

MADE IN CLASS

Made In Class Thesis by Payal Doshi
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made in class

/mad/in/klas/

1 the concept of self-definition through a collegiate lifestyle; we as students define ourselves through confidence and bold attitudes

2 creating something in style or sophistication; being classy; we feel this when wearing the apparel

3 we literally made this in class

INTRODUCTION

In an age where we rush to keep pace with an ever-evolving society, we transform our thoughts, mannerisms, and overall approach to remain relevant in our aspirations—as well as to be successful and known by communicating our outward identity. Through observation, personal experience, and networking it is obvious that identity, function, and lifestyle are concomitant concepts that synthesize to a distant, yet attainable ideal of success and empowerment. Identity is defined as the fact of being whom or what a person or thing is. The certainty or uncertainty of one's identity can be broken down into multiple realms: transformation, empowerment, confidence and success. Add this idea of an intangible transformation to an attainable concept, functionality. Functionality incorporates utility. Made In Class combines identity and function to make you useful and relevant. Now multiply the summation mentioned above by an achieved or unique principal of lifestyle. Similarly to everything in life, all the pieces are there, you just have to put them together. You place things together and if they work, you've reached the goal or final. I see it as empowerment. The equation derived is:

$$\text{Made In Class} = \text{Lifestyle (Identity + Function)}$$

IP is an experiential opportunity where I have been encouraged to fully realize a project through planning and conceptualizing. I began by gathering courses from my past three years of academic curriculum: Business Administration 201, Concept Form and Context 230 and Entrepreneurship Practicum 411. I quickly began to identify similarities in my academic, social and professional life, which in turn shaped my yearlong concentration. With the help of faculty, classmates, peers, parents, and advisors I started networking within the University, and beyond it by reaching out to alumni from New York and Los Angeles. This is when my concept began to take on its own unique character; a journey that would take up the better part of a year. Made In Class is a brand of apparel inspired by personal transformation incorporating motifs of confidence and boldness designed to empower the consumer.

Made In Class is a clothing line made of neoprene, which is a non-wrinkle lightweight tech material, and zippers, some of which are longer than the pieces itself to indicate a transformation. Made In Class is comprised of eight pieces: women and men's jackets, a hoodie, a crewneck, a sports bra, boxers, joggers and a dress. Together, these materials, which comprise the final pieces of clothing, are the key resources. The zippers represent transformation, they unzip and move, just the way we do. This is meant to ensure movement, change, and utility through simply adjusting the zippers. Marketed towards young adults in college and young professionals, Made In Class is meant to compliment one's lifestyle through its functionality and by enhancing one's identity through clean and crisp design.

We adapt, transform, and evolve ourselves in an effort to reach this final concept of success or empowerment. Without a proper core concept, marketing, or exposure none of this can be fully visualized. I got feedback from friends and students on campus about their favorite fashion brands and began pulling from popular designers to make flats and sketches. Then, I started grading, creating size guides and patterns for sample production. I began networking within my

community at school and through past internships to find local New York factories that could start creating samples, gathering the proper materials and trims. I had to negotiate and properly pitch to angel investors and factories as to why they should invest their time and money into a twenty-one year-old's class project. Those who invested became my key partners, providing a revenue stream and key resources to me as needed. After a first fitting and a few adjustments, I had the eight pieces that made up the first collection of Made In Class. Eventually, I began thinking about future options and how to elevate Made In Class to the commercial level. I have been in contact with mass manufacturers overseas in India and China in regards to production. This is only the first part of the 10-steps vision I outlined in my long-term business plan, which aimed to generate sales and provide my designs to a greater audience.

The next critical step is the execution and image of the brand. The big picture not only calls for detail-oriented apparel designs, but also strong marketing and visuals to place my brand. I strategically collaborated and networked within my community to produce a name and look for Made In Class. I worked with a variety of software programs, machinery and most importantly, people. I began reaching out to students who showed interest in my work initially; they became my earliest adopters and my first marketing team. They were supportive and pulled together for my first photo shoot. This photo shoot was a combination of the collection's first appearance to a mass audience, as well as acting as a marketing tool. After establishing my first marketing hit, buzz generated among students and this helped drive more recognition and support for my next ventures. The second photo shoot was smaller but more successful. This photo shoot continued to create the name and visual of whom and what Made In Class was and is, its identity. Made In Class taught me to be patient, have diligence, perseverance, and how to push myself out of my comfort zone.

CONCEPT FORMATION

Organizing the structure of my Integrative Project involved lists, documentation, and mapping. This is when I made a master list of what would constitute Made In Class. I built a business through design, brand identity, graphic design, web design, organizational skills, and execution. This entrepreneurship venture would be based upon lateral thinking and the way I see the world around me: design and business.

I started observing artists and designers in the fashion realm. Shayne Oliver, Alessandro Dell'Acqua, Three as Four, and Alexander Wang stood out. Shayne Oliver is the founder of Hood By Air, a clothing company who uses high contrast and striking photography to brand their clothing. The bold clothes look extremely different when off the model and when set in a space and on a figure. The brilliant way Oliver takes a piece of clothing and seemingly changes it without altering the actual garment at all is aesthetically stimulating. The use of zippers helps me achieve a versatility in looks as the models had on the same eight pieces but were all transformed through adjusting the zipper length and use. Alessandro Dell'Acqua, featured in an article by the New York Times, is a designer who is changing men's fashion and the way men dress. I was inspired by the use of contrast, textures, and dimensions he employed. The visual look of Made In Class showed black neoprene

material and shiny zippers juxtaposed against a white backdrop. The strategic use of lighting and shadows helped form dimension and contrast within the images. “Three as Four” is a fashion label that keeps a clean, high-end look, which is supported by their models keeping straight facial expressions. The models depict an assertive attitude while showing motion. This quality helped me inform my models of how to move and pose at the same time. Alexander Wang can be recognized as a minimalist fashion designer. He keeps his work clean and monochromatic while showcasing it as sportswear with class. This minimal touch seems so effortless, but played a big role in informing me as I attempted to show Made In Class. Lastly, the idea of the Health Goth aesthetic is where Made In Class fits. Made In Class possesses the ideas that comprise Health Goth; the ideas of “street goth,” performance wear brands, tactical gear, body enhancement tech, monochrome sportswear and extreme cleanliness. Health Goth is the ultimate umbrella term. As critical questions began to form I kept referring to what brought me here in the first place—a yearning to depict transformation in means of empowerment through a bold and stylish fashion line.

While mind mapping and brainstorming, I started laying a foundation for concept formation. I began looking at the teachings of Malcolm Gladwell. Through social experiments and real life experiences, Gladwell insightfully describes the way we think, act, and adapt in situations. He breaks down social norms and societal aspirations and defines why we do the things we do and categorizes who we are. These teachings helped me map out a critical question that my thesis aims to address: Who, how, and what does Made In Class make you feel?

In Alexander Osterwalder’s book, “Business Model Generation,” he talks about the business model canvas and indicators that one needs for their organization to succeed. Likewise, psychologist, Malcolm Gladwell writes about “The Tipping Point,” a concept describing how ideas are adapted into society and the stickiness they need to survive. Malcolm Gladwell states, “The tipping point is that magic moment when an idea, trend, or social behavior crosses a threshold, tips, and spreads like wildfire.” With successful decision-making and deliberate, instinctive thinking, I want to reach the tipping point of Made In Class. Both of these authors helped form the core competence for Made In Class.

Simon Synek, author of “Start With Why,” talks about a concept called the Golden Circle. The Golden Circle is the idea that most successful companies start with a why, then move on to answer how and lastly, what; this is how the value proposition is formed. Made In Class is based on a psychological principle, and supported by focus group research that concludes this is the line of clothing that you want in your closet. The demand is generated through the use of familiar faces in the look book photography, word of mouth, and strategic use of social media, also known as my channels. As the value proposition forms, the other areas of the business model canvas start to develop.

Eventually, I ventured into watching Ted Talks. After learning from multiple talks, they became the leading component to the basis of what Made In Class aims to solve. This aspiration we chase is that of empowerment and success. The teachings we constantly absorb and listen to are the small indicators and answers we use and adapt into our own lives. How can clothes make you feel empowered or successful?

Power posing is the medium of how simple garments can say empowerment and evoke success. The poses were a driving factor of how Made In Class would be properly portrayed to potential buyers. Power posing is the act of transforming the body to make one look bigger than the space their bodies occupy. The models were asked to keep straight faces and bold postures, while simultaneously exuding confidence and cockiness.

Amy Cuddy, a social psychologist, talks primarily about the psychology of posing and how the form our body takes on is indicative of perception to oneself and those around them. She talked about little, yet critical changes that can be utilized with forms to help one look bigger and subsequently, feel bigger. Among these included, putting your arms out wide or stretching, as well as thinking of positive and empowering thoughts, which, the models were told to do before they were put in front of the camera. Similarly, Vanessa Beecroft, a contemporary artist, juxtaposes and brilliantly puts those words to life using models: confidence and boldness into visuals. The models are still, straight faced, and eerily all look similar in posture. I used Beecroft's model forms to help map out my own models. I kept my models in upright positions with their heads slightly tilted down- as if they are looking down on the viewer. Teachings from both Cuddy and Beecroft solidify the concept of empowerment. I will go into depth with this concept in the third phase.

Lastly, I began organizing by creating matrixes to roughly plan Made In Class from beginning to end.

SAMPLE MAKING & PRODUCTION

Visualizing the overall picture was the first step in the actual creation of Made In Class. This is what led to the design questions: Where is the edginess? What would be the competitive advantage? Were the root values depicted well? Simultaneously, key questions about audience were considered: Who is my audience and my ideal consumer?

Design flats were made for an array of items. Through the process of elimination and peer reviews, I began forming a certain structure for the items. Made In Class is a unisex brand that focuses on high-end fashion through simple and bold designs. The patterns were generated using CAD system, which involved me having to learn new software. The material is exclusively domestic neoprene and mesh tech material. The neoprene chosen was based on small, nuanced differences. The materials had to be black, non-wrinkle, synthetic, comfortable, and have a certain weight. Neoprene is the fabric of now. It possesses all the qualities that my target user would appreciate, admire, and even take for granted. It is made for the young, fast-paced, and driven consumer. The primary focus being the zippers with their lengths and placement strategically mapped out on each piece to help evoke an essence of transformation. The purpose: to change visual identity.

For production, I had two fittings where I made adjustments to fully realize the muslin pieces into the actual pieces, and then I was able to see the pieces on live models. Eventually, I began incorporating skills I learned in my past courses of accounting and managerial finance to calculate the net worth and cost. Production involves a lot of negotiating for material, accessories and assembly. This is when I began researching and learning about CMT, ratio charts, using excel to generate costs, and figuring out grading and rulers for my patterns to create size guides.

CMT, better known as cut, make, and trim are all small numbers that add up to create a piece's overall cost. Ratio charts are ratios made for mass-producing factories. These charts create a key for each item and the number of times it will be produced in each size. Grading and rulers are indicators on patterns of the difference between one size and another in the same piece.

All of these numbers are shuffled and provide the premise of being able to pitch to angel investors. It was critical to create a pitch that presented organization and proper knowledge of the field.

NETWORKING & LEARNING

Made In Class was born out of collaborations and networking. Learning from those around me was the reason I took Integrative Project to begin with. It is innate for me to go up to someone, reach out, and start forming relationships that were mutually beneficial. Whether it was simply feedback to creating business relationships that extended beyond Made In Class, I was expanding my network and thus, the network of Made In Class.

Collaborations included networking in Manhattan's garment and financial district to find mentors, fabrics, accessories, and factories. This expanded my terminology within the fashion world and gave me real life experience that I will be able to carry on to other endeavors. I also collaborated with students on campus and on other college campuses to get feedback, and potentially recruit for future ambassadors.

College is an ideal environment for students to start expanding their portfolios to gain real world experience. Using this thought, I reached out to photographers, finance students, communication majors, engineers, and those passionate about fashion itself, to see who would be interested in becoming a part of the Made In Class family. This was primarily for last phases that brought everything together. They provided me with a new set of eyes, models, editors, documentation, and marketing tools that I could trust and utilize. It was critical to branch out with persistence and using a strong elevator pitch that engaged the students. This was a real life application, bringing me into the next formation phase: the plan.

BUSINESS PLAN

A business plan is an essential aspect of any firm; it organizes and explains how the business is going to achieve its goals, as well as laying the framework for the marketing and financial operations. This plan is not as fully developed since the brand itself is an ever-evolving entrepreneurial venture, however it nonetheless provides vision and guidelines for the ultimate goal of success. With trial and tribulation, the numbers and goals change, but the core competence remains as the driving strength. Through organization, critical thinking, and reflection of each action, I began to see information piece together to create the abstract for Made In Class. The financial component is created through excel sheets and primarily presented to angel investors. The cost structure is made by the use of the CMT sheet and mini-meetings with professionals in the field. Made In Class can be viewed as a financial endeavor as well as a social experiment, something taught in my entrepreneurship practicum and in a managerial operations class.

SOCIAL MEDIA & MARKETING

Marketing is a tricky and delicate means of communication. One aspect of marketing, social media, provides a strong point of view for a company and its exposure. The use of social media must be planned and implemented correctly. Specifically, I used Instagram as a means to reach my audience. Since the core of Made In Class can best be told visually, it is crucial that I utilized this a form of social media to showcase glimpses of my work. Instagram as a specific medium accentuates the aesthetic of the pieces, and provides an interactive forum for potential consumers to engage with the brand itself. The chronological organization allows my followers to be a part of the evolution, as well as automatically create storyboards and visual narratives. The software itself serves a symbolic purpose, which I consider an integral part of my brand.

DIGITAL & LOOK BOOK

I began collaborating and pitching my ideas to students in order to make the digital portion possible. It is the art of being prepared and persuasive that allowed me to recruit student photographers and models to help bring the visual to life. The look book is a compilation of many photo shoots to provide a story and setting for Made In Class. The power posing discussed earlier, through Amy Cuddy's Ted talk and the imagery created by Vanessa Beecroft, are inspirations behind the imagery seen in the Made In Class look book. The use of Adobe Creative Suite software to edit and organize these photographs strengthened the visual appeal. Also, organization and file sharing provided a great tool for collaboration to successfully transfer and place credit where credit was due.

The images and the photo shoots were planned as a networking event as well. I thoughtfully selected students who would serve as great representations of the Made In Class aesthetic. I had a makeup artist, hair stylist, coordinators and photographers. We did a few shots with curves and contortions of the body to show the zippers and how the clothing transformed as the models' bodies did. Then these photographs were placed side by side in an aesthetically pleasing and strategic way. On the wide spreads of the look book I chose the strongest depictions of clothing versatility. I also mirrored some of the strongest shots on the left and right sides using reflections. All the images were black and white and the book was bound with black Italian cloth and has black vinyl decals.

CONCLUSION

Made In Class is a small-scale example of a long-term goal. For me, Integrative Project was a chance to combine intriguing courses and strong personal characteristics to venture into a field that allowed me to network with students in other disciplines as well as people in the real world. This transition provided me with knowledge far beyond expectations. The purpose of Made In Class reaches outside of just creating clothing; it captures a glimpse of an entrepreneurial endeavor that requires the integration of numerous people in order to achieve success and have an empowering impact.

While the path to attaining credibility and recognition were obstacles, the strengths of the collaborations, learning experiences, and process of attaining various benchmarks through pitching, listening, and learning.

Looking to the future, knowing I have not only taken, but also have achieved multiple learning goals in a rapid paced environment, has made me discover many strengths within myself that I was not aware of before this process. This experience has provided me with many valuable lessons and steps, offering ability to better understand the basics and more advanced techniques, which I can continue to transform into my own empowering evolution.

There is an opportunity for everyone to be involved in this process of learning and development. I plan to properly implement and execute Made In Class. For my final show, I presented my work as a mock window storefront at Work Gallery on State Street in Ann Arbor.

Made In Class is my first fashion entrepreneurial venture that I was lucky enough to execute in a yearlong thesis and gain support, constructive criticism, and most importantly, collaborate with many, many people. For me, Made In Class is more than just a brand of apparel it is a beginning. Made In Class was inspired by transformation along with depicts of confidence and boldness; it is specifically made for those with the desire to succeed.









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