

Bizango

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Mentor Statement. This student's creative work begins with intense research in experimental art and construction techniques, followed by intensified lab hours testing out techniques and mediums, and is translated into cutting edge adaptations and innovations in couture quality wearable art. Each piece designed inspires through the unique application of techniques, fabrics, colors and textures. As design mentor, I sought to guide the process, offering resources and streamlining construction and finishing techniques where needed. This student came to our program with extreme creativity, yet minimal skills to translate ideas to reality. I chose to submit this work because it is the culmination of tremendous growth on the part of the designer, superb creativity, and shows merit and promise for the future.

Statement of the Purpose. "Bizango" was inspired by colorful Bizango warrior statues. The sculptures are human skeleton faces molded from clay and a stuffed body, so they almost look like scarecrows. Fabric is draped on the sculptures and the fabric is apparently randomly eased in at odd places and hand topstitched until the fabric fits taut against the form. The pleats look very free form and snake like. The technique was utilized for a portion of the design (the pant) while topping off the body form with a dichotomous tightly molded and loose fitting echo dyed drape. Blending inspiration from ancient body molded art forms and contemporary influences of McQueen's leather body molding helped create a nature-inspired ensemble. The finishing dying technique plays off the experimental work of Sherry Haar (2015), utilizing natural leaves, twigs and petals to complete the appearance of a lichen-covered aging hide.

Process, Technique and Execution. I took the stuffed body approach of the Bizango warrior statue when I created the polyester/cotton imitation silk dupioni pants. I created a completely finished oversized pair of pants lined with cotton sateen to act as a block. I put these oversized pants on the dress form and ran about 1 inch horizontal hand basting stitches around the circumference from pant top to the point at the bottom of each leg where I wanted the pants to flair out. The basting stitches were drawn in until the pants fit the dress form. These gathers were taped down so that the imitation dupioni crushed like paper. The gathers were ironed to make pleats. The pants were put back on the dress form and all the pleats and any excess ease was hand stitched down until the pants fit well on the dress form. The pleats swirl around the body in a beautiful, free-form, organic way. The finished product makes the viewer think of tree bark or cracked marble.

The top blouse was inspired by Alexander McQueen's circa 90s collections and his techniques with leather molds and dyeing. Alexander McQueen created designs that were leather molds of the female bust. I wanted to make a top that was built on a female bust mold, but I chose, instead of using leather, to use wool felt. I created a bust mold out of plaster bandages. I then created a strong block of wool felt from roving. This block of felt was stretched and molded to the plaster mold. After the wool dried, the mold was stabilized with a latex rubber coating. The silk Dupioni that I draped and hand tacked to the mold was eco dyed. This technique involved scouring the silk, then mordanting with alum and cream of tartar. The fabric was further mordanted with a ferrous acetate liquor. I then placed many plants native to my region on the fabric with berries, rusted metals and purple onion skins. The silk was rolled up and steamed for two hours. The fabric was then kept moist and let to sit for about a week. The result was a beautiful natural dyed fabric that gives the look of many animal hides.

Design Contribution and Innovation. Each of the design processes chosen for this ensemble were time consuming, but rewarding in their end result. The Dupioni shirring technique played off of its inspiration source while adding to the various pleating approaches taken by Fortuny and others. The body sculpting technique was my creative approach to mimic McQueen's leather sculpting designs while casting light on an alternate and possibly more eco-friendly approach. Finally, adding an echo dye technique to the silk bodice layer introduced a balance of nature and regionalism to the design, reflective of the visual inspiration for the design. Although the techniques are not new, my approach to adaptation and experimentation with them provides unlimited methods of creative interpretation. Ultimately, an innovative and experimental approach to design has become my signature, alongside creative textile dyeing and surface manipulation for dimensional excitement.

References

Haar, S. (2015). Summer Harvest. Abstract. Proceedings of the International Textile and Apparel Association, Santa Fe, NM, November 11-14, 2015. On-line.

Measurements

B – 32", W – 25", H – 35"

