

The Nyangatom woman

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The Nyangatom woman is a continuation of research focusing on various African cultures. With this piece I wanted to further expand my knowledge of working with batik resist technique. I also wanted to experiment with beading on leather.

This piece was inspired by the Nyangatom tribe of the Omo Valley located in Southwest Ethiopia crossing over into the Sudan border. This tribe is semi-nomadic and is known for their singing and storytelling. The girls and women wear heavy necklaces of dried seeds given to them by their father as a girl; and then after marriage, as a wedding gift from their husband.

The skirts worn are what distinguish the girls from the women. Both wear skirts of goat or calf skin; however the girls' skirts are rectangular shape with colorful beads of ostrich shells and glass attached to the skins and women who are married wear a longer triangular shaped skirt with metal beads. The latter skirts are not as flashy as the girls' multi-colored skirts, however the metal beads used for the women's skirts makes them much more valuable. This triangular skirt was the main thrust of inspiration for this piece.

The design process began with the bodice which was draped with the tribe's simplicity in mind. The cotton canvas bodice wraps the body and has only one seam at the side. It was embellished with a batik technique, scrap pieces of corduroy and leather were appliquéd on for added interest. The linen-like weave under skirt was draped with an inverted triangular silhouette repeating the shape of the Nyangatom women's skirt. The hem of the underskirt was frayed to further pay tribute to the simplicity of the Nyangatom life. The main showpiece, the leather over skirt, is triangular shaped and adorned with solid copper beads in an antique and polished finish. The copper beads also adorn the shoulder of the bodice. This piece contributes to the field a unique combination of





media—batik, appliqué and metal beading being used to assist in furthering our understanding of the Nyangatom culture.

Date Completed: May 2015

Measurements: Bust 34”, Waist 27”, Hips 36”

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