



## Water's Edge: Theme and Variation

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### **Concept and context**

Universal Design (UD) is described as a method to create a design that works “beautifully and seamlessly for as many people as possible [by considering] the breadth of human diversity across the lifespan to create design solutions that work for all users” (Story, Mueller, & Mace, 1998). A limited number of apparel designers have explored UD as a possible framework, and have found that of the seven principles, not all are directly relevant to Universal Design for apparel (UDA) (Park, et al., 2014; Carroll & Gross, 2010). Clothing designed using Universal Design principles also has a strong tendency to emphasize function over aesthetics (Carroll & Kincade, 2007). Thus additional research is necessary to understand the implications of UD for apparel. The design *Water's Edge: Theme and Variation* is a beginning phase in examining the UD principles as related to apparel, and was motivated by the belief that clothing has a dual purpose of function and self-expression.

Frequently, designers try to apply all seven principles of UD when creating one product, but as Park et al. noted, not all principles directly apply to apparel design. For this design, the researchers incorporated one, rather than all, UD principles in the apparel design to optimize the examination of the UD approach. Thus, the primary focus was the second UD principle, flexibility in use. This principle states that “the design accommodates a wide range of individual preferences and abilities” (The Center for Universal Design, 1997). For this study, the user group identified was women over 50. The creative approach was to use digital textile printing for aesthetic appeal, and integrate laser cutting for additional fit flexibility.

### **Aesthetic properties and visual impact**

*Water's Edge: Theme and Variation* was created to allow a variety of wearing options. It can be worn as a vest or, by adding the separate sleeves, as a jacket. The sleeves are attached to a bolero shape that could be worn separately. The entire garment can be turned 180 degrees and what was center front becomes center back. This offers two different silhouettes for the wearer. Finally, the jacket is reversible. The digitally printed surface design, developed from photographs of ice and water, was manipulated to create strong linear movement and transitions from light to dark. The use of angular pattern pieces breaks up the lines of the printed pattern, which were intentionally not aligned to match. However, the lighter color was placed closer to the top to highlight the

face. In addition, by printing on two fabric weights, there is both structure and lightness in physical movement.

### **Process, techniques, and execution**

Garment shape developed through experimental draping and reliance on the designer's previous experience with geometric, transformable forms. As the goal was to focus on multi-use, it was predetermined that it would start as a vest, have detachable sleeves and potential be able to be worn in more than one orientation on the body. Previous experimentation demonstrated possible draping approaches that varied the starting point and angle of geometric shapes relative to the body. Multiple shapes were tested in half scale to experiment with solutions for body curve shaping, with a desire to have limited obvious dart contouring. Use of separate interconnected pieces in the final solution allowed distribution of shaping while at the same time allocating some control to the wearer in terms of desired fit and level of interaction of garment with body. The angled drape of some pattern pieces extends the movement vertically, aiding in creating a cohesive visual element with the linear print pattern. Semi-sheer silk georgette was used for a double layered front/back draped bodice that softens the line, as do the georgette sleeves. Laser cutting on a band that extends from the draped bodice across either front or back, depending on orientation when worn, has self-fabric silk ties that can also be tied to alter tightness of fit.

### **Design Contribution and Innovation**

*Water's Edge: Theme and Variation* builds on research that seeks to expand on the process of using Universal Design principles for apparel design. This garment design development focused on flexibility in use. The vest/jacket can be worn in two different orientations of the body, has a removable sleeve component, and flexibility is adjusting fit for various bodies. The surface design is oriented to extend the body and to highlight the face. The design also emphasizes aesthetic qualities as at least equal to functional aspects.

**Date Completed:** May 30, 2018

**Materials:** Silk crepe and silk georgette, digitally printed with reactive dye.

**Measurements:** Female size Large, with some flexibility in fit.

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