

## Windswept

Barbara T Bradley, University of Wisconsin Madison, USA

Carolyn Kallenborn, Assistant Professor

Keywords: Transformative, kinetic, wearable art

I have forever been lured by the magic of shaping raw materials into wearable pieces of art. The craft of making forges a strong connection to my ancestors who also engaged in textiles and clothing. Draping fabric, hearing the whir of the sewing machine, and hand-printing pattern on cloth recalls images of making doll clothes alongside my mother and watching my grandmother knit spectacular patterns from memory.



My graduate work explores visual art which blurs the boundary between humans, art, and the environment.

Shaping textiles into three-dimensional form is my creative vehicle to express nature's mystery and complex life forces. By superimposing rhythmic layers of pattern, shapes, and line, I can begin to touch the edges of our natural world. What can I learn from drawing closer to nature and can we be changed by that relationship?

In *Windswept*, I set out to capture the untamed elements of nature. The conceptual process began with questions such as - "How can I mimic the wind? What materials are malleable and organic that can reflect its movement? How can I elicit the

kinetic tension of materials about to take flight?

For the shoulder sculpture, I took course, natural fiber-wrapped wires and twisted them through transparent tubing. The wire gives structure to the arc and can be manipulated to fit the body's form. A leather tie crosses the bodice front, reminiscent of a Greek goddess. As light penetrates



the conduit, the raw core is exposed, a metaphor on vulnerability. The feathers suspended in space signify a spiritual passage. The young woman wearing this garment seems poised, about to embark on a journey.

For the garment portion, I custom-designed a simple, bias-cut halter dress with an extended asymmetrical hemline. The lines of the halter straps mirror the bodice leather wrappings. The bare upper back becomes a canvas for the shoulder sculpture. The rayon blend knit yielded a body-hugging, liquid drape. Its neutral color unifies the earthy ensemble. The dress can also be worn as an elegant layer on its own. The semi-transparent layers of dyed cheesecloth and wire mesh added a sense of intrigue and ambiguity. Elegance mixes with erosion as the open weave separates and tears, as if exposed to the wind.

Can the viewer visualize their own experience of the natural world and recall where they felt the wind lifting their spirits or wearing them thin? Windswept is an outcome of this exploration. It validates the transformative power of wearable garments and nature. To empower the wearer's sense of self is true metamorphoses.