"Thanks, It Has Pockets!"

Adaptive or Universal Design is based on a simple premise: when we design for people with the greatest number of needs, we will all benefit. Examples include dips in the sidewalk curbs on corners and ramps to doorways.

Adaptive design presents a number of challenges when designing clothing. You have to ask a lot of questions: what is difficult for you, how have you coped up to this point, how would you fix your clothing if you could?

Clothing is an essential part of human life and we’ve probably all complimented someone on their dress and heard in response, “Thanks, it has pockets!” This line was the inspiration for this project. If something as simple as adding pockets to a dress or skirt can invoke such joy, imagine clothing made so that the overlooked task of dressing is made more accessible.

In this gallery space, there are a number of fully produced clothing items, sketches, and prototypes that were designed with adaptive principles in mind. How do you make a blouse that can be closed if you don’t have the fine motor skills to do up buttons? How about dressing if you are not able to lift your arm above your head or can’t work a zipper? How do you wear a dress if you have to run a feeding tube out the side? What about wearing a dress with an insulin pump that has to sit in your pocket or for many women, where does the pump go if your pants only have fake pockets?

These designs will work through some of those challenges and hopefully show that fashion is for all bodies.

Thank you to Raymond Veon, Amber Williams, Julie Wheeler, and the many people who were willing to share their experiences with clothing, illness, and disability with me. Your vulnerability helps make the world a better, safer, more inclusive space.

View the concept art.