Color Hearing: Baby it's Cold Outside

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Contextual Review and Concept

This design used psychomimicry (Ridgway, 2017; Jonsson, 2014) as the process for creating the textile print. The psychological aspect being "mimicked" is the neurological phenomenon known as synesthesia. Synesthesia occurs when an individual experiences two senses at once (i.e., seeing color when hearing music; Haack & Radocy, 1981; Ward, 2013)). The design challenge sought to emulate this phenomenon through the creation of a textile print that embodies color hearing through the depiction of sound as color. In a previous design scholarship, Ridgway (2017) used violin music with the coding of only notes from the selected musical piece. While a successful emulation of synesthesia occurred in Author's work, it occurred at a very simplistic level in terms of coding of the music. The purpose of the current work is to elaborate on the design challenge by asking new and more complex questions: How would a *duet* be portrayed in a textile print? And how would the coding of the musical beats along with the music notes change the development of the textile print? The current work explored these challenges through the selection of *Baby it's Cold Outside* to be used as the piece of music to be coded to emulate synesthesia through psychomimicry.

Baby it's Cold Outside was selected as the piece of music because of its structure as a duet and its fame as a classic American standard. The history of the piece of music served as the foundation in determining the silhouette of the garment and the color story. Although the song is considered a classic to many, the layman cannot often recite the true origin and meaning behind the song. *Baby it's Cold Outside* was written by Frank Loesser in 1944 as a song for him and his wife to sing at a housewarming party that they were hosting shortly after moving to New York city (Loesser, 1993). The song was the closing act and served as in indication that it was time for the guests to leave. Frank and his wife reportedly became famous for singing *Baby it's Cold Outside* at many of their friends' parties for several years until 1949 when Frank made the decision to sell the song to MGM to be used in the romantic comedy, Neptune's Daughter (Loesser, 1993). The song won "best original song" at the 1950's academy awards for its use in the hit movie. The song is written as a duet, in binary form, with the two parts being indicated as "mouse" and "wolf." In the movie Neptune's Daughter, the song is sung as a call and response between two different couples. In one scenario, the man plays the part of the wolf and in the second scenario the woman also plays the part of the wolf. The part of the wolf played by both genders is significant to the design of the textile print and garment as it is important to incorporate both feminine and masculine components. The garment type chosen to explore the textile print design challenge is a woman's jacket and skirt that historically fits with the time period in which the song was written and originally performed (circa 1940s). In 1947 Christian Dior débuted the new look, which was a jacket and skirt that molded to the curves of the female body (Tortora & Eubank, 1989). The jacket length covered the top of the hips and the skirt length was below the knee. The new look served as the main inspiration for the silhouette of the ensemble.

Process and Technique

Print Development: The song *Baby it's Cold Outside* served as a road map for the creation of the digital textile print. A two-step process was utilized to code the music for both beats (unit of time) and notes (pitch). First, beats were coded based on the duration of time (i.e. a whole note equals 4 beats). This coding is reflected in the textile print. For instance, a whole note was given a 1" x 1" square. Therefore, the remaining beats were coded based on their

relationship to the whole note. For example, a half note received a 1/2" x 1" bar and an eighth note received a 1/8" x 1" bar (See figure 1.). Therefore, the lines of the textile print accurately reflect the beats of the music. Second, to emulate synesthesia, each note was allocated one color (i.e. all "c" notes are blue and all "f" notes are yellow). The color story was selected based off research of popular colors used in apparel for the 1940's. Additionally, inspiration was gained through viewing garments housed in the costume collection of the researcher's institution. Furthermore, the colors were specifically selected to represent both male and female parts of the duet. The lower notes on the scale are depicted in blues and the higher notes reds/pinks. The two highest notes are a high 'c' and high 'd', which are depicted in lighter versions of the same blue used for the lower notes as if the scale is repeating in a higher octave. The middle notes are depicted in gender neutral, yellow, while breaks in the music are depicted in white (See figure 2 for note color coding). The final version of the textile print (See figure 3) depicts both the mouse and wolf parts with the mouse part above the wolf, similar to how the music is written since the mouse starts the song. In the textile print, the call and response between both singers can be seen through the patterns that emerged as repeats in both lines. For the final garments, the researcher used Photoshop to create a repeat print that was digitally printed onto a cotton sateen fabric. The repetition of the print symbolizes the many verses of the song and created a beautiful overall print for the skirt and jacket. Basic flat patterning techniques were used to construct the jacket and skirt. One interesting design detail to note is the lining of the jacket. The jacket lining is also digitally printed and is the four pages of sheet music with the designer's notes and coding for both the music beats and notes. The sheet music directly links the process of developing the textile print to the final garment and will aid in the dissemination of knowledge for this work.

Design Contribution and Innovation

The main contribution of this work is furthering the body of design research that utilizes psychomimicry and expands what was already known by implementing new techniques for the coding of the piece music using both beats and notes, which has not been done before. Additionally, this work provides a novel link between the process and final work by incorporating the "data" of this project into the final garment's lining. The idea of visual depiction of the process will help in the dissemination of the knowledge as it allows the viewer to gain insight into the coding of the music and to gain a better understanding of how the textile print was created.

References

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Figure 1.

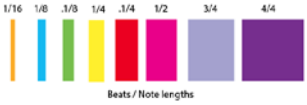
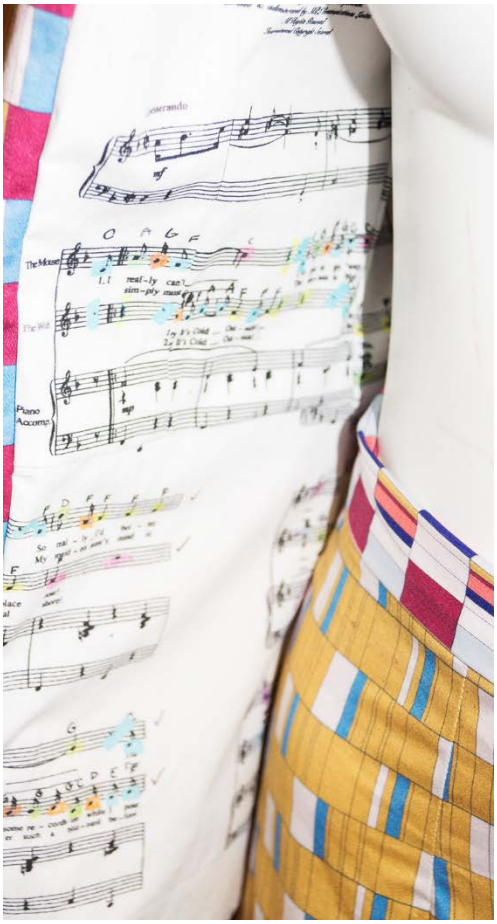


Figure 2.

Figure 3.


The Mouse
Piano Accomp