

Singed: How the zebra got its stripes

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Singed: How the zebra got its stripes is a continuation of exploration into various African cultures and fables. I have been working with batik for the past few years and with this piece, I continue to expand my knowledge of working with this resist technique. There is still much to learn of this craft, thus I plan to experiment with this media in the future as well.

This piece was inspired by an African fable from the San people of Botswana, Namibia, Angola, Zambia, Zimbabwe and South Africa. Through paraphrasing, I tell the story here and interpret it via the exhibition piece. Long ago, when drought was near and only small pools and pans of water were accessible; there was a boisterous baboon who was the self-proclaimed ‘lord of the water.’ The baboon sat perched on the rocks near the pool with his fire going. An all-white zebra came to the pool of water for a drink and the baboon told the zebra to go away from *his* pool. ‘This water is for everyone not just you,’ shouted the zebra back at the baboon. The baboon stood on a large rock, puffed out his chest and told the zebra he would have to fight for the water. They began to fight in fury, then with a mighty kick, the zebra sent the baboon flying high in the air and he fell among the rocks behind them. However, when the zebra gave that powerful thrust, the force was quite great! As a result of the kick, the zebra staggered back into the baboon’s fire and was singed leaving black stripes all over its white fur.



The design process began with researching bustles from the 19th and early 20th centuries. I



wanted the garment to have a similar shape as the zebra's body and a bustle was the perfect solution. I created a 3-tiered pillow bustle and then draped the dress silhouette on top of the bustle. The first two layers were constructed of black cotton batiste and white cotton batiste. The exterior layer was created of white 7mm cotton canvas and the bustier top was created with a buckram interlining for stability sandwiched between the batiste and canvas. The exterior layer was pinned together and the zebra stripes were drawn on by hand, then the areas which would remain white were waxed with a paraffin and beeswax mixture. The exterior layer was colored black in a cool bath with fiber reactive dyes. The wax was ironed out and the fabric laundered. Finally all three layers (the canvas and two batiste layers) were singed along the hem with a heat gun. This work contributes to the field more knowledge of African cultures as well as ideas of how to use batik to interpret new concepts. Story telling is very important to

the legacy of African cultures and many other cultures. This piece represents an alternative way to tell the story of the San people.

Date Completed: May 2015

Measurements: Bust 34", Waist 27", Hips 80"

Fourie, C. (n.d.) How the Zebra got its stripes. *Fables and animal stories by Chrigi-in-Africa of the San Clan*. Gateway Africa.com. Retrieved from http://www.gateway-africa.com/stories/How_the_Zebra_Got_his_Stripes_San.html