

Research Article

The Integration of the Modern Kebaya with Gothic Aesthetics in a Womenswear Collection as an Embodiment of Women's Empowerment

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Abstract.

This study examines the visual aspects of the discovery and modernization of Indonesian Kebaya. The Kebaya's integration with the Gothic style is considered an example of its modernization. The combination of these two aspects, in addition to its innovative nature, serves as a means of preserving the cultural significance of Kebaya both domestically and globally. The Gothic style is a popular fashion trend among the younger generation. The Kebaya and Gothic styles share historical connections as they both served as emblems of women's resistance and independence in previous eras. In terms of visual aesthetics, there are notable similarities between the Kebaya and Gothic styles, particularly in their use of lace fabric and form-fitting silhouettes. In addition to this, the examination of the Kebaya and Gothic style, frequently associated with women, suggests that the incorporation of Gothic elements into the modernization of the Kebaya can serve as a symbol of women's emancipation. The present study employs a qualitative research methodologies, including a comprehensive literature review, trend analysis, and design and material explorations. The exercise produced a collection of ten distinct designs, each of which is manifested in four different product realisations. The collection encompasses a range of garments, including Kebaya shirts, pants, skirts, bralettes, and corsets. These pieces predominantly include black hues and exhibit fitting body forms. Additionally, they are decorated with metallic hardware accents and embellishments, which are applied to lace and denim fabrics. The purpose of this collection is to ensure the preservation of the Kebaya as an integral part of Indonesian culture while also allowing it to coexist with contemporary pop culture. This approach aims to maintain the relevance of the Kebaya in an ever-evolving and modern society.

Keywords: Kebaya, gothic, modernization, culture, preservation, fashion

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1. Introduction

In 1945, Indonesia adopted Kebaya as its national symbol, representing the grace and symbolic defiance of Indonesian women. Kebaya assumed ideological significance during the era of independence, namely in connection with the advancement of women's education and opposition to Dutch colonial governance. Kartini, a prominent female activist, exemplified the concept of women dressed in Kebaya apparel, promoting values such as modesty, grace, resilience, and intellect. Today, the nation of Indonesia commemorates the Kebaya as an emblem of both national autonomy and the unwavering determination of women's pursuits. This research investigates the current transformation of Kebaya attire into a Gothic fashion style, focusing particularly on the influence of the Visigoths, a well-known Germanic group recognised for their dark and pale cultural traditions. The Gothic architectural style, renowned for its notable focus on the concepts of individuality and self-expression, has experienced a series of transformations over the course of its historical development. This style has been embraced by contemporary individuals, including pop-punk singer Olivia Rodrigo as well as designers Alexander McQueen and Rick Owens. The objective of this study is to analyse the development of a modern Kebaya design that incorporates Gothic features. The study places particular attention on the promotion of women's empowerment and the questioning of traditional stereotypes. As a result, the study highlights the importance of embracing Gothic culture in present-day society.

2. Literature Review

2.1. History and Characteristics of Kebaya

Kebaya is a traditional garment that is representative of Indonesian women. There exist multiple theories pertaining to the origins of Kebaya. According to Lombard, the term 'Kebaya' originated from the Arabic word 'kaba' [1]. This etymological connection was purportedly introduced to Southeast Asia by the Portuguese upon their arrival in the region. Kebaya is a garment that embodies a fusion of cultural elements derived from various foreign nations, such as China, India, Arabia, and Portugal, whose representatives visited and resided in Indonesia during periods of trade interaction [2]. Kebaya was originally worn by Javanese nobles and women of high social status, who were observed donning similar attire with an exposed front upon the arrival of the Portuguese

in Java in 1512 [3]. The term “Kebaya” developed to encompass both men’s and women’s robes or blouses. However, starting from the 19th century, Kebaya in Southeast Asia evolved to denote a fusion of women’s blouses and batik sarongs [4]. Kebaya is therefore a significant representation of Indonesian women’s attire, encompassing both cultural and historical elements. It has a captivating aesthetic appeal that is grounded in a sense of simplicity and authenticity [5].

Based on historical accounts, it is evident that Kebaya holds significance in Indonesian culture, particularly among the Javanese population residing in the regions of Yogyakarta and Surakarta. Subsequently, with the arrival of foreign nations in Indonesia, Kebaya transcended its original association with Javanese individuals and was adopted by Dutch and Chinese ladies as well [6]. Nevertheless, notable distinctions were observed, particularly in terms of materials, colour palettes, and decorative patterns. The Kebaya worn by Javanese women was often characterised by a sombre colour palette and crafted from cotton fabric, featuring a modest design. In contrast, Kebaya worn by the Dutch community incorporated lace and brocade textiles, while the Chinese community favoured vibrant hues and intricate floral and animal embroidery motifs [7]. In the past, Dutch women discontinued the practise of wearing Kebaya due to Japan’s designation of Kebaya exclusively for indigenous captives. Consequently, Kebaya underwent a fall in its cultural significance [6].

Kebaya exhibits a diverse range of variations that are influenced by the specific regions in which they are found. In the region of Sumatra, traditional attire is characterised by the presence of voluminous sleeve details and elongated Kebaya garments. In the region of Kalimantan, Kebaya is characterised by the presence of a collar and a front opening located at hip level. In the regions of Java, Bali, and Nusa Tenggara, Kebaya exhibits a shorter length, a form-fitting silhouette, 3/4 sleeves, and is crafted from a translucent fabric [8]. Table 1 displays the primary classifications of Kebaya.

2.2. History and Characteristics of Gothic Style

The Gothic culture is primarily centred on the expression of the “dark” notion, with its social group members engaging in the consumption of Gothic horror and romances, donning dark attire, and making references to the supernatural [10]. As per the New Webster’s Dictionary and Thesaurus of the English Language, the term ‘Gothic’ pertains to various aspects. Firstly, it refers to the Goths or their language. Secondly, it denotes a particular style of art, particularly architecture, that thrived in Europe from the late 12th

TABLE 1: Types of Kebaya According to Region.

Type of Kebaya	History & Fashion Characteristics
Balinese Kebaya	Similar to its religious function, Kebaya employs an <i>obi</i> , or belt that is fastened around the waist. The <i>obi</i> , when worn by women, serves a symbolic purpose of safeguarding the body against detrimental influences. The material commonly used for Balinese Kebaya is typically lace or cotton fabric, frequently adorned with vibrant hues.
Kutubaru Kebaya	Kutubaru Kebaya, which gained popularity during the reign of the Majapahit Kingdom, is a versatile garment that may be worn in various settings, including both official and informal occasions. The Kebaya in question exhibits a notable characteristic in the form of supplementary fabric positioned centrally, effectively serving to unite the right and left sections. Typically, the Kutubaru Kebaya is traditionally adorned with a brooch positioned on the chest area.
Kartini Kebaya	Kartini Kebaya originated on the island of Java. Historically, the Kebaya worn by Kartini was exclusively reserved for individuals belonging to the Javanese aristocracy. As societal norms evolved, the popularity of Kartini Kebaya extended beyond the confines of the noble class. The Kartini Kebaya is characterised by its distinctive V-shaped collar and is crafted from high-quality fabrics such as silk, brocade, or nylon.
Betawi Kebaya	Referred to as <i>Encim</i> , this particular Kebaya type exhibits a unique integration of Chinese and Malay cultural influences. This Kebaya's form bears resemblance to the Javanese Kebaya, albeit with a distinctly pointed bottom hem and thinner neck folds. The Betawi Kebaya predominantly incorporates materials such as embroidery, brocade, lace, and other motifs.
Sundanese Kebaya	This Kebaya has been intentionally constructed with an elongated length in order to provide coverage for the hips and thighs. The Sundanese Kebaya is typically adorned with vibrant hues, including shades of red, light purple, and white.

Source: Putri [9]

century until the Renaissance. Lastly, it is associated with a genre of sensational novels from the late 18th and early 19th centuries that explore macabre or mysterious events set in mediaeval environments [11].

The term “Gothic” has its historical origins in the appellation of the Visigoths, an ancient Germanic tribe that adhered to pagan beliefs. The Goths are an ethnic group that presents disadvantages to the Roman Empire. The reason for this phenomenon can be attributed to the Goths’ disillusionment with the efficacy of both the church and the state in addressing the issues of unemployment and crime [12]. The Visigoths were renowned for their reputation as a courageous, steadfast, and formidable group. According to their beliefs, their society was characterised by a sombre and melancholic

atmosphere. The cultural identity of this society is manifested through diverse forms of expression, including architectural designs, musical compositions, folklore narratives, and sartorial choices.

The Goth subculture upheld a distinct ethos centred around the deliberate distinction of punk from mainstream culture, with a particular emphasis on individualism and self-expression. This was achieved through a unique style that consciously rejected the use of clothing as a means of blending into societal norms. The Gothic style possesses certain qualities that have become famous within society. Gothic fashion is commonly associated with the utilisation of predominantly black hues, which creates a striking yet elegant aesthetic [13]. The Gothic subculture encompasses various fashion streams, as displayed in Table 2.

2.3. Kebaya and Gothic Fashion as A Symbol of Women's Empowerment

President Soekarno declared Kebaya as the official national attire during the Proclamation of Independence of the Republic of Indonesia on August 17, 1945. This event highlighted the significance of Kebaya as a symbol of national identity for Indonesian women [15]. It can be understood that Kebaya represents the ideal embodiment of elegance and symbolic resistance for Indonesian women. Kebaya in Indonesia acquired ideological significance as Indonesian women used it as a symbol of resistance against Dutch colonial rule during the pre-independence era. Nyi Hajar Dewantara, in the context of women's education, recommended that female tutors and students residing at the Wisma Rini dormitory, exclusively for women in Tamansiswa, adopt national attire, namely Kebaya. This suggestion was made as a means of opposing the influence of foreign cultures [16].

Kebaya is a tangible representation of the Indonesian nation's challenging journey, influenced by Kartini, a prominent female activist of that time. Kebaya was traditionally worn by Javanese women to honour the female form and show respect to others. The kebaya was traditionally worn by Javanese women to honour the female form and show respect to others. Kartini embodies the ideal representation of women wearing the traditional Indonesian garment called Kebaya. The pursuit of perfection in this context is attained by combining women who possess qualities of modesty, elegance, strength, and intelligence. Kartini pursued intellectual endeavours to address the educational and

TABLE 2: Types of Gothic Style in Fashion.

Types of Gothic Style	History & Fashion Characteristics
The Traditional Goth	The Gothic style in the 1980s and 1990s was regarded as a definitive manifestation of the genre. It was distinguished by certain key elements, including individuals with dark hair, smoky eye makeup applied to pale skin, torn fishnet garments, belts adorned with grommets, leather boots, various piercings, and metallic accessories. Attire typically consisted of black jeans and tops featuring occult symbols, complemented by the use of dark shades.
The Romantic Goth	The primary influence for this aesthetic derives from the literary, artistic, and sartorial trends prevalent in the Victorian era, commonly referred to as the Victorian Gothic style. The term "Romantic Goth" typically refers to a fashion style characterised by the use of black velvet and lace garments, including corsets, long dresses, fishnet stockings, veils, black gloves, and flowing crowns.
The Hippie Goth	The equivalent of the Gothic aesthetic was popularised during the 1960s. The style incorporates eerie elements, characterised by dark dresses, flowing tops, and trousers. Prominent adornments include oversized rings and black bandanas, along with dark cosmetics like dramatic cat-eye eyeliner paired with vibrant lips.
The Casual Goth	This particular fashion style does not evoke a sense of fear or intimidation. Typically, individuals adopt this particular fashion style as a means of exploring diverse dark aesthetics, subsequently integrating it with their regular attire through a process of mixing and matching. The casual Gothic fashion typically favours dark attire and is closely associated with denim bottoms and upper garments. Casual goths typically opt for long, straight hairstyles and minimal makeup.
The Death Rock	This style incorporates gothic elements with a hint of horror. The utilisation of distinctive hairstyles, such as deathhawks and mohawks, is recognised in this context. In terms of attire, death rock is closely associated with leather jackets, skinny jeans, and leather footwear. The striking aesthetic is enhanced by the application of dark makeup, particularly the use of thick eyeliner.
The Corporate Goth	This specific style of Gothic fashion incorporates workwear garments with a Gothic aesthetic. Corporate goths tend to exhibit reduced levels of flamboyance and theatricality. Corporate goths, similar to conventional work attire, exhibit formal clothing comprising suits, dresses, shirts, and trousers, accompanied by understated makeup.

Source: Nabila [14]

personal growth disparities between Indonesian women and men in her time. Sulistyanyas advocated for the empowerment and inclusion of women who happen to wear

dresses, enabling them to actively participate and make meaningful contributions within the societal context [5]. The enduring impact of Kartini's struggle, exemplified by her Kebaya attire, remains evident in contemporary Indonesian women. Moreover, Kebaya has been recognised as a means of linking women to their historical roots, embodying traditional values such as reverence and deference towards figures of authority [17]. In order to pay tribute to female figures who resisted colonialism, particularly Kartini, Indonesia observes April 21 as a means of commemorating the historical resilience of women [5].

Gothic fashion encompasses a concept known as Gothic feminism. The emergence of this genre can be attributed to British women writers during the late 18th and early 19th centuries. This concept was employed to express the experiences during the social and economic changes of their time, while also promoting the emergence of a new style of bourgeois female sensibility. Gothic feminism takes a neo-feminist approach to women's literary works, viewing them as guiding theses rather than revered texts. This perspective offers a new understanding of the genre and a unique interpretation of feminism as a literary ideology. The female Gothic genre is seen as subversive for depicting women's opposition to patriarchal structures. During that era, women were influenced by patriarchal systems and domestic ideologies. As a result, women sought secure environments to express the challenges they faced [18].

3. Methodology Research

Data collection is performed through the implementation of trend research conducted on the internet, with a particular emphasis on utilising the World Global Style Network (WGSN). This research provides evidence that the projected trends for 2023/ 2024 encompass various themes, ornaments, and types of fashion products. These trends are closely linked to the collections examined in this study, which include hardware ornaments, black colours, modern goth aesthetics, and the utilisation of fabric laces, among other elements. Findings from the study and collection of data show that the design of this collection can effectively include visually appealing elements that support women's empowerment and at the same time protect Indonesian cultural heritage, such as the traditional Kebaya dress. The incorporation of Gothic elements into the modernization of Kebaya has the potential to both attract and retain the interest of the younger generation, hence ensuring the continued relevance of Kebaya in

contemporary times. This approach seeks to modernise Kebaya without compromising its inherent cultural value and philosophical significance.

The interview method has also been incorporated by the authors in this study. An interview refers to a formal dialogue that takes place between two parties, namely members of the Perempuan BerKebaya community and a representative of individuals who have an affinity for Gothic style. Based on information obtained from the Perempuan BerKebaya community, it is suggested that the Kebaya attire should undergo modernization in order to appeal to the younger demographic. Furthermore, it is deemed more suitable to promote Kebaya to the younger generation. The Kebaya design, which has undergone modernization by a local designer, is highly intriguing. The utilisation and recognition of Kebaya can be enhanced both domestically and globally. This holds significant influence for the younger demographic who continue to exhibit reluctance in donning the traditional Kebaya attire. The modernization of the Kebaya garment can be regarded as an endeavour to approximate and preserve elements of traditional culture.

The Kebaya's presence extends beyond social media, encompassing its practical implementation in daily life, exemplified by the contemporary evolution of Kebaya design. The incorporation of Gothic elements into the design of the Kebaya can also serve as a contemporary representation of women's empowerment. This is due to the historical context of the Kebaya, which originated as a form of resistance against colonialism. Furthermore, contemporary women who exhibit a vested interest in the Kebaya are also engaging in a form of resistance. The amalgamation of Kebaya and Gothic elements presents a captivating fusion that holds significant historical relevance, particularly for the younger generation and the notion of women's empowerment.

As per a spokesperson for enthusiasts of the Gothic style, this proposition holds potential interest due to its relative scarcity in conceptualization. The individual expresses a personal preference for wearing a Kebaya, which is a type of traditional clothing that is subject to frequent modifications. Nevertheless, it is a relatively uncommon occurrence to find only a small number of individuals engaged in the creation of Kebaya and fabric with a Gothic aesthetic. The colour black is characterised by its rarity. The individual finds the subject matter to be intellectually stimulating and aesthetically pleasing. The fusion of Kebaya and Gothic style can effectively embody the concept of women's empowerment. As per her assertion, Gothic literature inherently embodies acts of rebellion, thereby amplifying the existing stigma surrounding women's empowerment.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1. Trend Research

The result of trend research conducted using the data from WGSN was classified into two groups, which are 1) Key Statements and Details; and 2) Products, as shown in Figure 1. These elements will then be implemented in the collection design.

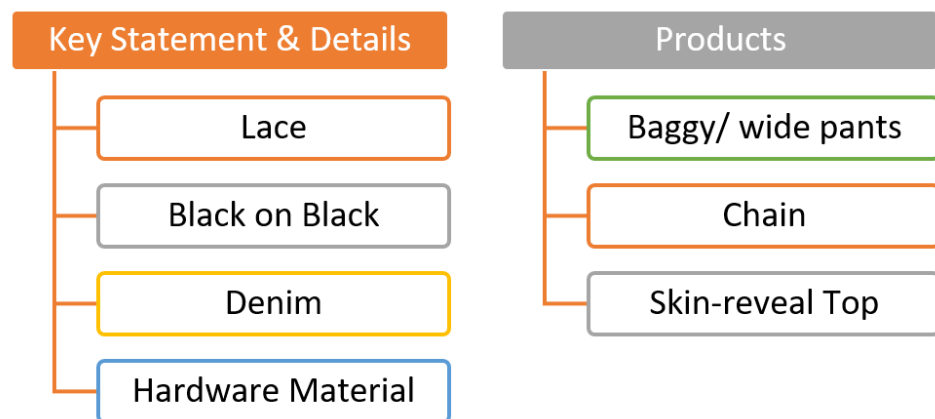


Figure 1: *Trend Research Result.* Source: WGSN (2023).

4.2. Implementations

a) Volume and Silhouette

This collection uses fitted, semi-fitted, and wide volumes. The determined volume is applied to the tailored Kebaya and trousers, skirt, and corset belt. This collection emphasises slits, form-fitting busts, and waistlines. Furthermore, this collection extensively employs the technique of layering garments.

b) Colours

Black is the predominant colour in this collection, as it intensifies the boldness and reinforces the Gothic motif as the artistic theme. Silver is also used for embroidery and fabric print as a complementary colour.

c) Pattern Making

This collection employs moulding techniques and flat patterns to facilitate customised product manufacturing.

d) Moulding

The moulding technique is applied to garments that conform closely to the body. This collection features fitted body garments such as Kebayas, corset belts, waistbands, and tube tops.

e) Flat Pattern

The flat pattern is employed in the creation of various garments such as loose Kebaya, skirts, trousers, outerwear, and shawls.

f) Finishing Technique

To improve performance, this collection uses French seam, bisband, denim stitch, double tuck, and lining. The French seam is employed in this collection to provide a refined finishing touch to the Kebaya. The double tuck technique is utilised on both the trousers and skirt in this assortment. The final layer of fabric in this collection is affixed to the upper portion and corset belt.

g) Materials and Creative Fabrics

This collection's fabric composition includes cotton, lace, denim, and tulle. The Kawung pattern is later embroidered to present a modernised interpretation of Indonesian culture (Figure 2).



Figure 2: *Embroidered Denim as the Creative Fabric.* Source: Author (2023).

Collection Design

The designer has created a total of 10 looks for the final collection, based on the established concept and narrative of the story (Figure 3). The assemblage presented here is derived from a pre-established mood board, primarily characterised by a dominant black colour scheme. It incorporates imaginative Gothic elements and integrates the silhouettes of Indonesian Kebaya garments, complemented by contemporary modifications in the lower portions. Out of the total of 10 looks that have been created, the designer has produced 4 looks as prototypes (Figure 4).

Production Results

In the process of product realisation, the designer incorporates two pattern-making techniques, specifically moulding and flat patterns. Moulding techniques are employed to create tailored body garments, including corsets, fitted Kebaya, and bralettes. The flat pattern technique is commonly employed in the production of trousers, skirts and certain non-fitted Kebaya garments, such as Kebaya dresses. Flat patterns were utilised in conjunction with moulding techniques. Designers in the product realisation process incorporate two pattern-making techniques, specifically moulding and flat patterns. Moulding techniques are employed to create custom-fitted body garments, such as corsets, fitted Kebaya, and bralettes. The flat pattern technique is commonly employed in the production of trousers, skirts and certain non-fitted Kebaya garments, including Kebaya dresses. The conclusive outcomes of the four designs are depicted in Figure 5.

5. Conclusion

This study examines the process of modernising the traditional Kebaya garment by incorporating elements of Gothic style within the women's ready-to-wear collection. The fusion of Kebaya and Gothic styles was motivated by their shared historical significance, particularly in terms of group resistance, as well as their visual characteristics, including the prominent use of lace as a key material. Kebaya serves as a representation of the autonomy of Indonesian women during the era of colonialism, while Gothic fashion emerged as a form of female resistance against prevailing injustices during that period. In addition, based on prevailing trends, the incorporation of Gothic elements into the design of Kebaya has the potential to sustain its relevance and utility in contemporary society, particularly among the younger demographic.

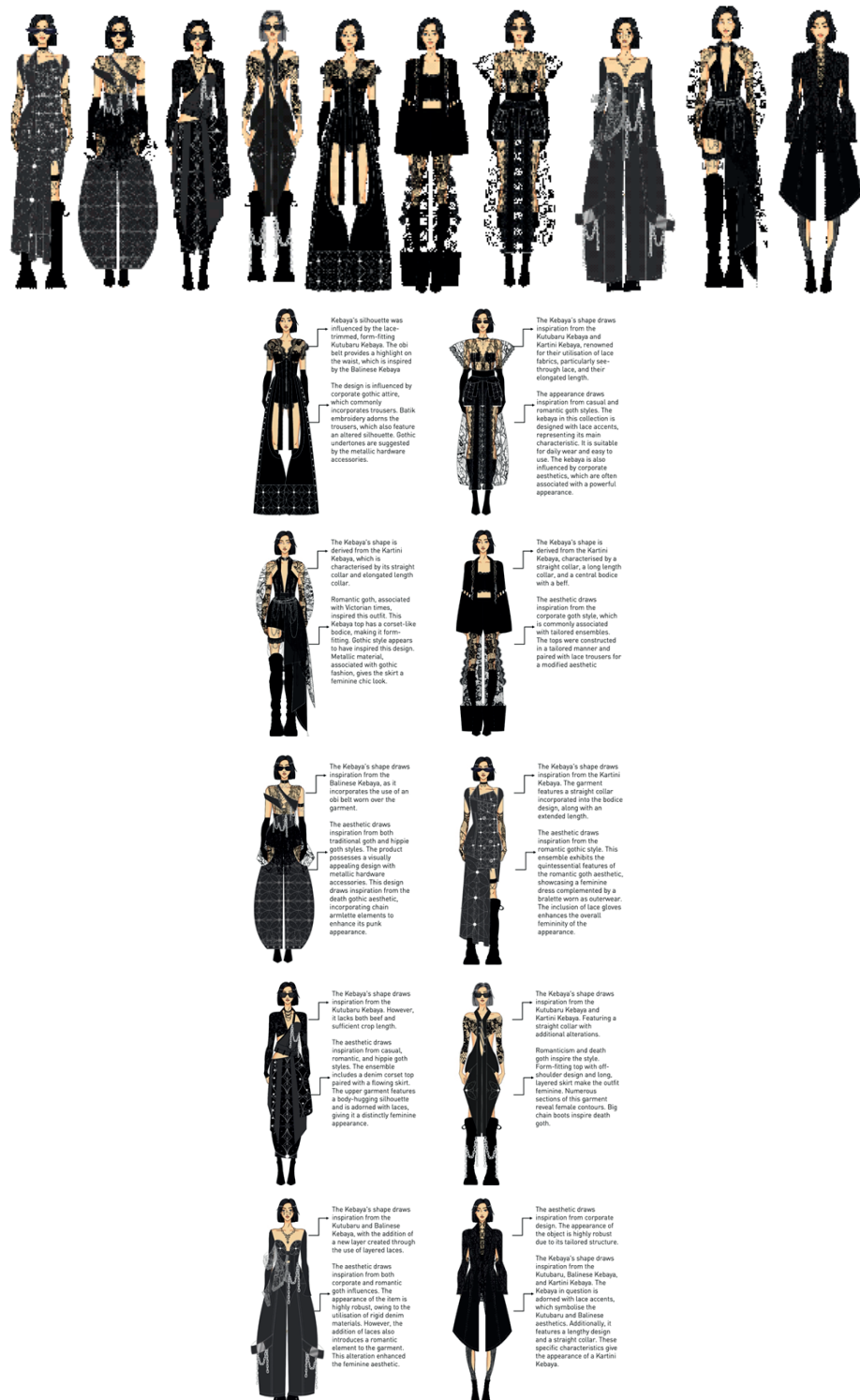


Figure 3: 10 Looks for the Collection. Source: Author (2023).

The research yielded a set of 10 designs, resulting in a total of 4 distinct looks. The predominant colour scheme in this collection is black, complemented by the incorporation of lace and denim materials. The women's ready-to-wear collection explores



Figure 4: 4 Selected Design Realizations. Source: Author (2023).



Figure 5: Final Production Results. Source: Author (2023).

Indonesian culture through a Gothic aesthetic. To enhance its practicality and appeal for everyday wear, the collection could be adapted to incorporate modern design elements and utilise more functional materials that offer sweat absorption. It has the potential to be integrated with various traditional fabrics such as original batik cloth, songket, tenun, and others. In future research, the modernization of Kebaya can be achieved through the incorporation of contrasting styles beyond Gothic. This enables the expansion of the market and enhances the usability and purchasing power of Kebaya, which is a significant Indonesian cultural heritage.

The cultural significance and aesthetic value of Kebaya in Indonesian society necessitate an examination of how its modernization has brought new interpretations to its

historical design and usage. Prospective scholars have the potential to uncover contemporary design applications by establishing a robust conceptual connection between the philosophical essence of an object and its symbolic significance, leading to the discovery of other well-suited Kebaya designs or patterns. Incorporating meaningful philosophies is crucial for innovative product designs that integrate cultural heritage elements. This prioritisation ensures the effective communication of an enticing message to the target market.

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