

Surrealism with Floating Origami Rose: A Cocktail Ensemble
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Measurements: Bust 38 ½”, Waist 29”, Hips 39”

Contextual Review and Concept:

Surrealism began as an art movement in the 20th Century, and was characterized by paintings and sculpture using perplexing images in strange combinations to express unconscious thoughts and dream states (Ellinwood, 2011; Martin, 1989). Salvadore Dalí was one of the artists who produced paintings, sculpture, and films in the Surrealist style (Ellinwood, 2011; Martin, 1989). Melting clocks, floating flowers in landscape space, and humans with drawer units inserted into legs and torso, were among the images used by Dalí (Ellinwood, 2011; Martin, 1989).

During the 1930's Italian designer Elsa Schiaparelli collaborated with the Surrealist Dalí (Ellinwood, 2011; Fukai, 2002; Martin, 1989; Millbank, 1985; Steele, 1991). While Schiaparelli was a contemporary with Coco Chanel, and had an atelier in Paris that was geographically close to Chanel's, she was not the accomplished seamstress as was Chanel. Instead, Schiaparelli considered "Dress designing...not a profession but an art" (Martin, 1989, p. 197). By this she meant that the dress was to be considered a canvas, much like a painting. The famous lobster dress in which she collaborated with Dalí serves as an example of her design as art (Ellinwood, p. 208). In this design, a lobster measuring upwards of thirty inches is positioned center-front on the skirt of a long white evening gown. While the symbolism of the lobster is unclear, the concept and positioning of the orange crustacean on white silk was purposeful, and involved considerable planning. In addition, there was probable use of a resist substance to maintain the lobster image without bleeding onto the white silk.

In this design submission the *concept* of the Surrealist Landscape textile design evolved during the process of manipulating a digital image of twisted metal with multiple layers of peeling paint. During the process of enlarging, mirroring, abstracting and copying various parts of the image, a surreal landscape emerged. At times the image appeared to be of extra-terrestrial origin, and from a different perspective the image took on an under-water landscape appearance. The designer was fascinated with the lateral organization of the image, and deemed it appropriate for further development into a garment structure, in which the visual priority was the Surreal Landscape imagery. The *concept* for the cocktail ensemble of coat and dress was a contemporary, easy-to-wear, minimal and modern fashion design.

Aesthetic Properties and Visual Impact:

Beyond the unusual shapes that one might associate with landscape images, color was identified as a prime design element to manipulate for visual focus. A variety of hues within the blue family were digitally intensified, deepened, and juxtaposed next to a variety of hues from the realm of secondary green hues. The greens were lightened to create an edge of contrast next to the dark blues. The mirrored image was centered on the width of fabric slated to be the center-front and center-back of both the cocktail dress and coat. It was intended that the images on center-front of the coat would align with the images on the dress, to create a three-dimensional appearance of image echo.

To keep the Surreal image in the textile the main focus of the design, garment structures were purposefully keep uncomplicated, minimal and straight forward. The slender cocktail dress has waist shaping accomplished by means of three half-inch tucks placed one inch apart on either side of center front. Each tuck was pressed to create a creased edge, but the tucks were not pressed flat. Rather, the series of tucks stand perpendicular to the plane of the dress to add three-dimensional emphasis. There are fifteen-inch openings at the hem of the side-seams of the dress which reveal the bright green silk lining,

and mirror the openings in the side-seams of the coat. The coat is styled with a ‘V’-shaped neckline without collar or lapel. Front darts from the shoulder seam provide shaping for bust. The lateral orientation in the textile is aligned in the coat body and bracelet-length sleeves. The coat lining is digitally printed with the same design as the outer fabric.

The origami folded rose in this ensemble was inspired by a Dalí painting entitled *Meditative Rose*, in which a realistic depiction of a red rose floats over an abstract landscape. To create the origami flower, two layers of silk were fused and folded into a flower abstraction. The rose is attached to slender black silk cording and worn as a necklace.

Process and Technique:

The textile design was developed using Lectra Kaledo Print software, then digitally printed onto silk duchess for the coat. A blend of silk/lycra charmeuse was used for the cocktail dress and coat lining. All digitally printed fabric was steamed in a vacuum pressure steamer to set the dyes. Fabric for the dress lining was hand-dyed a brilliant green. Garment patterns for the coat and dress were draped using traditional technique approach. Traditional interfacing and couture sewing techniques were used to assemble both garments.

Cohesion:

The primary focus in this submission is the Surrealist landscape textile design. Emphasis was achieved through digitally manipulating color vibrancy and contrast in the artwork used for the silk textile. Garment structures were purposefully held at a minimum level of complexity to maintain emphasis on the textile design. Traditional draping techniques were used to create the garment patterns, and couture techniques were used to assemble and finish the garment structures. The combination of these strategies result in a visually interesting and cohesive design.

Design Contribution and Innovation:

This design submission follows the precedent of a relationship between fashion and Surrealism established in the 1930’s by Elsa Schiaparelli and Salvador Dalí. This design is different than works created in their collaboration, in that the process for deriving the imagery in the textile design was done using digital technology. The final imagery was actually a *consequence* of the process of digitally manipulating a photograph which resulted in a Surrealist landscape, compared to the process used by Schiaparelli and Dalí which involved the manual painting of a preconceived, planned image onto silk. The contribution to the literature in design provided by this submission, is a unique textile design and garment structure that visually demonstrates the potential for dress designing to be a manifestation of art.

References:

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