Mother

Designer: Sophia Luu, Iowa State University, USA
Mentor: Ling Zhang, Iowa State University, USA

Mentor Statement

This design was created in a digital textile printing and design process course for undergraduates. The purpose of this mentorship relationship was for the student to understand the creative design process by using digital textile printing technology and handcraft techniques. The goal of this course was to introduce design strategies and conduct research in a creative design field for junior-level students. As design mentor, I demonstrated digitizing paper patterns into the Optitex and engineering the prints into the garment patterns. I also gave the student advice on the creation of the garment silhouette regarding representing her inspirations and the Kimono culture. I chose to submit this work due to the superb creativity of the prints, unique inspiration and the story of the garment, high quality of the construction, and the tremendous growth the student demonstrated in her problem solving skills.

Design Statement

The purpose of *Mother* was to exemplify the memory of the designer's deceased mother and characteristics of traditional Japanese dress. Engineered prints, digitally printed fabric, beading, and embroidery bridge innovation and tradition in a kimono-esque, avant-garde ensemble. A black ground was utilized, as it is the color of formal Japanese *mofuku,* or mourning clothing, and blue, reds, and whites exemplified the depicted artifacts belonging to the designer's mother.

Figure 1. Photographed artifacts

Initial ideation began with the intent of giving precious objects another life. Similar designs include Melanie Bowles and Kathryn Round's dress with a vintage dress digitally printed on it (Bowles, 2012). Stylistically, inspiration was taken from the work of Japanese photographer Ishiuchi Miyako. Miyako's work is said to "record material traces of the passage of time" (Michael Hoppen Gallery, 2019). Her series *Mother's* is a photography collection of her mother's possessions. Critic Yomota Unuhiko describes the work as "a work of private mourning and sign of reconciliation" (Sas in Maddox, 2015)

Before making the final selection of the motifs, the prototype design process was initiated. *Mother* was draped as a variant of a long, basic skirt and sleeveless bodice. The ensemble drew stylistic elements from the Japanese kimono by reiterating an overlapping center front and wide fold-over collar, and displaying layered shoulder panels. The layering was guided by the importance of

layered, colored panels in the Heian era of Japan (Dalby, 2001). The bodice and skirt patterns were then digitized and exported to Lectra Modaris software to modify the patterns.

Once the garment pattern was developed, creation of the digital print took place in Adobe Illustrator and Photoshop. A variety of artifacts had the background cut out on Adobe Photoshop and then experimentation with layering occurred (Figure 1). On the front skirt, a kokeshi doll, uchiwa fan, frog castanet, iris from a *furoshiki*, paper cranes, and gladiolas, roses, and lavender from the designer's mother's funeral comprised the final selection. The kokeshi doll, uchiwa fan, frog castanet, a variety of *furoshiki* (Japanese wrapping cloths), and Japanese toys, such as the included *durama,* stand out in the designer's mind because of her consistent exposure to them as a child. Because of the heavy use of symbolic floral motifs in Japanese design, the designer chose to include flowers from her mother's funeral, as they were personally meaningful. Cranes intermingle throughout. On the back skirt, a koi kite was engineered over a center back seam. Using the free transform tool, the kite occurs in a trailing repeat with decreasing opacity as the skirt lengthens. The back bodice features a print with 1,000 paper cranes made by the designer's mother's students. The shoulder panels most clearly iterate Mikayo's style of capturing things purely as they are. Two rumpled children's kimonos portray erosion with time and additionally represent the designer and her sister, the only two children of the designer's mother. A crackle paintbrush utilized in Adobe Photoshop covers the top panels and contributes to a feeling of time passed. Additionally, a flower motif taken from one of the photographed kimonos act as crests on the front and back shoulders and center back bodice. The crests were included, as they denote the highest level of formality with a Japanese kimono and are seen on mourning wear (Dalby, 2001). The second middle panel features a filtered gladiola motif and the bottom panel features a filtered lavender color. The channel mixer was utilized to alter the colors and the free transform tool allowed

Figure 2. Engineered print layout

for object manipulation and layering. Each panel is lined with a repeat print design representative of traditional Japanese design. The top and bottom panel both feature a repeat hemp design. After photographing a blue Japanese plate and red *furoshiki* cloth, the designer dissected the hemp star in Adobe Illustrator and created a perfectly symmetrical repeat. The middle panel features a black and white polka dot pattern based off a Japanese headband owned by the designer's mother. Using the fill and pattern tool, the designer filled the shoulder panel linings. The linings were exported to a PSD file and joined with the shell pieces. The final canvas was scaled to the appropriate printing size, layers were merged, and then saved as a TIFF file (Figure 2). The

Figure 3. Hand embroidery

design was printed on butterfly smooth crepe with a 100% polyester fiber content. This material was chosen for its lightweight quality, likeness to silk, and semi-matte finish that would support
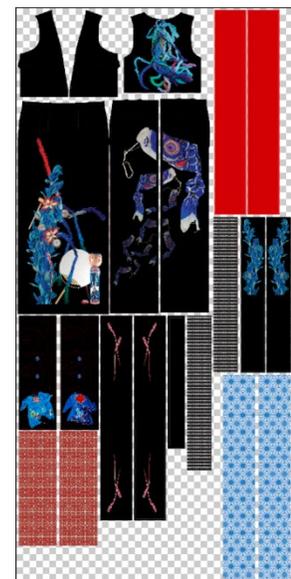
highlighting the surface technique. Interfacing the lining of the panels especially helped to bring the silhouette to life.

Before constructing the garment, the designer used 12/0 sized, turquoise, red, and white glass seed beads to decorate the floral motifs and children's kimono (Figure 3). Similar to other historical Japanese kimono, the designer utilized metallic gold thread to embroider the iris motif. Back stitches and French knots bring subtle intrigue and beauty that is only noticeable when up close to the garment.

In the final construction stages, the kimono collar was purposely lapped right over left. This arrangement has symbolic meaning in Japan, as only the deceased have their kimono lapped in this manner (Dalby, 2001). A magnetic snap closure lent a hand to ease the wear. The shoulder panels were tacked down with basting stitches to maintain the silhouette.

Digital printing contributed a great deal to the creation of *Mother*. This piece innovates from traditional Japanese silhouettes and symbolic Japanese design along with being a highly sentimental piece for the designer.

References:

Beser, A. (2017, December 15). How Paper Cranes Became a Symbol of Healing in Japan. Retrieved from https://blog.nationalgeographic.org/2015/08/28/how-paper-cranes-became-a-symbol-of-healing-in-japan/.

Bowles, M., & Isaac, C. (2012). *Digital textile design*. London: Laurence King Publishing.

Dalby, L. C. (2001). *Kimono*. Leiden: Hotei Pub.

Miyako, I., Hiromi, I., & Sas, M. (2015). *Ishiuchi Miyako: postwar shadows*. Los Angeles: The J. Paul Getty Museum.

Front

Back

Side

Detail