

## Joya's Dragon

Constance R. Spotts, Iowa State University, USA  
Faculty Mentor: Ling Zhang, Ph.D.

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*Contextual Review:* Through the ages the concept of “what is art” has changed but one thing has not changed, the reward of displaying the art. From master painters to photographers, the mark of making it in your chosen art medium is having your art displayed for others to view. This reward is no different for children. In 1981, Diana Korzenik suggested that it is in the culture of the adult that decides if children’s work is art. Having their work viewed holds multiple rewards for children: a) being praised promotes self-esteem and builds stronger self-core, b) knowing that their art is on display for the public promotes “motivation to rise to new levels” (Christenson, 2017, as cited in Erikson, 2020, p. 14), and c) success in art can lead to success in other school subjects (Erikson, 2020). Having their art work displayed empowers children. Currently, a new trend has emerged where companies such as Budsies have made over 130,000 custom stuffed animals from children’s drawings since 2013 (Budsies, 2022). Children are excited at seeing their imagination take a tangible form. Imagine the excitement and empowerment if a child wore their own artwork. This design was an exploration of the concept inspired by a six-year old’s drawing of a dragon (Figure 1).



Figure 1. Dragon by Joya Cathcart



Figure 2. Detail of quilted

*Concept:* With the use of digital printing technology this design translated a two-dimensional drawing (Cathcart, 2021) into a three-dimensional cape while keeping the dragon as a true representation of child’s drawing. The silhouette of a cape was chosen to characterize the stories of childhood where children were in the woods wearing capes and having great adventures. Both the digitally printed shell and the lining were 100% cotton for durability and comfort. The goal of this design was to provide a walking gallery for the art work.

*Aesthetic Plan:* The design explored the principle of rhythm and balance. Rhythm was achieved through the use of the waving felt border and repeated dragon motives in the shell of the cape as well as the border. The curves of the border and the dragon created movement. The quilted dragons (Figure 2) also repeated the shape and colors of the original dragon creating balance throughout the design.

The bright orange lining outlined the design much like a mat on a framed work of art.

*Process, Technique, Execution and Cohesion:* The design started cleaning up the artwork (Figure 1) in Adobe Photoshop thus removing the background and isolating the motif. Once the pattern of the cape was digitalized, the layout of two dragons (one smaller and mirror image of the other) was executed in Adobe Illustrator. Since a dragon needed to be on two sides of the same pattern piece, layers were used to duplicate the pattern piece, rotate it into position aligning two copies of the same dragon before removing the unwanted parts. The layer was then rotated back into the original position and all layers merged (Figure 3). The outer shell fabric was digitally printed, and sandwiched with warm and natural color cotton batting and orange cotton broadcloth lining using quilter's adhesive spray to ensure adherence. Stencils - made by stitching through photocopies, two sets, original and mirror, in five sizes ranging from 8 inches to 4 inches -ensured the shape, spatial position and balance of the dragons were maintained during the free-motion quilting process.

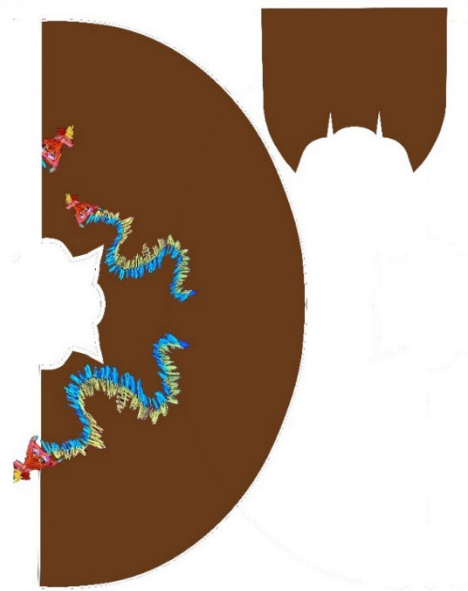


Figure 3. Digital print layout

Bernina Active 230 domestic sewing machine was used by the designer to manually quilt the miniature dragons in rayon thread in three colors: orange, a variegated lime and a turquoise blue. The remaining cape and hood were free-motion quilted with a brown rayon thread in a meandering overall quilting pattern creating a unique surface texture resembling the “flames” of the dragon. After attaching the border made of burnt orange felt – a non-woven fabric not needing to finish the wave edge – more dragons were free-motion quilted around the border. The cape was finished with facings much like a binding on a traditional quilt, resulting in a bright orange outline. Magnet closures are encased in each side of the dragon at the center front. The wearer's right-side dragon head has wool strips sewn in a fire pattern, while the wearer's left side dragon head has no fire. This was done in keeping with artist demonstration of her original dragon on the paper, which she cut between the fire and whiskers, folding up the fire to show a dragon with and without the flames. More wool strips in corresponding colors were hand stitched onto the smaller right-side dragon at the shoulder. The added embellishment gives the look of bold crayon strokes and adding dimension to the art work.

*Design Contribution, Originality and Innovation:* Although Budsies.com creations are not digitally printed, the website does show that a market exists for items created from a child's imagination (Budsies, 2022). It is not a far leap to envision a market for fashion designs created from child's artwork. This design demonstrated the representable quality of digital printing was viable for creating a wearable gallery for a child. Free-motion quilting used, only added dimension and interest without distraction of the focus of the design - a six-year old's master piece.

**References:**

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