

## “Arresting Fluidity”

Constance R. Spotts, Iowa State University, USA  
Faculty Mentor: Ellen McKinney, Ph.D.

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*Contextual Review:* At the age of 5, my sister taught me how to sew by way of new clothes for my dolls. At the age of 24, I learned the art of quilting. For 20 years I thought my passion was found until I combined my love of art quilting with that of the functional art of clothing. Translating the colorful and unique design of a two-dimensional quilt into an outstandingly bold three-dimensional piece of dress is beyond rewarding. “Arresting Fluidity” was inspired by an art quilt “Nemo’s Ecstasy” by Lorraine Torrence (Torrence, 1997) that had bold colors and vertical lines adjacent to curves combined with sharp points of triangles, which can be referred to as quilt block “New York Beauty” (White, 2021). The quilt (Figure 1) screamed movement and thus an idea of translating that quilt into a moving dress was born. I did not want to simply use the quilt as a fabric from which the pattern could cut but to integrate the quilt design into the style lines of the dress itself. Using quilts as inspiration is not new, designer Sarah Burton used the quilt “Wrexham Tailor’s Quilt” (1842-52) as inspiration for her Alexander McQueen A/W 20 (Battista, 2020). Scholars alike have designed mindfully to feature quilt piecing and patchwork techniques (e.g. Haar, 2019; Mehta, 2018). This design takes it a step further by incorporating the quilt designs into the style lines of the garment.

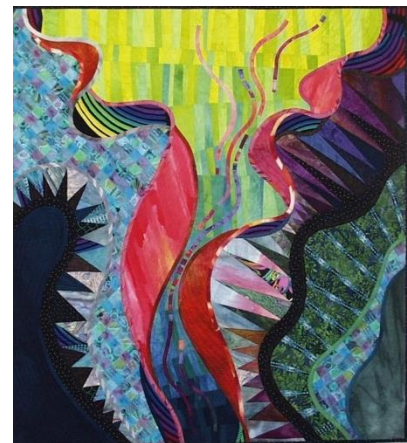


Figure 1 Nemo’s Ecstasy by Lorraine Torrence

*Concept:* With the use of foundation piecing and art quilt drafting this design translates the lines and colors of a two-dimensional art quilt (Torrence, 1997) into a three-dimensional dress. Quilter’s cotton was used throughout the dress for stability and vast color variation. Foundation piecing technique was used to create the “New York Beauty” panels on either side of the center front (Mahoney, 2016). This technique allowed for no arrow points to be clipped. The goal of the design is to use quilt block within the style lines, not simply use them as a background.

*Aesthetic Plan:* The design explored the principle of rhythm, balance and line. Rhythm was achieved through the use of repeated triangles on the front of the dress. Contrast of the straight lines of the arrows in “New York Beauty” block against fluidity of curves creates great movement. The principle of balance was explored through color as it alternates from dark to light from the top of the “New York Beauty” panel to the hem. Color is as balanced across the body with “New York Beauty” arrows aligned across the design.

*Process, Technique, Execution, and Cohesion:* Translating an art quilt into a garment is a challenge but using techniques learned during years of quilting and newly acquired patterning skills. The first step was to create a base pattern with proper fit that would be altered. The base pattern was a tea-length A-line dress with armseye princess seams. To achieve the desired feeling of movement, I drew the curving lines onto the base pattern. Each line was converted into a seam (Figure 2). The front and back princess seams were curved into a wave curve design, with the seamline splitting around one of the fisheye darts. These lines served as both fitting tools and design elements. Multiple fit muslins were sewn to get the proper fit and alignment on these curved seams. To maintain the proper flow with art quilt inspired design, the armhole flounces are embedded into the princess seams on front and back. Draping on the sample



Figure 2 Pattern Pieces

extended the flounces down the front wave creating more movement. The design resulted in 23 pattern pieces: 14 for the main dress, 3 skirt flounces, 4 arm flounces, and 2 additional pieces for the lining. The center yoke was comprised of seven vertical line strips with occasional teal blocks of color and framed on either side with teal that extends into shoulder straps and continue down the center back. “New York Beauty” side panels, constructed using foundation piecing six

different colors in the design of 42 triangles on the right side and 41 triangles on the left side, all points maintained, create visual impact. Next to the New York Beauty panels are peanut shaped side panels in purple which each hold a fitted dart. The back is composed of wave panel and wave crest on either side of the teal center back which closes with an invisible zipper and hook eye. The hem of dress is completed with a 3 ½ inch wide wave blue flounce lined with lime chiffon to give another splash color as the dress moves. Flounces are stabilized with topstitching.

*Design Contribution, Originality, and Innovation:* The project was a labor of love and innovation. This design contributes a new way to create a three-dimensional fashion from a two-dimensional art piece using quilt piecing techniques. The quilting technique of foundation piecing was an excellent way to create an intricate design without errors or losing points. Combining patternmaking techniques with quilting techniques allowed the achievement of the goal to use quilt pieces within the style lines, not simply use them as a background.

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