The borders of formal and everyday wear: a case study of the *eNVision* project and the dual professional mentorship model

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Professional paper**

This paper presents a case study of the pedagogical research project eNVision, conducted within the Graduate Fashion Design program at the University of Zagreb, Faculty of Textile Technology, during the 2024/2025 academic year. The research analyzes the collaborative model between the higher education institution and the fashion brand eNVy room, aiming to examine the integration of professional practice into the curriculum and the development of applicable design competencies. Ten students participated in the project (Dario Benički, Amanda Berišaj, Kimi Bičanić, Patricia Brnin, Chiara Gatti, Aurora Hercigonja, Ira Kosmačin, Doris Lenarčić, Marija Maros, Ana Piplica), who through an individualized mentoring approach developed reinterpretations of existing bridal models into functional ready-to-wear clothing combinations. The methodological framework is based on the "bridge" model, which connects the higher education institution with the economy, that is, theoretical knowledge with industrial standards. The analysis of student work demonstrates that this approach facilitated a high-quality transition from ceremonial to everyday attire while preserving the core design identity of the original models. The results indicate that this form of integration and collaboration serves as an effective tool for fostering analytical thinking, design autonomy, and an understanding of the professional context within contemporary fashion education.

Keywords: *case study; bridal; ready-to-wear; bridge model; academy-industry collaboration*

Stručni rad**

Granice svečanog i svakodnevnog: Studija slučaja projekta *eNVision* i modela dvostrukog stručnog mentorstva

Rad prikazuje studiju slučaja pedagoško-istraživačkog projekta eNVision, provedenog na diplomskom studiju Modni dizajn Sveučilišta u Zagrebu Tekstilno-tehnološkog fakulteta u akademskoj godini 2024./2025. Istraživanje analizira model suradnje između visokoškolske institucije i modnog brenda eNVy ROOM, s ciljem ispitivanja mogućnosti integracije profesionalne prakse u nastavni proces te razvoja primjenjivih dizajnerskih kompetencija. U projektu je sudjelovalo deset studenata (Dario Benički, Amanda Berišaj, Kimi Bičanić, Patricia Brnin, Chiara Gatti, Aurora Hercigonja, Ira Kosmačin, Doris Lenarčić, Marija Maros, Ana Piplica), koji su kroz individualizirani mentorski pristup razvijali reinterpretacije postojećih bridal modela u funkcionalne ready-to-wear odjevne kombinacije. Metodološki okvir temelji se na modelu "mosta", koji povezuje visokoškolsku instituciju s gospodarstvom, odnosno teorijska znanja s industrijskim standardima. Analiza studentskih radova pokazuje da je pristup rezultirao kvalitetnim prijelazom iz svečanog u svakodnevno odijevanje, uz očuvanje ključnih elemenata dizajnerskog identiteta izvornog modela. Rezultati upućuju na to da ovakav tip integracije i suradnje predstavlja učinkovit alat za razvoj analitičkog mišljenja, dizajnerske autonomije te razumijevanja profesionalnog konteksta u suvremenom modnom obrazovanju.

Ključne riječi: *studija slučaja; bridal; ready-to-wear; model mosta; suradnja akademije i industrije*

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1. Introduction

Modern education in the field of fashion design is increasingly facing the challenge of balancing theoretical knowledge with practical competencies applicable within professional and industrial contexts [1]. Traditional study programs often fail to provide students with direct experience working in real production and market environments; conversely, the fashion industry lacks a structured space for systematic collaboration with academic institutions aimed at developing innovative, yet experimental, design solutions [2].

The *eNVision* project, realized at the University of Zagreb Faculty of Textile Technology during the first year of the Fashion Design graduate program (acad. year 2024/2025), was designed as a response to these challenges. The project's goal was to develop students' practical and analytical competencies, strengthen the connection between the higher education institution and the fashion economy, and explore the possibilities of transforming bridal design into the context of contemporary ready-to-wear fashion.

The research is based on a pedagogical "bridge" model, which links the system of higher education with professional fashion practice [3]. In this setup, students take on the role of active participants of innovative interpretations, while mentors and industrial partners act as intermediaries for the transfer of knowledge, experience, and professional standards. The fashion brand eNVy ROOM [4] was selected as the case study for this collaboration; the brand has been active on the Croatian fashion scene for nearly two decades, with a recognizable focus on bridal and ready-to-wear collections. The brand's designers, Vjekoslav Franetović and Nikica Ivančević participated in the mentoring process, providing students with guidance regarding the industrial and market relevance of their design solutions. The mentors of the *Fashion Design IV* course, in collaboration with the brand's designers, applied an individualized mentoring approach with ten students, allowing the process to be "tailored" to the specifics of each individual student project.

The starting point of the design task was a single bridal model from the eNVy ROOM archive, assigned to each student as a basis for research-led reinterpretation. The task involved transforming the original model into an outfit suitable for everyday wear, while retaining recognizable aesthetic and construction elements. Special emphasis was placed on functionality, practicality and adaptability/ transformability, thereby exploring the possibility of crossing the boundaries between formal and everyday wear and the applicability of such solutions in a contemporary fashion context.

2. Experimental Design and Process

The project was conducted throughout the 2025 summer semester (April - September) as part of the *Fashion Design IV* course. The participant group consisted of ten first-year graduate students specializing in Fashion Design. Research was structured around a collaboration with the eNVy room brand, utilizing a dual-mentorship framework that provided weekly individual technical consultations. This mentoring focused on the intersection of garment construction, material selection, and the strategic alignment of student work with established brand identity and industrial market requirements.

The experimental phase required the conversion of archival eNVy room bridal models into functional ready-to-wear ensembles. Students explored the physical properties and performance of diverse textiles, including denim, striped poplin, bouclé, and wool. The design process centered on an analytical deconstruction of "ceremonial" versus "utilitarian" silhouettes, focusing specifically on modularity and daily wearability.

Performance evaluation was based on a rubric of functionality, retention of the original model's morphological markers, and technical innovation in construction. The project results were presented at the eNVision exhibition on September 11, 2025, at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Zagreb. The event was integrated into the eNVy room fashion show program, providing a professional context for the public dissemination of the research outcomes [5,6].

3. Results and Discussion

The experimental phase of the project centered on the transition between formal and everyday wear. Specifically, it looked at how bridal gowns could be transformed into functional outfits while keeping the recognizable aesthetic and structural elements of the original designs. Students were encouraged to experiment with new materials, cuts, and construction methods, placing a heavy emphasis on practicality, wearability, and modular design. These reinterpretations aimed to develop design strategies that allow for a flexible move between formal and casual contexts, while simultaneously building the students' creative and analytical skills. As part of this research, each of the ten students developed a unique concept for reinterpreting their assigned bridal piece:

Dario Benički's work, *JEANvy Room*, bases its reinterpretation of *a 2024 eNVy room bridal gown* on aesthetic contrast. Moving away from silk and embroidery, the outfit was made from rugged blue denim and grey striped fabric. Here, organic and sculptural elements were reimagined through the lens of utilitarian and urban textiles (Fig.1). Reflecting on the balance between the brand's identity and his own, the author noted: "The challenge was finding a way to keep the eNVy room aesthetic while introducing my own signature. It required a certain discipline to stay true to their sensibility yet be brave enough to step away and contribute something of my own. It is in this balance between respect and innovation that one finds the most freedom." [7]

Amanda Berišaj, in her work *Lines of Connection*, reinterpreted a *2021 bridal gown* by developing a custom material made from layered wool strips (Fig.2). These strips also function as a fastening system on the back of the jacket and the belt, while a knot detail on the lower trouser legs references a specific element from the original gown's bodice. The author emphasized that collaborating with an established brand provided a necessary "validation of design identity" within a professional framework [8].



Fig.1 Dario Benički, *JEANvy Room* (2025): Comparison of fashion sketch and finished garment (Photo: Franjo Matković)



Fig.2 Amanda Berišaj, *Lines of Connection* (2025): Comparison of fashion sketch and finished garment (Photo: Franjo Matković)

Kimi Bičanić's *White Noise* reinterprets a *2023 bridal model* by focusing on the transformation of the volume and rich feather textures of the original piece. A bomber jacket and trousers were crafted from white corduroy with feather strips applied to the surface, using everyday silhouettes to rethink formal elements (Fig.3). On the importance of this mentorship, the author remarked: "It is particularly significant that this project gives us a unique chance to work alongside a renowned Croatian brand, learn industry workflows, and gain experience essential for our future professional growth. For me, it was a moment of confirmation that the hard work so far has paid off."

Patricia Brnin, in *Blueprint/ER/01*, based her reinterpretation of a *2024 bridal gown* on a contemporary, conceptual shirtdress featuring a top that mimics a corset. The outfit was made from blue striped poplin with draped cowl sleeves and pointed cuffs, while a tie adds a subtle nod to professional business wear (Fig.4). Brnin noted the importance of learning how to remain faithful to a brand's aesthetic while maintaining one's own creative voice [10].



Fig.3 Kimi Bičanić, *White Noise* (2025): Comparison of fashion sketch and finished garment (Photo: Franjo Matković)



Fig.4 Patricia Brnin, *Blueprint/ER/01* (2025): Comparison of fashion sketch and finished garment (Photo: Franjo Matković)

Chiara Gatti, in *Cloud Nine*, reinterpreted a *2024 bridal model* by carrying over key features like the structured pleats on the front and the voluminous puff sleeves. The skirt uses pleats of varying widths to create visual movement, while bouclé trousers introduce a textural contrast against the shirt and skirt (Fig.5). She described the collaboration as "releasing creativity within a secure, professional environment" [11].

Aurora Hercigonja's *Cocoon* reinterprets a *2025 bridal model* with a design approach focused on "cocooning" the jacket and sleeves (Fig.6). This emphasizes the volume found in the original gown. Cut-outs in the sleeves reference a slit in the wedding dress, while the oversized cuffs of the shirtdress were inspired by the original collar. Regarding the mentorship, the author described it as a "dynamic exchange of ideas" with professional designers [12].



Fig.5 Chiara Gatti, *Cloud Nine* (2025): Comparison of fashion sketch and finished garment (Photo: Franjo Matković)



Fig.6 Aurora Hercigonja, *Cocoon* (2025): Comparison of fashion sketch and finished garment (Photo: Franjo Matković)

Ira Kosmačin, in Til Death, used the deconstruction of a 2025 bridal gown as a starting point for a contemporary fashion statement. The tulle from the original model was combined with striped suiting fabric to create a unisex suit that explores elegance outside of gendered categories (Figure 7). Kosmačin noted that the project served as an excellent platform for starting a dialogue on the transformability of clothing [13].

Doris Lenarčić, in Dune Rider, reinterpreted a *2025 bridal model* by deconstructing its form and turning the classic gown into a modern jumpsuit. Design elements like the pleats on the corset and the tapered sleeve ends are direct references to sand dunes, creating a visual link to the aesthetics of the film Dune (Figure 8). Discussing the mentorship, she said: "The opportunity to work with designers who have been on the scene for so long gave us a precious look into how a fashion brand actually functions. It was vital to learn how to balance a personal creative vision with market wearability… an experience that is hard to get purely within an academic setting." [14]



Fig.7 Ira Kosmačin, *Til Death* (2025): Comparison of fashion sketch and finished garment (Photo: Franjo Matković)



Fig.8 Doris Lenarčić, *Dune Rider* (2025): Comparison of fashion sketch and finished garment (Photo: Franjo Matković)

Marija Maros, in *Slate Grey*, reinterpreted the peplum element from a *2025 bridal gown*. In her new design, this element was moved to the shoulders (specifically the sleeve head) while also being kept at the hips to create a strong visual balance between the upper and lower body (Fig.9). Maros noted that participating in this process encouraged "a new level of professional responsibility" [15].

Ana Piplica, in *Perforated Void*, kept the core morphological features of a *2025 bridal model*, including the long sleeves, high collar, and short legs. The original lace pattern was transformed into oversized, hand-crocheted motifs on the jacket, while the trousers were made using a tulle knitting technique. The volume and material of the skirt reference the veil of the original piece. Regarding her experience, she stated: "The value of gaining practical skills by understanding the entire process of bringing a collection to life was invaluable for my future career." [16]



Fig.9 Marija Maros, *Slate Grey* (2025): Usporedni prikaz modne skice i realiziranog modela (Foto: Franjo Matković)



Fig.10 Ana Piplica, *Perforated Void* (2025): Usporedni prikaz modne skice i realiziranog modela (Foto: Franjo Matković)

The analysis of these reinterpretations shows how the project allowed for a systematic exploration of design borders, including the shift between formal and daily wear, the modulation of volume and fabric, and the use of modular or unisex solutions. At the same time, the fact that the identity of the original bridal models was preserved highlights the success of this pedagogical approach. It positions the educational process as a space for synergy between design research, innovation, and professional practice.

4. Conclusion

The conducted case study of the *eNVision* project confirms the effectiveness of a dual professional mentorship model which established a systematic link between the higher education institution and the fashion industry. Students redesigned bridal gown models into functional everyday clothes exploring the subtle distinctions between formal and casual while creating modular and original outfits that retained the core visual characteristics of the initial models. The results of this case study demonstrate that such an educational approach directly contributes to the development of complex professional competencies primarily through the mastery of strategies for balancing the established aesthetic parameters of a brand with individual creative expression. The reinterpretation process carried out within the defined curriculum encompassed the resolution of construction challenges and improved professional readiness thereby bridging the discrepancy between academic learning outcomes and the actual demands of the fashion market. Ultimately the study verifies that the synergy between research-based work in the Fashion Design IV course and direct contact with professional practice ensures a higher level of professional preparedness for students establishing a valid framework for the further development of hybrid learning models in higher education.

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