

## Queen for a Day

Casey Stannard, Oregon State University, USA

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The purpose of this design was to visually represent the graceful wrought iron grillwork of the balconies which line the French Quarter in New Orleans and incorporate elements of historic



dress worn by Mardi Gras queens. Mardi Gras is a celebration which culminates on Shrove Tuesday, the day before Lent begins (Huber, 1989). The event includes an elaborate parade which winds its way through the streets of the French Quarter. Extravagant costumes are worn by many attendees, beaded necklaces and masks are also important aspects of Mardi Gras dress.

Each year a king and queen are chosen for the celebration. Historic photographs from the 1970s show Mardi Gras queens wearing empire waisted gowns with capes featuring oversized standing collars (Huber, 1989). The design silhouette was inspired by the dress of the 1970s queens and the traditional Mardi Gras colors of green, gold, and purple were selected for the garment.

The design was draped on a dress form using jersey knit fabric and a pattern was produced. The designer knit gauge swatches and calculated how many stitches were needed to create each pattern piece using the different knit stitches employed in the garment. The bodice was knit by hand using a 2x2 rib knit. A 1x1 rib trim was added to the armholes and neckline to finish the edges.

The slightly scalloped skirt panels were machine knit and then hand dyed to achieve the desired gold color. The green strips within the skirt were hand knit using a cable stitch which was chosen to resemble the twisted balcony posts in the French Quarter. The skirt panels and green strips were seamed together and a three-dimensional lace trim was added to the hem for visual balance. The applied

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designs on the skirt are inspired by historic iron grillwork featured in French Quarter balconies (Lynn, 1949). The designs were made from single crochet chains which were coiled into the proper shape and then stitched onto the skirt sections.

The jacket was meant to symbolize the temporary illusion of royalty which is embodied by a Mardi Gras queen. The queens of Mardi Gras only take their position for a short time, though they wear all the trappings of royalty. This creates an illusion of power and prestige which was conveyed by using sheer fabric for the jacket.

The jacket was flat patterned and the collar was draped on a dress form. The jacket was created from nylon tulle and is lined with the same fabric. The collar has wire inserted in a casing around the edge to enable the collar to stand like those worn by the historic queens. The jacket also has applied single crochet designs. The designs on the jacket echo those used on the dress. The tighter spirals employed in the collar design were modeled after the intricate pediments included on some of the iron grillwork gates in the New Orleans French Quarter (Lynn, 1949). The spirals on the collar were applied to both the interior and exterior to help frame the model's face from both the front and back view. Finally, a necklace was fashioned of purple crystal beads which bring to mind the typical beads of the Mardi Gras celebration.



Huber, L. V. (1989). *Mardi Gras: A pictorial history of carnival in New Orleans*. Gretna, LA: Pelican Publishing Company.

Lynn, S. M. (1949). *New Orleans*. New York, NY: Bonanza Books.

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