

Unbridled

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Statement of the Purpose

The concept behind “Unbridled” was inspired by a visit to the *Undressed* exhibition at the Victoria and Albert Museum. From early periods in costume history, women were bound or contrived through the use of banding and corsetry into an ideal look and shape (Ehramm, 2015). The exhibition revealed various movements in the past two centuries where undergarments and outerwear synchronistically adapted to the look of the times or to cultural expectations, highlighting and controlling features from derriere to bosom and looks from straight to curvaceous. The constant battle between opposing forces, freedom and constraint, was a mainstay in the exhibit and in a survey of latter centuries of historic costume. Even today, author Janelle Collett states “though technological advances may decrease the pain and discomfort, women still pad, distort, and squeeze their bodies to meet cultural expectations.” “Unbridled” highlights the use of bands in a less constrained manner, creating movement away from the body equal to the pull against the body. Building off of previous work by Dragoo (2015), and further investigating the application of trim and soutache in angles and curves, the design took shape. The selection of fabrics and colors represent a neutral palette, indicating the indecision between bondage and freedom, while the silhouette also represents the dichotomy of constraint and extension.

Process, Technique and Execution

The design began with a variety of sketches working out details of conformity to the body. A cotton/linen fabric, cotton banding, and two blended fiber soutache trims were selected for the outer garment. A menswear cotton blend Khaki fabric was used for lining and bodice interlining, while a lightweight cotton sateen with 5% lycra was used for Hong Kong seam finishing. A decision was made not to use boning for the garment to maintain the integrity of purpose for the design. A blend of flat pattern and draping was used to create the fit and flare of the hemline. Asymmetry was introduced through the surplice skirt, offering further support for the vision of indecision and conflict in conformity. The bodice was constructed with a bustier interlined in medium weight menswear khaki. Seams were serged and stabilized with a double row of topstitching to offer bodice support without the discomfort of boning. The top banding was created using wide cotton twill, edged in trim. The twill was eased and steamed in areas to shrink or stretch around the curves of the chest and rib cage. The banding was set on a self-faced band to fold over on top of the bodice layer. The skirt was draped to create the appropriate fullness and desired appearance for the slit opening and silhouette. Twill banding was used to support and stabilize the hemline to produce the desired flare without use of horsehair braid. Again, basting stitches, easing and steaming were used to create the curves in the trim edge.

Soutache trim was added to both edges of the cotton twill and stitched in place. The cotton khaki skirt lining was used for structure and finishing of the bottom and side panel edges. The lining enclosed the hemline, creating a smooth finish just under the base trim layer. A side zipper was selected for closure with a grosgrain inner belt to stabilize the waistline and finish the seam allowance.

The girdle was created as a separate accessory. The girdle concept was to create silhouette volume, accentuating a minimal waist, but freeing what would be bound through the hip area in a traditional girdle. The design of this introduced challenges with numerous thick layers of fabric and trim. Additionally, the cotton twill in itself held little volume in each loop, so a wired grosgrain was used for added shaping. The waistband was created using two horizontal layers of twill sewn together at the top edge, one holding the outer edge of each loop and one holding the inner edge of each loop. A cross stitch was used to secure the two layers together at the bottom creating the finished girdle. A matte pewter belt clasp was used to secure the ends together.

Design Contribution and Innovation

“Unbridled” gave opportunity to further the designer’s body of work in banding and precision trimwork. The use of cotton/linen fabrics provided the right body and fabric weight for the chosen design while highlighting natural fiber resources, a designer preference. Additionally, the investigation of structure and volume without the use of traditional resources such as boning and horsehair braid offered insight and opportunity for experimentation in the design process through selection of materials, findings and fabrics. Overall, the design presents innovative alternatives to traditional design through fabric and trimming selections and silhouette constraint deviations.

References

Colette, Janelle. "Remember the Ladies – Distortion: A Study of 20th Century Women’s Undergarments." [Http://www.feminist.com/resources/artspeech/remember/rtl10.htm](http://www.feminist.com/resources/artspeech/remember/rtl10.htm). Feminist.com, Apr. 2016. Web. 26 May 2016.

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Measurements

B – 33 1/2”, W – 26”, H – 37”

