



AFRICAN THREAD CONNECTIONS

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The purpose of African Thread Connections was to design a wearable art garment that focused on the 1999 ITAA conference theme, Encountering Cultures: Making Connections. The fiber kenaf, which is indigenous to Africa, served as a point of departure for the design process. African dress and textile themes inspired the form and motifs.

African Thread Connections is a lined coat. Tunics from Nigeria and Ghana were examined as a source of inspiration for the garment form. Elements from the tunics evident in African Thread Connections are the overlapping neckline, the wide sleeves, and the wide garment body.

The surface design of African Thread Connections was also inspired by African textiles and dress as evident in the use of indigenous kenaf and traditional Adinkra cloth stamp motifs. Three forms of processed kenaf were dyed four colors: deep orange, fushia, cerulean blue, and purple. The dyed kenaf was stitched to the coat surface using over 10,000 yards of mercerized cotton thread and metallic thread.

Adinkra cloth is made by pressing stamps onto cloth. Each stamp design has historical, allegorical or magical significance. Adinkra cloth stamp motifs of Ghana are featured on African Thread Connections through machine embroidery in gold metallic thread and on the lining by stamping the lining fabric with bleach and gold paint.

Recognition: The kenaf used was from a USDA/NRICGP grant of Dr. Gita Ramaswamy.