

Mother's Desire

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Contextual Review and Concept: The contextual review for this design piece originated from the investigation of pre-colonial printing of Adinkra cloth of the Ashanti tribe in Ghana, West Africa. Adinkra symbols convey traditional wisdom, summarize reminiscent messages, and serve as a decorative purpose on Adinkra clothes (Tetteh, n.d.). Adinkra clothes were traditionally made for royalty to wear at religious ceremonies and to express people's thought and feelings (The Mirror, 2006). These fabrics are indigo hand printed and made in Ghana. Adinkra symbols are widely used in African fabrics, walls, pottery and logos. There is a popular belief in Africa about how a mother's prayer goes a long way in the life of her child (Abbott, 2003). Adinkra symbols were used in the cloth for the *Mother's Desire* to express the designer's thoughts and desires for her child. This design demonstrates how Adinkra cloth can be designed in Adobe Illustrator and Photoshop and then ecofriendly printed onto cotton instead of the traditional use of an indigo hand printing process.

Mother's Desire's garment is a transformable garment that transforms from a long to a short dress. Transformable garments comprise of technologies that can change them from one style to the other or silhouettes, hence extending the apparel's lifespan and reducing the need to purchase new apparel (Fletcher, 2008). *Mother's Desire's* garment can change in style and silhouette; thus, it can be worn in different ways and for different occasions. Waste in a product's lifespan can be minimized and prevented by transformable design because it encourages consumers' involvement in sustainable fashion acts (Fashion United, 2015).

Aesthetic Properties and Visual Impact: A lemon yellow color and an aqua color were used as the background of the two fabrics to create a contrast for each transformation "look". The use of a pop art technique created the pattern on the lemon-yellow fabric by manipulating the designer's child's face. To create an interesting distinction between the bodice and skirt the designer's child's face was printed in two different scales. The first transformation "look" shows a long dress with sixteen strips with the child's faces on alternating stripes. At a first glance, the faces are not distinguishable but upon a closer look the faces are revealed. On the aqua background fabric, the Adinkra symbols were arranged to create the map of Africa. The Adinkra symbols that were used on the aqua fabric communicate strength, abundance, love, beauty, purity, leadership, loyalty, good marriage and God's blessing.

Process, Technique, and Execution: The process evolved from a dress that can be worn as a strapless bulb shaped dress of contrasting colors to a long dress with different scales of faces to add interest. Final sketches were completed accompanied by detailed, digital flats. Muslin was draped on a full-scale dress form and then pattern set were drafted from the draped muslin. The

garment was constructed using couture sewing methods. Hand sewing techniques were used to hem the skirt and tack the side seam of one side of the strips. A foam understructure was built into the bust area and channels were sewn along the princess seams of the lining to feed the plastic boning that support the strapless bodice. The princess seam was used to give the wearer a taller appearance. A lightweight polyester-cotton served as an underlining for the bodice of the dress to give additional support. Horsehair and lightweight buckram were sandwiched in between the polyester-cotton to underline each of the sixteen strips to give understructure and create the desired shape and volume. The strips and the yoke are composed of two contrasting fabrics that created a compelling look. The strips were attached to a style line in between the bodice and the skirt, turned inside out and fastened to sit on the hips below the waist to show the contrasting color. The skirt can be dropped to show the front side of the strips creating the alternate “look”.

Cohesion: Aesthetic properties such as contrasting colors, different scale and arrangement of the patterns were considered. The wearer’s movements were also considered while following design principles.

Design Contribution and Innovation: The Adinkra symbols on the bottom of the dress represent the designer’s prayers for her child as a foundation for her child’s life journey. The Adinkra symbols shaped into the map of Africa symbolizes that the prayers are communicated in an African manner. This creative design piece also addresses sustainability issues by transforming into an alternate look therefore reducing wastage due to its two-in-one transformation. *Mother’s Desire* garment went from the usual Indigo dyeing popularly used in making Adinkra cloth in West Africa to ecofriendly fabric printing thereby, addressing shade variations issues in using indigo dye and contributing to sustainable environmental fashion practice.

Materials: Top dress, skirt, yoke, and stripes: 100% lightweight cotton twill; dress top underlining and skirt lining: 70% Polyester 30% Cotton; Stripes underlining: Buckram and Horsehair.

Date Completed: May 2018.



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