

Catriona

April Elisha Stanley, Iowa State University

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**Contextual Review and Concept.** The Celtic selkie legend was the main inspiration for this childrenswear ensemble. A selkie, the Gaelic term for seal, is a shape-shifting mythological water creature but assumes a two-legged, human form on land (Celtic Rings, 2016), inspiring the concept of bifurcation for the ensemble. The market research demonstrated that selkie-inspired apparel has been limited to womenswear (DandilionGirlDesigns, 2013; Unabashed Apparel, 2016), swimwear (Selkie Swim Co., 2016), costume design (TwinRoseDesigns, 2016), and T-shirts (Zazzle, 2016). Scottish culture was the second major inspiration for this childrenswear outfit, utilizing the color scheme of the national flag and landscape. The ensemble was to be designed as a “self-help” ensemble, which according to Banerjee (1964) is clothing that permits children to don and doff garments without the assistance of an adult. The intention of the designer was to combine multiple creative methods including experimental patternmaking, digital textile printing, needlework processes, and the concept of “self-help” garments in conjunction with the selkie myth and Scottish culture to produce a bifurcated, multi-sized childrenswear outfit.

**Aesthetic Properties and Visual Impact.** The color scheme of the outfit is light blue and a soft white, based on the blue and white Saltire flag of Scotland and the Scottish scenery. The limited color scheme was meant to have the viewer focus on the complementary prints and patterning of the garments. Creative components for the original digital textile prints were derived from Scotland itself: the paisley motif, weaving, and crochet. When spread, the hind flippers (or tail) of the seals look like wide fans. Similar shaping was added to the patterns to implement the form of the selkie creature into the outfit and produce a whimsical ensemble.

**Process, Technique, and Execution.** The ensemble patterns were developed through experimental patternmaking and patterned in a size 5X to accommodate sizes 4 – 5X. Both the blouse and the culottes utilized Roberts’ (2013, p. 12) subtraction cutting method, the “removal of fabric, rather than the addition of fabric” resulting in a final shape and producing an “empty space for the body to occupy, but also effects how the fabric drapes around the body”. On the blouse, side seams were formed where selkie-tail-shaped godets were inserted. A concave hem was drafted for the blouse, and a selkie-tail-shaped extension was patterned and sewn to the back hem of the blouse. Topstitching and roll hem serging were used to create a professional finish on these complex curving shapes. A center front zipper was sewn into the blouse to implement the “self-help” concept.

For the culottes pattern, the legs were drafted to embody the selkie shape and drawn twice the normal length to accommodate strategically placed circles. These circles, which were cut out and sewn together, allowing the body to be inserted. The subtraction cutting method had to be adapted for childrenswear sizing: some circles were sewn to a matching circle as found in Roberts’ work (2013) while a few circles had to be folded in half and sewn to themselves to create an appropriate garment length for a child. The culottes were fully lined, to eliminate potential confusion in the dressing process due to the sewn circles inside the garment and assisted in forming a “self-help” outfit.

Topstitching and roll hem serging were used to create a professional finish for the culottes. A non-roll elastic was inserted into the waist to allow a child to easily pull on the culottes.

The fabrics for this childrenswear ensemble were digitally printed with cultural components endemic of Scotland. For the blouse, a *paisley print* was hand drawn and colored with Prismacolor markers to simulate a negative space motif. For the culottes, a *houndstooth* sample was woven on a pin loom. The lining for both the blouse and the culottes was crocheted in a *raised diamond* pattern. All samples were scanned into Adobe Photoshop CS6 to create the digital prints. Belgium linen was printed with the paisley Prismacolor and houndstooth pin loom woven designs. Cotton shirting was printed with the raised diamond crochet pattern for the ensemble lining.

**Cohesion.** This childrenswear blouse and culottes combination cohesively incorporated experimental patternmaking, digital textile printing, needlework processes, and the concept of “self-help” garments. This ensemble also successfully incorporated the selkie legend, the blue-and-white color scheme, and Scottish-inspired textiles. These elements demonstrate that multiple methods can be integrated to create a unique, culturally-representative childrenswear ensemble.

**Design Contribution and Innovation.** This outfit contributes to field of apparel and textiles and the childrenswear market through advancing the comprehension of experimental patternmaking for children’s garments. The process of digital printing with a variety of fabrics that integrate Prismacolor markers and needlework techniques also contributes to the innovative design of textiles and creative options for childrenswear garments. This ensemble was completed in December 2016 in a childrenswear 5X.

## References

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