

Sacred and Profane Dress

Della Reams, Art Department, Miami University
Larry Rushing, Tyler School of Art, Temple University

Keywords: Digital Printing, Fine Art, Painting, Wearable Art

The intention of this process is to illustrate the direct influence fine art can have on fashion design, such as the work Elsa Schiaparelli did with Salvador Dali, Gianni Versace's work inspired by Andy Warhol and Botticelli paintings, and Marc Jacobs using the artwork of Takashi Murakami for Louis Vuitton.

Fine art painting provides inspiration for my fabric and fashion designs. The integration of a two-dimensional fabric design into a three-dimensional garment is my design challenge – to form a beautiful 2-D design into 3-D form, using the human body as the supporting structure and the 2-D design as ornament. This dress could be remade in another fabric print, but the resulting dress/print design would not be integrated in the way it is with this particular fabric. Many fabric prints are made from simple repeats of mark-making, and most dress designs are made to be constructed with a variety of fabrics. This fabric print was developed over several months of iterations from parts of a painting that took three months to complete.

The Sacred and the Profane are both expressed in this collaborative dress from the collection "From Fine Art to Fashion". All of the dresses in this ongoing collection are one-of-a-kind dresses made from textile patterns derived from paintings. The surrealistic imagery and harmonious color sense featured in my collaborator's paintings inspire me to develop digitally-printed fabrics, which then inspire unique dress designs. Starting with a section of a painting, I design a repeat using Photoshop, employing the mirroring technique for symmetry. After numerous trials, this design is printed on woven fabric with a digital fabric printer.

This dress was draped from one length of wide fabric with very little waste – only cutouts from the armholes and front neckline curve. The patterns were matched on all vertical seams. Following an exploration of stitching techniques hand sewing, cording and trapunto were added as embellishment. Some of these features support forming the fabric to the shape of the body and others are used to accent some of the motifs by raising them in relief. The full back skirt, in contrast to the straight front, was informed by Yohji Yamamoto's 1986 dress, a "deconstructivist take on Victoriana" (Hamish Bowles, Vogue Magazine, May 2020). Other details, such as the neckline shape, were discovered in the process of draping.

The Sacred is represented by the abstract angel over the heart space. The Profane is symbolized by the same motif reversed, a flame over the area of a woman's greatest power and femininity. Devotion is communicated using the artwork of the beloved and transforming it into a dress that conveys the creativity of both partners - the male inspired by femininity and the female by love. Spirit is expressed by the abundance of handwork performed to embellish and energize the dress.

Celebrating color and exploring its expression in texture, pattern, and form, this design integrates two-dimensional textile design with three-dimensional fashion design. Designing and creating original textiles enhances the ability to design unique garments, using traditional production techniques mixed with present-day manufacturing technology. A balance of old and new practices - hand painting, digital printing, draping, and sewing by hand and machine – are featured in this one-of-a-kind dress. Photos follow.



