



Spiraling Through Generations

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Spiraling through Generations was developed as an experimentation of process and collaboration across generations. The idea was inspired by a study on how textile crafts can positively impact ones mood. (Collier, Hahn, Ohrn-McDaniel, 2015). Growing up in a family where textile arts were always an important part of the cultural heritage and the daily life it was only natural to look to collaborate within the family. I started the discussion with my mother, whom I often talk to about ideas. Her textile expertise is focused on batik and tie-dye, but she is also very knowledgeable in a multitude of other textile related techniques. We started discussing ideas and thought it would be great to create a piece that involved 4 generations of makers and thus the project had begun. The four generations collaborating were easy to choose, we started asking the youngest participants; my two sons, three and five years old, then we asked my grandmother, who was 91 at the time. Naturally, my mother and I were the main participants organizing and planning together. We started talking about how each participant would be able to contribute in an area they felt they had experience. This led to the natural organization of the collaborators. The roles were as follows; me: lead designer, patternmaker and draper, my mother: second designer with dye experience, the children and grandmother had experience with embroidery at different levels.

The design process started out through draping of the silhouette and then using a technique often referred to as transformational reconstruction in order to add the style lines to the design. The term “transformational reconstruction” was coined by Shingo Sato a Japanese draper and patternmaker. (Sato, 2016). Using transformational reconstruction simplified the draping process considerably as other techniques had initially been tested. In transformational reconstruction the simplest darts and seaming is draped on the form to create the silhouette, then the style lines are drawn on the drape and the pattern is developed by cutting the drape on the new style lines. The design of the pattern started from the idea of craft carrying through generations, as is historically the culture of skill development in textile crafts. This was very much true for our family and I try to keep that tradition alive with my two young boys. Through two spirals, one in a new linen fabric and one in an old handwoven linen sheet, the shaping of the garment was created. Both fabrics started out white then the pattern was based on the fabric and with that in mind my mother designer the tied dyed motif with the plan of the embroidery in mind. After the fabric was dyed we started planning and mapping out the embroidery. Through this discussion we realized it would be easier to piece parts of the dress together in order to work on the embroidery more effectively. The design of the embroidery for the young boys was very loose and open all I told them was to stay within the tie dyed circles and then go as crazy as they wanted using the yarn we had chosen. This gave them freedom but incorporated enough control to make sure the stitches stayed a good length. At their age the only embroidery stitching they knew was how to go up and down without wrapping the yarn around the hoop. They both enjoyed participating and there was just enough for them to share in the work and not too much work as children run out of patience rather quickly. The embroidery motifs for my grandmother were much more detailed. She has extensive experience in embroidery but she does not enjoy having freedom when she stitches she wants to know exactly what to do in order to enjoy it the most. Therefore,

Page 1 of 2

the design was carefully drawn on the dress. When designing the embroidery we played with ideas of how the spiral of textile learning can give us the opportunity to flourish. Learning from my mother gave me the confidence that I have needed to push myself to try new things in my work to never be afraid of what I don't know but to jump in with both feet and see where it takes me. This is why the floral motifs in the design are all untraditional and creative interpretations of flowers. This imaginative approach to flowers shows the freedom and the opportunity to be creative and try things without having set rules to follow.

Through this project, we looked at a perspective of co-design and collaboration focusing on what the people involved in the process would enjoy working on. Looking at co-design we can see as evidenced in the project "Wearing Well-being: Using Context Mapping toward the Development of Garment Therapy for Elderly Populations" (Cobb, Lapolla, 2016) that it is important to find the natural connection with the co-designer or in this case collaborator. When we planned out the approach we wanted to make sure to focus on areas of expertise but also areas of enjoyment. This design process was slow with the intention of making a garment that would be cherished not just at the completion but also during the process. The slow approach also relates to the slow fashion the end product hopes to fit into. Although, not a classical design as we expect from a garment that we hope to keep for a long time but with a personal connections as Kate Fletcher talks about in her book on Sustainable Fashion and Textiles (Fletcher, 2014). Through the personal involvement and the meaning of the piece to the makers as well as the rare opportunity to meet in a project through textile craft gives opportunity for joy for many years to come. It is also our hope that it will serve as an inspiration as slow and relaxing techniques such as embroidery hopes to be brought back more into our currently rushed society as a way find a balance in our often stressed lives (Rosen, 1972).

Aesthetically, this design carries the idea of the concept through the spiral design and through the techniques and the mix of the techniques. The materials and colors were chosen carefully in an effort to work with the theme and the continuation of my body of work. This project builds on a group of designs in my work that look at the connection to your roots and how you can create pieces that form a connection between the piece and the maker and/ or material in a very personal way.

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