locus of the design process. The student has become able to self-redefine and to recognize his or her own agency and narrative. Creativity is bred through processes in which choice, accessibility and resilience are key elements.

2. The focus is shifting from making and creating to "recognizing" and "reframing". This happens by means of attributing meaning to experiences, objects, image and narrative. The traditional canon, based on the dictates of hierarchical Eurocentric elites, has ceded the spotlight to the living world of art and design as curated in live-time through social media and virtual experiences. The concept and practice of design are experiencing a long-overdue shift from intransigent, complacent, static to decolonized, fluid, inclusive.

3. The "canvas" is shifted from being external or apart from oneself, to the idea of one’s own body or story being the canvas and site upon which designing is emanating outwards. A driving element is to connect, align and claim one’s place and point of view in the collective discourse.

4. The site of learning and design itself now extends beyond the limits of a physical studio, classroom or location; it transcends space, proportion or time-zone. The global marketplace, landscape and community thus creates access to previously limited resources, ideas, connections and collaborations. These hold the promise of levelling the playing field. This is an expansive time and space for different levels of ability, privilege, different languages and cultures.

Pedagogical questions persist, such as accessibility to technical platforms/resources and establishing new norms around processes. However, these are offset by the larger possibilities that hold the promise of invigorating creative thinking/problem solving to address issues around social justice, environmental responsibility, ethical and equitable resources and experiences for all.

• Author(s) Biography (200 words each):
Shireen Soliman is an Egyptian-American artist, educator, advocate and mother. As a creative professional, she has over 20+ years of design-related experience in various areas of the fashion and textile industries. Shireen teaches at both Parsons School of Design and Pratt Institute, offering coursework under the umbrella of Visual Communications and Illustration, with a focus on Systems, Society and Narrative. As a community leader and advocate, she sits on various boards and councils, representing and amplifying the voices and experiences of Muslim-Americans. Aligning her unique personal and professional lived experiences, Shireen offers art and design workshops and speaks publicly in the community on topics ranging from Fashion, Art and Technology, to
Muslim-American Identity, Cultural Diversity, Representation, and Expression. Shireen holds a B.F.A. in Fashion Design from Moore College of Art and Design and an M.S. Ed. from Bank Street College of Education.