



## SAORI Ensemble

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SAORI Ensemble is one in a series of designs developed as part of a textile and fashion collaboration organized by SAORIartsnyc, between SAORI weavers with autism in Japan and fashion designers based in the US. The SAORI collaboration was an awareness-raising opportunity to reach people working in the fields of fashion and art who have never related to those with disabilities. It should be noted that proceeds from the sale of the collaborative ensembles generated funding for the SAORI weaving non-profit SAORIartsnyc to develop a curriculum to benefit people living on the spectrum of autism. As part of the collaboration, I was paired with weaver Sachiko Sawada of the Japanese SAORI workshop Akagino Kobo.

**The purpose** and my role in the design was to create a cohesive ensemble that expanded the textural dynamism of the SAORI narrow-loomed cloth while respecting the physical parameters by leaving the woven yardage uncut. **Background/Context:** SAORI is a weaving technique developed by the Japanese weaver Misao Jo. The weaving form of SAORI has been adopted by art therapists at SAORIartsnyc and used as a healing modality for people with physical and intellectual disabilities. According to Misao Jo, “The concept of SAORI is to refuse the idea of mistakes. Each movement, each thread used is integral to the whole piece. The free-style weaving (ori) form’s name comes from the word ‘sa,’ which is used in zen vocabulary to mean that everything has its own dignity.” (www.saoriglobal.com, 2015)

**Inspiration:** The philosophy of SAORI inspired me to employ a method of tactile ‘call and response’ with the intention of celebrating the cloth and the culture and wisdom from which it originates. The celebration of fabric positions patternmaking and textiles as an integral aspect of fashion design rather than something to be addressed after and in response to a sketch (McQuillan, 2011). **Process:** The material from which a garment is made is the factor that has the most influence on the particular shaping of it. Reflecting on this passage from Brunahm (1973) guided my process. I evaluated the SAORI textile aesthetically and functionally. Based on the functional evaluation the sturdy warp threads (10/2 pearl cotton set at 24 e.p.i.) were used as a device for gathering and draping a bodice, allowing the weaving to remain uncut. The gathered silhouette was draped on a dressform, then secured through hand-sewn joins (Mayer, 1985). In making use of the total textile, no waste was created. I determined through aesthetic evaluation that the textural dynamism of the weaving could be expanded with the use of digital textile design. The weaving was scanned and composited into a repeat pattern in Adobe Photoshop, then digitally printed onto silk satin. An A-Line skirt was constructed out of this printed yardage. The skirt hem was frayed as a textural compliment to the woven bodice.

**The contributions** to creative scholarship are multi-fold. The method of construction used in the woven bodice consciously considers the parameters of the material itself. The effort to compliment (and maximize) the qualities inherent in the material is a form of no-waste design. In this way, SAORI Ensemble amplifies existing knowledge, harkening back to the first garments that were dependent on the rectilinear form of loom-woven cloth (Burnham, 1973). Secondly, digital printing expands the potential of more quickly developing a complex pattern and increasing the amount of usable patterned material for a design. Finally, this design is a tactile invitation to other designers who might be interested in exploring and collaborating with the valuable work of the SAORI movement.

### References:

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Mayer, A. (1984). *Clothing from the hands that weave..* Loveland, CO: Interweave Press.

*SAORI WEAVING - free-style weaving for everyone - its philosophy, history, events and more.* (n.d.). Retrieved May 13, 2015, from <http://www.saoriglobal.com/>

